Mosaic Men: Critical Masculinities and National Identities in Contemporary Subnational Cinemas

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Abstract

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The crisis of traditional images of manhood in Western cultures, the disruption of nation-state primacy, and the revival of self-determination movements in the aftermath of globalization and the rise of neoliberal policies have caused a rupture in the stability of such concepts as nation and masculinity. This dissertation investigates the impact of these ruptures on the representation of gendered subjects in the subnational cinemas of Flanders, Scotland, and Quebec—that is film industries and imaginaries located in geopolitical contexts that lack nation-state recognition, but operate along the lines of national-belonging principles. Combining the methodologies of production history, film, and cultural analysis, this work looks at subnational cinemas from the interconnected standpoints of their institutional and representational developments. One the one hand, it maps how film production and funding infrastructures emerged in recent subnational contexts at the convergence of national and transnational interests. On the other hand, it considers how performances of gender and national identity are renegotiated in such complex geopolitical and cinematic scenarios. It is the central contention of this dissertation that subnational contexts, by virtue of their cultural and geopolitical hybridity, offer a significant set of possibilities for revisiting monolithic paradigms of national cinemas, identities, and gender power structures in the globalized era.

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This is dedicated to you.

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INTRODUCTION

> *To put it briefly: I do not think that the main options today are to defend identity or to globalize. The most illuminating studies of the globalizing process are not those that lead us to review questions of identity in isolation but those that lead us to understand the benefits of knowing what we can do and be in relation to others, like dealing with heterogeneity, difference, and inequalities.*
>
> - Nestor García Canclini, *Imagined Globalization* (2014, 13)

The work of anthropologist and cultural critic Nestor García Canclini, exemplified by this quote, relocates the dualistic debate around the perils of globalization and the protection of local/national identities within a framework that elects simultaneity, multiplicity, and the promotion of difference as its theoretical and methodological pillars. Following Benedict Anderson's definition of nations as "imagined communities" (1983), Canclini proposes to look at globalization as an "imagined" phenomenon. Differently from Anderson, whose notion of imagined community was predicated upon the cartographical and geopolitical boundaries of the nation-state (nations are imagined as limited, sovereign, and bound in comradeship), Canclini's "imagined globalization" refers to the production of heterogeneous imaginaries and social configurations by migrant subjects moving across borders and within transnational circuits. Canclini suggests bypassing the minor understanding of globalization as a *circular* phenomenon, applied indistinctively to the entire world, and to rather conceive it as a *tangential* one, which accounts for a plurality of imaginaries, narratives, and forms of globalization that are intercultural, intersectional, and dialogic in nature (xxxix). For Canclini, there should be no clear-cut antagonism between the idea of globalization as an homogenizing force, and the narratives of local communities resisting its effects: "[d]ifference does not appear as the compartmentalization of separate cultures but as a dialogue with those with whom we are in conflict or with whom we seek alliances" (95). It is in conversation with this non-oppositional, non-monolithic approach to the relationship between local and global, national and transnational, settled and transient identities that the "mosaic" nature of my research takes shape.

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines the word "mosaic" as "a surface decoration made by inlaying small pieces of variously colored material to form pictures or patterns," and

"an organism or one of its parts composed of cells of more than one genotype."[1] Both in artistic and scientific terms, a mosaic thus refers to the coexistence of different elements within the same surface—be it inanimate or corporeal. The title of this dissertation borrows from such a semantic multiplicity to examine composite forms of masculinities and national identities in the contemporary subnational cinemas of Flanders, Scotland, and Quebec. Over the past three decades, patterns of cross-national migration, intercultural communication, and intersectional oppression have played a crucial role in reshaping paradigms of national identities, cinemas, and gender dynamics in the wake of globalization and transnationalism—resulting in a large body of scholarship invested in revisiting such paradigms through the lens of film, gender, and cultural studies. The concept of "mosaic men" hence functions as an apt metaphor to encapsulate the key issue explored in this dissertation, that is how national and gendered configurations cohabiting the same subjects and geopolitical spaces can be renegotiated in subnational film industries and imaginaries.

I am especially interested in observing how the correlation between the national and the masculine can be reconfigured in geopolitical and cinematic scenarios where both notions are profoundly destabilized. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the resurfacing of self-determination drives and sovereigntist sentiments in stateless nations, postcolonial communities, and ethnic minorities signalled the persistence of nationalist ideologies vis-à-vis the homogenizing drives of global and supranational powers (Enloe 2014). The multiform status of subnational entities complicates however the very categories of territorial, cultural, and gendered uniformity at the core of nationalist projects. My central contention is that subnational contexts provide a fertile ground to reconsider the interplay of masculinity, nationhood, and their representation onscreen, by virtue of the complex relationship they entertain with both concepts of nation and manhood. Subnational contexts epitomize the hybridity and heterogeneity of spaces situated between the local and the global, wherein univocal understandings of nationhood and gender—and the interaction between the two—are no longer tenable. The choice of three Euro-American subnational cinemas as my privileged case studies is therefore dictated by three intertwined factors. First, they exist within geopolitical entities that function according to national-belonging principles, but are nonetheless subsumed under the governance of a recognized nation-state.

[1] "Definition of mosaic", *Merriam-Webster*, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mosaic Accessed on 25 Jan. 2018.

Second, they occupy a peculiar position as film industries located in contexts that lack nation-state recognition, but develop distinct national imaginaries. Third, they complicate the definition of nationhood and national identity, thus opening up the possibility to challenge the modern concurrence of masculinity, nation-building processes, and the symbolic association of nationalism to manhood.

The latter factor constitutes the theoretical starting point of this dissertation, which builds upon the disentanglement of manhood and nationhood in postmodern times, and the subsequent impact of such a separation on the representation of masculinity in national visual cultures. As George L. Mosse has argued in *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, "[m]odern masculinity and modern national consciousness had grown up at the identical time" (1998, 192). This historical coincidence is held responsible for the construction of a specific "aesthetics of masculinity" that has been adopted by modern national societies to represent themselves at the time of their insurgence in the nineteenth century: "[t]he ideal of masculinity was invoked on all sides as a symbol of personal and national regeneration, but also as basic to the self-identification of modern society" (1998, 3). The formation of modern nation-states in the Western world has therefore been linked to the emergence of gendered discourses that have configured national identity as *symbolically* masculine, electing the contrived "male stereotype" as the repository of national strength. Under the same discourses, the national soil has been construed as *metaphorically* female—a defined unit of land to be protected from foreign penetration, and a reproductive device to ensure national futurity. The distinction between symbols and metaphors is especially poignant, as it points toward the appropriation of the feminine as an empty vessel for nationalist fears and protectionist outcomes, and to the elevation of the masculine as the immediate counterpart of the nation. In his 2010 book, *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction*, Todd W. Reeser reprises a similar argument by underlining the existence of a visible analogy between women and nations (the "motherland"), but also a subtler and more powerful parallel between masculinity and the nation (the "fatherland"). Resorting to yet another figure of speech, Reeser affirms that "[t]he nation is coded as masculine *metonymically*… because it is considered to be composed of male bodies or of physical elements coded as masculine" (2010, 174, italics mine). Mosse and Reeser's linguistic choices thus emphasize the power imbalance at the core of the gendered rhetoric of the nation: whereas

women might be blatantly associated with the nation on account of their topographical mimesis and procreative functions, men stand as the direct representatives of the nation itself.

Such a rhetorical configuration of national gendered discourses is however not a prerogative of studies of men and masculinities only, but informs also the work of feminist scholars challenging the mistaken assumption of nationalism as a gender-indifferent category of inquiry—a premise endorsed by canonical writings on nationalism such as Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism* (1983),[2] Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983), and Eric Hobsbawm's *Nations and Nationalism since 1788* (1990). In her chapter "Gender and Nation," Mrinalini Sinha departs from such a body of work to reintegrate gender and sexuality as central components in the study of nationalism. Sinha resumes the shared understanding that nations are neither universal nor pre-existing, but rather structured around fabricated ideas of linguistic, territorial, and ethnic homogeneity—of "selfhood" versus "otherness." If nations are not natural, but invented and imagined, their "performance" of nationhood must be subjected to acts, discourses, and representations that are connoted in gendered terms—a gesture that echoes Judith Butler's pivotal theorization of gender as constructed "through corporeal signs and other discursive means" (1990, 185). In the unfolding of her argument, Sinha's adopts a similar vocabulary to Mosse and Reeser's abovementioned excerpts. By defining men as consequential to the nation (symbols), and women as iconic embodiments of it (metaphors), the author claims that "the discourse of nationalism is an important site for the enactment of masculinity" (2004, 256). In *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics,* Cynthia Enloe goes even further to develop a taxonomic breakdown of the ways in which women are considered integral to nationalist projects: they are the nation's most valuable *possessions*, they are *vehicles* for the nation's procreative function, they are *bearers* of the community's futurity, they are the most *vulnerable* members of the nation, and they are the most prone to external *assimilation* (2014, 108). The terminology employed by Enloe highlights once again a crucial

[2] By stating that "the idea of a *man* without a nation seems to impose a far greater strain on the modern imagination" (1990, 6, italics mine), Gellner's volume attributes however the importance of nation-building processes not to mankind as a genderless entity, but to men as gender-specific repositories of national identity. While female subjects are relegated to the role of bodily metaphors of the motherland—insomuch as the "woman-as-nation" paradigm has become a "rite of passage" in feminist approaches to nationalism and international relations (Peterson 1999, Nagel 2010)—their male counterparts have surged as *de facto* representatives of national assertion and nationalist ideologies.

difference in the way the feminine and the masculine are related to the nation: the former by subordination, the latter by immediate correspondence.

Although covering only a limited portion of the ongoing academic debates on gendered vocabularies and discourses of the nation, the scholarly interventions cited above anchor the premises of this dissertation to the intertwined concerns of feminist and men and masculinities studies with national and transnational gender power structures. The theoretical affiliation of my research with the field of Critical Studies of Men and Masculinities (CSMM) is therefore informed by those very concerns. In the introduction to *Rethinking Transnational Men*, Jeff Hearn and Marina Blagojević have defined CSMM "*in contrast* to that version of 'men's studies' that seeks to develop a field more or less separate from and competitive with feminist studies, women's studies, or gender studies" (2013, 2). By using subnational contexts as fields of possibility to destabilize the idea of nationhood as a homogeneous construct—and the paradigms of contrived manhood aligned to it—my goal is to examine how such a disentanglement can affect the gender discourses that are associated with the nation, and endanger the secure position of dominant masculinities[3] at the center of them. In his overview of the methodological approaches that compose the studies of masculinities, Hearn has further argued that "critical studies on men need to be carefully monitored—to avoid creating a new power base for men, and a new way of ignoring or forgetting women, feminist work and gendered power relations between men and women" (2013, 35). The primary focus of this research on men—rather than on female and/or queer subjects—is thus not aimed to reinforce such a "power base." I am rather concerned with the need to unpack the shifting centrality of manhood and nation-state structures in postmodern Western cultures first, so as to revise heteronormative and masculinist constructions of national gender hierarchies in feminist and queer terms.

I am also particularly interested in confronting the "unmarked" nature of men as a gendered and social category, often essentialized and taken for granted, rather than deconstructed and problematized (Hearn 2015, 4). The choice of masculinities as the main object of my research thus resonates with a concern that is not only central to the field of CSMM in the late 1990s and 2000s, but also to the seminal work of film studies scholars from the early 1980s such

[3] I am employing the term "dominant masculinities" to define forms and practices of manhood that occupy a privileged position in the subnational context examined in this dissertation, by virtue of their ethnic, racial, sexual, class, social, and able status—or a combination of these factors. Given the ambiguity of the concept of "hegemonic masculinity," as discussed in this Introduction, I find the notion of "dominant masculinities" more pertinent to the rationale of my work.

as Pam Cook and Steve Neale, who advocated for the investigation of (heterosexual) masculinity in mainstream Hollywood cinema, rather than for the "assumption of a male norm" (Neale 1983, 16). For these reasons, I conceive this dissertation as an open-ended trajectory that starts with masculinity and veers towards a more complex and multifaceted gendered scenario. I depart from the case of Flemish cinema as an example that challenges univocal understandings of masculinity and nationhood; I then continue with the case of Scottish cinema as a terrain to test alternative paths of gendered and national configurations; and I conclude with the case of Quebec cinema as a potential ground for the relocation of female and queer subjects at the center of national narratives and building process. The notion of "mosaic" as the conceptual starting point of my work is therefore related to such a trajectory, which is not necessarily linear in its development, but rather grows in different directions that are connected by the same shared set of research questions: what can we make of the relationship between gender and national identity in the global contemporaneity? What realms of possibility do subnational contexts provide to reconsider such a relationship? And how are subnational cinematic imaginaries involved in such a process of rethinking?

The multiplicity of ways in which national, cinematic, and gendered identities can be perceived, performed, and reshaped in the contemporaneity thus lies at the core of this dissertation's multiple ambitions, that is to open a horizon of possibilities in three intertwined areas: revising traditional paradigms of national cinema via the case of subnational film industries going global; challenging essentialist and monolithic conceptions of national identity as ethnically, linguistically, and territorially homogeneous; and renegotiating gender power structures on and off screen by decentering dominant masculinities from the national discourse. Given the scope of my work in terms of selected corpus and timeline, it would be however an untenable goal to provide with this dissertation a comprehensive and exhaustive account of the links between nationhood, gender, and cinema in subnational contexts. This project is rather conceived as a starting ground for the study of subnational cinemas as crucial players in current global film economies and gendered imaginaries—and one that aims to generate productive paths of interdisciplinary convergence and exploration. With this in mind, I will devote the remainder of the Introduction to outline the theoretical framework, methodological layout, and organization of my work. I will start by addressing the key scholarly debates that converge in my research, and the relevance of their intersection for the fields of film, gender, and cultural

studies. I will continue by outlining the methodological approaches and rationale of my project, and I will conclude by presenting the breakdown of my three main chapters.

Before delving into the theoretical and methodological sections, some terminological clarifications are however in order. Given the geopolitical and cultural peculiarity of subnational contexts, the vocabulary associated with their cinemas and employed throughout the dissertation will oscillate between "national" and "subnational." Whereas the subordination to the nation-state implied by the prefix "sub" might carry a negative connotation to some, the use of the subnational terminology in my work is neutral in nature, and motivated by practical reasons. Firstly, it allows to overcome the hurdles of contextual specificity for my three main case studies, all of which would otherwise require definitions adapted to their geopolitical status: "federal cinema" in Flanders, "devolved cinema" in Scotland, and "provincial cinema" in Quebec. Although each chapter of this dissertation engages extensively with such a contextual specificity, none of these terms is apt to define the intersection of local and global, regional and transnational tensions embodied by the examined cinemas with the same conciseness and inclusiveness of the subnational lexicon. Secondly, such a lexicon helps situate these cinemas on the global map of film studies scholarship invested in reconsidering traditional paradigms of national cinemas via modes of film production, circulation, and reception that are not necessarily confined within the delimitations of the nation-state.

The subnational case studies examined in my work respond also to the criteria of "national belonging" outlined by Jerry White in the attempt to revise and renew aspects of national cinema in the globalized era (2004). The occasional use of a "national" vocabulary with respect to Quebec, Scottish, and Flemish cinemas is therefore not intended to conflict with or cloud over the notion of subnational cinema used in this dissertation as a whole, but relates to the specific conditions of self-perception and representation of these cinematic identities onscreen. This principle informs also the choice of championing the ongoing validity of the national cinema framework as an epistemological tool to understand the existence and expansion of subnational imaginaries. Both in their writing and in the informal conversations collected during my research process, local scholars of Flemish, Scottish, and Quebec cinemas have discussed the association of subnational film industries and imaginaries to nationally inflected infrastructural developments and representational aspects. It is therefore out of respect and awareness of my position as an external observer that I chose to situate this dissertation in dialogue with, rather

than in contrast to the work of film and media studies scholars based in the analyzed subnational contexts—thus embracing the terminological complexity that derives from such an encounter.

Theoretical Framework

Three instances of crisis function as the theoretical foundations of this dissertation: the crisis of identity and the crisis of masculinity—which operate at both levels of society and theory—and the crisis of the national cinema paradigm—which occurs at the level of academic discourses. It is the purpose of my research to assess how these intertwined instances are addressed in subnational cinemas and how they interact with one another from both an infrastructural and a representational standpoint. The first instance, the "crisis of identity," works as the point of origin and conjunction for the more specific disruptions of national, cultural, and gendered constructs I identify in my subnational case studies. Although central to the fields of psychology and sociology already in the 1950s and 1960s, the concept of "identity crisis" has crystallized in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a societal as well as a theoretical issue—a result of the clash between the understanding of identity as a fundamental trait of individual and collective realization, and the notion of "identity" as a construct open to multiplicity and fragmentation (Bendle, 2002). As Stuart Hall has argued in "The Question of Cultural Identity," the crisis of identity has emerged as "a wider process of change which is dislocating the central structures and processes of modern societies and undermining the frameworks which gave individuals stable anchorage in the social world (1996, 596). Such a state of crisis thus responds to the pivotal passage from the unified self of Enlightenment and the sociological self of modernity, to the fragmented self of postmodernity, which relocates subjectivities across different temporalities and coexisting but "contradictory" identities (597). The conflicting and plural nature of identities as a result of the dislocating forces of globalization is however not a prerogative of postmodernity only. Despite the attempts to establish national narratives, imaginaries, and cultures that are temporally continuous, geographically contiguous, and culturally homogeneous, modern identities, Hall argues, have never been truly stable or fixed. By engaging with Anderson's concept of "imagined community," Gellner's examination of nations as social and historical constructs, and Hobsbawm's discussion of nations as inhabited by "*a pure original people or 'folk*'" (615), Hall observes in fact that national cultures and identities have been discontinuous and hybrid even within modernity, but they have surged as "unified" by

imposition of violent colonizing forces and nationalist ideologies. Hall hence suggests that "[i]nstead of thinking of national cultures as unified, we should think of them as constituting a discursive device which represents difference as unity or identity" (617).

In her examination of the relationship between identity and *gender* identity in her seminal volume *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler puts similar emphasis on discursive practices as forcefully unifying. Moving away from feminist conceptualizations of "women" as a "stable signifier" (5) and a "masculinist construction" (22), Butler advocates for the need to revise the notion of identity, and especially that of the "subject of feminism," beyond claims of unity and universality, as well as beyond imprecise understandings of gender as a "secondary characteristic of persons" (22). There is no linguistic or bodily continuity between the sex of a subject and their gender. On the contrary, Butler argues for the separation of the former as a biological matter, from the latter as a culturally constructed one—the byproduct of institutions and discourses of power (8). If gender is socially, culturally, and politically constructed, how does such a construction take place and how can it escape the regulatory nature of those very discursive practices involved in its making? For Butler the answer resides in the concept of "gender performativity," the idea that gender is produced through a set of repeated acts and patterns of behavior embodied by the subject who chooses to perform them: "gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity that it is purposed to be" (34). Both notions of gender and identity are therefore predicated on "doing" rather than "being," a radical shift in thinking that allows Butler to challenge the regulated position of "masculinity" and "femininity" within the binary structures of the heterosexual matrix. Such a move has crucial consequences for the conceptualization and enactment of "gender" and "identity" outside prescriptive and normative regulations. If gender is performed by the subject rather than socially dictated or assumed as a pre-existing fact associated with the biological sex of a given individual, then identity too cannot but be conceived as performative rather than substantiative. By countering the idea of gender identity as both a preconceived and essentialist *being* of the subject, and a "regulatory practice" coinciding only with heterosexuality, Butler rethinks gender*s* and identiti*es* as expansive theoretical and embodied notions that stretch beyond the limited confines of male/female dichotomies: "an open assemblage that permits of multiple convergences and divergences without obedience to a normative telos of definitional closure" (22).

Closely connected to these understandings of gender, identity, and gender identity as sets

of contradictory but interconnected practices, the second instance of crisis—that of masculinity—stems from an analogous reconfiguration of the alleged unity of the category of manhood. In Mosse's abovementioned volume, *The Image of Man*, the author introduces his overview of the evolution of modern Western masculinity and its representations by provocatively asking: "[d]oes true manliness remain the potent political and social force that had made it so important during the nineteenth century and throughout most of the twentieth?" (1998, 14). Other than being profoundly disputed by Butler's theorization of gender performativity, the idea of "true manliness" has been heavily challenged by the methodological shift from the clinical and scientific paradigms of "sex role theory" in the twentieth century—that is the definition of masculinity and femininity as mere repositories of biological features—to the emergence of sociological studies of men and masculinities in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Sociologists such as Michael Kimmel and R. W. Connell have advocated indeed for masculinity and femininity to be examined no longer under biological lenses, but rather "as socially constructed within historical context of gender relations" (Kimmel 1987, 123) and as "way[s] in which social practice is ordered" (Connell 2005, 71). This passage from the biological to the sociological understanding of gender and its power dynamics has had an impact on the way the trope of "masculinity in crisis" has been constructed and approached from an academic standpoint. In the incipit to his article "The Contemporary 'Crisis' of Masculinity in Historical Perspective," Kimmel has argued "[t]hat men are today confused about what it meant to be a 'real man'—that masculinity is 'in crisis'—has become a cultural commonplace" (1987, 121). Within the parameters of "sex role theory," masculinity has been largely conceived as an oppositional rather than relational concept to femininity, and the alleged crisis of its consolidated image and position in the world as the result of feminization and emasculation, rather than as the consequence of socio-historical changes. But how can the "crisis of masculinity" be understood in this latter framework as more than just a "cultural commonplace"? By looking at two specific moments in Western history that preceded the crisis—Restoration England (1688-1714) and pre-WWI United States (1880-1914)—Kimmel finds the answer to such a question in the historical and social changes that affected the relationship between masculinity and femininity across modernity. Rather than relying on the idea of sex roles as opposite and mutually exclusive, Kimmel shows how masculinity as a critical construct has been reshaped by the changing social positions of femininity in history: "masculinity was not defined in isolation… but as part of the

problematic of gender relations" (153).

Expanding on Kimmel's analysis of masculinity and its crisis as relational and social phenomena, Connell's re-edited volume *Masculinities* (1995/2005) identifies two systems of gender relations that further unpack the position of masculinity amidst gender, sexuality, race, and class inequalities: "hegemonic masculinities" and "marginalized masculinities." The former is defined by the privileged status certain forms of masculinity hold in the world, particularly "the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees…the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (77). The latter is a consequence of the "authorization of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group" (81). Although theorized as a specific configuration of gender practices within specific social situation, and not as a "fixed" type (81), the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been heavily criticized as too circumscribed and prescriptive. How is hegemony dictated and by whom? How can intersectional practices of oppression affect the arrangement of hegemonic masculinity in different geopolitical context? And how can hegemony and marginalization be theorized from both a local and a global standpoint? In "Masculinities and Globalization" (1998), Connell proceeds to address these very questions and clarify the non-unitary nature of "hegemonic masculinity," underlining how globalizing processes can intervene to shape different forms of masculinity. Connell defines globalization as a centrifugal force that redistributes bodies through migration and determines how masculine bodies in particular are positioned within the world's gender order. Such a relocation of bodies allows the hybridization of gender imaginaries and practices, which entails that masculinities cannot be possibly reduced to one encompassing category, and that plural forms of hegemonic masculinities can exist in different geopolitical spaces, and in accordance with different socio-cultural practices. As a result, it could be argued, the crisis of masculinity should be opened up to an analogous multiplicity: not one crisis, but multiple *crises*, and not one masculinity, but multiple *masculinities*.

Although acknowledging Connell's own revisions of the concept of hegemonic masculinity in its social and global inflections, Jeff Hearn introduces his volume *Men of the World: Genders, Globalizations, and Transnational Times* (2015) by calling for a further engagement with "theoretical critiques" that did not figure prominently in Connell and Messerschmidt's review of the term (2005). Hearn suggests replacing "masculinity" with "men" as a non-essentializing term, and proposes to understand hegemony as a "process" rather than a

variety of "forms of masculinity" (13). Moreover, the author argues for a broader re-examination of the "crisis of masculinity" beyond the limitations of a single-nation framework and within a transnational perspective. In his ambitious attempt to revisit the study of men and masculinities from a critical, intersectional, and transnational standpoint—accounting for the plurality of gender*s*, globalization*s*, and time*s* men are situated into—Hearn thus wishes to further problematize men and their relations to gender power: "Are men changing? Are men really in crisis? …Are men still the (unspoken) norm?" (3). In order to address these concerns, Hearn advocates for "*differentiated, pluralized approaches to gender*" (6), which imply that men can no longer be interpreted as a "posited" category, but rather as a complex interplay of practices and processes, a panoply of the different roles and places men occupy in an increasingly globalized and transnational world.

Emerging from such a broader and radical rethinking of the state of identities in the current global scenario, the third and last instance of crisis, that of the national cinema paradigm, employs a similar vocabulary of diversity and heterogeneity to investigate the impact of transnationalism and globalization on traditional ideas of nationally-bounded cinematic productions and imaginaries. Andrew Higson's article "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema" (2000)—a self-critical revision of the author's seminal essay "The Concept of National Cinema" (1989)—can be considered a crucial starting point to understand the complexity of national cinema as a prismatic notion rather than "a single universally accepted discourse" (36). Conceived as an overview of the debate on national cinema in the first decade of its academic unfolding, Higson's piece deplores the efforts to establish an all-encompassing paradigm of capitalized National Cinema over the recognition of a variety of national cinema*s*. Higson distances himself from his original article, which advocated for a descriptive rather than prescriptive approach to the study of national cinema, and adopted a limited, Eurocentric vision with the ambition to apply it universally. Conversely, Higson's asserts that "the contingent communities that cinema imagines are much more likely to be either local or transnational than national" (66), thus questioning the usefulness of national boundaries for describing specific cultural and economic formations. It is however Higson's contention that the concept of national cinema should not to be ignored, but rather challenged and revised before being mobilized as a category of cinematic inquiry.

Building upon Higson's work, the debate around the epistemological resignification of

national cinema in a global context has expanded towards new frontiers of theoretical conceptualization and methodological application. The concept of "transnational cinema" has especially intervened to resituate the understanding of current dynamics of film production, distribution, circulation, and reception outside the limitations of canonized paradigms of national cinema. In the preface to their edited volume *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives* (2010), Nataša Ďurovičová and Kathleen Newman have championed transnationalism as a pedagogical tool that allows us to understand the recent changes in film economies within a system of scale "broadly conceived as above the level of the national but below the level of the global":

> The term "transnational" has since the late 1980s evolved from signaling the generalized permeability of borders to the current usage in which it has taken on, as well, what had been previously meant by the adjective "international." In contradistinction to "global," a concept bound up with the philosophical category of totality, and in contrast to "international," predicated on political systems in a latent relationship of parity, as signaled by the prefix "inter-," the intermediate and open term "transnational" acknowledges the persistent agency of the state, in a varying but fundamentally legitimizing relationship to the scale of "the nation." At the same time, the prefix "trans-" implies relations of unevenness and mobility. It is this relative openness to modalities of geopolitical forms, social relations and especially to the variant scale on which relations in film history have occurred that gives this key term its dynamic force, and its utility as a frame for hypotheses about emergent forms. (2010, ix-x)

Within such a frame, the concept of national cinema is however not completely dismissed but rather regenerated. It is no longer the cinema produced solely within the cartographical borders of a recognized nation-state and watched by a geographically contained audience that constitutes a national cinema. The growing scholarship on small national and subnational cinemas, led by such scholars as Mette Hjort (1996, 2005) and Duncan Petrie (2000, 2007), has posited indeed these geopolitical entities and film industries as viable models of national cinemas that function as political projects by employing transnational strategies of filmmaking and industrial development (Ďurovičová and Newman, xi). In response to the crisis of out-dated nation-state-bound paradigms, film studies scholars have therefore intervened to outline these strategies, focusing on the "makeover" of national cinema, rather than on its suppression.

A relevant contribution in this sense is offered by Jerry White's article "National Belonging, Renewing the Concept of National Cinema for a Global Culture" (2004). Herein, White humorously but aptly argues that "a national cinema is very much like pornography; most

film scholars know it when they see it, but most also hesitate to provide a precise definition" (211). White proposes to disentangle national cinema from its historical affiliation to nation-state structures and concerns, and rather advocates for a more flexible and composite notion of what can constitute a national cinema in terms of film practices, locations, and audiences. Promoting the sense of belonging over the notion of identity—a gesture that reflects the instability of the notion as discussed above—White is able to circumnavigate the limitations of national cinema as tied to cartographical configurations of the nation-state and to narratives solely focused on explicit national issues. He advocates for "potentially viable locations" of research such as Quebec, Scotland, Chechnya, and Kurdistan, which may differ in size and scope, but all partake into the same sense of belonging to a given national community. Furthermore, he extends his inquiry to complex case studies such as Aboriginal and Yiddish cinema, as examples of geographically disperse but nonetheless feasible forms of national cinema spread across multiple countries and communities. In an increasingly globalized scenario informed by the transnational circulation of people, capital, and information, to limit the reach of national cinema to the geopolitical perimeters of linear mapping and modern nation-states is no longer sustainable. The concept of national belonging thus allows us to move beyond patterns of cinematic "folklore" and traditional theories of national cinema as a "set of formal and thematic concerns" (216)—finding in subnational contexts, ethnic minorities, and diasporic communities the crucial players in the reconfiguration of the national and its cinematic representations, circulations, and receptions.

Whereas White's piece proceeds to broaden the national cinema framework without questioning the validity of the concept itself, but rather its applications, Korean scholar JungBong Choi opens his provocative article "National Cinema: An Anachronistic Delirium?" (2011) by wondering if a national cinema even existed anymore. Choi embarks in a quest to reinstate the methodological effectiveness of the national cinema concept by producing a set of questions that attempts to "repurpose" such a notion (174). The pivotal one concerns the possibility for the transnational to actually "supplant" the national. Choi concludes however by stressing the "[l]asting relevance of National Cinema as a paradigm for engaging with the transnational and the global" (189). Transnationalism thus emerges from Choi's writing as a complementary tool to the study of national cinema—a position that emphasizes the dialogue rather than the antagonism between the two notions, and acknowledges the usefulness of both

concepts to rethink global dynamics of film circulation and production across and within national borders. Such a dialogic approach to the interplay of national and transnational methodologies is taken up once again by Choi in his following article "On Transnational-Korean Cinematrix" (2012), wherein the author expands on the considerations of his previous piece by resuming a productive collaboration between the national and the transnational framework. Resorting to a set of scientific metaphors, Choi "conceptualize[s] transnational as an enzyme that prompts the organizational metabolism of the national" (3). In order to further unpack this osmotic relationship between the national as a conglomerate of different applications, and the transnational as their "connective tissue," Choi coins the term "cinematrix"—a hybrid concept that allows the regrouping of the multidisciplinary aspects left aside by the incomplete concept of transnational cinema. The alleged need of the national to be replaced by the transnational in global times and spaces is dismissed and revisited: the national is reconsidered not *against* but *through* the transnational, and the transnational is retroactively evaluated for "its analytic efficacy to rethink the national" (16). Choi's employment of the "cinematrix" as a biological and cinematic metaphor that aims to "dismantle the mythic integrity of the national and cinema" (16), thus comes full circle with the notion of the "mosaic" this dissertation departs from. It is therefore in the same vein that this project aspires to bring the three instances of crisis examined above, and their related fields of study, into conversation with one another, in a quest for interdisciplinary convergence that is both theoretically and methodologically rooted.

Methodological Layout

In his talk "La langue, l'état, et le réel: quelques considérations fondamentales pour une comparaison des cinémas nationaux québécois et catalan,"[4] delivered at Université de Montréal (UdeM) in January 2015, Jerry White introduced the comparative study of national cinemas in Quebec and Catalonia by stressing the structural differences of the two examined case studies in terms of historical, cultural and social development, but advancing also the possibility to draw an "instinctual comparison" between them. The methodological layout of this dissertation builds upon a likewise "instinctual" recognition of similarities in the infrastructural developments, representational patterns, and articulations of gender and national identities in the cinemas of

[4] "The language, the state, the real: some crucial thoughts for a comparative study of Quebec and Catalan national cinemas." (Author's translation)

Quebec, Scotland, and Flanders. My purpose is to employ a comparative approach that looks at how the three case studies display such similarities and respond to the overarching research questions of this project, while articulating at the same time a distinct and locally specific cinematic vernacular. The theoretical issues concerning the renegotiation of gendered and national identities in subnational contexts thus constitute the common ground of inquiry for the relevance of Flemish, Quebec, and Scottish cinemas in a global film economy, but the geopolitical and socio-cultural specificity of each subnational context is emphasized so as to understand the different gendered and national inflections of their industries and imaginaries.

Whereas national identities and critical masculinities function as the conceptual pillars of this dissertation, the cinematic productions and cultural representations of Flanders, Quebec, and Scotland over the past two decades represent the main object of textual and infrastructural analysis. In order to ensure the feasibility of the project, as well as its rationale, the corpus of films analyzed in each chapter is circumscribed to feature films produced in the 2000s. The choice of feature films as the privileged focus of analysis does not imply the erasure of other forms of media production and moving images from the scope of this research, but it is rather dictated by the accessibility and availability of sources as well as by the coherence of their organization. Furthermore, the chronological delineation of the project is motivated not only by an analogous concern with practicality, but also by reasons of academic and historical development. As outlined in the theoretical section of this Introduction, the revision of theories and practices of national, cultural, and gendered identities flourished across several academic fields in the late 1980s and 1990s, prompting the reconceptualization of univocal paradigms of gender, nationhood, and subjectivity in light of global and transnational changes. In the same years, major political turns occurred in the subnational contexts examined within this dissertation. The second referendary defeat of Quebec's sovereignty in 1995, the success of Scotland's devolution referendum in 1997, and the establishment of Belgium as a system of constitutional regions in the mid-1990s epitomized the persistence of self-determination thrusts and the position of subnational entities within a larger global order, boosting the consolidation of their local film industries and reshaping their cinematic imaginaries. Such an historical convergence of academic and political changes allows us to locate in the last two decades of their cinematic production an ideal terrain to test the relevance of subnational contexts for the renegotiation of national and gendered dynamics in the globalized era.

As this dissertation looks at Flemish, Scottish, and Quebec cinemas from the perspective of their film productions and imaginaries, the three case studies will be observed through the methodological lenses of production history, film, and cultural analysis. Textual analysis will be employed to highlight the presence of multiple forms of masculinities in the cinematic imaginary of these countries, and to challenge the contrived ideas of manhood that are associated with traditional understandings of national identity. The critical construction and deconstruction of the "image of man" via masculine as well as feminine and hybrid bodies will be interrogated in relation to issues of national and sexual anxiety, and the interplay of "hegemonic" and "marginalized" practices of masculinities will be scrutinized so as to reflect on the composite nature of gendered and national representations in subnational cinemas. As I will further specify in the introduction to each chapter, my reading of the chosen films will be particular and symptomatic in nature. The chosen corpus has been selected for its felicitous position at the crossroad of international circulation and local success, but also for its explicit engagement with the key concerns of this dissertation in terms of gendered configurations and socio-political relevance. It is however not exhaustive in its reach, in a similar vain to this project as a whole. These films constitute in fact a selected body of work that display a productive engagement with the intertwined instances of crisis this dissertation is theoretically informed by, and my analysis is geared towards emphasizing the field of possibilities that such chosen texts can originate in the dialogue between gendered and national discourses in subnational contexts.

Since my work is structured around representational but also infrastructural concerns, textual and cultural analyses need to be complemented with the examination of the production strategies and industrial developments of the analyzed subnational film industries. Production history will serve to understand when these industries emerged, under which circumstances, and with the support of which funding structures and institutions. Furthermore, the fieldwork I conducted in the three examined contexts will offer an insight into specific dynamics of film making and financing that reflects the rationale and concerns of local film scholars, practitioners, and film industry professionals. By offering an overview of the historical and infrastructural trajectories of subnational film industries from local limitations to national and transnational expansion, this dissertation aims to situate these cinemas and their scholarly examination into a broader map of global film economies, but also to gauge their self-sustenance and endurance on a long-term scale. Moreover, the interest in the institutional and financial aspect of subnational

cinemas is not disjoined from the core engagement of this research with the renegotiation of gendered and national identities. The hybrid existence of subnational film industries and funding infrastructures at the intersection of regional, national, and transnational drives can provide in fact yet another possibility to unpack the relationship between different configurations of masculinities, genders, and forms of national identifications examined in this dissertation as a whole.

Chapter Breakdown

Chapter 1, "Split Screens/Split Subjects," focuses on the representation of plurinational and accented masculinities in current Flemish cinema. The concept of the "split" is adopted as the guiding principle of the chapter in industrial as well as in representational terms. On the one hand, the chapter examines the recent and successful emergence of funding infrastructures and institutions that have allowed the consolidation of a properly defined Flemish film industry in the 2000s. On the other hand, the chapter scrutinizes the heterogeneous forms of masculinities—domestic, migrant, and diasporic—that abound in current Flemish films as a counterpart to the hybridity of Flanders—a regional entity with federal status and national scope at the linguistic and territorial level, but also cross-regional and transnational reach at the cinematic one. The goal of the chapter is twofold. First, it aims to locate Flanders' cinematic complexity within Mette Hjort's small nation/global cinema framework, using its regional-global qualities as an apt substitute to the nation-state. Second, it proposes to understand the composite nature of masculinities onscreen as a mirror to the heterogeneity of Flemish cinema and its geopolitical position in Europe as well as in the world.

Chapter 2, "Scotsmen Revisited," discusses how tropes of hard masculinity and geographies of gender are reconfigured in the specific momentum of Scotland's pre-referendary history (that is in the years preceding the 2014 referendum on independence). Similarly to the analysis of Flemish cinema in Chapter 1, this chapter departs from an overview of the scholarly debates on Scottish cinema—that is from its consolidation as a national industry in the mid-1990s, to its decline in the early 2000s, and its potential repurposing as a transnational phenomenon in recent times. Stemming from this infrastructural analysis and its relationship to a specifically masculinized imaginary, the chapter proceeds to examine two examples of Scottish pre-referendary films, *Filth* and *Under the Skin*, so as to determine how performances of gender

associated with national self-determination can be challenged in the crucial years of Scotland's quest for independence.

Chapter 3, "In the Name of the Mother," analyzes the work of contemporary filmmakers Xavier Dolan and Léa Pool and their alternative take on the Oedipal structures of Quebec cinema through the trope of the "family-nation allegory." Contextualized within the broader history of gender and nationhood in the province—particularly the masculinization of the national project during the Quiet Revolution, and the crisis of national manhood in the aftermath of it—the film corpus analyzed in this chapter aims to reimagine Quebec's national master narrative from a feminine and queer perspective. Chapter 3 operates a methodological shift from the previous two chapters. Accounts of production history and local-global film dynamics are integrated in the examination of the chosen films but they do not take over an entire section as in the Flemish and Scottish case, mostly due to the fairly recent emergence of Flemish and Scottish subnational cinemas vis-à-vis the longer and well-documented history of Quebec cinema in these respects (Marshall 2001).

Each chapter looks at a significant moment in the history of each case study and partakes in the same concerns around the renegotiation of striving masculinities and national identities. Those same concerns are however framed within the specificity of each subnational context's historical, geopolitical, and cinematic landscapes, and take upon different aspects of the same broader research questions addressed in this dissertation. The central concepts at play in my work—critical masculinities and national identities—thus need to be particularly clarified in relation to their distinct use in the three chapters. In the Flemish case of Chapter 1, the identitary struggles of both plurinational and accented masculinities are looked at as embodiments of the convergence of regional, national, and global issues in Flemish film industry and imaginary. In the Scottish case of Chapter 2, the rethinking of masculinity via cross-gender performativity highlights the effects of national instability on the understanding of Scottish manhood in the post-devolutionary and pre-referendary moments of the country's history. In Chapter 3, the peculiarity of Quebec's political and gender history focuses specifically on white, Francophone, heteronormative masculinities as the repository of Quebec's national and identity crisis. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to deconstruct such privileged narratives of critical masculinities in Quebec cinema through the analysis of alternative family structures and figures that stand in contrast with them. One of the main purposes of this final chapter is therefore to

envision and foster the relocation of female and queer subjectivities into Quebec's cinematic and national imaginary. Chapter 3 thus represents the point of arrival of a dissertation that moves from the examination of composite patterns of masculinities and their reconfigurations in subnational contexts, to eventually advance the restructuring of nation-building processes around hybrid and decentered forms of gendered subjectivities.

CHAPTER 1

Split Screens/Split Subjects:
Plurinational and Accented Masculinities in Current Flemish Cinema

Fig. 1.1: Split Screens (Screenshot, *Broeders*)

Introduction

Upon my arrival in Flanders in the summer of 2015, a giant poster of *Jurassic World* (Colin Trevorrow, 2015) towering over the highway from the Charleroi Airport to the Brussels-South railway station constituted the first cinematic encounter in a research visit aimed to collect data on the interplay of male representations and national cultural issues in current Flemish cinema. In contrast with the iconic configuration of conflicted masculinity portrayed in Michaël R. Roskam's Oscar-nominated debut *Rundskop/Bullhead* (2011)—one of the most internationally well-known Flemish features to date—the image of former Navy veteran Owen Grady (Chris Pratt) riding a motorcycle in the midst of a pack of raptors stood as a reminder of the stereotypical configuration of heroic manhood in US blockbusters, as well as of the homogenization of global film markets under the influence of Hollywood's cultural imperialism. A few days later, the discovery of *Rundskop*'s Flemish star Matthias Schoenaerts watching over the tourists-crowded city centre of Ghent from the theatrical poster of Alan Rickman's *A Little Chaos* (2014) caught me by surprise: the large-scale promotion of a film that did not even make it to the first one hundred entries of the 2015 Belgian box office[5] seemed odd at first glance, and

[5] "Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Box Office 2015," *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/intl/belgium/yearly/?yr=2015&p=.htm Accessed 13 Jan. 2016.

quite immediately justified by the exploitation of Schoenaerts' international stardom in the actor's country of origin. Although indicative of the usually scattered film offering of the summer season, the stark contrast between the two images in terms of industry (the box-office hit on the one side, the arthouse period piece on the other) and male representation (the rugged Hollywood hero vis-à-vis the sensitive European artist) set the tone of the intricate web of tensions informing the present state of Flemish cinema. Confronted with the global hegemony of Hollywood's mainstream products over the specificity of local film markets worldwide, the recent expansion of Flemish film industry as a regional phenomenon acquiring international visibility—anecdotally symbolized here by the recognisability of Schoenaerts' persona *in loco* and abroad—demands indeed a more in depth investigation of the cinematic instances that converge into the definition of Flemish cinema as a challenge to traditional understandings of national cinema, identity, and gender paradigms.

What makes Flemish cinema a particularly compelling example of the relationship between onscreen nationhood and manhood in the globalized era? As outlined in the Introduction of this dissertation, the revision of the national cinema framework due to the emergence of global and transnational dynamics of film production and circulation have paved the way for the assessment of small national cinemas as subjects of growing academic interest in film studies scholarship from the past two decade onward. Led by the international revival of Nordic film markets in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and more specifically by Mette Hjort's insightful examination of New Danish Cinema as one of the "various promising alternatives to globalization Hollywood-style" (2005, 9), the small nation/global cinema framework established by the author has provided a blueprint for the study of local-global drives in "minor" national contexts. It has also been partially extended beyond the realm of nation-statehood when retroactively applied to the work of such scholars as Bill Marshall and Duncan Petrie, who envisioned the global potentials for Quebec and Scottish cinema in the final chapter of their books *Quebec National Cinema* (2001) and *Screening Scotland* (2000)—which I will engage with more extensively in Chapter 2 and 3 of this dissertation.

In a similar vein, the decline of nation-state supremacy in the upheaval of transnational migrations, diasporic circulations, and border-crossing movements has uncovered the limitations of studies of men and masculinities circumscribed to single nations or societal contexts, as well as the necessity to problematize the spread of hegemonic models of male dominance on a

homogeneous global scale—thus fostering the emergence of diversified approaches to the subject matter connoted in global, transnational, and international terms (Beasley, 2008/2013, Hearn, 2004/2015). R.W. Connell's popularization of the concept of "hegemonic masculinity" for a Western culture (1979/1983) and George L. Mosse's mapping of the "male stereotype" over the nationalist ideologies of modern nation-states (1998) have therefore undergone a continuous revaluation, facing the relocation of masculine bodies and subjectivities in the wake of centrifugal forces of globalization (Connell, 1998), and the need to understand gendered dynamics of power relations on a global rather than solely local scale (Connell, 2005).

The impact of globalization and transnationalism on both fields of film studies and studies of men and masculinities has been and is still at the core of a radical shift in the ways scholars understand cinema and gender beyond, within, and across nations, but both disciplines have expressed their academic concerns in the distinct spaces of their own scholarship. What if a bridge could be established between the two fields? What if the representation of male subjectivities negotiating gendered and national identities could help unveiling the tensions embedded in film imaginaries that travel across geopolitical spaces? And what if subnational entities could constitute a fruitful ground of inquiry in these respects? The potential renegotiation of national belonging for a global cinematic culture is far from being a prerogative of subnational realities only, and the challenges posed to men within the gendered world order—and more narrowly within the specific hierarchies affecting the relations among localized masculinities—can be extensively traced in both Western and non-Western nation-states. However, the peculiar condition of Western subnational entities with film industries handling the multiplicity of regional, national, supra-national, trans-national, local and global dynamics all at once, offers a productive path for the interdisciplinary convergence of film and gender studies research outside the constrictions of the nation-state framework—that is outside the equation of nationhood and statehood under the premises of territorial unity and arbitrary self-determination. In the age of their alleged dissolution, how can the concepts of nationhood and national cinema be rethought within the specific context of subnational entities? And what is the relevance of such entities and of their cinemas in setting the stage for the reconceptualization of critical masculinities as more than just a generic trope of postwar Western culture?

In order to address the plurality of these research questions, I will refer in this chapter to current Flemish cinema as my first case study. The relevance of Flanders lies specifically in the

twofold developments of its film industry and cinematic imaginary from the early 2000s onward. At the level of the former, the consolidation of funding infrastructures on a regional scale and the emergence of a properly defined Flemish film and media industry with national ambitions has allowed scholars to assess the prosperity and growth of Flemish cinema as an international player. At the level of the latter, the abundance of male images in crisis in recent Flemish film productions—both in their domestic and diasporic inflection—points toward a fruitful discussion of the intersection between national assertion and gendered reconfiguration on the subnational screen. Stemming from such an intersection, I will propose in this chapter a range of possible approaches to the renegotiation of multifaceted representations of manhood and non-homogenising national identities in Flemish cinema from both an infrastructural and a representational standpoint.

This chapter will be organized in three main sections. The first section will address the recent implementations of film funding and policy measures in Flanders. The emergence of a successful subnational film industry within an international reach will allow us to identify in Flemish cinema a productive context to rethink monolithic patterns of national cinema in subnational entities. Referring to Mette Hjort's pivotal work on small national cinemas (1996/2005) and Jerry White's notion of national belonging (2004) as crucial theoretical assessments, the reconceptualization of Flemish regional cinema as a national cinema expanding on an international scale will present a counter-argument to Philip Mosley's take on Belgian cinema as a unitary national phenomenon in *Split Screen: Belgian Cinema and Cultural Identity* (2001), and it will also anticipate issues of cultural representation of Flemish identity further explored in the following sections of the chapter.

The second section will tackle questions of Flemish plurinationalism and identitary permeability in relation to the representation of conflicted male subjectivities in two symptomatic case studies: *Rundskop/Bullhead* (Michaël R. Roskam, 2011) and *Welp/Cub* (Jonas Govaerts, 2014). Reappropriating Mosley's notion of the "split" as a productive methodological tool, the examination of these two texts will draw attention to the negotiation of local specificity and international visibility in the films' take on genre and gender, and to the relationship between the complexity of the male characters and the porosity of their geopolitical and ethnolinguistic landscape. The double inscription of both films will be addressed so as to understand the reasons of their circulation and positive reception abroad, as well as the peculiarity of their approach to

Flemish nationalism and Belgian cultural heterogeneity. The theoretical point of conjunction between the second and the third section of the chapter will be the gendered reconfiguration of Michael Keating's notion of "plurinationalism" (2001) and André Lecours' "negotiated sovereignty" (2012). The coexistence of several national identities within the same subnational individual theorized by Keating, and the decentralized framework in support of multiple national communities elaborated by Lecours will serve to unpack the struggle of the male protagonists navigating the uncertainties of their national and gender identification within the specificity of Flemish cinema.

The third section will move from such a conceptual framework to address questions of diasporic and migrant masculinities via the analysis of *Turquaze* (Kadir Balci, 2009) and *Image* (Adil El Arbi and Bilall Fallah, 2014), as representatives of a larger corpus of Flemish films concerned with the self-representation and external perception of male subjectivities in the composite scenario of Turkish diaspora in Flanders (*Mixed Kebab*, 2012; *Trouw met mij/Marry Me*, 2014) and African migration/diaspora in Brussels (*The Invader*, 2011; *Waste Land*, 2014; *Black*, 2015). Hamid Naficy's theory of accented cinema and Gertjan Willems' account of crosscultural film policies in recent Flemish film productions will be employed to situate Flemish cinema beyond the spectrum of domestic regional-national identities, while gendered understandings of diaspora and migrant circulation will intervene to shape the films' reading with respect to the representation of transnational forms of masculinity. This final section will broaden the scope of the chapter towards a more intersectional approach to the relationship between gender, ethnicity, and identity in Flanders' subnational cinema.

The methodological layout of the chapter will be articulated on two levels. A material rather than qualitative analysis of the structural developments of Flemish film industry will be offered in the first section. A symptomatic and particular reading of a selected corpus of films will be performed in the second and third section. Textual analysis will seek to interrogate the critical construction and de-construction of the "image of man" via the masculine body in relation to issues of national and sexual/gender anxiety. Such an inquiry will be pivotal to understand the critical position of the masculine figure within a conflicted cultural and national specific imaginary, but also, and more broadly, within the reconfiguration of gendered patterns in the mutating relationship of the global with the local.

The outcome of the chapter will be twofold. On a broader level, the engagement with the case of contemporary Flemish film industry will be used to present subnational cinemas as productive grounds to rethink, rather than discard, theories and practices of national cinema in the global era. On a narrower level, the analysis of multiple representations of male subjectivities in recent Flemish films will allow us to read the tensions ingrained within the subnational space through the lens of conflicted gendered dynamics. In so doing, the chapter aims to highlight the inefficacy of univocal patterns of cultural and gender identity within the pluralist context of subnational realities and imaginaries. Through the examination of the plurinational and accented forms of masculinity presented herein, and their relation to nationhood, I intend to offer a preliminary outline of the possible ways subnational film industries and imaginaries can challenge the assertion of contrived images of dominant masculinity as symbolic representatives of the nation.

Flemish Cinema Expanded

Concluding his analysis of the Belgian "split screen" by resituating it within the globalization of media markets in 1990s Europe, Philip Mosley exhibited a great deal of scepticism towards the future of national cinema in Belgium, as the lack of communication between Belgian federal regions and the difficulties experienced by European small nations facing Hollywood competition rendered it "difficult to locate a genuinely national cinematic discourse in Belgium" (Mosley 2001, 206). Mosley's approach to the national is however not only limited in the way it circumscribes the scope of national belonging to the schematic display of "local qualities" in the cinema of Belgium-born filmmakers (White 2004, 218), but also in that it ignores the affirmative role of the split as a framework rather than a hurdle to reconceptualise the notion of national cinema for the Belgian context.

In the fifteen years following the publication of Mosley's *Split Screen: Belgian Cinema and Cultural Identities*—to date, the only comprehensive account of Belgian cinema for the English-speaking academic community[6]—the local consolidation and global expansion of small national and subnational film markets allowed for a productive revision rather than dismissal of

[6] Marcelline Block and Jeremi Szaniawski's edited collection *Directory of World Cinema: Belgium* (2013) offers a compendium of contributions on the current state of Belgian film industry and its most representative Walloon and Flemish directors, but does not articulate a comprehensive account of the history and development of Belgian cinemas as a unitary volume.

the national cinema paradigm in film studies scholarship. Hjort's abovementioned *Small Nation, Global Cinema* provided indeed a ground-breaking model for the study of small national and subnational cinemas as emerging players in the upheaval of multiple instances of globalization. Stemming from the analysis of New Danish Cinema as an emblematic case of small national resistance to neoliberal Hollywood-based conceptions of cinematic globalization—thanks to institutions and private agencies supporting the international diffusion of an otherwise localized cinema—Hjort forecasted a wide range of possibilities not only for the cinematic revival of Nordic small nationhood, but also for the relocation of subnational entities in the current scenario of global remapping and film circulation beyond the limited scope of cartographical national borders.

In the specific momentum of its current cinematic development, the potential for Belgium to fill a spot in such a scenario are higher than in Mosley's expectations, but only if the idea of Belgian cinema as a unitary player is dismantled in favour of a more flexible reframing of coexisting, regionalized national cinema*s*. Organized into four semi-autonomous federal communities—Dutch-speaking Flanders in the North, French-speaking Wallonia in the South, German-speaking municipalities on the Eastern border of Wallonia, and Brussels as the bilingual capital embedded in the Flemish territory—Belgium functions according to an analogous partition in cinematic terms as well. With the emergence of two regional film funds—Wallimage in Wallonia (extended in 2009 to the Region of Brussels Capital under the name of Wallimage/Bruxellimage) and the Flanders Audiovisual Fund - Vlaams Audiovisueel Fonds (VAF) in Flanders—Belgian cinema consolidated in the 2000s as a bipartite entity, crystallized into two strands of film production regularly announced before a film's opening credits: "Belgian cinema made in Wallonia and Region of Brussels Capital" and "Belgian cinema made in Flanders". Although regrouped under the shared national label of "Belgian cinema" and frequently participating in cross-regional co-productions, Francophone and Flemish cinema have followed separate paths, acquiring the scope and dimensions of regional-national industries within a transnational and global reach.

As Mosley already noticed in *Split Screen*, the emergence of an audiovisual agenda shaped on the model of pan-European and transnational media markets weakened the concept of national identity for a unitary Belgian cinema, but not necessarily for the regional communities of Wallonia and Flanders, which found in the autonomy of economic administration and

localized film infrastructures the opportunity to enforce the geo-cultural and ethnolinguistic specificity of their respective cinematic imaginaries. As Jamie Steele further argued in his recent account of Francophone Belgian Cinema as a case of "transnational-regional cinema" (2015), the bifurcation of Belgian cinema into two linguistically distinct streams of film production not only challenges the idea of national cinema for the Belgian context, but brings the region forward as an alternative to the nation, or rather as a way to break down the nation into smaller units of analysis (2015, 1-2). Whereas in the case of Francophone Belgian cinema the region as a linguistic rather than territorial notion is designated as the ideal partner to cinematic transnationalism—especially given the relationship with non-domestic markets such as the French one (Steele 2015)—in that of Flanders, where Flemish community and territory coincide, the region can function more aptly as an alternative to the small-nation in relation to the global, thus offering a platform for the application of Hjort's framework to subnational other than strictly nation-state entities.

The official passage from the centralized system of film subsidy in force in the 1960s and 1970s, to the subnational film funding policies administered by Belgium's federal regions in the 1990s can be identified as one of the preliminary factors leading to the self-sustainability of Flemish cinema, although not quite the crucial one. Emerging from decades of stagnating film productions and literary adaptations, Flanders launched in 1994 the initiative for the creation of a Flemish Audiovisual Center and a Film Flanders Fund on the example of its Francophone counterpart (Mosley 2001, 143-149), but it is only from the early 2000s onward that radical changes in the infrastructures of Flemish cinema allowed for the emergence of a regional cinema that functions as a national one, simultaneously extending beyond the limits of its domestic market. Officially established in 1999 but operative only from 2002 and undergoing periodic renegotiations (in 2003-2007, 2007-2010, and more recently 2010-2015), VAF boosted the production of Flemish films both locally and internationally, leaving however ample margins for further improvement (Engelen and Van de Winkel 2010). A cultural fund interested in promoting Flemish talents and resources, VAF benefited from the introduction of the economic fund Screen Flanders in 2012 and from the 2015 revision of the Belgian tax shelter system with increased incentives to European and international co-productions—two additional measures that granted Flemish cinema the proportions of a proper film industry rather than just a peripheral and ephemeral phenomenon.

With sixty-four projects funded by Screen Flanders between 2012 and 2015 in the fiction, animation, and documentary sectors;[7] two nomination for Best Foreign Film at the Academy Awards over the past five years (*Rundskop* in 2011, and Felix Van Groeningen's *The Broken Circle Breakdown* in 2013);[8] the dissemination of Flemish films travelling worldwide through the film festival circuit,[9] and Hollywood's growing interest in Flemish productions,[10] Flemish cinema is undergoing a successful transition towards a brighter future than the one envisioned by Engelen and Vande Winkel in their account of Flanders' cinematic development in the first decade of the 2000s (2010). The efforts demanded by the authors to keep Flemish cinema afloat in the years following "anticipated government cutbacks and budget reductions" (2010, 58) have been in fact consolidated by Flanders' interest in the expansion of its own film and media market, not only as a way to attract investments in the region, but also to preserve local cultural heritage and export it abroad, to the extent that Flemish cinema can no longer be addressed as merely "the other Belgian cinema" (Masson and Vanden Abele 2009), but rather as a self-sufficient, prosperous entity.

Introducing a set of interviews with emerging Flemish filmmakers in the years preceding the assertion of a so-called Flemish New Wave (Simonyi and Verheul 2014), Alex Masson and Staf Vanden Abele employed the concept of "l'autre cinéma belge" to analyze the reception of Belgian cinema from a French perspective. Departing from the generalized assumption of Francophone film production as the only internationally renowned stream of Belgian cinema, their preface advocated for the existence of a vibrant cinematic imaginary rooted in Flanders, which is "other" not by virtue of its marginality, but for the complexity of its engagement with matters of cultural identity and representation:

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[7] Data collected in conversation with Jan Roekens, Head Production of Screen Flanders. Brussels, June 2015.

[8] Over the fifteen films submitted by Belgium to the Academy in the 2000s, nine were Flemish and three made it to the final cut for the Best Foreign Film Award.

[9] Adil El Arbi and Bilall Fallah's *Black* (2015), and Robin Pront's *D'Ardennen/The Ardennes* (2015) are two of the recent and most representative examples of the global circulation of Flemish cinema. Both films were screened in the Discovery section at the Toronto Film Festival in September 2015 (where *Black* received the Dropbox Discovery Award) and at the Film Fest in Ghent, Belgium in October 2015 (where *Black* was given the Audience Award). *The Ardennes* was also presented at the Chicago International Film Festival (15-29 October) and in the Official Competition at the European Film Festival in Les Arcs, France (12-19 December), while Black was included in the line-up of the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival (13-29 November).

[10] Signs of the consolidation of recent Flemish cinema as a potentially global player can be found in the TV series *Containment* (created by Julie Plec and David Nutter, 2016) based on the Flemish show *Cordon* (created by Carl Joos, 2014), as well as in the migration of such directors as Erik Van Looy, Michäel R. Roskam, Robin Pront, and Felix Van Groeningen to Hollywood.

> Un cinéma à la fois multiple et unique lorsque ces films se retrouvent autour d'une question centrale: "Comment trouver sa place dans le monde?", manière moderne de formuler le fameux "Qui sommes-nous? D'où venons-nous? Où allons-nous?" des plus légitime dans un pays scindé en deux communautés.[11]

Although carrying the risk of reducing it to a merely folkloristic phenomenon ("L'Autre Cinéma Belge" is also the title of a series of screenings organized by Masson in Strasburg to "discover the diversity of Flemish film production"),[12] Masson and Vanden Abele's piece raises relevant questions regarding the role of Flemish cinema as a viable option to rethink national cinema in Belgium. Flourishing on both a local and a global scale, Flanders' film industry provides indeed an interesting case study for the extension of Hjort's small nation/global cinema framework beyond the scope of nation-statehood, and more broadly for the renegotiation of the national cinema paradigm within a subnational entity. More than a question of inferiority in respect to its Francophone counterpart, the "otherness" of Flemish cinema can be therefore reappropriated in positive terms, so as to underline the capacity of Flemish film industry to assert the regional-national quality of its cinema in dialogue with, rather than in contrast to, the supranational structures of European cinema,[13] the national pulls of Belgian cinema, and the transnational flows of production and circulation of the current cinematic scenario.

Jerry White's understanding of national belonging offers an effective alternative to the limitations of nation-state citizenship and geographically contiguous ideas of national identity in the study of national cinema "for a global culture" (2004, 225). Such a notion is particularly crucial to comprehend how Flemish cinema can operate convincingly as a national cinema regardless of its lack of nation-state recognition. It also allows us to understand how its national

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[11] "A cinema that is at the same time multifaceted and unique, as these films converge around the same central question: 'How can we find our place in the world?'—a modern way to reformulate the famous interrogatives: 'Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going?' even more relevant in the context of a country divided into two communities." (Author's translation)

[12] Fabien Lemercier, "L'autre cinema Belge in vitrine a Strasburg," 24 March 2017, http://cineuropa.org/nw.aspx?t=newsdetail&l=fr&did=288287. Accessed 29 Nov. 2017.

[13] As Tim Bergfelder has pointed out in his article "National, transnational or supranational cinema? Rethinking European film studies" (2005), the analysis of the supranational impact of Europe over the study of "discrete national cinemas" is a necessary move for European Film Studies (EFS) to understand how national specificity and identity are negotiated in the relation between European countries, diasporic/migrant movements, and the supranational community of the EU. Rather than addressing the question from the homogenizing, Western perspective of European Art Cinema (EAC), Bergfelder advocates for a transnational understanding of European cinema not as a sum of distinct national cinemas, but rather as a phenomenon of in-betweenness, dispersal and re-centering. Moving away from fixed conceptions of national identity, Bergfelder makes a case for European Cinema as a matter of dislocation, liminality, migration and diasporic modes of imagination that can be applied to the context of Belgian cinemas as well.

framework functions to a great degree of flexibility, moving across stages of regional development, national consolidation, and global reception. Approached from both the perspectives of its film production and cultural imaginary, Flemish cinema works in fact on two intertwined levels: on the one hand it asserts the ethnolinguistic and territorial definition of Flanders' (sub)national community in Andersonian terms (that is sovereign, limited, imagined); on the other it complicates the mono-nationalist nature of such a community by confronting it with the heterogeneity of its ethno-cultural composition—a result of blurred inter-regional borders, cross-cultural influence of migrant and diasporic movements (Willems and Smets 2013), and disruption of essentialist notions of nationhood in the wake of globalization.

The cinematic renegotiation of Flemish identity thus serves both purposes of cultural preservation and re-articulation of national belonging, and allows us to apply Hjort's major reconceptualization of cinematic small nationhood to the even narrower context of contemporary subnational cinemas facing issues of national identity and international recognition. Employing Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of "minor literature" in her early article "Danish Cinema and the Politics of Recognition" (1996), Hjort defines the positioning of small national cinemas at the conflation of national and international interests. At the core of her analysis is the way in which local filmmakers can reach out to wider audiences without losing the specificity of their own national culture, that is by "leveraging" the opaque, locally grounded nature of their film elements with more translatable features that can also appeal to non-domestic viewers (1996, 528-531). The article thus anticipates the theoretical bulk of *Small Nation, Global Cinema* almost a decade before its publication, using the case of Danish cinema to test the capacity of small national cinemas to confront the hegemonic forces of US cultural imperialism, and the possibility for national cultural identity to be safeguarded but also reshaped so as to circulate outside the geographical borders of the small nation-state:

> The link between minor cinema and small-nation status imposes a certain task on the film industry – that of contributing to an ever-urgent project of national memory and validation aimed at resisting the various amnesias that a sustained exposure to global English and the cultures of Hollywood entails. Minor cinema is understood at some level as appealing to national but also international audiences on account of the way in which it articulates or rearticulates the core understandings, experiences, and expressions that are the basis for a deep sense of national belonging. In the context of small-nation cinema, national identity is necessarily on the agenda, even, or perhaps especially, in an era of globalization that complicates the once taken-for-granted equivalences of nation and state. (2005, 116-117)

Hjort's reference to national memory is particularly compelling with respect to the transition from a small national to a subnational context—and more specifically to the Flemish case considered herein—since the urgency to preserve national cultural consciousness under conditions of national instability is at the core of Belgium's fragmented cinematic experience.

In his chapter "Anxiety, Memory and Place in Belgian Cinema" (2002), Philip Mosley resumed the issue of destabilized national unity already tackled in *Split Screen* to discuss how multiple anxieties around the elusive nature of Belgian national condition have affected the representation of collective historical memories in Belgian films. Dealing with instances of cross-regional circulation and socio-cultural memory in the aftermath of Belgium's regionalization (1970s-1980s) and then federalization (1990s), Mosley departed from the weakened position of the Belgian unitary state to investigate the negotiation of spaces and identities in narratives that travel across borders. Although still moving within the perimeter of "Belgian" cinema in the decades preceding its definitive partition into separate units, Mosley's contribution levels the ground for further inquiries on national cultural anxieties as they manifest in the subnational context of Flemish cinema.

So far, the question of Flemish multifaceted positionality has been addressed mostly at the level of its film industry, but how can we move towards a gendered understanding of the very anxieties that Mosley sees at the core of Belgium's cinematic fragmentation? That is, how can we discuss the impact of such a prismatic and conflicted perception of national identity over the representation of male subjectivities, especially in contexts such as Flanders, lacking nation-state recognition? In the introduction to her book *Masculinity and Nationhood, 1830-1910: Constructions of Identity and Citizenship in Belgium*, Josephine Hoegaerts addresses the creation of symbolic representations of masculinity in conjunction with the rise of modern nations to comment upon the lack of historical inquiries of manhood in the study of the Belgian nation-state:

> The absence of a political, national perspective on the history of Belgian masculinity or, conversely, of a gendered history of citizenship is all the more surprising as the country was so explicitly part of the process of modern nation-building in the nineteenth century. […] In fact, the nation is one of the earliest companions of masculinity in its histories. (2014, 3)

As the intrinsic modernity of the image of man discussed by Mosse (1996) and the sociological patterns of hegemonic masculinity traced by Connell in Western culture (1995) are employed by Hoegaerts to highlight the need for a national approach to masculinity in the outset of Belgian nationhood, the application of such concepts to the specificity of Belgium's subnational partitions in present times appears less effective. The consequences of the fourth state reform (1993)[14] and the fragmentation of Belgium into semi-autonomous federal regions stimulates indeed a revision of unitary concepts of nationhood, and therefore of gender identity for a national Belgian culture. Whereas in Hoegaerts' book the theorization of a "common language of masculinity" spoken within the institutions of the Belgian state is made possible by the modern mapping of manhood and nationhood over one another (2014, 5), the fading relevance of nation-statehood in the globalized world complicates the discourse around Belgium's subnational realities, carving out space for a polyphony of bodies and subjectivities rather than for a unitary language of manhood to exist.

Stemming from such a multifaceted understanding of subnational masculinities, the second section of this chapter will lay the ground for the examination of the troubled ties between nationhood and manhood in the current state of Flemish film imaginary, referring to *Rundskop* and *Welp* as particularly compelling examples. On an infrastructural level both films demonstrate in fact the success and coherence of Flemish cinema as a national industry. On a cultural and textual level they offer the opportunity to read into issues of Flemish mono- and pluri-nationalism, by staging the effects of traumatic past events and confusing dynamics of gender and nationhood on the (de)sexualized, animalized body of their male protagonists. In the following section both texts will be therefore analyzed from such a double perspective. As products of a national film industry and imaginary that travel widely, their position in the midst of subnational and global recognition will allow us to test the theoretical layout addressed in the current section of the chapter. As peculiar representations of male subjectivities struggling with multiple identities at once, they will offer a potential answer to our central question, that is how masculinities can be understood and reconfigured in the cinematic context of not fully fledged nation-states.

[14] The fourth state reform signalled the official consolidation of Belgium as a fully-fledged federal state. This achievement came as part of a state reform process started in 1970 with the first revision of the Belgian constitution and still ongoing with more autonomy granted to Belgium's federal communities in 2012.

Blurred Identities and Plurinational Masculinities in *Rundskop* and *Welp*

Selected to represent Belgium in the competition for Best Foreign Film at the 84th Academy Awards ten years after Dominique Deruddere's *Iedereen beroemd! - Everybody's Famous!* (2000), *Rundskop* called international attention to the re-birth of Flemish cinema, granting visibility to a growing film industry in Flanders as well as to the career of director Michaël R. Roskam and actor Matthias Schoenaerts, both successfully expatriated to Hollywood in the following years. Roskam's feature positioned in the top twenty of the highest grossing Belgian films of 2011 with $4,093,863 earned on the domestic market[15] and $362,607 on the international one (partly in the US and partly in UK and France),[16] over an estimated budget of €2,000,000. Roskam's debut thus followed in the steps of Nic Balthazar's *Ben X* (2007), Erik Van Looy's *Loft* (2008), and Felix Van Groeningen's *De helaasheid der dingen/The Misfortunates,* (2009), asserting the possibility for films "Made in Flanders" to take a slice of the local Belgian market but also to export "Flemishness" abroad and gain wider recognition.

Albeit requiring a high coefficient of geographical and linguistic competence for a non-domestic audience to appreciate the subtler nuances of its take on Belgian diversity, *Rundskop* validates the efficacy of Hjort's abovementioned categories of "opacity" and "translatability" by attracting local viewers with the specificity of its cultural setting, and appealing to foreign spectators with its compliance to multiple genre conventions.[17] Conceived and marketed abroad as a crime drama that evolves into personal tragedy, *Rundskop* departs from the depiction of an illegal trade of beef hormones in rural Flanders to eventually focus on the individual trajectory of a dysfunctional male subject, Jacky Vanmarsenille (Matthias Schoenaerts), a young cattle farmer participating in the hormone traffic while dealing at the same time with the abrupt surfacing of painful memories from his childhood.

Jacky's trauma is unveiled in a flashback that signals the transition from the crime plot to the protagonist's tragic path one-third into the film, explaining the subject's split into conflicting identities, gendered anxieties, and national resentment. Caught spying on a gang of Francophone peers living on the other side of the linguistic border, preadolescent Jacky is beaten and

[15] "Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Box Office 2011," *Box Office Mojo*. http://www.boxofficemojo.com/intl/belgium/yearly/?yr=2011&p=.htm. Accessed 4 Nov. 2015.
[16] "Box office/business for *Bullhead* (2011)," *Internet Movie Database*. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1821593/business?ref_=tt_dt_bus Accessed 4 Nov. 2015.
[17] Although *Rundskop* will be read primarily as a crime drama in this section, Jozefien Van Beek's analysis of the film as a Flemish reappropriation of tropes from the noir and western genres provides further evidences of its genre-based appeal (Van Beek 2011).

emasculated by the group's leader, a disturbed teenager who crushes his testicles with a rock in a gruesome act of unjustified revenge. Dismissed as an "incident" by the Francophone community in order to protect the perpetrator—the son of an influent member of the Walloon hormone mafia—the event establishes a hierarchy of power that functions as a blueprint for the overarching structure of the film, which cuts across binaries of sexual and cultural behaviour to disclose issues of gender uncertainty, troubled national identity, and territorial permeability in the Belgian context.

Appropriating the "split" as its defining principle and then problematizing it, *Rundskop* can be read indeed as a film about osmotic borders and their crossing—either in physical or territorial terms. While the very opening shot aims to enforce the mystery upon Jacky's story, inserting his narrating voice over a hazed and unspecified segment of rural landscape, the remainder of the film proceeds to establish precise geographical coordinates, using bilingual intertitles to design a map of the characters' movement across the volatile internal borders of Belgium. From the countryside of Limburg in the Eastern part of Flanders (and the municipality of Heers where Jacky's family lives), to the port town of Zebrugge in West-Flanders, back to Waremme and Liege in Wallonia, the transience of the characters is justified on the extra-diegetic level by the conditions of the film's production,[18] and on the diegetic one by the film's interest in commenting upon the tensions of Belgium's internal ethnoscape.[19]

Emphasizing the fragile status of geographical and gendered borders by working on the registers of humorous parody and sentimental tragedy, *Rundskop* offers a commentary on the inadequacy of mono-nationalist ideologies in a subnational space where nationalism appears as a silent but omnipresent issue. Emerged in the nineteenth century as an extension of Belgian nationalism, the Flemish Movement constituted the first bulk of Flemish subnationalism, advocating for the recognition of Flemish cultural heritage and ethnolinguistic specificity as

[18] Produced by Bart Van Langendonck's Brussels-based company Savage Film in collaboration with Eyeworks, Artémis Productions, and Waterland Film, *Rundskop* also benefits from the conjoined support of Flemish (VAF and Flanders Image), Dutch (*Het Nederlands* Fonds Voor de Film) and Belgian Francophone (*Centre du Cinéma et de l'Audiovisuel* de la *Communauté française de Belgique, Wallonia and Region of Brussels Capital*) film funding, thus motivating the heterogeneity of the film settings in financial other than in solely narrative terms. (*Bullhead Press Book*, http://www.flandersimage.com/frontend/files/movies/B/991/docs/bBdYEjkqZT.pdf. Accessed 29 Nov. 2017)

[19] "A term used to get away from the idea that group identities necessarily imply that cultures need to be seen as spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or ethnically homogeneous forms" (1996, 182), Appadurai's notion of "ethnoscape" is employed here on a reduced but not reducing scale. Whereas it does not address the impact of media circulation and people migration on the post-national structure of the globalized world, the term is applied to the Belgian case so as to comprehend the mobility of cultural, linguistic, and geographical notions beyond the limitations of the nation-state and within the construction of negotiated subjectivities.

essential components of Belgium's national identity (Vos 1998). Largely loyal to the Belgian government during World War I—with the exception of an anti-Belgian, collaborationist front—Flemish democratic and linguistic nationalism was rewarded with the monolingual status granted by the Language Acts in the 1930s, which could not however impede the rise of an increasing gap between Flemish and Walloons during World War II. The resurrection of Flemish nationalism in the form of a movement striving for political autonomy coincided in the mid-1950s with the appearance of the nationalist party Volksunie (People's Union, VU), successor of Christelijke Vlaamse Volksunie (Christian Flemish People's Union CVV) and promoter of Flemish federalism. The secession of Vlaams Blok (Flemish Block, VB) from Volksunie in 1978 determined a split in the political layout of Flemish nationalism with the democratic, federalist design of VU on one side, and the far-right, secessionist agenda of VB on the other. The consequences of such rupture are still visible in Flanders' current political scenario, which is articulated around the opposition of civic and ethnic nationalism: the former endorsed by Flanders' largest and current ruling party, the centre-right conservative Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (New Flemish Alliance, N-VA) succeeded to Volksunie in 2001; the latter promoted by Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest, VB), the right-wing populist party born from the ashes of Vlaams Blok after it was sentenced for racism in 2004.

Despite the reluctance of contemporary Flemish filmmakers to address issues of Flemish nationalism—precisely in the attempt to dissociate themselves from the right-wing implications of Vlaams Belang's nationalist ideologies—*Rundskop* deals with the effects of ethnolinguistic and separatist policies on the identity and positionality of his main character within the hybrid geopolitical space of federal, multi-regional Belgium. On the one hand, the film's ironic references to Vlaams Belang (corrupted into "Vlaams Gezang" by the Italian-Walloon mechanic David) and the extreme polarization of the Flemish-Walloon clash exacerbate inter-regional conflicts almost to the verge of ridiculousness, using cultural stereotyping as a tool of critical inquiry (a point that will return in the analysis of *Welp*). On the other hand, the impossible romance between the Flemish protagonist Jacky, and the Walloon girl Lucia (Jeanne Dandoy) pushes the linguistic and cultural incommunicability between the two communities to a dramatic extent.

Although never explicit in its critique, *Rundskop* digs into the recesses of Flanders' political imaginary to produce what Peter De Graeve interprets as an "anti-nationalist counter-

fiction" (2013), as he approaches the political scope of the film through the lens of Claude Lefort's notion of "indeterminacy." In *Democracy and Political Theory* (1991) Lefort departed from the examination of the differences between several forms of society—both in their signification and representation—and promoted the historical and social indeterminacy of democracy as opposed to theocratic, aristocratic, and despotic regimes. Contrary to totalitarianism, democracy is indeterminate as it does not aim to impose overarching principles of law, knowledge, and power over people, but rather embraces the coexistence and exchange of different, even conflicting understandings of the social and historical interaction between the self and the other. Stemming from such opposition, De Graeve argues that *Rundskop* resists strong forms of fiction associated with totalitarian regimes, and uses instead the traumatic precariousness of Jacky's subjectivity as a metaphor to question the idealistic definiteness of Belgian democracy.

Such lack of stability in the representation of the male subject—and therefore of national cohesiveness—is asserted in the film on both a formal and a narrative level. In respect to the former, the introduction of the character in the shot following the opening credits is already revelatory, as the subjective gaze of the camera does not correspond to Jacky's POV, and the protagonist is only included in the frame but has no agency in determining its focalization. Rather, the character is *subjected* to the look of the camera, which frequently renders him out of focus to then linger on his semi-naked body as a display of physical strength, never of sexual power. Indeed, when the act of looking is exercised by Jacky it is always in a disempowered way (fig. 1.2-1.4), either for the impossibility of his having a family (unlike his brother), an active sexual life (unlike the men frequenting the Walloon brothel or the local pub), or a romantic involvement with the loved one (Lucia, the sister of the teenager responsible for his castration). Scarcely intelligible before the flashback, the film's formal choices only begin to make meaning once the revelation of Jacky's traumatic past enhances the legibility of his actions, disclosing the vulnerability of the character at the narrative level as well.

Fig. 1.2: Jacky's disempowered gaze (Screenshot, *Rundskop*)

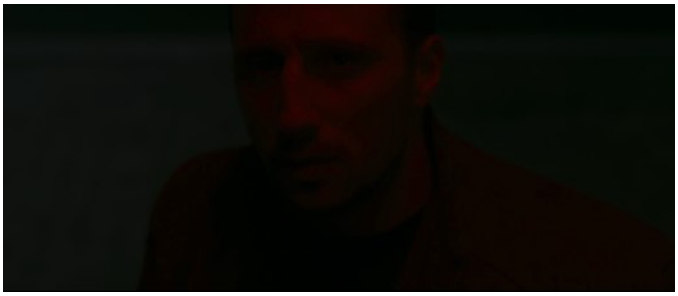

Fig. 1.3: Jacky's disempowered gaze (Screenshot, *Rundskop*)

Fig. 1.4: Jacky's disempowered gaze (Screenshot, *Rundskop*)

In one of the film's initial scenes, the parallelism established by the editing between the farmers preparing the hormone injections for the cattle, and Jacky injecting drugs (later revealed as testosterone) into his body, does not refer to a vague case of addiction, but aims to underline the positioning of the masculine subject at the core of both a gendered and humanistic split. As a consequence to the partial destruction of his genitals, Jacky is forced into the assumption of massive doses of hormones in order to develop secondary sexual characteristics and perform the expectations of his gender, although such expectations are constantly questioned by the character's inability to overcome the impact of his childhood trauma. Despite the hyper-masculine display of his body as a result of hormone abuse, Jacky does not conform to the

standards of manhood his appearance suggests, insomuch as his (hetero)sexual desire is always repressed and disjoined from any engagement in sexual acts, replaced instead by recurrent outburst of physical violence.[20]

In this sense, the film poses a challenge to the interplay of masculinity and nationhood as theorized by Mosse in *The Image of Man,* where the need for uniformed political imageries in the rise of modern nation-states was associated with the creation of homogenized and heteronormative representations of masculinity. Geo-culturally deterritorialized and sexually displaced, the non-conforming body of Jacky deflects the persistence of Mosse's "male stereotype" in the globalized (Western) world, and confirms the author's precognition of new forms of masculinity arising in the twenty-first century (1996, 181-194). As it no longer stands for the symbolic double of the nation, Jacky's split subjectivity epitomizes the collapse of standardized images of maleness in the fading supremacy of the nation-state, and more specifically in a subnational context struggling with univocal paradigms of nationhood. In line with Connell's rethinking of the gender world order in the wake of globalization (1998), Roskam's film thus suggests the necessity of acknowledging the instability of manhood in current times and spaces, challenging fixed conceptions of hegemonic masculinity and affirming the coexistence of plural forms of masculinity within multicultural/multinational societies.

Rundskop's "club sequence" is especially relevant in these respects, as it illustrates the dramatic outcomes of the character's renegotiation of sexual and cultural boundaries when he trespasses the limits of his comfort zone and enters the "enemy" one. Following Lucia into a club in Liège, Jacky is stopped at the entrance and asked by the owner to buy a shirt in order to get in. The request is however delivered in a condescending tone that seemingly praises the provenance

[20] The association of masculinity and violence in both *Rundskop* and *Welp* is particularly relevant in regard to the demands of the normative gender role both male characters are struggling to perform. As Feather and Thomas argue in their book *Male Aggression in Early Modern Texts and Cultures*: "Men's capacity to imagine, control, and enact violence has come to define normative masculinity in both Western and global contexts" (2013, 2). Focusing on early modern English history and literature (first and foremost Shakespearian texts), Feather and Thomas' locate in such a period the negotiation and achievement of masculinity through acts of violence as a defining, even necessary trait of emerging manhood. As George L. Mosse further acknowledged, the construction of masculinity as a matter of political, intellectual, and physical aggression has been part and parcel of modernity as well, where manhood and nationhood emerged as parallel trajectories (1996). In present times, the alleged "crisis of masculinity" has not disrupted practices of male violence carried out through physical dominance and gender privilege. As Connell pointed out, "violence is part of a system of domination" and crisis tendencies can be used to restore such domination rather than repress it (2005, 84-85). Rather than focusing on the element of crisis per se then, it would be rather productive to trace how these tendencies impact on the gender world order and what they can change about the relationship between men and their own masculinity—a perspective that this chapter aims to build upon through the analysis of its case studies.

of the character while actually remarking his utter otherness: "Vous êtes flamand? La première fois ici, hein? Moi j'aime bien les Flamands, vous avez sens des affaires, vous êtes ambitieux, correctes, j'aime ça. Mais ici il faut porter une chemise."[21] Jacky's acceptance of the dress code—that is the acceptance of the imposition of the Francophone etiquette—reveals the intensity of his intention to pursue a desired object, but also the character's inadequacy vis-à-vis fitting into an alien space as well as into an alienated body. Alone under the violent blue lighting of the club, Jacky's immersion into the Francophone crowd is almost a descent to hell, a prefiguration of the character's imminent failure. As Lucia sees him and approaches him to engage in casual conversation, Jacky's unsuccessful effort to properly perform in the foreign language results in the abrupt interruption of any communication, and the girl is taken on the dance floor by a Francophone friend. In a sudden escalation of frustrated violence, Jacky follows the man in the parking lot and beats him nearly to death.

The follow-up to the sequence is equally compelling, as the character's gender anxieties do not cease to haunt him even once he returns to Flemish territory, potentially implying that the relocation of the male subject into his own cultural environment may not be a sufficient reason to restore his "correct" functioning. Back in Limburg, Jacky meets with Sam Raymond (Frank Lammers), a veterinarian involved in the hormone trade, and Diederik (Jeroen Perceval), his childhood best friend and only silent witness of the never outspoken "incident." As Jacky refuses to submit to the business demands of the Flemish mafia, Raymond reacts with anger, accusing him of "hav[ing] no balls." The linguistic ambiguity of the sentence—immediately caught by the viewer but precluded from Raymond—sparks hilarity at first, and then violence again, as Jacky smashes Raymond's face on the table and starts hitting Diederik head to head, like a bull in a fight.

Suggested by the film's title ("rundskop" as "bull head") and reinforced by both Schoenaerts' bodily transformation and the constant association of the protagonist with his cattle, the animalization of Jacky triggers the resignification of the character as more of a beast than a man. Such resignification does not however operate at a sexual level: the bull's metaphor is not used to enhance the erotic nature of the main character, but rather to imply his defectiveness as a

[21] "Are you Flemish? First time here, uh? I like Flemish people, they have a good sense of business, they are ambitious, fair, I like that. But here you must wear a shirt." (Author's translation)

fully formed, fully functional masculine subject. It is Jacky himself who bolsters such an idea in one of the final dialogues with Diederik. As the character states:

> My whole life I have known nothing but animals. I always felt like those bulls, I never knew how it was to protect someone. Calves, a flock, like a wife, children… Really having to protect them, because you have to… because it is in your nature. I don't have what should have been in my nature.

The loss of masculinity thus coincides with the partial loss of humanity—symbolized earlier in the flashback by the disturbing image of a bleeding crucifix—a trope that informs the (de)construction of Jacky's subjectivity and eventually exposes it to a racist slur at the end of the film. Escaping from the Flemish police with the help of Diederik, Jacky crosses the Francophone border one last time to "go get the girl," but his romantic dream, doomed from the very beginning, is crushed by the final confrontation with Lucia. After she alerted the Walloon police, the girl waits to be rescued and lets Jacky into her apartment hoping to calm him down. Once her bluff is discovered, however, her real perception of Jacky—and of Flemish people with him—is voiced out loud: "Vous êtes tous des bêtes, voilà. Maintenant tu le sais."[22] Triggered by Lucia's words, a linguistic breakdown occurs, as Jacky switches back to Dutch and confesses his trauma for the first time. Since Lucia cannot understand what Jacky is saying, his revelation is ultimately pointless, and any reconciliation between the two characters, as well as between their opposed cultures, is neutralised by their incommunicability. With nothing left to lose, Jacky locks inside Lucia's bathroom and injects his last hormone shots, then self-immolates in a spectacular death as he is eventually killed by the Francophone cops in an iconic scene set in the elevator of Lucia's building. Unable to prove himself a man and not an animal after all, the character thus dies as such, kicking and bellowing, until the last frame grants him the return to the uncorrupted humanity of his childhood (fig. 1.5-1.6).

Fig. 1.5: Jacky's Death (Screenshot, *Rundskop*)

[22] "You are all animals. So now you know." (Author's translation)

Fig. 1.6: Return to Childhood (Screenshot, *Rundskop*)

Whereas *Rundskop*'s anti-nationalist critique is performed through the deconstruction of a masculine subject aiming to shift back from animal to man—as both a representative of mankind and manhood—Jonas Govaerts' *Welp* works in the opposite direction, following the progressive transformation of its main character from boy to beast. Twelve-year-old Sam (Maurice Luijten) is a "cub," a boy scout from the Antwerp division led by "Akela" Kris (Titus De Voogdt) and "Baloo" Peter (Stef Aerts). Haunted by "some kind of traumatic and violent past" (never resolved and evoked only by an obscure picture), Sam is a silent and introverted boy, bullied by his fellow scouts and secretly feared by his leaders. Along with his peers and the cook Jasmijn (Evelien Bosmans), he heads off to summer camp in the fictional location of Casselroque in the Ardennes (a homage to Stephen King's imaginary setting of Castle Rock in Maine), where Kris and Peter claim a werewolf boy named Kai (Gill Eeckelaert) crawls out the woods at night in search for prey. While the lethal traps of a mysterious Francophone poacher start killing one character after the other, over-imaginative Sam takes Kai's legend literally, blurring the boundaries of nightmare and reality and facing what is eventually revealed to be his doppelgänger.

Produced by Peter De Maegd's company Potemkino with the support of VAF, Wallimage/Bruxellimage, and the Nederlands Filmfonds, and partially financed through an Indiegogo campaign that raised 24% of the estimated budget,[23] *Welp* enters only at the 82th position of the Belgian box office ranking of 2014, but with a local gross of $578,275[24] over a €34,567 budget it still presents a solid evidence of the current prosperity of Flemish film industry. Although not assisted by the same numbers as *Rundskop*, *Welp* discloses several

[23] "CUB The Movie," *Indiegogo,* https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/cub-the-movie#/ Accessed 13 Nov. 2015.
[24] "Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Box Office 2014," *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/intl/belgium/yearly/?yr=2014&p=.htm Accessed 13 Nov. 2015.

infrastructural and thematic similarities to Roskam's first feature. Premiered at the Midnight Madness section of TIFF 2014 with the favour of the international press, Govaerts' directorial debut engages in fact with questions of conflicted identities and split subjectivities in the liminal space of Belgian internal borders, using the slasher horror genre[25] as an access key to a wider pool of foreign viewers.

Borrowing once again from Hjort's categories of small national/global legibility, *Welp* is indeed both an opaque and translatable text. On the one side, the permeability of its geographical setting, the breakdown of ethnolinguistic communications among characters, and the annihilating outcome of the encounter between the Walloon and Flemish community refer to the former instance, and suggest the potential interpretation of the film as an extreme display of mono-nationalist malfunctioning. On the other hand, the meticulous deployment of recognizable horror tropes responds to the latter, although Govaerts' inventive bending of crucial genre features complicates the gender discourse traditionally associated with the slasher paradigm, recasting monstrous masculinity over the ultimate triumph of surviving femininity.

In this respect, *Welp* comprises all of the "component categories" of the slasher horror film as identified by Carol J. Clover in her pivotal article "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film" (1987), except for the crucial one: The Final Girl. Theoretically, the film accounts for five categories out of five: Sam as The Killer, "propelled by psychosexual fury, more particularly a male in gender distress" (194); the woods as the Terrible Place in which the horror unravels; knives, body parts, and gimmicks of sort (the booby traps built by the poacher) as the Weapons; the boy scouts, their leaders, and any occasional visitor of the woods as the multiple Victims; and the merciless, unmotivated slaughter as the Shock. However, the main subcategory of the Victims section, The Final Girl to which Clover's piece devotes most of its gender-based analysis, is drastically reversed. Kept alive until the very end in order to trick the viewer, the only female character in the film, Jasmijn, is eventually stabbed to death by Kai/Sam under the supervision of the evil poacher (fig. 1.7), tragically resolving the anticipation of the opening scene—a flash-forward of Jasmijn being captured by a mysterious man after a desperate escape attempt.

[25] A sub-category of the horror genre, slasher films feature a psychopathic killer on a hunt to stalk and murder all of the characters in a movie (often with a predilection for female victims).

Fig. 1.7: Jasmijn's Murder (Screenshot, *Welp*)

The suppression of the potential Final Girl and the victory of the male killers thus demand a revision of Clover's interpretation of the slasher horror as a challenge to the identification practices of the genre's largely male audience. Whereas in Clover's reading the slasher demystified the exact correspondence of gendered representations and bodies onscreen—hence troubling the congruence of the viewer's gendered perspective to either male sexual violence or female victimization (1987, 206)—*Welp*'s transgression of such a paradigm provokes two orders of thoughts: a reconsideration of the film's impact on the audience's identification processes, and a further speculation on the conflicted status of masculinity in unsettled national contexts.

At the first level lies the sexual connotation of Jasmijn's murder, which also coincides with the revelation of Kai's identity behind the wooden mask (fig. 1.8-1.10). In the reprise of the opening scene at the end of the film, Jasmijn is chased by both Kai and the poacher, but it is Sam who eventually takes her life, repeatedly stabbing her in the genitals or in the abdomen (the close-up is unclear), and punishing her for the erotic encounter with Peter caught earlier in the film—thus charging the killing with sexual implications. Similarly to Jacky in *Rundskop*—although under extremely different circumstances—Sam is a subject confined within the pre-pubertal dimension of his sexuality, but unlike Jacky, whose sexual arrested development was due to a physical lack of male attributes, Sam's repression is motivated by his animal transformation as well as by the killing of his voyeuristic object of desire. Jasmijn's death ultimately functions as a catalyzer for both gender and genre troubles: in regard to the former, it coincides with the interruption of Sam's development into a mature, sexually active subject; with respect to the latter, the murder of the Final Girl prevents the viewer from finding any solace in the elimination of the villain, as well as in the establishment of an alternative but functional gender order. Destroying the audience's false perception of the protagonist as a hero, and forcing

it to assume the perspective of a hybrid individual, no longer male or female, not even human, *Welp* reads against the grain of the horror genre it reflects upon, disclosing the possibility for another anti-nationalist critique to take place.

Fig. 1.8: Behind the Mask (Screenshot, *Welp*)

Fig. 1.9: Behind the mask (Screenshot, *Welp*)

Fig. 1.10: Behind the mask (Screenshot, *Welp*)

On the second level of the film's inquiry, Sam's final shift into the feral boy Kai represents indeed the survival of a dysfunctional, pre-sexual creature, ultimately disjoined from both its gendered and human attributes, and more incline to follow the monstrous path of its maker. Although both Francophone and Flemish characters succumb in the film to the same horrifying fate, Sam's responsibility in the killing of the Flemish victims (either voluntarily or not) by command of the Francophone poacher implies the renegotiation not only of the character's own nature (from human to animal, from male to gender-neutral beast) but also of his subnational belonging. Through the acceptance of Kai's mask at the end of the film and the

submission to the poacher as an alternative father figure, Sam renounces his human features, but more importantly to his own voice, transformed into an undifferentiated beastly sound. As the character can no longer speak, his ethnolinguistic specificity ceases to matter, and so neither does his sense of cultural kinship: Kai/Sam exists only in the borderline space of constant duality, where geographical and gendered borders are blurred to the point of irrelevance.

Mainly interested in reviving the tropes of suspense-based horror films from the 1970s and 1980s (with John Carpenter and Dario Argento as explicit points of reference), Govaerts does not profess any intention to inform *Welp* with a critical meditation on Belgium's geopolitical tensions, but the dualistic nature of the film's relationship to intra-national splits allows nonetheless us to approach it from such an angle. In his tepid review for *The Hollywood Reporter,* Boyd van Hoeji focused specifically on this issue, criticizing the film's oversimplified depiction of the Flemish-Walloon dissent rather than taking it as an occasion for a productive socio-cultural reading:[26]

> Another missed opportunity [along with weak character development] is the lack of pointed observations on the country's subsisting Flemish/Walloon tensions, which should clearly be possible in a story about Dutch-speaking northerners finding themselves assaulted in the French-speaking South of their country. *Cub* was actually shot in Flanders so why pass it off as Wallonia at all, unless Govaerts doesn't have anything more intelligent to say than all his French-speaking compatriots are either buffoons or psychopaths? Indeed, like in the recent Flemish Oscar nominee *Bullhead*, all Walloons are caricatures, which precludes any kind of even semi-intelligent commentary on their (perceived) similarities or differences with the Flemish. (Van Hoeji 2014)

The misallocation of *Welp*'s actual setting—situated in Luxembourg and not in Flanders[27]—along with the interpretation of the film's duality as merely a vehicle for a shallow parody leads to the misunderstanding of Govaerts' use of the horror genre as a way to reflect on the theme of the Double, that is on the consequences of the encounter with otherness when otherness is embedded in one's self. The confrontation between the boy-scouts and a stereotyped couple of Walloon brothers at the beginning of the film is thus not an occasion to ridicule either one or the other community, but an anticipation of the forthcoming horror twist in the narrative.

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[26] Boyd Van Hoeji, "Cub: Toronto Review," *The Hollywood Reporter*, http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/cub-welp-toronto-review-734502 Accessed 20 Sep. 2014.

[27] On *Welp*'s official website a video-interview with Govaerts and producer De Maegd is preceded by footage of the film's crew scouting for location in the Province of Luxembourg. Interestingly, the logo of a fleur-de-lis covered in blood introduces the video: an ironic prefiguration of the Francophone violence in the film. ("Report 1-Preproduction & Press," *CUB The Movie*, http://www.cubthemovie.com/en/?page_id=808. Accessed 29 Nov. 2017)

Resorting to another trope of the slasher horror film—the movement from the reassuring security of the city to the uncanny perils of the hostile countryside—*Welp* uses the juxtaposition of urban Flemish and rural Walloon characters to convey the danger of border-crossing and its impact on Sam's subjectivity. Rejected by his own peers, as well as by his own biological parents (as Peter reveals at a later point in the film, the boy is a foster-child), the character makes the woods his new home, and the poacher his alternative family, leaving his Flemish roots behind not to embrace the Walloon ones, but rather to find comfort in the refusal of fixed definitions of gender and national identity.

Similarly to *Rundskop*, the employment of the "split" as a principle that informs the main character's subjectivity, as well as the overall structure of the film, thus occurs in *Welp* to underline the unattainability of clear-cut divisions of national, cultural, or simply human belonging. The dramatic outcome of both films addresses a broader set of issues experienced by the male protagonists within the heterogeneity of their multinational setting, where their blurred identities do not fit into rigid patterns of mono-nationalism and gender unity. As the demands for unequivocal identifications of gender and culture trigger the dissociation of Jacky and Sam from their own masculinity, as well as from their national and human subjectivity, the reappropriation of Michael Keating's notion of "plurinationalism" and André Lecours' "negotiated sovereignty" can intervene to shape the understanding of these films as advocacies for a better navigation of gender and national identities within multi-regional states.

Arguing for the re-emerging strength of Western subnational entities in the late twentieth century, Keating suggests abandoning traditional concepts of centralized sovereignty and multi-nationalism to rather embrace "plurinationalism," as no longer the coexistence of discrete and separate nationalities within the same national space, but rather as the concurrence of plural national identities within a single community or individual (2001, 19). In his analysis of subnational states' continuous appeal in Western contemporaneity, Lecours extrapolates from Keating's theorization to further elaborate on the idea of "negotiated sovereignty" as an alternative way to manage centralized forms of political power and conflicting national(ist) narratives in multinational states:

> The negotiation of sovereignty can yield new narratives to multinational countries that are typically characterized by different, often antagonistic stories. Narratives that make up nationalist discourse (both state and sub-state) are usually exaggerated or simplified portrayals of historical realities; they are, therefore, subject to change. The

> development of new stories, stressing inter-community collaboration rather than confrontation, in the repertoire of a multinational society can work towards alleviating mutual isolation and antagonism. (2012, 282-283)

Resorting to the very antagonistic stories deplored by Lecours in his article, both *Rundskop* and *Welp* highlight the inefficacy of strong nationalist fictions in liberating the male protagonists from the constraints of their gender and national role. The negotiation of sovereignty and the plurality of identities—of nation as well as of gender—is therefore a productive tool for redefining the position of male subjectivities in the porous order of current subnational realities. Reframed so as to encompass not only geopolitical entities but also gendered subjectivities as cohabiting spaces of national identity struggles, notions of both plurinationalism and negotiated sovereignty indeed present the possibility of rearranging multiple gender, cultural, and ethnic identities within the same subnational space, without relying on oppositional and exclusionary conceptions of otherness.

However, a caveat to this last point is in order. As Kris Deschouwer et al. has argued in their conference paper "Measuring (sub)national identities in surveys: Some lessons from Belgium" (2015), the employment of behaviourist and dualistic approaches for the assessment of national self-identification practices in subnational scenarios poses several limits to the complexity of Belgian identities. A standard procedure for the measurement of regional/national identity in political science, the Linz-Moreno question[28] has in particular been challenged throughout the years and within different (pluri)national contexts (Abdel et al. 2006; Sinnott 2006; Guinjoan and Rodon 2016). Based on a five-point scale hierarchical classification that traces the salience and intensity of national identity,[29] the question—which Moreno himself conceives as a tool for mapping "dual identities" (2006)—carries the risk of relying on several major assumptions: the strict opposition of competing identities, the lack of nuance in the feeling of national belonging, the exclusivity of the given choices, and the homogeneity of the responses regardless the class, gender, and ethnicity of the respondents (Deschouwer et al. 2015, Guinjoan

[28] Based on the seminal work of Juan Liz on minority identities in Spain and the elaboration of self-identification categories (Linz 1973/1986), the question was employed by Luis Moreno in 1986 as the key methodology of his doctoral dissertation, *Decentralization in Britain and Spain: The cases of Scotland and Catalonia*, in order evaluate the degree of belonging to national identities in the Catalan/Spanish and Scottish/British context.

[29] The breakdown for Belgium being: 1) Only Belgian, 2) More Belgian than Flemish-Walloon, 3) Equally Flemish-Walloon and Belgian, 4) More Flemish-Walloon than Belgian, 5) Only Flemish-Walloon. (Keating 2001 87, Source: 1995 General Election Study, Belgium). The data presented in Keating's book for the Belgian context are already problematic, as the opposition of hyphenated Flemish-Walloon identity to the Belgian one does not give a sense of the wider variety of regional-national (let alone ethnic) identities operating within Belgium's geopolitical landscape.

and Rodon 2016). Although intended to rationalize the scope of overlapping and multiple identities in the outcome of nation-state fragmentation and globalizing forces, the binary scheme prompted by the Moreno scale—and partly co-opted by Keating in *Plurinational Democracy*—fails to acknowledge two crucial aspects of such forces, that is the revision of gender roles and the gradation of national belonging generated by the circulation and relocation of diasporic and migrant subjects on the global (re)mapping.

Whereas plurinational understandings of national and gendered identity can help reformulate and revise questions of masculine inadequacy and national anxiety affecting the existence of subnational male subjectivities such as those of *Rundskop* and *Welp*, a further level of sophistication is required to address the construction of diasporic and migrant masculinities in the prismatic geo-political scenario of Belgium. Taking *Turquaze* (Kadir Balci, 2010) and *Image* (Adil El Arbi and Bilall Fallah, 2014) as privileged case studies, the following section of the chapter will broaden the spectrum of plurinational representations of regional-national manhood in Flemish cinema, focusing on the renegotiation of male identities in the portrayal of Belgium's diasporic and migrant communities. Stemming from a brief discussion of the emergence of crosscultural forms of film production and accented cinema in Flanders, the section will proceed to analyze the representation of diasporic and migrant masculinities in a selected corpus of recent Flemish films, highlighting the relevance of sexuality, gender, and intimacy, other than just race and class, in the study, experience, and representation of diaspora and migration.

Polyphonic Bodies and Accented Voices in *Turquaze* and *Image*

Although the historical trajectory of imperial colonization in Belgium dates back to the late XIX century, and the subsequent heritage of postcolonial migration to the early 1960s, the history of diasporic and migrant cinema in Flanders is less than two decades old. Emerged sporadically at the beginning of the XXI century, Flemish "accented cinema" has been revitalized in the past five years by the significant work of both Flemish directors and second generation filmmakers of Turkish and Moroccan descent. It is especially thanks to *Black*, the second feature by Flemish-Moroccan duo Adil El Arbi and Bilall Fallah, and one of the highlights of Flemish cinematic season 2015-2016, that accented filmmaking in Flanders has recently surged to international recognition. Acclaimed at TIFF 40, where it premiered in September 2015 and received the Discovery Award for "directors to watch", the screen adaptation of Dirk Bracke's young adult

novels *Black* (2006) and *Back* (2008) travelled the film festival circuit all over the world, performing reasonably well at Belgium's yearly box office[30] and gaining critical consensus in Flanders as well as abroad. In his review of the film on *Variety* Peter Debruge commented: "The first of its kind in Belgian cinema, this easily exportable, minority-driven drama has the potential to launch the careers of its young directors and cast, driving its star-crossed West Side Story formula into the 21st century."[31] Re-enactment of Shakespeare's classic tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* in the gritty scenario of Brussels multi-ethnic feuds, the contrasted romance between Black Bronx's gang member Marvela (Martha Canga Antonio) and 1080's petty thief Marwan (Aboubakar Bensahini) is however more than just an occasion for El Arbi and Fallah to make a bigger splash into the international film market. Shot only within few months from the filmmakers' feature debut *Image* (2014), and promoted via a cleverly designed website—which provides, along with the usual information and film stills, even a booklet with pedagogical purposes[32]—*Black* brings indeed further and well-needed attention to the representation of diasporic and migrant communities in Brussels as well as in Flanders' reality at large, especially in the aftermath of the Brussels bombings of March 2016.[33]

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[30] Entering the 30th position of the box office ranking in 2015 with a total gross of $1,612,781 in Belgium and Luxemburg, *Black* surpassed Hollywood productions such as *Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb* (2014, Shawn Levy), *Magic Mike XXL* (Gregory Jacobs, 2015) and *Spy* (Paul Feig, 2015), as well as the domestic "competitor" *D'Ardennen/The Ardennes*. (Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Box Office 2015, Bod Office Mojo, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/intl/belgium/yearly/?yr=2015&p=.htm Accessed 29 Nov. 2017). With a budget of €1,842,500 (Caviar films, VAF, TV-coproduction, Bruxellimage and the European MEDIA + program), *Black* also recuperated a significant portion of the invested capital. (Karla Puttemans, head of production at VAF, provided the financial schemes for the films discussed in this section via email conversation with the permission of the films' producers).

[31] Peter Debruge, *Toronto Film Review: 'Black',* 21 Sept. 2015, http://variety.com/2015/film/reviews/black-film-review-1201598645/ Accessed 29 Nov. 2017.

[32] Downloadable from *Black*'s official website in both Dutch and French, the "Dossier Éducatif" designed by Josine Buggenhout, Marlies De Bock, and Brecht Nijssen includes several tools for a pedagogical approach to the film in the school setting. Not only the synopsis, possible readings, main themes and cinematic and literary references of the film can be found in the booklet, but also newspaper articles, excerpts from the screenplay, and daily call sheets with production details, which offer students a grasp of both technical and representational aspects of the film's making.

[33] On March 22nd 2016 three coordinated bombings in the Zaventem airport and the Malbeek metro station in Brussels resulted in the death of 32 civilians and three attackers. As suspect Salah Abdeslam was arrested in Molenbeek and incriminating material was found in Schaerbeerk—working class neighbourhoods with a high density of Muslim inhabitants (mostly of Moroccan descent)—the events refocused attention upon Brussels' municipalities after the Paris attacks of November 2015, especially reinforcing the media's relabelling of Molenbeek as a "jihadist haven." (Ian Traynor, "Molenbeek: the Brussels borough becoming known as Europe's jihadi central," *The Guardian*, 15 Nov. 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/15/molenbeek-the-brussels-borough-in-the-spotlight-after-paris-attacks. Accessed 21 Nov. 2017. Chams Eddine Zaougui, "Molenbeek, Belgium's 'Jihad Central'," *The New York Times,* 19 Nov. 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/19/opinion/molenbeek-belgiums-jihad-central.html. Accessed 21 Nov. 2017.)

In his seminal book *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* Hamid Naficy coined the notion of accented cinema to discuss the interstitial work of exilic, diasporic, and ethnic filmmakers emerged from "postcolonial displacement and postmodern or late modern scattering" (2001, 11). As a result of both the decolonization processes that between the 1950s and 1970s, and the fragmentation of nation-states in the wake of global economies in the 1980s and 1990s, exilic and diasporic filmmakers migrated to the West in different forms and patterns, giving way to a heterogeneous phenomenon that can be read through the lens of a shared stylistic category. Although brought into migration by diverse historical and socio-political circumstances, accented filmmakers partake of analogous conditions of liminality, ambiguity, and simultaneity, which inform the ethics and aesthetics of their cinema, as well as the political experience and practice of it. The tensions between the local and the global, the margin and the center, the homeland and the hostland are therefore at the core of Naficy's analysis, which aims to identify inconsistencies but also recurrences in the films produced under conditions of exile, diaspora, and geopolitical dispersion, using accented style as their common denominator. The negotiation of plural identities, the hybridization of narratives, the deterritorialization of bodies and subjectivities considered by Naficy as essential components of the accented paradigm can be observed in current Flemish cinema as well, and it is through the ancillary notions of "hyphenated identities" and "double consciousness" that the accented cinema framework can be pertinently applied to the Flemish case studies considered herein.

Employed to define the work of ethnic filmmakers emphasizing their racial and ethnic identity within their host country (especially in the American context), the hyphen is discussed by Naficy as an ambiguous punctuation marker, one that resists the homogenizing power of mono-national identities, but also carries the risk of creating a qualitative hierarchy between hyphenated and non-hyphenated identities. It is however when conceived as a contestatory sign of nested, hybridized, multiple identities, rather than fetishized as a nativist index of stability and authenticity within a national framework, that the hyphen works more productively against essentialist notion of nationhood and towards a transnational understanding of accented filmmaking. In this sense, the hyphen can be repurposed so as to understand the way diasporic filmmakers in Flanders approach the plurality of their geo-cultural, linguistic, and gender identities within the narrative and style of their cinema. Dealing with personal feelings of displacement as well as with the larger tradition of diasporic and exilic cinema preceding their

work, Flemish-based hyphenated filmmakers use their "double consciousness" to move across spaces, temporalities, and identities, creating a fertile ground for challenging and expanding the plurinational dimension of gender and national belonging explored in the previous section of this chapter.

Furthermore, Naficy traces an analogous disruption of binary categories through the way accented films are aesthetically, spatially, and temporally conceived in contrast to dyadic conceptions of gender such as those of classical cinema (2001, 154). It is Naficy's provocative contention that all accented films are in fact "feminine texts" by virtue of their reconfiguration of both inside/domestic, outside/natural spaces as coded in feminine terms, and that the pulling forces of belonging and nostalgia in relation to homeland and hostland affect the way gender identities are reshaped onscreen. By arguing that "[t]hese films destabilize the traditional binary schema of gender and spatiality because, in the liminality of deterritorialization, the boundaries of gender, genre, and sexuality are blurred and continually negotiated" (2001, 154-155), Naficy advocates for an intersectional understanding of accented filmmaking practices. Gender and sexuality, along with ethnicity and race, intervene as crucial factors in the renegotiation of identities for exilic, diasporic, and migrant subjects, informing the analysis of masculinity presented in this chapter. Naficy's engagement with the intersectionality of accented cinema indeed invites us to think about the feature films examined in this section as manifestations of three interconnected issues: the paradoxical liminality and simultaneity of border-crossing identities, the regendering of accented aesthetics and subjectivities, and the hyphenated nature of accented filmmaking practices within plurinational and pluriethnic film industries and imaginaries.

Accented filmmaking has made its appearance in Flemish cinema since the early 2000s, concurrently with the emergence of film funding and policy measures responsible for the consolidation of a Flemish film industry. As Gertjan Willems outlines in his brief overview of the phenomenon on *rekto:verso*, the work of Flemish-Turkish amateur filmmaker R. Kay Alban can be considered the starting moment of accented cinema in Flanders, while the debut of Flemish directors Jan Hintjens (*Osveta*, 2001) and Guy Lee Thys (*Kassablanka*, 2002) signalled the incursion of domestic filmmakers into the exploration of Flanders' multicultural texture (Willems 2013). Although filtered through the non-hyphenated gaze of a Flemish director, *Kassablanka* in particular holds several resemblances to El Arbi and Fallah's *Black*, but also to

the work of Turkish-Flemish director Kadir Balci discussed in this section. The love story between white Flemish teenager Berwout (Aernowts) and Muslim girl Leilah (Babett Manalo), situated against the backdrop of Vlaams Blok's political exploit in the so-called "Black Sunday" of 1991,[34] deals indeed with the multicultural twist of the Shakespearean narrative adopted in *Black*, as well as with the ethno-cultural conflicts portrayed in Balci's filmography (both in *Turquaze* [2010] and in the more recent *Trouw Met Mij/Marry Me* [2014]). As Willems argues in concert with Kevin Smets, it is especially with *Turquaze* that the "autochthonous" and "allochthonous" perspectives of accented filmmaking started to merge in contemporary Flemish cinema, paving the way for the emergence of crosscultural phenomena beyond the mere ethnolinguistic divide of French and Dutch/Flemish film productions in Belgium (Willems and Smets 2014).

Combining the analysis of narrative aspects and industry-related data in current Flemish cinema, Willems and Smets' article "Film Policy and the Emergence of the Crosscultural" locates two specific strands of crosscultural filmmaking: migrant and diasporic cinema made by migrant and diasporic directors in Flanders (i.e. *Turquaze,* and more recently *Image, Marry Me,* and *Black*); and Flemish films funded with Flemish money but shot outside of Flanders (i.e. Peter Brosens and Jessica Woodworth's Mongolian/Belgian/German co-production *Khadak* [2006] and Peruvian-based *Altiplano* [2009], and Gust Van den Berghe's *Blue Bird* [2011]). With the notable exception of diasporic and migrant-themed films shot in Flanders by Flemish directors and with Flemish funding (namely Nicolas Provost' *The Invader* [2011], Guy Lee Thys' *Mixed Kebab* [2012] and Peter Van Hees' *Waste Land* [2014]), the two categories identified by Willems and Smets serve as a taxonomic tool to understand how the crosscultural intervenes in complicating and negotiating Flanders' quest for national identity, challenging hegemonic structures of mono-cultural and mono-national societies. Either by minimizing the link with Flanders, or by bridging the gap between homeland and hostland, both strands contrast fixed preconceptions of national cinema and nation-statehood in the globalized era, as they also

[34] On the occasion of Belgium's general election on November 24 1991, Karen Dillen's nationalist party obtained three times more votes than in the previous 1987 elections, gaining 12 seats in the Belgian Chambers of Representatives and surpassing Volksunie for the first time since the party split in 1978.

demonstrate the many opportunities offered by crossover film policies in recent Flemish cinema (2013, 96).[35]

Identified by Willems as the first film made in Flanders "by and about immigrants" (2013), *Turquaze* is a particularly emblematic example of the tendencies traced by the author in the current structures of Flemish film industry, but also in the regional-national imaginary of Flemish cinema in the wake of its "accented turn:"

> The heterogeneous body of films under the category of migrant and diasporic cinema challenges the notion of immobile and national cinemas, both textually and in terms of production and (potentially) distribution. *Turquaze* fits that description as it takes the unsettling of homogeneous national and ethnic identities as its main theme. Moreover, the national is surpassed by the importance of the local and the translocal: it is not so much Belgium, Flanders, or Turkey that forms the basis for the development of the plot as specific districts of the "home" cities of Ghent and Istanbul. (Willems and Smets 2013, 87)

Co-produced by Dirk Impens' Flemish company Menuet and Turkish company GU-Film with the support of several financial partners (among which VAF contributed to 45% of the €2,000,000 total budget), *Turquaze* transcends the "nationalization" of Flemish industry and imaginary on several intertwined levels. On the infrastructural one, the film attests the interest of Flanders in endorsing the crosscultural diversity of its regional-national cinema, as well as Balci's intention to reach out to both domestic and diasporic audiences in the region.[36] On the representational one, it underscores the need to move beyond the ethnolinguistic and inter-regional divide pertaining to the Flemish-Francophone split, so as to reflect more widely upon the experience of diasporic subjects torn between their memories of the homeland and their

[35] It is however interesting to notice that the key factor affecting the allocation of film funding from VAF is the director's nationality. As Karla Puttemans pointed out via email exchange in the fall 2015: "Films can be shot anywhere as long as 100 % of our support on the film is spent in the Flemish Community (meaning f.i. salaries, fees, postproduction, etc. etc.). We feel that the film should be coherent, so if the story requires a decor/landscape/place that is not linked to Flanders, so be it. (…) The main criterion to consider a film Flemish is that the director is Flemish. The language used is often Flemish, but if the story requires a different language, we accept that also. Again, the coherence of the film prevails." So, in spite of the hyphen, the national belonging of the directors mentioned in this section is still considered by all means Flemish.

[36] Despite Balci's professed intention to target both audiences alike, the results of the quantitative analysis conducted by Kevin Smets et al. in their chapter "Centre and Periphery: Film Practices Among the Turkish Diaspora in Antwerp" seems to point to a different result—although an interesting one for the argument presented in this chapter about plurinational forms of self-identification that include ethnicity and gender in their articulation. The authors argue indeed that "the screenings of mainstream Turkish films are almost exclusively attended by people of Turkish origin, even though many were Belgian-born. Identifying their various ethnic and national identifications is a complex task, as individuals may refer to language, birthplace of (grand-)parents or other key aspects in their self-identification towards ethnic and national entities. Among the younger generation especially, there is a strong consciousness of… 'multiple identifications,' illustrated by the explicit awareness of simultaneously being both Turkish and Flemish/Belgian" (2013, 179).

present lives in the hostland. Shot partially in Ghent and partially in Istanbul in accordance with its co-production agreement, Balci's first feature translates the translocal, conflicted position of hyphenated subjectivities through its accented style, narrative, and modes of film production and circulation, providing a symptomatic case study for issues not only of national identity and national cinema in Flanders, but also of male representation and gender construction in Flemish film imaginary.

The dialogue between the center and the periphery as the accented marker of *Turquaze*'s approach is evident from the film's plot, which departs from the intimate dimension of the three main characters' story and connects with their broader experience of displacement and their acceptance of their diasporic condition. The death of the *pater familias* and the return of their mother (Tilbe Saran) to Istanbul affect the lives of three Turkish brothers living in Ghent. Timur (Burak Balci), who works in the Museum of Fine Arts but wishes to become a trumpeter in the local marching band, starts questioning the relationship with his Flemish girlfriend Sarah (Charlotte Vandermeersch), whom he has never introduced to his family. The eldest brother Ediz (Nihat Alptug Altinkaya), a mechanic struggling with the frustrations of a childless marriage and with oppressive feelings of gender inadequacy, neglects his wife Zehra (Hilal Sönmez) to find temporary comfort in the affair with a Flemish woman. The youngest son Bora (Sinan Vanden Eynde) escapes the impositions of Ediz' conservative household by committing small crimes and acts of vandalism that will eventually bring the family back together.

Mainly focused on the conflicted love-story between Timur and Sarah, and partly on Ediz and Zehra's troubled marriage, *Turquaze* uses the romantic sub-plot not only as a way to enhance the film's palatability to a wider audience,[37] but also as a metaphor to exemplify the intricate web of tensions at play in the everyday life of its diasporic characters. The cultural clash between the two young lovers—eventually resolved by their reconciliation in the film's closing scene—and the renegotiation of gender dynamics for the married couple epitomize in fact on a microscopic scale the macroscopic conflicts elicited by the efforts of the diasporic characters to reconcile the ways of life of the homeland with the conditions of existence in the hostland.

[37] As Willems and Smets remark in their article, Balci himself discarded the interpretation of *Turquaze* as first and foremost an example of diasporic filmmaking. In the attempt to reach out to a larger public, both director and producers commented on the romantic nature of the film as more central to it than its cross-cultural concerns. (Willems and Smets 2013, 98) The opacity and translatability of minor cinema as discussed in the second section of this chapter thus affect the conditions of making and being of accented Flemish cinema as well, as the accent (and its potential rejection) introduces a further level of complication in the discourse of local-global circulation and reception of small national/subnational films.

Such efforts are addressed in the film from both a narrative and a formal standpoint. On the level of the former, the employment of romantic drama conventions serves two purposes: it endorses the renegotiation of a more nuanced national cultural belonging for Timur, and it allows the acceptance of a less contrived gender identity for Ediz. On the level of the latter, the film's editing works with spaces and temporalities to visualize the diasporic experience as a matter of displacement, relocation, and hybridity, but ultimately portrays it as a condition of harmony rather than rupture in both visual and auditory terms. The following reading of the film will thus proceed in two steps. First, the staging of the diasporic condition via memory and space will be observed in relation to Timur's character and the negotiation of his accented identity. Second, the de-construction and re-construction of diasporic masculinity as a mediation between the traditional models of the homeland and the opening possibilities of the hostland will be discussed with respect to Ediz's character, allowing the transition to the representation of male subjectivity in El Arbi and Fallah's *Image*.

As Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg have pointed out in the introduction to their book *Locating Migrant and Diasporic Cinema in Contemporary Europe* (2010), the diversification of Europe in the wake of transnational flows of people and capital has largely affected the structures and modes of European filmmaking. Questions of identity formation and challenges to national-ethnocentric myths brought forward by diasporic and migrant filmmakers have been crucial to "redefine understanding[s] of European identity as constructed and narrated in European national cinemas" (2010, 2). *Turquaze* fits particularly well in the scenario laid out by Berghahn and Sternberg's volume, as the main purpose of the film—in spite of Balci's detachment from its "migrant" label—seems to envision the reconciliation of fractures within Belgium's plurinational and multiethnic identities as an optimistic actuality rather than a mere potentiality. Whereas in films such as *Rundskop* and *Welp* the "split" operated as a critical tool to rethink mono-nationalist understandings of identity and gender to the detriment of the male subject's survival (or salvation), in *Turquaze* the acceptance and restoration of identitary fissures are positively embodied by Timur and the metaphor of musical harmony the character carries within himself.

In *Studies on the Origin of Harmonic Tonality*, German musicologist Carl Dahlhaus defined harmony as follows:

> "Harmony" implies an agreement [*Zusammenstimmen*] of disparate or contrasted elements. Up to the 17th century (following the Pythagorean-Platonic tradition, scholars looked to numerical proportion to provide an explanation of, and basis for, harmony. In music, the concept of harmony has included since the early Middle Ages: (1) the combining of tones into a sequence of tones, or even groups of tones into a melody; (2) the agreement of the two tones in a dyad or of the tones and intervals in a triad; (3) the connecting dyads into an intervallic progression; (4) the relationship among the voices of a polyphonic composition; and (5) the joining together of chords into a chord progression. (1990, 18-19).

Dahlhaus' wording is especially fascinating with respect to *Turquaze*. Terms such as "combination," "agreement," "relationship," and "joining" point towards the idea of harmony as a form of conciliation that can be extended beyond the musical realm, so as to understand the role played by the film's protagonist in bringing together several, seemingly dissonant identities within one polyphonic body. In his first, clumsy encounter with the director of Ghent's marching band, Timur is in fact enthusiastically reminded that: "It is thanks to you [the Turkish people] if we [the Flemish people] have harmony. It is the Ottomans who have created harmony, with their cymbals and horns and drums…" Such a claim contrasts however with George Grove's assertion that "[t]he earliest attempts at harmony of which there are any examples or any description, was the Diaphony or Organum which is described by Hucbald, a Flemish monk of the tenth century, in a book called 'Enchiridion Musicae'" (669, 2009). Despite its historical inaccuracy, the band director's statement establishes an interesting link between Timur and his function as the bearer of harmony in the film—a role that the character himself seems unaware of on the narrative level, but the film endorses at various points on the textual one.

Timur's inner ability to reconcile internal and external dissonances is played out in the film through modes of temporal and spatial mobility, which refer to the geographical movement of the character across international borders, but also to his temporal movement across dimensions of migratory/diasporic past and present life. The concept of "diaspora space" elaborated by Berghahn and Sternberg is particularly useful in this sense (2010, 18). The convergence of "minority memories" from the homeland and cultural memories from the hostland, and their articulation within the context of diasporic filmmaking, is indeed at the center of Timur's experience. Memory is crucial in *Turquaze* from the film's inception, a brief edited sequence that juxtaposes images of the Spiegel String Quartet playing the *leitmotiv* of Timur and Sarah's love story (composed by Flemish musician Bert Ostyn as part of the film's original

soundtrack), and a backward tracking shot of Timur sitting in the Museum of Modern Arts while the voice over of his dead father recollects dreams of playing in a marching band but having to give up his passion for a more steady job in Belgium. For Timur, the most mobile of the three brothers,[38] sentiments of nostalgia and cultural disorientation triggered by the loss of the paternal figure and the temporary absence of the maternal one are the primary source of internal conflicts. In the film's narrative, the struggle to reconcile his present life in Ghent with the memories of his family's past in Istanbul prevents the character from moving forward in his relationship with Sarah, as well as from fully embracing the porous condition of his diasporic settlement in Flanders. At the level of the film's text, however, the editing and sound design disprove such a conflictual separation of Timur's national cultural identities, as they intervene to situate the homeland and the hostland on a plane of temporal and spatial synchronicity.

The role of music, both diegetic and extra-diegetic, is particularly compelling in this respect, as it reconfigures Timur's subjectivity as a condition of multiplicity in contrast with the split suggested by the character's storyline. In one of the initial scenes, Timur returns from Istanbul after his father's funeral and is reunited with his girlfriend Sarah. After a quick coffee together, Timur departs to have dinner at Ediz's house—a routine he follows scrupulously—and then surprises Sarah by showing up at her apartment. While the two characters are making love, the camera cuts on the detail of a record player playing the Turkish song that can be heard in the background of the scene. A slow lateral pan reveals however that the player is not located in Sarah's bedroom in Ghent, but rather in that of Timur's mother in Istanbul (fig. 1.11-1.15). The scene thus marks the translocal connection between the two geo-cultural spaces mentioned in Willems and Smets' article, but it also suggests the proximity of Timur's plural identities even before the character himself is made aware of them. Such proximity is however not conceived as a matter of homogeneity, as the film makes it clear that it is upon the coexistence of differences rather than their assimilation that diasporic lives can be productively reframed in the composite scenario of Belgium's ethnoscape.[39]

[38] Marginal importance is given in the narrative to Bora, the youngest sibling, which explains the scarce engagement with his character in my reading of the film. Apparently the best integrated of the three, he mostly functions as a catalyzer for the familial reconciliation at the end of the film.

[39] As Brinker Gabler and Smith argue in *Writing New Identities: Gender, Nation, and Immigration in Contemporary Europe*, neo-colonial practices of "integration" and "assimilation" are frequently employed to exert control over the potential disruption of national identity as a matter of cultural and ethnic homogeneity. Assimilation is especially dangerous: "[g]rounded on the discourse of universalism, it operates always unidirectionally. It assumes the

Fig. 1.11: Translocal connection (Screenshot, *Turquaze*)

Fig. 1.12: Translocal connection (Screenshot, *Turquaze*)

Fig. 1.13: Translocal connection (Screenshot, *Turquaze*)

resolvability of difference, its erasure in the becoming like, becoming the same. A stable, essential, unified national identity absorbs, refines, and neutralizes difference, but remains itself unchanged by those differences. Yet in the cultural imaginary differences may never be fully resolvable." (1997, 9)

Fig. 1.14: Translocal connection (Screenshot, *Turquaze*)

Fig. 1.15: Translocal connection (Screenshot, *Turquaze*)

Analogous instances of textual continuity between homeland and hostland return later in the film, when Timur decides to go back to Turkey after an unsuccessful encounter with Sarah's apprehensive parents—which interestingly takes place during the Spiegel String Quartet concert shown at the beginning of the film. The decision to leave Flanders seems to underline the depth of Timur's identitary split, and his need to reconnect with a past that is not only represented by the attachment to the homeland, but also by the memory of a dead lover and future wife now buried in Turkey. In the sequence that precedes the character's departure, another spatial-temporal juxtaposition is introduced to situate the film's main geo-cultural locations on a plane of simultaneity. While his mother is nostalgically browsing through an old album of family pictures in Istanbul, Timur is shown playing the trumpet in his modest room in Ghent. A close-up of the character's face suffused in a warm, golden light catches him in a state of distress. As Timur seemingly takes his definitive decision and presses the keys of his musical instrument, the lighting turns from gold to blue and the same colour palette allows the transition to the following shot of a ferry that the character is taking to reach Istanbul (fig. 1.16-1.21).

Fig. 1.16: Border-crossing fluidity (Screenshot, *Turquaze*)

Fig. 1.17: Border-crossing fluidity (Screenshot, *Turquaze*)

Fig. 1.18: Border-crossing fluidity (Screenshot, *Turquaze*)

Fig. 1.19: Border-crossing fluidity (Screenshot, *Turquaze*)

Fig. 1.20: Border-crossing fluidity (Screenshot, *Turquaze*)

Fig. 1.21: Border-crossing fluidity (Screenshot, *Turquaze*)

The fluidity of border-crossing movements and spatial-temporal synchronicity as a prerogative of the diasporic character is however disrupted soon after his departure, when Sarah decides to inquire about Timur's absence and then joins him in Istanbul in the attempt to save their relationship. After consulting with both Bora and Ediz, Sarah literally materializes at Timur's dead lover's grave, where the young man is sitting alone, lost in contemplation. By avoiding the use of establishing shots to track the character travelling from one location to the

other (the only shot of a plane's takeoff appears at the beginning of the film), the editing seems to translate Sarah's willingness to move freely across dimensions of geographical and cultural belonging as the necessary condition of acceptance and existence of her translocal relationship with Timur.

In the montage sequence that follows their encounter at the cemetery, the couple is shown wandering around Istanbul, while the melancholic music that functioned as a *leitmotiv* for Timur's return to the homeland is replaced by Bert Ostyn's original song *Little Rascal*, a catchy electronic track that blends a seemingly Middle Eastern melody with English lyrics about an ephemeral encounter between two lovers. Although textually unrelated to the actual dynamics of their relationship, the song functions as a conduit for Timur and Sarah to encounter each other in a shared space, which happens to be for once familiar to the diasporic character, and foreign to the Flemish one. The transitory moment of bliss is however tainted by uncertainties and doubts, as Sarah returns to Flanders without knowing if her romance with Timur will have any future (a melancholic farewell occurs this time in the non-place of Istanbul's airport).

Even so, Sarah's unexpected entrance into the homeland forces Timur to reconsider the depth of his feelings for her, and more importantly his potential role as the gatekeeper of multiple, but not necessarily contradictory national and cultural identities. Such a realization has to move through instances of self-destruction before being put into practice, as Timur is caught in a fight with some strangers in Istanbul and decides to return to Ghent only afterwards, bringing his mother back with him. The family is eventually reunited when Bora is involved in a car accident after stealing a motorbike, and remaining conflicts between Timur and Ediz are resolved in the mutual understanding of each other's identitary and gender struggles. The definitive reconciliation of the "split" takes however place in the final scene of the film, when Timur leads Ghent's marching band outside of the same laundromat he met Sarah for the first time and plays for her, using music once again as the privileged form of expression of his feelings. No longer a boundary, the glass window between the two lovers thus becomes a thin wall that unifies rather than separates, an osmotic membrane through which differences and dissonances are not erased, but eventually shared, embraced, and harmonized (fig. 1.22).

Fig. 1.22: Timur and Sarah reunited (Screenshot, *Turquaze*)

While Timur's narrative arc is mostly focused on the negotiation of his national and ethnic identities, Ediz's storyline delves more explicitly into questions of plural masculinities and negotiated gender dynamics in relation to the character's diasporic condition. Ediz is depicted in the film as the most conservative of the three brothers, as well as the one that most forcefully and loyally adheres to the expectations and codifications of his traditional gender role—or what he believes as such. The character's attempt to act as a surrogate father after the death of the actual one is carried out through a rigid enforcement of mono-cultural behaviours that seems to reject the plurality of the diasporic condition altogether. The refusal to speak Flemish within the household—thus preventing both brothers and wife from doing the same—is accompanied by the imposition of regular dinner gatherings and conversations about Timur's prospects of marriage with a Turkish woman. The success of Ediz's paternal re-enactment is doomed not only by the rigidity of his mindset, but also by the impossibility for him to be a father, as the character's sterility is revealed later in the film.

Whereas for Timur the main source of anxiety consisted in finding a balance in his belonging to different geo-cultural temporalities and spaces, Ediz's defining conflict is the inability to fulfill the standards of masculinity expected in the homeland and restaged in the hostland. In this sense, Ediz's character complies with the categories of transnational masculinity elaborated by Ernesto Vasquez del Aguila in conclusion to his book *Being a Man in a Transnational World* (2014). Herein, the author maps three main social representations of manhood tailored on the experience of Latin American, and more specifically Peruvian men: the "winner," the "failed," and the "good enough man." Outside the geopolitical framework adopted by Aguila's research, the same patterns of masculinity can be used to analyze the trajectory of

Ediz in *Turquaze*, which moves from winner to failed man to ultimately embody (or envision) the good enough man.

Ediz's conservative demeanour at the beginning of the film corresponds to his desire to accomplish the position of the winner migrant, which Aguila describes as: "hegemonic masculinity that achieves the "migrant's dreams": personal achievement and fulfilment of family's expectations in the host country" (2014, 224). A wife, a stable job, a house, and a seemingly cohesive nuclear family: these are the pillars of Ediz's self-assertion as the winner man. Nonetheless, the character's inability to achieve paternity—that is to ultimately prove himself a "functional" male subject—situates him along the lines of the failed man, who "suffer[s] from emasculation among [his] male peers and also with women" (224). Ediz's struggle is however not just a matter of gender inadequacy, but points more widely towards the ways in which forms of diasporic displacement and socio-cultural hybridization affect perceptions and practices of manhood. The failed performance of masculinity, as Aguila extensively argues, cannot be disjoined from the geo-cultural environment that surrounds the male subject, and in the specific case of the male characters in *Turquaze*, from the shifts in family dynamics that occur throughout the film.

Timur's capacity to bring identities and cultures together ultimately affects Ediz's trajectory, as the character is brought to reconsider the nature of his gender role, as well as of his interactions with the wife Zehra, in more flexible terms. There cannot be only one univocal understanding of identity either in gendered or national terms: both are predicated on the basis of complexity, sometimes contradiction, but ultimately negotiation. Aguila's concept of the "good enough man" is therefore the most interesting for the purposes of this section, as it is used "to describe the outcome of men's attempt to reconcile the paradoxes and contradictions inherent in masculinity" (225). Instead of conceiving hegemonic masculinity and male failure as the opposite pole of the same gender spectrum, Aguila advocates for the coexistence of different dimensions of masculine capital and the non-homogenizing reconciliation of contradictory instances of male performance, in a similar fashion to what Keating and Lecours' abovementioned notions of plurinational democracy and negotiated sovereignty attempted to do for national identity. The capacity to accept the uncertainties and complexities of masculinity, as well as of the diasporic condition more broadly, becomes therefore more relevant than the fulfilment of supposedly univocal standards of biological and gendered "functioning." And it is

precisely by acquiring such a capacity that Ediz's character can accept to display his vulnerability outside of the seemingly safe space of his own solitude (fig. 1.23-1.24), and rather share it with a companion who is ultimately equal and no longer subordinated or neglected (fig. 1.25).

Fig. 1.23: Ediz' vulnerability (Screenshot, *Turquaze*)

Fig. 1.24: Ediz' vulnerability (Screenshot, *Turquaze*)

Fig. 1.25: Ediz' vulnerability (Screenshot, *Turquaze*)

Such a positive outcome of gendered and national-cultural renegotiation is instead denied to the male protagonist of Adil El Arbi and Bilall Fallah's first feature *Image*, where the reality

of migrant lives in Brussels is caught through the lens of media exploitation. Eva (Laura Verlinden), an ambitious reporter from Ghent working for a tyrannical anchorman (Gene Bervoets), is determined to shoot a documentary on Moroccan immigrants living in the multiethnic neighbourhood of Molenbeek in Brussels,[40] in the attempt to rehabilitate their public image. While scouting for locations and "insiders," she encounters Lahbib (Nabil Mallat), a young Moroccan man who offers to guide her to the discovery of the neighbourhood. The relationship between the two is however challenged by Eva's obsession for journalistic truth, and by Lahbib's efforts to maintain his reputation within the neighbourhood while at the same time questioning his own line of conduct.

Confronted with the intensification of xenophobic waves triggered by both the migrant crisis (2015) and the media coverage of the November 2015 attacks in Paris—and even more so the March 2016 bombings in Brussels—the work of El Arbi and Fallah holds great relevance with respect to the (mis)representation of migrants and diasporic (male) subjects in Europe, and more specifically in Belgium. Already in their short film *Broeders*, funded with VAF's Wildcard,[41] the Flemish-Moroccan duo reflected on the divided perception of Belgian-based migrant masculinities, laying the ground for a deeper engagement with the subject matter in the following features *Image* and *Black*. Narrated as a reverse fairy-tale, *Broeders* portrays the parallel trajectories of the two titular brothers, Karim (Nabil Mallat) and Nassim (Moraad El Kasmi), living in the same neighbourhood but following opposite lifestyles. Karim works hard to keep the children off the street and complies with the same precepts of kindness and respect in his everyday life, while Nassim behaves recklessly as a womanizer and a drug dealer. An unexpected turn of events forces them to switch moral sides, provoking tragic consequences. The film's unhappy ending stages the simultaneous killing of the two brothers, who lie on the opposite sides of a street line (fig. 1.1) while the narrating voice asks (in Arabic, but the film is subtitled in both Flemish and English): "A question: who is going to heaven and who is going to hell? Karim, who was on the right track all of his life, but was about to kill? Or Nassim, who was on the wrong track all his life, but was about to save a life?"

[40] Situated in the North-Western area of Brussels, the municipality of Molenbeek-Saint-Jean has a dense, multi-cultural component of Muslim inhabitants, Turkish, Congolese, and Eastern European immigrants, and several other ethnicities and nationalities. It has infamously surged to the attention of international media in recent years as a fertile breeding ground for Islamic terrorism and ISIS recruitment in Europe.

[41] Since 2007, graduate students from film schools in the Flemish region can apply to win one of the six Wildcards offered by VAF to sponsor two first feature films (up to €60,000,000 each), two documentaries (€40,000,000) and one animation project (€60,000,000).

An echo of the same lines returns in the final moments of *Image*, where Eva concludes her documentary on Lahbib by stating: "In this world there is only one question. If you do the wrong thing for the right reasons is that a good deed?" Both *Broeders* and *Image* bring up analogous interrogatives surrounding the self-perception and construction of the migrant image. That is, what possibilities are there for migrant men in Belgium to escape stereotypical and biased representations? How is the negotiation of their gendered image challenged by their positioning within a complex web of entangled national and ethnic identities? Do migrant and diasporic men exist only as split subjects comprised within Manichean dimensions of ethics, spaces, and temporalities? Or is there a way to offer a more prismatic representation of their national, ethnic, and gender identities?

Expanding on the limited framework of the short film, *Image* abandons the clear-cut separation of good and evil employed in *Broeders*' narrative to give space to a more nuanced characterization of both the migrant figure (Lahbib), and the Flemish native (Eva), whose ethical stances are purposely ambiguous and highly problematized throughout the film. Such a nuanced perspective is attested by the passage from a fable-like narration to a less archetypical, and more cynical engagement with the portrayal of immigrants in the media, which is conveyed through a mise-en-abyme of different screens and points of view. Resorting to a multiplication of devices and instances of news reporting, *Image* works on the meta-textual level to reinforce its critical standpoint towards the stereotypical representation of migrant subjects, without however resorting to equally unproductive strategies of victimization.

The film's opening sequence is particularly emblematic in these regards. The camera functions as an omniscient narrator, moving forward from the establishing shot of a blurry television screen onto the screen itself, where fragments of a video interview *in medias res* suddenly appear. As the television is expanded to occupy the entire frame, the interpolation of video and film image is resolved in favour of the latter, implying that a movement from a meta-filmic prologue to the actual film has taken place. The interviewee looks into the camera while talking to Eva and her two cameramen—who remain out of frame—generating the impression that the documentary itself constitutes the first and main layer of the film's narration. The illusion is maintained until a group of immigrants surrounds the reporters' car, forcing them to turn off the camera and therefore bringing the viewer back to the "reality" of the primary film narrative (fig. 1.26-1.31). Lahbib is introduced for the first time as he enters the car and

convinces Eva that if she really wants to get a taste of what Molenbeek is truly like, it is him that she needs to hire. Once the business transaction is completed, Eva asks Lahbib where they should go. The editing cuts to the film's opening credits, a montage sequence of newscasts and voice-overs of news reporting (in Flemish) about immigrant criminality in Brussels.

Fig. 1.26: Meta-textual narrative (Screenshot, *Image*)

Fig. 1.27: Meta-textual narrative (Screenshot, *Image*)

Fig. 1.28: Meta-textual narrative (Screenshot, *Image*)

Fig. 1.29: Meta-textual narrative (Screenshot, *Image*)

Fig. 1.30: Meta-textual narrative (Screenshot, *Image*)

Fig. 1.31: Meta-textual narrative (Screenshot, *Image*)

The sequence sets the tone for the meta-textual reflection prompted by the film as a whole, which departs from the narrative pretext of a loose crime-based plot in order to address the mediated representation of migrant subjectivities as its most pressing concern. The main storyline follows Eva as she struggles to defend the integrity of her project, as well as her future career, against the unethical plans of her boss Herman Verbeek—who is plotting to remain in charge of his own news show. Whereas Eva is convinced that a less biased approach to Lahbib's life is necessary to understand his character—although her objectivity is eventually compromised by her deeper relationship with the subject—Verbeek follows the cannibalistic rules of news

reporting and hijacks Eva's film in order to show the most sensationalistic aspects of Lahbib's criminal figure. The documentary thus becomes the bone of contention between the two characters and their opposite stances towards the ethics of journalism, dramatically resulting in the killing of Verbeek at Eva's hand during the premiere of her film. The murder eventually solidifies the bond between Eva and Lahbib, who become accomplices and run away together only to return in the film's closing scenes and once again in the mediated form of news reporting. Footage of the two fugitives is shown along with Verbeek's obituary and the ambiguity of the characters' relationship ("Are they together? Has she been abducted?" the reporters wonder in voice over) leaves no space for Lahbib's redemption in the eyes of the media, carving out space for critical debate in the bitterness of the film's *Ringkomposition*.

Is Lahbib a criminal or the victim of circumstances? *Image* seems less concerned with finding a univocal answer to the question, and more interested in positioning the character's subjectivity at the crossroad of diverging instances of self-representation and external perception of his gender and cultural identity. Lahbib's configuration as a multifaceted subject is in most cases produced by others, either through the director's omniscient gaze, Eva's perspective, the media apparatus surrounding the narrative, or a combination of the three. When Eva is not following him to collect material for her documentary, it is through the lenses of the film's multiple cameras that Lahbib's image is constructed in both positive and negative terms. The character is shown harassing a stranger in Brussels' metro, stealing from a liquor store, and beating almost to death an alleged pedophile who offered him protection when in prison. However, he is also portrayed helping a kid overcome his fear of the razor at the local barbershop and recording a song for Eva. These instances are offered to the viewer as the privileged spectator of Lahbib's life outside the determined framework of Eva's documentary or the biased staging of migrant criminality in the footage that opens and closes the film. This does not however mean that Lahbib has no consciousness or agency over of the complexities at play in the articulation of his public and private persona. On the contrary, the character is very much aware of the rules established within the neighbourhood in terms of masculine and socio-cultural capital, and acts in accordance with them, complying with expected models of hegemonic and violent masculinity to the detriment of his own sensibility.

As in *Turquaze*, the privileged point of access for understanding the (self)articulation of Lahbib's multiple identities is music. One early scene in particular epitomizes the split

consciousness of the character's gendered and cultural subjectivity. As part of the research for her documentary, Lahbib invites Eva to see his apartment. Once seated, Lahbib starts playing a ballad on his guitar, and suddenly stops when Eva takes out the camera and starts filming him. When asked why he does not want to be recorded, Lahbib replies that what he is doing "is personal," and whereas he can play "gangsta rap" music with his friends, he could never do the same with Arabic lyrical poetry, since the risk of being considered weak by his peers would be too high of a price to afford. Even in the security of his home Lahbib cannot escape the constrictions of his character, the "thug" that can find any weapon if need be, and whose reputation is build on the myth of a reckless criminal past. The control exercised by Lahbib over the construction of his own persona is therefore carefully calculated but not necessarily embraced to the fullest, as the character's behaviour is often subsumed under the fulfillment of social expectations but not to their willing acceptance. As Lahbib himself raps later in the film, while performing a freestyle song in a hip-hop club under the careful scrutiny of Eva's camera, "The street is no movie and I don't want this role."

The multilayered structure of the *Image*'s mise-en-abyme thus serves to underline that although it is the media's responsibility to provide a realistic image of migrant existence, the migrant subjects themselves participate in the construction of a public image shaped on internal pressures within the neighbourhood's space. This point seems to resonate with Floya Anthias' contention that "diasporic or racialised groups (like all subordinated social groups including those of class), may be subjected to two sets of gender relations: those of the dominant society and those internal to the group" (1998, 572-573). In her evaluation of ethnicity and race as non-exhaustive categories of inquiry for understanding diaspora as an intersectional phenomenon, Anthias argues indeed that gender dynamics affect diasporic and migrant subjects in different ways on a transnational and a local scale. Similarly to Ediz in *Turquaze*, but more violently so, the ambiguity and complexity of Lahbib's negotiated image has to deal in fact with the entanglement of gendered and cultural codes embedded in the migratory experience. Differently from the characters in Balci's film, however, Lahbib holds no visible ties to his homeland, nor he does to his migratory past: Brussels, or rather "BX", is the only space he recognizes as his own, and it is precisely within the microcosm of the neighbourhood that intertwined rules of homeland and hostland are played out.

Although distant in tones and outcomes, *Turquaze* and *Image* are therefore similar in the way they provide alternative spaces for the articulation and negotiation of cultural and gender identities in the Flemish context. Rather than using cross-regional and sub-national tensions to think about identitary splits, diasporic and migrant films employ the city and the neighbourhood as alternatives to the region to articulate their reflection on geo-cultural and gender identity in Flanders. Produced with a budget of €289.161,70 coming exclusively from Flemish sources (VAF, Eyeworks Film Production, and the Belgian tax-shelter) *Image* is shot only partially in Ghent, and almost entirely in the Molenbeek municipality of Brussels. The geopolitical space of the "hood" is therefore crucial for understanding the microscopic ramifications of national, regional, and local identities within Belgium's fragmented scenario. This is reflected in the film at both the geographical and the linguistic level—the two dimensions being deeply intertwined in the historical development of the Belgian nation-state, and of its shattering into semi-autonomous regions.

Whereas Flemish is used sporadically, Arabic and especially French take the lion's share of the film's linguistic component, which confirms Miriam Ben-Rafael and Eliezer Ben-Rafael's study of Brussels' linguistic landscape (LL) as a "focus of multiple contradictions" and ethnolinguistic antagonisms (2009, 402). The authors explain that "[t]o be the capital of Belgium implies French-Flemish bilingualism since both languages are official in this region… as the capital of the Flemish region, Brussels should however reveal a preferential approach to Flemish" (402). In opposition to the latter claim, the research shows a consistently marginal use of Flemish in most of the city's municipalities. Within the Arab-Muslim neighborhoods in particular, French is used extensively either unilingually or in conjunction with Arabic, Flemish, and English, while Flemish is almost absent regardless the alleged bilingualism of the city/region (as Lahbib notes sarcastically at the beginning of the film, "À quoi le flamand?"[42]). *Image* thus deflects from the monolinguistic assertion of Flemish nationalism as the congruence of territory, community, and language (Blommaert, 2011), and rather points towards a diverse and more articulated network of identities at play in the (re)configuration of national belonging in Flanders, using Brussels as the converging ground of supranational, national, regional and ethnic tensions. Along with a larger corpus of accented films made in Flanders, *Image* hence allows us to rethink the complex interplay of nationhood and manhood not only within a regional and

[42] "What's the point of speaking Flemish?" (Author's translation)

national framework, but also, and more interestingly so, within the complex microcosm of the diasporic and migrant space. A space that, as in the case of *Rundskop* and *Welp*, invites to a more nuanced engagement with issues of gender and national cultural identity within the Flemish context.

Conclusion

Taking current Flemish cinema as its privileged case study and employing the notion of "split" as its central conceptual tool, this chapter has aimed to provide a non-exhaustive but symptomatic account of how the broader questions concerning the validity of the national cinema framework, the shifting understandings of national identity, and the revaluation of the role and performance of male subjectivities are deeply intertwined and affected by the dynamics of a film industry and imaginary at the crossroad of regional and national, local and global, transnational and translocal dynamics.

In the first section of the chapter the infrastructural and cultural revision of Flemish cinema as a regional phenomenon with the proportions of a national industry within a global reach has offered the possibility to revise the categories of national cinema beyond the scope of nation-state recognition, widening Hjort's small national/global model, and challenging Mosley's critical stance towards the lack of "an appropriate 'national' cinematic identity" in Belgium due to the increasing tensions of the "split screen" (2001, 5). The split has been reappropriated to read through both the structures of contemporary Flemish cinema and the specificity of the examined film texts, so as to rehabilitate the "dialectic of unity and duality" contested by Mosley as a "highly problematic subject" at the core of Belgian film history (2001, 5).

Such a dialectic has been crucially employed in the second section of the chapter in order to unpack the predicament of male subjects afflicted by their own inadequacy to mono-nationalist ideologies and univocal gender demands, and it has eventually led to reconsidering the position of conflicted masculinities and national identities in a plurinational space. The analysis of *Rundskop* and *Welp* as examples of the unsettled interplay of nationalism and masculinity in recent developments of Flemish cinema has allowed us to address two sets of intertwined issues. On the one hand, the positive response to the films on the domestic and foreign markets has provided evidence of the consolidation and success of Flemish film industry

as a consistent and coherent case of national regional cinema expanding on a global scale. On the other, the close examination of identity and gender struggles experienced by the film protagonists within the osmotic ethnoscape of multi-regional, plurinational Belgium has offered a set of possibility for reconsidering contrived images of (mono)national masculinity and exclusionary patterns of gender and national cultural identity.

The third and final section of the chapter has expanded on the plurinational framework discussed with respect to *Rundskop* and *Welp*, looking at diasporic and migrant filmmaking, and more broadly accented cinema in Flanders, as a site of further inquiry for potential re-articulations of male subjectivities and national cultural identities in the Flemish film imaginary. Moving beyond the binary model of plurinational self-identification, the work of accented filmmakers in Flanders as pointed towards the necessity of considering gender and ethnicity as crucial factors in the reconfiguration and understanding of national and cultural belonging. Traces of accented style, and particularly the employment of hybrid spaces and temporalities, have been looked at so as to comprehend how diasporic and migratory experiences can be reshaped and reframed in the composite scenario of Belgium's geo-political scenario, and how plural forms of masculinity can navigate through it.

The limited scope of the examined film corpus does not allow us to extend the analysis conducted herein to the totality of Flemish cinema, and nor it is the intention of the chapter to do so. The present state of Flemish film industry and the selected film texts are rather used symptomatically to call attention on the potential role of subnational entities reshaping the understanding of national cinema, belonging, and gender. Confronted with the impossibility to adopt Hoegaerts' "common language" of Belgian masculinities to read through the representation of men in Belgium's current subnational cinemas, this chapter ultimately aims to suggest an alternative take on the subject matter, endorsing multiplicity over unity, dissonance over homogeneity, and conceiving a polyphony of bodies and subjectivities not necessarily included within a unitary design of national culture and identity, as well as ethnicity, race, and gender.

CHAPTER 2

Scotsmen Revisited:
Gender Troubles and National Anxieties in Scottish Pre-Referendary Cinema

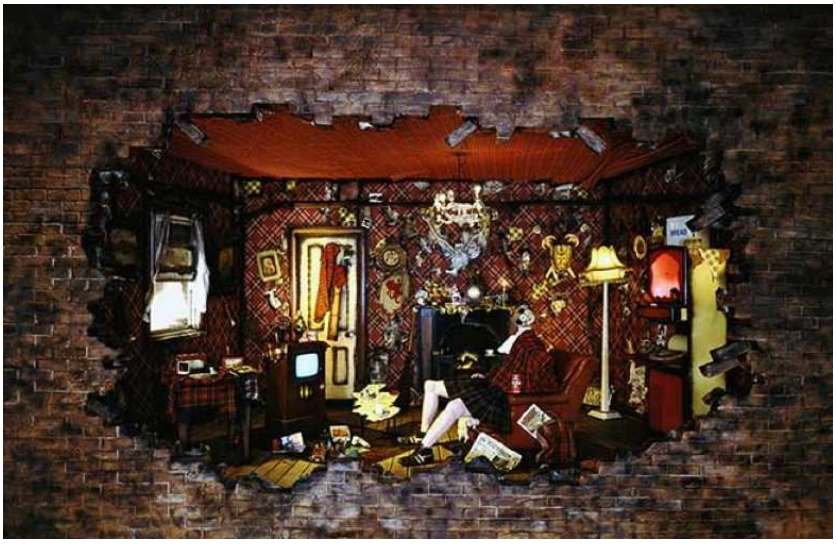

Fig. 2.1: *The Scotsman* (Ron O'Donnell, 1987, photographed installation)

Introduction

"This is not a Scotsman, this is a hooligan!" In a short video accompanying the exhibition of Ron O'Donnell's photo-collage *The Scotsman* (1987) at the Kelvingrove Museum in Glasgow an elderly woman replied in anger to the interviewer asking for her opinion on the artwork in question. On display in the Scottish Art section of the Museum among more flattering depictions of heroic Scottish masculinity, O'Donnell's "Scotsman" challenges the viewer with the blank gaze on his soccer-ballooned face, surrounded by a delirium of Tartanry[43] and other stereotypical Scottish paraphernalia amassed behind a destroyed brick wall (fig. 2.1). The woman's enraged comment was part of a collection of testimonies titled "Scottish Shorts," which offered a compendium to O'Donnell art piece by asking viewers and visitors to explain what the objects depicted in the collage represented for them in the present time. Capturing my curiosity as a foreigner exposed to local understandings of Scottish masculinity, the comment became a

[43] A derogatory term used to define the excessive use of tartan and other clichéd symbols of Scottish imagery to produce a romanticised and stereotypical view of Scotland and its history. In critical commentaries on Scottish cultural imaginary, Tartanry is often associated with Kailyard, a popular genre of Scottish fiction in vogue in the nineteenth century and based on sentimental and idealistic depictions of domestic Scottish life.

compelling starting point for my investigation of masculine and national identities in Scottish moving images, and more broadly within the local-global tensions of subnational cinemas. The disdain demonstrated towards O'Donnell's allegedly inaccurate portrayal of Scottish manhood spawned indeed a set of central questions for my interrogation of gendered and national anxieties in the post-devolutionary developments of Scottish film industry and imaginary.[44] What is a Scotsman? How is "he" represented? And who is "he" today?

I visited Scotland in the summer of 2016, in the days following the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum (informally renamed "Brexit referendum" by the international press), which determined the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union by triggering the article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty.[45] Landed in Glasgow on June 26, I woke up the following day in a drastically changed scenario. Passed by 51.89% "leave" votes over 48.11% "remain," the referendum signalled a landmark in the socio-political and cultural scape of the UK as a national context already fragmented by devolution of powers[46] and contrasting stances towards the supranational authority of the EU—with Scotland and Northern Ireland supporting the "remain" front as a pledge of commitment to Europe, and Britain and Wales endorsing a delicate parting process from the Union.

In her now seemingly prescient volume *Scottish Nationalism and the Idea of Europe* (2004), Atsuko Ichijo presented the reader with a first-of-its-kind analysis of the ostensibly paradoxical relationship between Scotland's national drive and Europe's supranational influence, prophetically asking: "on what basis can one construct the whole idea that being pro-Europe is good for Scotland, and, furthermore, that it will lead to Scottish self-determination?" (2).

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[44] In this chapter, my critical inquiry of Scottish masculinity stems from the specificities of Scotland's socio-political and cinematic reassessments in the aftermath of Scottish devolutionary period (1979-1999). These two decades of Scottish contemporary history are defined by a first and failed attempt to obtain home-rule in 1979, and a second successful one in 1997, followed by the consequent delegation of administrative powers to Scotland's devolved Parliament in 1999. As examined in further details in section 1 of the chapter, the devolutionary shift has consistently affected Scottish cultural production, not only in relation to the emergence of a properly funded film industry, but also to the renegotiation of gendered and national understandings of Scottish identity.

[45] Signed in December 2007 and in effect since December 2009, the Treaty amends and updates the previous Maastricht Treaty (1992) and the Treaty of Rome (1957), providing constitutional basis to the European Union. In its article 50 it states: "Any Member State may decide to withdraw from the Union in accordance with its own constitutional requirements." Article 50 has therefore become the bone of contention between UK's decision to leave EU and Scotland's intention to remain in the Union by virtue of its devolved status.

[46] Defined by its capacity to exercise legislative powers at the regional or local level by concession of a central government, a devolved subnational entity differs from a federal one by virtue of its dependency on the nation-state, and therefore included in a *de jure* unitary state.

Examining the shifting agenda of the Scottish National Party (SNP)[47] from the Euro-scepticism of the 1960s to the resolute pro-European campaign of the 1980s, Ichijo attempted to come to terms with the seemingly irreconcilable forces of Scotland's sovereigntist drives and European integration, locating in the latter a distinctive principle of recent Scottish nationalism (137). Deemed "exceptional" by the lack of detectable and shared indicators of national specificity such as language, religion, and race (18), Scottish civic nationalism found in the allegiance to Europe a reason to distinguish itself from England in its pursuit of nation-state determination (88). In the outcome of Scotland's first independence referendum, held in September 2014, the risk entailed by a potential secession from the EU was therefore considered one of the key factors for the triumph of the "Yes" vote. The reinstatement of such a possibility in the wake of Brexit's anti-European sentiments propelled the proposition of a second referendum, urged by First Minister of Scotland and leader of SNP Nicola Sturgeon as early as June 2016. A second referendum would deploy EU membership as the main currency to assess Scotland's independence and the acquisition of nation-state recognition over the country's current devolved situation, bypassing Scotland's dual status in favour of European affiliation and to the detriment of sovereignty-association within the UK.

Ichijo's leading question concerned the reasons for Scottish nationalism to be rebranded as a pro-European one both before and after devolution—thus renegotiating Scotland's local-regional specificity with the levelling traits of supranational authority. The critical scenario of the Brexit momentum allows the resumption of that very interrogative and its extension to Scotland's current cultural scape in relation to the intersecting constructions of national, gendered, and cinematic identities explored in this dissertation. That is, how are the ties between Scottish nationhood and manhood devolved in the shift from modern to postmodern, subnational to transnational, devolved to potentially independent identity? And how are the infrastructural

[47] Founded in 1934 after a merger of the National Party of Scotland with the Scottish Party, the Scottish National Party started acquiring considerable political force in the 1960s, when its ideological agenda shifted towards a more leftist, social democratic orientation. The pursuit of Scottish self-determination grew as a central concern for SNP along the 1960s and 1970s, culminating in the support to the first referendum on devolution in 1979. In the same year an internal split between gradualists and fundamentalists underlined SNP's conflicting positions on Scotland's achievement of independence, with the former advocating for a moderate approach based on devolution, and the latter for a more radical solution. The SNP's nationalist stances remained resolute after the success of the second referendum on devolution in 1997 and the failure of the referendum on independence in 2014. First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon currently leads the party, after previous leader Alex Salmond left helm in reaction to the defeat of the first independence referendum.

and gendered dynamics of the Scottish film industry and imaginary renegotiated in the intersection of devolved, national, supranational, and transnational tensions?

As observed in the Introduction to this dissertation, the intertwined paths of modern nationalism and contrived masculinity have been heavily reshaped by the disruption of nation-state primacy in the wake of globalization and transnationalism, as well as by the peculiarity of current subnational contexts in which neither notions of national identity and male subjectivity can hold univocal nor fixed meaning. The critical reconfiguration of masculine and national identities in both socio-cultural and cinematic terms have occurred in subnational entities and their film industries in concurrence with pivotal historical turns: the emergence of federal authorities in 1990s Belgium, as discussed in Chapter 1; the failed ideology of the Quiet Revolution in 1960s Quebec, and the psychological backlash of the two failed referenda in 1989 and 1995, as it will be examined in Chapter 3. Such historical breaking points have been mirrored by equally salient developments in the cultural imaginaries and cinematic infrastructures of these subnational contexts, coinciding in Flanders with the insurgence of film funding structures with a cross-regional scope and yet a nationally-oriented agenda; and in Quebec with the flourishing of popular forms of cinematic production dealing with the rethinking of post-referendary masculine lineages. Neither tangential nor accessory, the renegotiation of masculinity and its relocation within the national picture thus emerges as a crucial question in subnational contexts lacking nation-state recognition but thriving to assert themselves historically, geopolitically, and cinematically along the lines of national-belonging principles.

The Scottish case taken into examination in this chapter is similarly scrutinized under the lens of political, cinematic, and gender-charged historical events. The point of departure for my inquiry is located within the devolution processes that occurred between 1997 and 1999, which coincided not only with the establishment of a devolved Scottish Parliament, but also with the consolidation of local funding structures in support to the so-called New Scottish Cinema (NSC) in the mid-1990s. Greeted enthusiastically at first by Scottish film scholars as the awakening of a national cinematic consciousness (Petrie 2000), the novelty of NSC underwent critical rethinking in the late 2000s due to the shrinking potential of local funding and production systems (Petrie 2010/2014), but it also gave way to a positive rethinking of Scottish filmmaking in transnational terms (Murray 2014/2015). The passage from national to transnational film industry did not

however only affect the conditions of existence of a properly called "Scottish cinema," but it also impacted the way Scottish masculinities were reconfigured onscreen, revising the mythical conditions of primal masculinity and untroubled manhood of pre-modern Scotland in the shift from a modern, industrialized society, to a postmodern, nationally unstable one.

In her volume *The Mighty Scot: Nation, Gender, and the Nineteenth Century Mystique of Scottish Masculinity*, Maureen Martin approaches the question of Scottish national masculinity by examining the ways in which Scottish national and male identities have been constructed via the literary and artistic work of both Scottish and English authors. Looking at the nation-as-narration trope (Anderson 1983, Bhabha 1990, Hall 1996) from a gendered standpoint, and with respect to the emergence of small nations and nationalities in the wake of globalization, Martin unpacks the ambiguous relationship between Scottish and British manhood, highlighting how preconceived understandings of Scotland as "Britain's masculine heartland" proved ultimately detrimental to the emergence of a solid conception of Scottish nationhood:

> This masculinizing of Scotland both contributed to and complicated Scots' own attempts to construct a national identity and secure sense of manhood. Central to such attempts was the question of how Scotland's story should be told. Narrative is important in the imagining of any nation, but in the absence of an independent state that can help define the nation through its actions, narrative becomes especially vital. (2009, 3)

The mythical characterization of the Highlander Scotsman[48] as the beacon of "mighty masculinity" in the eighteenth century first, and even more so after the enforcement of gender constructs in the Victorian era (6), did not only consolidate the paradigmatic nature of Scottish manhood as the main signifier of Scottish nationhood, but was also co-opted as the emblem of British masculinity at large. In face of the colonial ties between Scotland and Britain, and the profound difference between Scottish "rugged virility" and British "effeminacy," the

[48] Although not officially recognized as geographical and administrative entities, Highlands and Lowlands are the cultural and historical regions in the Northern and Southern part of Scotland. The two areas are divided by the Highland Boundary Fault, a line established in 1746 after the Battle of Culloden witnessed the defeat of Jacobite leader "Bonnie" Prince Charles Edward Stuart at the hand of loyalist forces and led to the end of Highlander culture. In the aftermath of the failed Jacobite rebellion and although only loosely rooted in the reality of Scottish pre-modern and modern past, the patriotic and romanticized allure of the Highlander Scot in tartan and kilt became a dangerous conduit for the masculine narrative of Scottish nationhood in the nineteenth as well as in the twentieth century. As Martin further highlights in her introduction: "[t]he identification of true Scottishness with Highland culture mystifies and displaces historic Scottish nationhood, shifting it from history and politics to the safer realm of myth and romance" (Martin 2003, 9).

construction of British manhood depended on the appropriation of the Scottish "other" as part and parcel of the British "self", with severe repercussions on Scotland's own gendered and national self-perception. Such a dispossession of Scotland's agency over its own national and masculine narrative in the midst of modern processes of nation-state building is analyzed by Martin as the locus of Scotland's most profound anxieties. The nineteenth century, which both Tom Nairn (1976) and Atsuko Ichijo (2004) already examined at length for its paradoxical absence of European nationalism, thus emerges as the historical epicenter of Scottish ongoing national and gendered uncertainty.

Stemming from the complex trajectory of critical masculinity in Scottish post-devolutionary culture as its historical point of entry, this chapter aims to explore more specifically the intricate relationship between nationhood and gender in the pre-referendary moment of the Scottish film industry and imaginary, using two key film texts—*Filth* (Jon S. Baird, 2013) and *Under the Skin* (2013)—as its privileged case studies. The choice of the pre-referendary moment is not accidental, as it concurred not only with a critical rethinking of Scotland's position within the UK, the EU, and more broadly the world, but also with a compelling moment in Scottish cinematic production that witnessed the engagement with themes of gender identity in the crucial times preceding the vote on independence.

Keeping in mind the articulation of this dissertation along the three major conceptual axes of national identity, critical masculinities, and subnational film industries and imaginaries, this chapter will be divided into three sections cutting across the examination of such central frameworks. The first section will offer an overview of film studies scholarship on Scottish cinema so as to contextualize the peculiarities of the Scottish film industry within an unstable and fluctuating trajectory that moved from the national/native exploits of the NSC between 1995 and 1999 to its seemingly "ecliptic" downfall (Petrie 2014) and transnational potential in the late 2000s (Murray 2015). The movement from one stage of industrial development to the other will be coupled with a reflection on the mutating gendered spaces and scenarios that emerged in Scottish film and media in conjunction with the historical and socio-political transitions experienced by Scotland between the 1990s and the 2000s (Sillars and MacDonald 2009). Furthermore, the complex entanglement of Scottish-British relationships both historically and cinematically will be paramount in the understanding of how notions of national identity,

national cinema, and national masculinity are renegotiated and reconstructed in Scottish cinema from an infrastructural and representational point of view.

The second section will examine issues of self-hatred and troubled masculinities, using Jon S. Baird's *Filth* (2013) as its privileged case study. A careful analysis of the film in relation to other adaptations of Irvin Welsh's novels (particularly *Trainspotting* [Danny Boyle, 1996]) will allow us to tackle the renegotiation of the hard man archetype within Scottish post-devolutionary cinema and the pre-referendary momentum, with a particular attention to the re-construction of the masculine subject in the passage from one historical turn to the other. Symptoms of national and gendered nostalgia for Scotland's past, disruptions of hegemonic masculinity, and melancholic performances of male femininity will converge in my examination of *Filth* as a possible path of exploration of the ongoing tension between critical masculinities and national instability in Scottish culture.

In the third and final section of the chapter, a close reading of Jonathan Glazer's *Under the Skin* (2013) will provide a critical point of contrast to the masculine narratives largely at play in the Scottish film imaginary. Glazer's film, and Scarlett Johansson's role in particular, will be taken as an example of the interplay of gendered and national anxieties in the devolved cinema of pre-referendary Scotland from a feminine/feminist perspective. Analyzed in conjunction with other female-centered narratives such as Lynne Ramsay's *Morvern Callar* (2002) and Andrea Arnold's *Red Road* (2006), the section will look at *Under the Skin* as a subversive case for exploring current renegotiations of gender and national identities in subnational cinemas facing global changes. The employment of Johansson's embodied and disembodied stardom as both a global icon of post-human femininity and a potential conduit for local politics will allow us to address and rethink questions of gender performance, female sexuality, and gendered nationalism in both transnational and subnational terms. Focusing on the cross-gender and cross-genre elements at play in Glazer's film, this final section will offer a counterpoint to the notions of masculinity explored not only in this chapter but in this dissertation at large, carving out a space for subnational cinemas to challenge not only the modern interplay of nationalism and manhood, but also the very notion of masculinity and its existence on the national screen. By linking the analysis of *Under the Skin* to the contemporary political scenario of pre-referendary Scotland, the final section of this chapter will therefore start shifting the trajectory of this project

from questions of renegotiated masculinities to issues related to the agency and representation of female subjects and "other" subjects in national narratives and nation-building processes.

National and Transnational Turns in Scottish Cinemas and Masculinities

Situated in the northernmost geo-political area of Great Britain and the United Kingdom, Scotland is the second largest country in Britain, covering a third of the island's surface (77,933 km2; 30,090 sq. mi) and providing with about 9% of its population (5,404,700 millions according to the latest estimate[49]). Throughout its history and up to the present days, Scotland has entertained a complex web of relationships with its southern neighbour, England, as well as with Britain at large, in the attempt to gain independence as a kingdom first and a nation afterwards. This struggle for territorial and political emancipation dates back as far as to the ninth and tenth century, prior to the establishment of both kingdoms of England and Scotland. The starting point of the long-standing series of conflicts known as Anglo-Scottish Wars is however located within the First War of Scottish Independence, which lasted from the invasion of England in 1296 and the victory of the Battle of Stirling Bridge in 1297, to the peace Treaty of Edinburgh–Northampton in 1328. Following the coronation of Robert the Bruce as King of Scots in 1306 and his decisive victory in the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, the Declaration of Abroath—a symbolic letter sent to Pope John XXII—proclaimed the Kingdom of Scotland an independent sovereign state in 1320. In 1332 a Second War of Independence was triggered by the discontent of English "disinherited" noblemen deprived of their rights on Scottish lands after the Treaty of Edinburgh–Northampton. Sparked by the uprising of Edward Balliol and his claim to the Scottish throne with the support of King Edward III of England, the War ended in 1357 with the Treaty of Berwick. After a relatively peaceful period of intense cultural and artistic renaissance throughout the fifteenth century, Scotland's protestant reformation and secession from the Catholic Church prompted the return of warfare with England, popularised by novelist Walter Scott as the 'Rough Wooing' (December 1543 - March 1551). After the failed attempt of Henry VIII of England to arrange a marriage between his son Edward and Mary Stuart Queen of Scots, as a means of alliance between the two kingdoms, war was declared on Scotland and continued until it was deemed irrelevant in 1550. Mary reigned over Scotland until 1567, when

[49] "Mid-2016 population estimates Scotland," *National Records of Scotland* (NRS), 27 April 2017, https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/population-estimates/mid-year-2016/16mype-cahb.pdf Accessed 1 May 2017.

she was forced to abdicate in favour of her son James VI, King of Scots. After seeking help from her cousin Queen Elizabeth I of England, she was imprisoned by her in 1568 and executed in 1587.

The Anglo-Scottish Wars seemingly came to an end with the Union of the Crowns in 1603, which brought together the realms of England, Ireland, and Scotland under the ruling of James VI. The British Civil War or War of the Three Kingdoms resumed however the Anglo-Scottish conflict between 1639 and 1651, and officially ended only with the restoration of previously deposed monarch Charles II as the King of England, Scotland, and Ireland. This process of unification was further solidified in 1707, when the Act of Union ratified the foundation of the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain, merging Scottish and English Parliaments into one. Agreed upon for financial reasons, the Act of Union remained nonetheless largely unpopular in Scotland due to the potential threat of Anglicisation and the risk for the country of being further subjugated to English dominance. From a cultural standpoint, the end of the seventeenth century was also the center of one of the most dramatic historical turns for the preservation and continuation of Scottish national legacy, that is the uprising of the Jacobite movement—which took its name from the renaissance Latin version of 'James', '*Jacobus*'. This series of rebellions held between 1688 and 1746 was propelled by the Jacobites' desire to restore the Stuart dynasty on English, Irish, and Scottish thrones, after the last Catholic monarch James II of England and VII of Scotland was overthrown by Protestant Dutch sovereign William III Prince d'Orange, and deposed in 1688 during the Glorious Revolution. In 1746 the disastrous Battle of Culloden signalled the end of Jacobitism, but it also inflicted a dramatic blow to Scottish pre-modern culture. Decimated by the English army at Culloden, the remaining inhabitants of the Scottish Highlands were deprived of any jurisdiction, evicted, and their customs eventually suppressed during a period known as the Highland Clearances, only to be re-integrated in the nineteenth century through the romanticized tropes and modes of Tartanry and Kailyard. Standing in dramatic contrast with the erasure of Highlander clan culture, the Age of Enlightenment represented the peak of Scottish intellectual flourishing in modern times, with such figures as philosopher David Hume, poet Robert Burns, and political economist Adam Smith, among others, accomplishing significant achievements in Scotland and abroad. Glorified by popular historian Arthur Herman in his controversial volume *How the Scots Invented the Modern World* (2001), the impact of eighteenth-century Scottish intellectuals on the Western

world had however the effect of downsizing the tragic consequences of the Highland Clearances in territorial, socio-political, and cultural terms, affecting the way Scottish national and gendered identity was co-opted and romanticized in the literary and visual form from the nineteenth century onwards.

An interesting counterpoint to the historical formation of Scottish national identity within modernity is offered by the country's development in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution. Although Scotland followed England on the same path of urbanization, modernization, and economic expansion, it did not manifest an analogous investment in the nationalist agenda of modern nation-state building as other contemporary European countries. As Tom Nairn explains in his 1974 article "Scotland and Europe," and later on in his seminal book *The Break-Up of Britain* (1976), the "belatedness" of Scottish nationalism on the European scene of the nineteenth century, or rather its astounding absence, is to be understood as a consequence of Scotland's transformation into a capitalist society before the commencement of the nation-building momentum:

> Only one society was in fact able to advance, more or less according to its precepts, from feudal and theological squalor to the stage of bourgeois civil society, polite culture, and so on. Only one land crossed the great divide before the whole condition of European politics and culture was decisively and permanently altered by the great awakening of nationalist consciousness. (1974, 70)

Caught up in its own "exceptionalism," as Ichijo would rather define it (2004), Scotland was therefore the only European country to resist the urge of national assertion. Although perfectly "equipped" with all the necessary elements that sustained the outburst of nationalist and romantic rhetoric within modern Europe—a vibrant intelligentsia, a rising bourgeoisie, a folkloristic culture, and a separate religion in lieu of a non-separate language—Scotland did not manifest clear signs of nationalist uprising in the crucial time-span of nation-making between 1800 and 1870 (Nairn 1974, 71), and its national awakening was reported only in the late 1920s with the foundation of the National Scottish Party, the predecessor of SNP, in 1928. In more recent years, the regaining of Scottish national consciousness and self-determination drives resulted in the demand for a devolved status—that is the delegation of legislative powers to a subnational entity from the central government of a sovereign nation-state, without impeding the unitary nature of the state in question. Despite the victory of the Yes vote by 51.62%, the first devolution referendum of 1979 was repealed due to the turnout of registered electorate. A second

referendum was successfully held in 1997, resulting in the establishment of a Scottish Devolved Parliament in 1999. Strongly pursued by the SNP, the first referendum on Scottish independence was administered fifteen years later and lost by a margin of 8.60% votes, but as outlined in the introductory section of this chapter the possibility of a second independence referendum in the wake of Brexit might reshape the relationship between Scotland and Britain once again.

Although drastically condensed for the purpose of conciseness, this overview of Scottish history from medieval to modern and postmodern times serves as the necessary setup to the issues explored in this section, particularly in regard to Scottish cinema and its challenges to the national cinema paradigm in the globalized era. The long-lasting history of tensions and negotiations between Scotland, England, and Britain takes indeed a significant stance in marking the multifaceted nature of Scottish cinematic industry and imaginary from at least two angles. On the one hand, it affects how Scottish cinema has emerged and consolidated in current times at the conflation of global and local, national and transnational dynamics. On the other hand, it points towards the ways in which Scotland's national narrative has been portrayed onscreen, and by whom.

In the opening chapter of his influential book *Screening Scotland* (2000), Duncan Petrie addresses one of the most pivotal questions for Scottish cinema and its scholarly examination: "[W]hat constitutes a Scottish film?" (15). Given the status of Scotland as a devolved country within the UK, what defines its cinema as a *national* one is a particularly intricate issue. Is a film Scottish by virtue of its geographical setting, its sources of film finance, its cast and crew, its representation of Scottish culture, or all of the above? And more importantly, is the very notion of "national" cinema at all applicable to the Scottish case or is the entanglement of regional, devolved, local and global issues a more apt framework to understand the nature of Scottish cinematic existence? Considered the first comprehensive and stand-alone scholarly overview of Scottish cinema after Colin McArthur's edited collection *Scotch Reels: Scotland in Cinema and Television* (1982), *Screening Scotland* remaps the historical and industrial developments of moving images in Scotland from the early inceptions of filmmaking in the nineteenth century, to the potential consolidation of a Scottish film industry via the New Scottish Cinema (NSC) phenomenon in the mid-1990s. Two points in Petrie's work are particularly compelling with respect to this section of the chapter: first, the importance attributed to the infrastructural aspects of Scottish cinema as an alternative model of national cinema; second, the crucial role played by

the NSC in helping rethink the way Scottish culture has been presented onscreen. These two elements represent the bulk of Petrie's scholarship at the turn of the millennium,[50] as the author builds on the possibility for Scotland to regain access to and control over its own cinematic and national narrative thanks to the convergence of new creative energies and sources of film finance in the 1990s.

These intertwined trajectories of infrastructural development and cultural agency are traced within the historical account of the cinematic relationship between Scotland and Britain, particularly the way Scottish cinema has moved towards partial emancipation from the centralised grip of British national cinema. Petrie's analysis departs from the early developments of cinema in Scotland as a form of "colonised cinema" (28), that is a cinema of the periphery, which contributed to the formation and maintenance of a British film industry rather than constructing a self-sufficient Scottish one. The core tension between the institutionalization of British national cinema and the subsidiary nature of the Scottish regional contribution is examined in order to unveil the progressive formation of the Scottish film industry as a locally funded, nationally specific, and yet internationally oriented entity. Moving across the different stages of Scottish cinema's detachment from British influence—through documentary cinema between the 1930s and 1970s, and afterwards with television and art cinema in the 1980s—Petrie eventually locates in the NSC momentum the potentially successful peak of this enfranchising trajectory from both an institutional and a thematic standpoint.

A central preoccupation in both *Screening Scotland* and Petrie's following article "The New Scottish Cinema" (2000), the infrastructural aspect of the NSC is the first to be taken into consideration, following the assertion that "the necessary conditions for a sustainable national cinema in a small country like Scotland require more than the production of a handful of films, however accomplished and interesting they may be" (172). So as to explain the existence of a viable and successful local film industry—which the author rather defines as "indigenous"—Petrie proceeds to examine the foundational infrastructures of Scottish-based film funding and production. The creation of the Scottish Film Production Fund (SFPF) in 1982 is considered the first step into the institutionalization of an identifiable Scottish film industry. Despite the

[50] Petrie's article "The New Scottish Cinema", included in Mette Hjort and Scott McKenzie's edited collection *Cinema and Nation* (2000), provides a shortened version of *Screening Scotland*'s closing chapters on NSC, with a specific focus on the historical development of "indigenous" film funding infrastructures in Scotland and their impact on the emergence of a national film industry.

growing economic contributions of SFPF throughout the 1980s, the economic influence exercised by British broadcasters such as Channel 4 and BBC over the funding of Scottish film productions did not however allow a consistent nor definitive enfranchisement of Scottish regional productions away from British centralized intervention. It was only in the mid-1990s that a resolute improvement of the infrastructures and sources of film finance marked a crucial transition towards a locally based and funded Scottish film industry that could possibly acquire a national status (172-173). Paramount to this transition was the foundation of the Glasgow Film Fund (GFF) in 1993, and of Scottish Screen in 1997—which integrated in a single body the different agencies of the Scottish Film Production Fund, the Scottish Film Council, Scottish Screen Locations, the Scottish Film Training Trust and the Scottish Film and Television Archive. The inauguration of the 'Tartan Shorts' initiative in 1993—a short films scheme designed to foster emerging Scottish filmmakers—and the creation of a Scottish lottery panel in 1995—which redirected part of the National lottery funding to specifically Scottish film productions—worked as a further incentive for the foundation of a viable Scottish film industry via the NSC.

Despite Petrie's insistence on employing a nationally-oriented vocabulary to theorize Scottish cinema in both infrastructural and cultural terms, the question of what constitutes a national cinema in small countries lacking nation-state recognition and how such a notion can be challenged remains particularly thorny. As examined in Chapter 1, as well as in this dissertation as a whole, the distinctive position of subnational film industries within global film markets and scholarly debates invites for a more complex rethinking of the national cinema paradigm and the terminology associated with its academic examination. As Petrie himself further explains in "The New Scottish Cinema," the NSC phenomenon had the undoubtedly ground-breaking impact of revitalizing national consciousness on the Scottish screen in concomitance with the concurrent turns of devolutionary politics in mid-1990s Scotland. However, the financial and cultural endorsement of an "indigenous" Scottish cinema cannot be interpreted according to traditional definitions of national cinema as mapped over a monolithic conception of nation-state. On the contrary, the NSC has for Petrie the potential to challenge "essentialising and homogenising tendencies of discourses of 'nationalism'" in a theoretical and practical scenario defined by the need to reconceptualise the very notion of national cinema itself (2000, 143). Anticipating Hjort's book *Small Nation, Global Cinema*, Petrie's article stresses the relevance of small nations and, in the Scottish case, subnational entities, in offering an alternative model of

national cinema that serves as a productive tool to examine one country's cinematic and cultural identity in absence of politically sanctioned nation-state recognition. The locally grounded example of the NSC—regional in terms of geographical provenience, national in terms of cultural belonging, but international in scope—thus offers a counter-option to otherwise Anglo-centric understandings of British cinema, and helps read against the grain of Scottish, Welsh, and Irish small national/subnational cinemas as peripheral to a univocal concept of national cinema in the UK.

The opportunity to revisit what constitutes a national film industry and imaginary in the current global scenario is more extensively offered in the closing remarks of *Screening Scotland*, which trace the complexity of Scotland's position on the chart of national cinema discourses in industrial and thematic terms. Despite the infrastructural and cultural achievements obtained by the NSC in the mid-1990s, Petrie concludes his inquiry by observing that a fully fleshed national status for Scottish cinema might not be in reach yet for at least two orders of reasons. The first, financial in nature, concerns the role played by Britain as still the major source of film funding in the UK, which prevents the NSC phenomenon from being a completely self-sufficient entity separate from British agency. As Petrie eventually affirms: "The New Scottish cinema is a distinct and meaningful entity but as yet its status should be perhaps understood in terms of a devolved British cinema rather than fully independent entity" (2000, 186). The second reason, more culturally oriented, looks critically at the way films have been conceived by Scottish film funding institutions as economic rather than cultural objects, triggering the necessity to produce internationally consumable products to the detriment of a less idealized and more current representation of Scottish identity.

This negotiation of local-national specificity and international palatability—which I already observed in Chapter 1 with respect to the case of current Flemish cinema and its co-option of genre conventions—prompts Petrie's further examination of the NSC from a thematic point of view. In the last chapter of *Screening Scotland*, the author focuses on unwrapping the idea of a Scottish cinema "by, for, and about" Scotland, that is a cinema able to represent Scotland from a Scottish perspective, with Scottish agency, and yet a global reach. Whereas Hollywood-oriented titles such as *Rob Roy* (1995, Michael Caton-Jones) and *Braveheart* (1995, Mel Gibson) capitalized on the romanticized appeal to Scotland's historical past in a mainstream fashion, domestic low-budget successes such as *Shallow Grave* (1994, Danny Boyle) and

Trainspotting (1996, Danny Boyle) led the shift towards a new cinematic imaginary, which attempted to (re)present the identity of contemporary, urban Scotland over the stereotypical tropes of Tartanry and Kailyard pushed forward by modern literature and early cinema. Although directed by a British filmmaker, these films can be deemed Scottish by virtue of their funding and literary sources, setting, and location, as well as of their interest in depicting the urban, contemporary lives and struggles of a new generation of Scottish youth—thus infusing new life into a cultural imaginary otherwise dominated by stereotypically "authentic" representations of Scotland's mythical past and national identity.

In an enthusiastic conclusion that has become a staple argument for Scottish and British film studies scholars—Petrie included—to engage with, the author leaves his inquiry open-ended, welcoming with great hope and outspoken excitement the realm of possibilities offered by the emergence of the NSC and the newfound institutional support to Scottish cinematic culture:

> Scottish film-making is entering the new millennium with unprecedented levels of confidence, achievement, and ambition. […] The new Scottish cinema has an opportunity not only to project Scotland to the rest of the world but also to play an important role at the heart of a revitalised national culture in reflecting the diversity of contemporary Scottish experience, interpreting and reinterpreting the past, and providing a space for social criticism and the imagination of alternative possibilities. (226)

The emphasis put by Petrie on "projecting Scotland" and "revitalising national culture" is particularly pivotal in relation to a film industry and imaginary, as well as a cultural heritage more broadly, often subsumed under the external influence of British and North-American dominance not only in monetary but also in representational terms (15). The novelty and pioneering potential of the NSC is thus linked to the possibility for Scotland to finally represent the diversity and richness of its own culture through local funding structures and institutional support that comes from *within* rather than from *above* and *outside* the country.

Taking Petrie's twofold argument as its point of departure, Scottish film studies scholarship has been evolving in the past fifteen years in concomitance with the uneven trajectory of Scottish cinema in both economic and cultural terms. Departing from the promising achievements of the NSC, a thorough rethinking of the state of cinema in Scotland in the early 2000s and 2010s has spawned a conspicuous amount of academic contributions, moving across stages of overt optimism, bitter disappointment, and critical revision. In his article "Contemporary Scottish Fictions" (2001), Jonathan Murray is one of the first scholars to engage

directly with Petrie's work and to embrace the possibility for an alternative model of national cinema to be observed in Scotland. Looking at Scottish national narratives emerging in the cadre of British cinema between 1980s and 1990s, Murray highlights how these cinematic modes of "elegiac national allegory" (2001, 82) served to differentiate themselves from the idea of a British "(multi-)national cinema" in which different regional-national cinemas (Irish, Scottish, Welsh) are blurred into one or, as John Hill conceptualizes it, the plurality of British identities disrupts the idea of an homogeneous cinema in the UK (76). Even within the alleged heterogeneity of British national cinema, Murray argues, Scottish films stand out for the similar ways in which they deal with issues of national (and gendered) Scottish identity not reducible to a univocal definition of British cinema. Driven by Petrie's enthusiasm and by the empirical proof of institutional and industrial film development in Scotland, such a theorization of Scottish cinema's thematic distinctiveness and infrastructural enfranchisement at the beginning of the 2000s has taken however a more critical direction in the following decade.

In the introduction to his 2009 edited volume *Scottish Cinema Now*, it is Murray himself who offers a re-evaluation of the first ten years of Scottish cinema after the NSC surge, scrutinizing the dramatic passage from dawning film industry to cinematic stagnation from a critical but not fatalist standpoint. Drawing from Scottish actor Robert Carlyle's disillusioned statement that "we don't have a film industry here," Murray presents the layout of his collection with the precise intention to highlight the new directions Scottish cinema has pursued in the 2000s, and how they can be read in a productive rather than dismissive manner. Instead of looking at the changes that occurred in Scotland's cinematic landscape under a negative lens, Murray suggests a redeeming methodology based on the idea that "[r]evisiting the past offers a way of recontextualising and better understanding the nuances of the present" (ix). The tension between national and transnational understandings of current Scottish cinema is therefore at the core of Murray's volume, which functions as the point of conjunction and reconsideration for past and present scholarly debates on the subject matter.

On the one hand, Sarah Street's chapter "Scottish Transnational Cinema" advocates for the co-existence of "several versions of Scottishness" within Scottish Cinema (2000, 141), and provocatively suggests revisiting the national vernacular associated with the theorization of the NSC in consideration of the different agencies that converged within the phenomenon:

[T]he usefulness of the term "new Scottish cinema" needs to be called into question, at

> a time when most of contemporary film is very much a mix of styles, finance, acting talent, production personnel and locations. On the other hand (and this is not the focus of this chapter), it must be recognised that nationalist terminology does have strategic importance in film policy debates about the need for cinema to be diverse yet reflective of issues that are important to a local area with specific concerns. (140)

Duncan Petrie's piece "Screening Scotland: A Reassessment," on the other hand, remains focused on the idea of a Scottish *national* cinema, although within a more bleak framework of inquiry than in his previous contributions. Petrie resumes the hopeful conclusion of his 2000 book in order to comment on the shrinking proportions of funding institutions and local infrastructure in Scotland, and eventually urges "Scottish filmmakers, policy makers and intellectuals to embrace a common cause and combine their efforts in advocating the value of a small national cinema in Scotland" (169). In his following article, "The Eclipse of Scottish Cinema" (2014), the author further nuances his take on the underdevelopment of filmmaking and film production in Scotland, adopting a crepuscular terminology that shifts from the NSC momentum as the "new dawn of Scottish cinema" to the ecliptic nature of Scottish filmmaking in the 2010s. In order to emerge from this metaphorical as well as practical darkness, the local reinforcement of the infrastructural and financial architecture of Scottish cinema within a transnational reach—as shaped on the example of Danish cinema—seems to Petrie the only viable option for the survival of a small national film industry in Scotland.

More optimistic in his approach, Murray parts ways from Petrie's sombre vision, and rather considers how Scottish film industry and market have been morphing from national assertion into transnational opening. In his most recent book, *The New Scottish Cinema* (2015), the author examines the last two decades of filmmaking in Scotland in order to track the substantial changes that occurred in Scottish cinematic landscape in the passage from the NSC phenomenon, the emergence of different forms in Scottish cinemas in the 2000s, and the current situation in the 2010s. Looking especially at Scottish co-productions, low-budget genre films, and transnational portrayals of ethnicity and race in recent Scottish films, Murray champions the possibility for Scottish cinema to exist in a multiplicity of forms that exceed or rather complement the "indigenous", national one. As the author aptly summarizes in conclusion to the volume:

> [G]iven the ways in which Scottish cinema expanded and evolved during the 1990s and 2000s, we surely blind ourselves in one eye if we refuse to accept that the

> indigenous and international components of increasingly globalised local filmmaking careers might be usefully explored in tandem. (177-178)

A lengthy account of the shifting paradigms at play in the academic debates on Scottish cinema between the early 2000s and the present moment allow us to unveil the multiple layers of geopolitical complexity at play in Scotland's cinematic infrastructures and imaginary. Although extensively focused on the fate of Scottish cinema in the transition from national consciousness to transnational multiplicity, Scottish film scholarship has raised several concerns about the role played by gender and sexuality in the mise-en-scène of Scottish culture. How have the historical changes of Scottish political and cinematic scape affected and shaped the gendered subjectivities inhabiting the Scottish screen? In his early article "Contemporary Scottish Fiction", Murray already noticed the crucial importance of such a question for the study of Scottish cinema, especially given that discourses of national identity cannot and should not be disentangled from a more intersectional approach: "[w]e should be aware of the extent to which recurrent engagement with discourses of nation in Scottish cinema has often hidden other lines of social plurality from view: sexuality, locality, race and, most particularly, gender" (85). This latter remark is particularly telling, as the intertwined nature of national and gendered (especially masculine) discourses lies at the very core of Scottish cinematic history.

As Jane Sillars and Mayra MacDonald further observed in their piece "Gender, Spaces, Changes: Emergent Identities in a Scotland in Transition" (2009) the correlation between dynamics of gender power and processes of nation-building in Scottish cinema is quite paradigmatic. Moving from pre-modern to postmodern accounts of masculinity and femininity interacting on the Scottish screen, Sillars and MacDonald's article retraces the history of gendered and spatial representations in Scottish cinema as "bearers of moments of transition" for the construction of a Scottish national identity. As the authors point out, the passage from mythologized to contemporary representations of Scottish reality coincided with the progressive emergence of a re-articulation of gender dynamics in recent Scottish films, wherein women are no longer or not solely relegated to a "supporting role" in the nation-building process. As a starter, cinematic depictions of Scotland's pre-modern fantasies and histories such as *Brigadoon* (Vincent Minnelli, 1954)*, Braveheart*, and *Rob Roy* endorsed the romanticized, mythologized portrayal of the Scottish (High)land as a feminine mystique, a convergence of natural and supernatural features connoted in female terms. This nationalist trope of the female-as-

land/female-as-nation required the enactment of masculinity as the gendered embankment against foreign penetration, enforcing the reduction of femininity to a mere metaphor or a tangential presence. With the advent of the "crisis of masculinity" in 1980s post-industrial Britain, Scottish cinema started hosting different forms of critical male subjectivity, reflexive of Scotland's complex quest for national identity. Whereas these "unstable masculine identities incapable of emerging into maturity" (187) functioned as complementary to Scottish national anxiety, female characters assumed the role of maternal guardian angels, functioning once again as metaphorical presences ancillary to their male counterparts. It was only in concurrence with Scotland's transnational turn that previously unspoken questions of femininity and revised gender dynamics came into existence in Scottish cinema.

Sillars and MacDonald's quest for a more comprehensive and extensive examination of the links between gender, space, and history in Scottish cinema is supported by Murray in the Afterwards to his *The New Scottish Cinema* as well. Reprising the argument already raised in "Contemporary Scottish Fiction", Murray points towards one of the crucial blind spots in current Scottish film scholarship, affirming that "[a] coherent and comprehensive study of the place of gender discourses within Scottish filmmaking would be a long overdue addition to our knowledge of the field" (2015, 177). Without the ambition of extensively covering this "largely untouched area of inquiry," the following two sections of this chapter will provide a specific reading of two Scottish films, *Filth* and *Under the Skin*, released in the pre-referendary moment of Scotland's quest for national independence. The mise-en-scène of hard masculinity and predatory femininity in Baird and Glazer's features will allow us to reflect on how critical masculinities and feminist discourses can intervene to shape the way Scottish films deal with the entanglement of gendered and national anxieties in relation to the country's past and present historical turmoil. A common thread in the examination of the chosen case studies will be traced especially in the way both films rely on forms of gender performance and camouflage that complicate binary notions of masculinity and femininity with respect to Scottish national identity.[51]

[51] The employment of Judith Butler's notion of "gender performance," especially in my analysis of cross-dressing and cross-gender representation in *Filth*, is not oblivious of the recent critiques advanced to the concept by transgender scholars. In her chapter "Beyond Image Content: Examining Transsexuals' Access to the Media," for example, Viviane Namaste has condemned the approach of gender and queer studies scholars using transgender and cross-dressing representation as discursive tools devoid of agency and materiality. As she explains, in direct reference to Butler, "[the scholar] makes casual references to drag queens on stage in order to make broad claims

Soft-Boiled Masculinity and National Nostalgia/Nostophobia in *Filth*

In an iconic monologue uttered one third into Danny Boyle's *Trainspotting*, Mark "Rent Boy" Renton (Ewan McGregor) responds with fury to his friend and soon to be heroin-consuming partner Tommy asking if the sight of nature on a trekking trip in the outskirts of Scotland "doesn't make you proud to be Scottish":

> It's shite being Scottish! We're the lowest of the low. The scum of the fucking Earth! The most wretched, miserable, servile, pathetic trash that was ever shat into civilization. Some hate the English. I don't. They're just wankers. We, on the other hand, are colonized by wankers. Can't even find a decent culture to be colonized by. We're ruled by effete assholes. It's a shite state of affairs to be in, Tommy, and all the fresh air in the world won't make any fucking difference!

Re-adapting an analogous passage from Irvine Welsh's eponymous 1993 novel[52] —a chronicle of junkies' lives set in mid-1980s Edinburgh's Leith district—Renton's tirade encapsulates the feeling of self-loathing experienced by the Scottish man in the unstable years of Scotland's devolutionary buildup. Decentered in his manhood as well as in his sense of nationhood by virtue of the double bind of his colonial position, Renton surged as the poster boy for the crisis of masculinity in postmodern Scottish literature and cinema, consolidating his iconic status in Boyle's film thanks to its timely conflation with Scotland's acquisition of devolutionary status. Although still set in the mid-1980s—high waisted denim fashion and mentions of the AIDS pandemic allow for the film's historical contextualization despite its 1990s vibe[53]—*Trainspotting* functions as a compendium of national and gendered frustrations in the two decades separating the first failed devolution referendum of 1979 and the second successful one in 1997. In the introduction to her book *Disappearing Men: Gender Disorientation in Scottish Fiction 1979-1999*, Carole Jones explains precisely why the devolutionary interval has

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about the sex/gender system. In this view, transsexuals and transvestites are a pawn of knowledge, propped up on display only to be erased in the complicated fabric of their struggles" (2005, 42). In this vein, it is not my intention to neglect the transphobic implications of Bruce Robertson's representation as "cross-dressing villain" at the end of *Filth*, or to employ the notion of gender performance to make generalized claims on transgender subjectivity. Rather, I advance the interpretation of cross-gender dynamics in the film not as an embodiment of the character's transgender identity, but as melancholic processes that mirror cultural tropes of nostalgia/nostophobia in Scottish cinema.

[52] "It's nae good blamin it oan the English fir colonising us. Ah don't hate the English. They're just wankers. We are colonised by wankers. We can't even pick a decent, vibrant, healthy culture to be colonised by. … Ah don't hate the English. They just git oan wi the shite thuv goat. Ah hate the Scots." Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting* (1993, 78)

[53] The slippage between the historical setting of the film and its existence in the contemporary universe of the mid-1990s is mostly given on the visual level by the film's frantic editing and unconventional camera angles in a music video fashion, and at the sonic level by the employment of 1990s iconic tracks such as New Order's *Temptation* (1992), Underworld's *Born Slippy (NUXX)* (1995), and Damon Albarn's *Closet Romantic* (1996).

constituted such a sensitive moment for the fictional representation of Scottish manhood. As she points out with respect to the state of hegemonic masculinity under the shifting conditions of postmodernity, "the patriarchal conception of masculinity is experiencing a process of dislocation, becoming disconnected from its traditional discursive moorings and separated from its historic social location" (2009, 14). Mostly naturalized as an invisible and unitary construct within modernity—in a similar manner to the concept of nation-state—masculinity has acquired visibility in postmodern times as no longer a monolithic nor univocal gendered and social category, but rather as a transformative one. In its devolutionary inflation—which represents for Jones an exemplary case of such a transformation—Scottish manhood has therefore become more prone to instability and fragmentation, producing the disoriented and disenchanted subject emerging from Renton's self-reflexive statement as a symptomatic example of his own generation as well as of the ones to come.

In one of the first scenes from Jon S. Baird's 2013 adaptation of Welsh's third novel *Filth* (1998)—a firsthand narrative of human aberration and bipolar downfall recollected by a corrupted Edinburgh cop—protagonist Detective Sergeant Bruce Robertson (James McAvoy) provides a passionate celebration of his homeland that seems to counterpoint and absolve Renton's one:

> Scotland. This nation brought the world television, the steam engine, golf, whiskey, penicillin, and of course, the deep-fried Mars bar. It is great being Scottish. We're such a uniquely successful race.

Bruce's monologue would be particularly redeeming if it weren't for the way the character delivers it as he is introduced in the film. *Filth*'s opening scene stages Bruce's wife Carole (Shauna Macdonald) sensually wearing lingerie and make-up while directly engaging with the audience and commenting on the erotic games that keep her and Bruce's marriage alive. As she goes out at night and walks under a tunnel in the following scene, she witnesses the horrific hate-crime that triggers the film's plot: the unmotivated murder of a young Asian tourist at the hand of a gang of punks. Detective Robertson is presented for the first time at the end of this sequence. Strolling down Edinburgh's Royal Mile—the two kilometer-long road that connects the city's upper Old Town to its eighteenth century New Town—Bruce is framed as the epitome of Scottish masculinity at its fullest, the rampant lion of the Royal Banner of Scotland (the country's unofficial flag) towering above him from the front wall of the Edinburgh Castle

(fig. 2.2). By the time the line "we are such a uniquely successful race" is pronounced, however, the counter-shot of a stereotypical Scottish family is shown in slow-motion as the subject of Bruce's gaze: a pregnant teenage girl smoking a cigarette, an overweight woman eating a sandwich, and a man in a patriotic t-shirt drinking alcohol from a flask (fig. 2.3). While walking in front of a bagpiper, Bruce further adds "and as my wife Carole always says: there is no place like home," covering his ears in a mocking gesture (fig. 2.4).

Fig. 2.2: "It is great being Scottish." (Screenshot, *Filth*)

Fig. 2.3: "Such a uniquely successful race." (Screenshot, *Filth*)

Fig. 2.4: "There is no place like home." (Screenshot, *Filth*)

The irony of the scene, which capitalizes upon Bruce's distorted display of national pride—or rather, on his aversion for the current state of Scottishness—is further magnified by the later discovery of the character's name, Bruce Robertson, a sardonic reminder of Robert the Bruce, the heroic King of Scots who reported the decisive victory at Bannockburn during the

First War of Scottish Independence. Baptized as the ultimate repository of Scotland's sense of national recognition, Bruce proceeds throughout the film to dismantle his own position at the center of the country's national and masculine narrative, as his psychological and physical selves unravel through schizophrenic paths of nostalgic anxiety, nostophobic self-hatred, and gender dysphoria.

In the remainder of this section, I will take into examination the complexity of Bruce's character, and particularly the deflagration of his masculine and national identity, in coincidence with the adaptation of the novel in the year preceding Scotland's first independence referendum. I am especially concerned with how Baird's cinematic counterpart to Welsh's novel—published in 1998 and therefore on the cusp of Scottish post-devolutionary momentum—still resonates in the shifting scenario of pre-referendary Scotland, and what this says about Scottish manhood and its troubled relationship with national independence in the very same year anticipating its potential acquisition. In face of the lengthy financial and production struggles that brought *Filth* on the Scottish screen over a decade after the book's publication—the oscillating trajectory of Scotland's film infrastructures and sources of finances outlined in the previous section of the chapter being one of the main reasons[54]—a central question arises with respect to the film's industrial and cultural significance in the current panorama of Scottish cinematic and national identity. Why is the paradigm of hard masculinity, cynically epitomized by Bruce Robertson, still current fifteen years after the novel's first appearance? And what vision of Scotland is the film proposing by dismantling it?

The two paths of inquiry explored by Robert Munro in his analysis of Baird's film as a case study for the Scottish adaptation industry (2014) seem particularly productive to expand on, in order to address these interrogatives. At the infrastructural level, Munro's hypothesis that *Filth* might offer a third ground to the national and transnational aspirations of the current Scottish

[54] In a 2013 interview for STV News (the news service produced by Scottish Television), McAvoy and Welsh discussed the film's production history by pointing to the financial outsourcing and foreign capital invested in the filmmaking process, as well as to the need to shoot outside of Scotland in the absence of a proper "Scottish film studio." Commenting on the subject, McAvoy added a compelling observation on the ties between the industrial and cultural relevance of a locally-based film practice in Scotland. The necessity for a Scottish studio is justified not only in terms of job creation but also by the fact that "culturally, we don't have the facility to tell stories about ourselves… It's important for our cultural…confidence, I think, and identity." The idea of a Scottish film industry as first and foremost a "service industry" that would "serve the collective identity" of Scottish people and their onscreen representation thus provides a particularly interesting point of view on the delicate balance between national consciousness and international reach in current Scottish cinema. (STV News, "James McAvoy and Irvine Welsh Talk Filth." *Youtube*, last modified September 25, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xI7qqwSAuEY Accessed 30 Nov. 2017)

cinema (2014, 52) points towards the hybrid nature of the film's funding and production elements to strengthen its position at the conflation of local and global interests—thus locating in Baird's feature an emblematic example of the current state of Scottish film industry and imaginary. Co-produced by Swedish, German, Belgian, and British companies in association with the Scottish public body for the arts, Creative Scotland, *Filth* can be hardly considered a fully Scottish film from a financial standpoint, and rather fits into the transnational model analyzed by Jonathan Murray as a strategic conflation of national specificity and global saleability with respect to Scottish-Scandinavian co-productions (2015, 81). Distributed in seventeen countries outside the UK with a total gross of $8,334.411 worldwide[55] over an estimated budget of five million dollars,[56] *Filth* appeals to international audiences by using Welsh's name and *Trainspotting*'s successful wavelength as promotional leverages, while at the same time addressing the specificity of the Scottish viewer with the localized nature of its national and gendered satire. In this sense, *Filth* quiets down Christopher Meir's concerns that practices of "crossover marketing" might render Scottish films internationally palatable at the cost of "dumbing down" the local specificity of their textual fabric (2009, 202). Although positively received in the UK and abroad, Baird's film remains indeed strongly rooted in its cultural context and in the geopolitical momentum of its release. At the representational level, the split configuration of national manhood offered by James McAvoy's performance thus suggests, as Munro further elaborates, that "the hyperbolic characterization of Bruce Robertson [should not be read] as a premonition for the kind of Scotland—'a compulsively autocratic power'—that Welsh perceives as being born through increasing national sovereignty, but rather [as] one which must be authoritatively rejected for a new, culturally-diverse, aspirant nation to emerge" (44).

Stemming from Munro's twofold input, my analysis of *Filth* will build upon the mutated cultural and political context of the cinematic adaptation in order to understand how the film resituates Scottish manhood in the country's current socio-political landscape. My interest in the unravelling of contrived national masculinity will focus specifically on Bruce's performance of hard masculinity and idealised femininity as a matter of nostalgic camouflage and melancholic

[55] "Filth (2014) – International Box Office," *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=filth.htm Accessed 11 July 2017.
[56] "Box Office/Business for: Filth (2013)," *Internet Movie Database* (IMdB), http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1450321/business?ref_=tt_dt_bus Accessed on July 11, 2017.

mourning. This reading of the character's critical masculinity and dual gender performance will be contextualized in relation to the interplay of nostalgia and nostophobia identified by Craig Cairn as a persisting trope in recent Scottish cinema (2009)—hence highlighting how the interaction of past, present, and future temporalities in Bruce's character affects the way manhood and nationhood are resituated in the film's pre-referendary setting.

The relationship between toxic masculinity and national anxiety has been an inescapable refrain in Welsh's novels since his debut with *Trainspotting* in 1993. As Carole Jones notices in her critical examination of the author's engagement with gender (and the lack thereof in regard to female representations), "his work most effectively highlights and problematizes our own contemporary anxieties regarding unstable gender roles in transition" (2010, 54). The filmic adaptations of his novels, often supervised by the writer himself, have followed an analogous path, reflecting at large on the state of postmodern masculinity in crisis while preserving the specificity of Scottish hard manhood in decline as their primal focus. Whereas *Trainspotting*'s Renton and his self-deprecating monologue consolidated over the years as the overt repository of in-between-devolutions national resentment and gendered self-hatred with an optimistic opening in the film's ending, *Filth*'s Detective Robertson and his bipolar deterioration functioned as the vessel of transition into a post-devolutionary era no less concerned with the instability of Scottish nationhood and manhood alike, but doomed to a more tragic twist. As Stefan Herbrechter observes in his analysis of the ties between masculinity and cultural politics in Welsh's work, the passage from *Trainspotting* to *Filth* in the writer's *oeuvre* is indeed connoted by a dramatic shift in tone in the portrayal of disintegrating male subjectivity:

> If *Trainspotting* still "grieves for selves that cannot be", Welsh's later work constitutes the representation of the complete breakdown of identity. Sexuality and masculinity become the main focus. Whereas *Trainspotting* can be read as a negotiation of sexual identity and difference that explores the variety of identity positions available within the realm of sexual consumption, in his most recent work, *Filth* (1998), Welsh zooms in on the extreme masculinist position in order to further dissect and advance its psychotic self-dissolution. (2000, 112)

The "negotiation of sexual identity" herein addressed by Herbrechter is clearly advocated in Boyle's *Trainspotting* by Renton's character, which, although undisputedly portrayed as heterosexual throughout the film, witnesses the shifting paradigms of gender and sexuality occurring at the end of his generational uprising. While celebrating the success of a horse-racing bet in a Londoner club and thinking back to the words of wisdom of his teenage "girlfriend"

Diane (Kelly Macdonald), Renton comments: "Diane is right. The world is changing. Music is changing. Drugs are changing. Even men and women are changing. 1,000 years from now there'll be no guys and no girls, only wankers. Sounds great to me. It's just a pity no one told Begbie." The scene cuts on Renton's long-time pal and clichéd hard man Begbie (Robert Carlyle) discovering with terror that the woman he is trying to have sex with in a parked car is actually a transgender woman. "You see," Renton continues in voice over, " If you ask me, we're heterosexual by default, not by decision. It's just a question of who you fancy. It has to do with aesthetics and it's fuck-all to do with morality. But you try telling Begbie that."

Differing drastically from the characterization of Renton as internally homophobic but sexually fluid in Welsh's novel,[57] the film's sequence works as an ironic and self-aware commentary on the disentanglement of the hard man archetype of Scottish proletarian and urban masculinity in postmodern times. Begbie, rather than Renton himself, becomes the bottom of a joke that points towards the emergence of new, hybrid forms of gender-national subjectivity, challenging the coincidence of Scottish national and masculine identity in assertive terms. Although clarifying in his article "Masculinity in Contemporary Scottish Fiction" (1998) that a univocal definition of such a colloquial concept remains largely unattainable, Christopher Whyte provides an apt description of the hard man figure re-emerging in postmodern Scottish literature after its booming in the 1930s:

> The dysfunctional urban male who plays such a significant part in recent Scottish fiction is colloquially known as the 'hard man', with the stress on 'hard'. He comes from a working class or at most a lower middle-class background, is often represented as unemployed, and is the victim of injustice and discrimination on a class basis. His status as victim and loser makes him the focus of a surprising but persistent pathos, a pathos that oddly 'feminises' a figure who wants to be so resolutely and absolutely masculine. (1998, 274)

Whyte's portrayal of the hard man type, perfectly encapsulated by Begbie's character both in *Trainspotting* and in its recent sequel *T2 Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 2017),[58] serves as

[57] As Whyte explains in his "Masculinity" article, the assertion of Renton's heterosexuality is particularly blurred in the novel, as the character is portrayed in several instances as open to receive oral sex or perform penetrative sex on men in the absence of an available female partner. This possibility is however framed within the "normalizing" scenario of a proclaimed straight man accepting a strictly active or non-reciprocating position in the act, but never submitting to it. (1998, 281)

[58] Counterpointing Begbie's display of contrived manhood in *Trainspotting*, the character's storyline in *T2* is developed around his sexual impotence. Escaped from prison twenty years after his incarceration with the intention to find Renton and kill him, Begbie's authority as a father, a husband, and a man is repeatedly undermined by

a point of guidance for Bruce Robertson's character in *Filth* as well. Raised in a mining community by an estranged father and ostracized after the accidental murder of his little brother Davie—the trauma is unveiled in the film through hallucinatory sessions between Bruce and his psychiatrist Dr. Rossi (Jim Broadbent)—Bruce has turned his back on his original milieu to become its ultimate opponent: a cop, the metaphorical "pig" McAvoy is riding in the international poster for the film. Despite rejecting his working class background for the social upgrade of the police force, Bruce has nonetheless preserved the inner and outer qualities of the hard man archetype, which are exacerbated by the character's reckless behaviour and the tragic extent of his suicide at the end of the film. The need to protect the hard shell of contrived manhood from foreign and external attacks is at the very core of Bruce's motivations throughout the film. Despite not being a victim on a social level, *Filth*'s protagonist is gradually disclosed as a loser in several aspects of his life and, as Whyte points out, his desire to protect masculinity at all costs results in a paradoxical feminization of his figure that I will examine later in this section.

Constantly undermining his colleagues and superiors in the attempt to secure his own promotion as Detective Inspector, Bruce exercises his Machiavellian power on a strictly gender-discriminating basis. Whereas women are presented from his standpoint as idealised creatures (his wife Carole), repressed lesbians (his colleague Amanda Drummond) or mere bodies to sexually exploit (his fellow co-workers or lodge members' wives Chrissie and Bounty), men are ridiculed and compared for the size of their genitals or their sexual orientation. In an exemplary scene set during the police department's Christmas party, Bruce invites his male colleagues to play a merciless game only to mock his younger colleague and main competitor Ray Lennox (Jamie Bell)—whose "baby cock" condition was disclosed in a flashback earlier in the film. Each man is invited to anonymously print a copy of their penis and expose it to the office's staff, asking them to identify the owner of each one by the look of it. As a result, Lennox is humiliated and precluded from the possibility of seducing the department's secretary Karen, while Bruce's dishonestly enlarged copy of his "horse cock" proves ultimately successful in the intent (fig. 2.5-8).

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glimpses of unsuccessful marital coitus (even with medical help) and by the inability to turn his own son into a criminal.

Fig. 2.5: Lennox's "baby cock" (Screenshot, *Filth*)

Fig. 2.6: Lennox's reaction (Screenshot, *Filth*)

Fig. 2.7: Bruce's "horse cock" (Screenshot, *Filth*)

Fig. 2.8: Karen's reaction (Screenshot, *Filth*)

Virility is repeatedly tested also on the basis of alleged sexual preferences, as Bruce's other favourite victim, the "metrosexual" colleague Peter Inglis (Emun Elliott), attests in several

occasions. In a first instance of strategic plotting, Bruce storms into his colleagues' office after authoring the graffiti "Peter Inglis Sucks Cocks" in the men's toilet, denouncing the offence and pretending to take Inglis' reputation at heart as the elected union representative. Despite Inglis' shyness on the subject, Bruce brings the case to his superior Robert Toal (John Sessions), who appears visibly displeased at the idea of having a homosexual cop working under his guard. In a second instance, occurring during the abovementioned Christmas party, Bruce pays a random man to play the role of Inglis' ex-lover, triggering a violent response from homophobic fellow cop Doug Gillman (Brian McCardie) and the disdain of an utterly disgusted Toal. In a parodic exchange, Bruce pretends once again to take Inglis' side, while Toal confronts him with anger at the idea of having a gay man assuming the role of Inspector. "How can you have confidence in a man who is constantly undressing with his eyes, masturbating over images of you?" Toal insists. "Surely that's a bit caveman, Bob," Bruce counter-argues, "You know, in some parts of the country the force even advertise in the gay press now." "This isn't some parts of the country," Toal bursts out, as the camera zooms on his triumphant face, " This is Scotland, by Christ!" The remark is especially telling. As Toal links hard heterosexual masculinity to the constructs of Scottish nationhood directly, his need to distinguish Scotland from other parts of Britain in gendered terms displays at the same time a profound sense of distress towards the potential emasculation of that very construct. It is therefore not accidental that in his analysis of Welsh's post-devolutionary novels and their take on Scottish manhood Bertold Schoene locates in *Filth* the privileged case study for the postmodern dissolution of masculine centrality in discourses on Scotland's national self:

> Suspended between the utopian and the nostalgic, Scotland's crisis of nationhood mirrors the predicament of the contemporary masculine self, keen to be part of new communal configurations, yet held back by pomophobic anxieties over its exact status and position: if nationhood and/or masculinity were to yield wholeheartedly by postmodern diversification, how—if at all—might they come to reassemble? The nation and the masculine self have therefore become highly volatile entities, prone to violence and hypersensitive to violation. (2004, 124)

The psychopathology of the Scottish male subject, closely intertwined with that of the Scottish nation, emerges in *Filth* in all of its virulence, amplified by the concurrence of the novel's publication with Scotland's acquisition of its devolved condition, and to its eventual adaptability in the pre-referendary momentum of Scotland's contemporaneity. Denied the same degree of gendered self-consciousness displayed by Renton in *Trainspotting*, Bruce's film

character seems indeed even more at odds with the time and place he lives in than his literary counterpart. Bruce's relocation in pre-referendary Scotland by virtue of the film's delayed production amplifies the inadequacy of his gender model in concomitance with Scotland's pursuit of national determination. The character's (self)annihilation at the end of the film thus seems to confirm Munro's reading of *Filth* as a "self confident and subversive" text, "willingly undermining the desirability of representing any unified national identity" (50). Unable to fit into society as both an individual and a member of a national community he despises, Bruce's misogynistic, abrasive, filthy persona embodies the anachronistic phantom of Scottish contrived manhood threatened by the advent of post-national, multicultural, gender fluid societies, but at the same time dramatically morphed by it. In a twist occurring at the end of the film, Bruce is in fact revealed cross-dressing as his estranged wife Carole in order to maintain her presence alive in his otherwise deranged existence. This gender-bending camouflage serves as a cinematic device to translate onscreen the character's schizophrenic behaviour, exposed in the novel through a triptych of parallel personalities: Bruce the Filthy Cop as the first-person narrator, Bruce-as-Carole as the occasional storyteller of short passages told from a feminine and yet submissive perspective, and the Tapeworm inhabiting Bruce's intestine, interjecting chapters of the book with gutty soliloquies about food consumption and insights on the protagonist's dramatic past.

Bruce's transformation into Carole in Baird's film activates a cross-gendered metamorphosis that not only visualizes the character's bipolar split, but also establishes a link between gender performance and the notion of the "Caledonian Antisyzygy," theorized by Gregory Smith in his 1919 volume *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* as one of the key components of Scottish literary identity. Reprised and further unpacked by Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid in his double volume *The Caledonian Antisyzygy and the Gaelic Idea* (1931-1932), this Scottish trope came to signify, as Robert Crawford puts it, "the idea… that Scottish culture (especially literature) relied on producing energy by bringing together clashing opposites in the way that a medieval cathedral sculptor might place a grinning gargoyle beside a saint" (1997, 90). Whereas Munro rightly reads the embodiment of the Caledonian Antisyzygy in *Filth* as the manifestation of Bruce's bipolar disorder—a clash of hard man "caricature" and repressed sensitivity (43-44)—the protagonist's cross-dressing habit also allows us to interpret this figure from a gendered standpoint, a conflation of hard manhood and ideal womanhood in the same

body. Whyte's abovementioned inquiry into the hard man archetype is particularly helpful for unpacking the complex interplay of gender performances embedded in Bruce's camouflage. As Whyte explains, "[t]he 'hard man' in the very act of asserting his masculinity, renders it performative, a show which requires cosmetic preparation and establishes a dependent relationship with a regard which can only intermittently be that of the male subject himself" (1998, 276). This act of cosmetic preparation is actually reversed in the film's revealing scene, generating a process of *double* gender performance: from defeated man to hard man, and from hard man to ideal woman—a creature that exists only in Bruce's imagination and is molded on a male-produced paradigm of domestic and sexual virtue.

In the transformation sequence, a distressed Bruce is presented snorting cocaine and getting undressed in front of a mirror as Carole's voice-over recites the very same lines that opened the film. Her voice is ultimately superimposed on Bruce's own, and the same ritual presented at the beginning of the film is now repeated with Bruce as the actual protagonist (fig. 2.9-2.11). The character's double identity is eventually revealed as Bruce follows in Carole's steps and meets with the murderous punk gang in the same tunnel where the homicide of the Asian tourist took place in the film's opening scene (fig. 2.12-2.13). Addressing Bruce as "the fucking freak from the tunnel," the only female member of the group grants him the final identification. The make-over sequence is then followed by a recapitulation of all the instances in which Carole has been earlier presented in the film, unveiling the extent of Bruce's split personality as well as his involvement as a witness in the murder case he himself is investigating on.

Fig. 2.9: "Cosmetic preparation" (Screenshot, *Filth*)

Fig. 2.10: "Cosmetic preparation" (Screenshot, *Filth*)

Fig. 2.11: "Cosmetic preparation" (Screenshot, *Filth*)

Fig. 2.12: Bruce as Carole (Screenshot, *Filth*)

Fig. 2.13: Bruce as Carole (Screenshot, *Filth*)

More than a mere plot device, the gender-crossing leap operated by Bruce's female performance appears coherent with the profoundly nostalgic nature of the character. In several moments throughout the film, and prior to the discovery of Carole's estrangement, Bruce is

portrayed in the act of watching tapes of his previously happy life, and at times recording other characters for scheming purposes (as he does with his timid lodge friend Bladesey, the antithesis of the archetype of masculinity Bruce is so vehemently performing and defending). This attitude towards safeguarding the past and documenting the present, without however being able to move forward, marks Bruce as the symptomatic embodiment of the nostalgic-nostophobic interplay traced by Craig Cairn in his 2009 chapter "Nostophobia." Cairn identifies therein two seemingly antithetic but rather interdependent forces at play in Scottish cinema from the "emergence of a distinctive Scottish film culture" in the late 1970s with Bill Forsyth's work up to the present day (2010, 56). On the one hand is the nostalgia for Scotland's rural and mythic past, a romanticized view of the country's estrangement from the modern world often captured onscreen through the eyes of a foreigner. On the other hand is the opposite drive of nostophobia, "[the] profound revulsion from the representation of the nation in Scotland's cultural past, [the] profound refusal of the nostalgia of/for the homeland" (63). This latter sentiment is especially linked by Cairn to the Scottish diaspora of the 1960s and 1970s, when Scottish intellectuals migrated outside of the national boundaries to escape from the neurosis caused by the "disabling effects of national identity" (64). As discussed in the previous section of the chapter, the exceptional nature of Scottish nationalism—or lack thereof—within modernity marked the peculiar condition of Scotland as a nation *ante litteram*, formed before the very concept of nation-state came into being, and therefore frozen into a state of national "arrested development". Nostophobia thus intervenes as a way to reject this national failure in favor of Europeanism or, as Tom Nairn defines it, "promiscuous internationalism", in such a pervasive way that Cairn states, "[i]f, as is claimed, nineteenth century Scotland was the country of nostalgia, then twentieth-century Scotland has been the country of nostophobia" (65-66).

Interestingly, Cairn identifies in Renton's above-quoted monologue from *Trainspotting* an emblematic display of cinematic nostophobia: the refusal to abide with the magnified glory of the Scottish land in the face of the reality of the Scotsman's troubled condition. It could be therefore argued that *Filth*'s follow-up constitutes an exacerbated reiteration of the same sense of displacement and national rejection, mixed up with contrasting feelings of regret for an illustrious national past that might have been but is not there anymore. Mirrored by the structure of the cinematic *dispositif* as a medium of nostalgia in itself, the two forces at play in Scottish cinema cannot however be separated or deemed rival: "[n]ostophobia," as Cairn concludes "is

not an escape from national nostalgia: it begins and ends in identification with someone else's nostalgia" (70). In the case of *Filth*, Cairn's statement is rendered even more complex by virtue of Bruce's bipolar condition, as the character's nostophobic impulses are not derived from "someone else's nostalgia," but rather from the character's very own. Such an inextricable tension is eventually exemplified in the film by two main instances: Bruce's cross-gender camouflage as a symptomatic manifestation of the character's nostalgic drive; and the character's self-inflicted death at the end of the film as the peak of his nostophobic desire to leave a country he does not recognize as his own anymore.

As mentioned above, Bruce's gender performance is activated by the character as a way to preserve the illusion of his marriage: Bruce becomes Carole in order to retain the delusional presence of his beloved wife in his life. Although Carole is not dead in the flesh, she is metaphorically dead as Bruce's love-object, and therefore the character's cross-dressing metamorphosis lends itself to be interpreted as an unconscious strategy of melancholic mourning. In her gendered implementation of Freud's analysis of melancholia as a pivotal process of ego and character formation, Judith Butler departs from the author's understanding of melancholia as a way to cope with the loss of a loved one to expand on the effects of such a process on gender formation, which are only "alluded to" in the neurologist's work (1990, 78). Freud's description of the melancholic mourning via Butler's rephrasing seems to capture quite aptly the nature of Bruce's camouflage:

> In the experience of losing another human being whom one has loved, Freud argues, the ego is said to incorporate that other into the very structure of the ego, taking on attributes of the other and "sustaining" the other through magical acts of imitation. (…) This identification is not simply momentary or occasional, but becomes a new structure of identity; in effect, the other becomes part of the ego through the permanent internalization of the other's attributes." (1990, 78)

Butler goes further in her reading of melancholia as inextricably linked to processes of gender formation sustained by "the internalization of the tabooed object of desire" (79), that is by the same-sex identification of the subject with the parent s/he cannot love out in the open (i.e. son and father, daughter and mother). Whereas for Freud such a form of identification and repudiation of the other-sex parent is necessary to strengthens one's gender "disposition" in either masculine or feminine terms, Butler goes as far as to claim that melancholic identifications "are modes of preserving unresolved object relations, and in the case of same-sex gender

identification, the unresolved object relations are invariably homosexual" (86). Bruce's case offers however a third template to this model, as his internalization of the lost love object occurs on the other side of the gender spectrum. His performance of femininity—an abstract notion of it, shaped on preconceived ideas of what the "other" gender should act like and be like—is indeed not a way to deal with the Oedipal complex that would be coherent with the character's backstory, but rather a way to recreate and reiterate an ideal of female love and sexuality that is all but feminine, trapping the character in a liminal space where both notions of manhood and womanhood are eroded and rendered unstable.

Whilst the nostalgic nature of Bruce's persona is made clear by his gendered camouflage as well as by the character's behaviour throughout the film, the nostophobic qualities of his personality are only suggested in the scene that introduces him at the beginning of the film. It is with Bruce's death in the film's closing sequence that nostophobia eventually emerges as an evident trait in the character's psyche. At the peak of his bipolar doubling, Bruce decides to act as bait for the group of punks who committed the crime and follows them into their car, dressed as Carole and firmly convinced of his identity as the "wife of Detective Sergeant Bruce Robertson." Brought into a deserted building, Bruce is tied up and left to the mercy of the group's leader, Gorman, who intends to set fire to the place "with the pig in it." The scene acquires however an unexpected homoerotic tone when Gorman, after beating Bruce to a pulp and proclaiming his profound hatred for cops, decides to reserve a special treatment for his victim. "I'll make an honest woman of you yet… You sexy, wee pansy," Gorman says before kissing Bruce on the lips. Startled by Gorman's gesture, Bruce takes advantage of his assailant's distraction and, while responding to the kiss, pushes him out of a window, killing him. Reached on the scene by Amanda Drummond and Ray Lennox, his camouflage is exposed to the workforce, marking the apex of his professional and personal downfall. In the film's closing sequences, a scarred Bruce is shown buying wine for New Year's Eve at a supermarket, where he finally crosses gaze with his terrified ex-wife Carole and his daughter Stacey. With nothing left to lose, Bruce stages his suicide as an act of self-reconciliation. Dressed in full policeman regalia, he hangs himself with a Heart-of-Midlothian-inspired scarf made by the wife of a man he attempted to save in one of the few kind acts depicted in the film. As Bruce is about to kick the chair off his feet, the woman and her child show up at his door, but it is too late and the character

dies with the same cynical spirit he maintained throughout the film, looking at the audience in camera as he pronounces his motto "same rules apply."

Bruce's anti-heroic death recapitulates both the nostalgic and nostophobic forces at play in his twofold persona, and never fully resolved due to the lack of progression or maturation in his character. On the one hand, the nostalgic aspect of Bruce's figure is exemplified in this last instance by an apologetic recording of the character making amends to Bladesey and encouraging the man to live life to the fullest. On the other hand, the nostophobic aspect of Bruce's psychology resides in his choice to die as a way to part from his life as well as from his Scottish setting without physically moving to another country, but rather by leaving it for good. Whereas Bruce's escape from the failure of his performance as the epitome of Scottish hard masculinity is embodied by his transformation into the idealised feminine other, the character's nostophobic escape from the national land is thus activated by his suicide. Dwelling in the obsession for a glorious past, both personal and national, Bruce is not a man of the present or of the future. Punctuated by recordings of an happy domestic routine or by hallucinated, bestial memories of a tragic childhood, Bruce's life is one that goes backward rather than forward, caught up in the nostalgia for lost loves and mental sanity, and in the nostophobic forces that pull him away from the mirage of a mighty Scotland, as well as from his own human and masculine body.

In order to fully realize the idea of a "culturally-diverse" nation envisioned by Munro in his reading of *Filth*, Bruce has to die. His death—as the expulsion of the Tapeworm from the character's body in the very last passage of Welsh's novel—becomes synonymous with the expulsion of intolerant forces from the Scottish soil on the verge of deciding for its own independence. As speculative as it may appear, Welsh and Baird's decision to curb the extent of Bruce's wickedness in the film's script cannot but to be seen in this light. Whereas in Welsh's novel Bruce was eventually disclosed as the murderer of a young African man (his wife's new partner) and the sexual abuser of his own daughter, the cinematic adaptation of the literary source grants the character a more sensitive, and less overtly despicable nature, suggesting that Bruce might paradoxically function in the end as the herald of transition from toxic masculinity and far-right nationalism to a new idea of multi-cultural, gender-inclusive, potentially independent nation.

As Asifa Hussain and William L. Miller researched at length in their 2006 volume *Multicultural Nationalism: Islamophobia, Anglophobia, and Devolution*, the reality of the relationship between sub-state nationalism and multicultural nationalism is however more complex and less in reach than that. By questioning the nature of Scottish nationalism as ambiguously connoted in both civic and ethnic terms—especially with respect to the place of minorities in discourses and constructs of the self-governing nation—Hussain and Miller argue that speaking of "multicultural Scottish nationalism" is particularly problematic (10). Researching the case of Scottish Pakistanis and English immigrants, rather than of "undifferentiated ethnic minorities" and their relationship with the Scottish majority, the authors observe that despite the understanding of Scottish nationalism as a benign one these communities still suffer from marginalization, especially in face of the country's self-determination drives:

> Some realized that in order to achieve devolution they needed the widest possible consensus and that even small but disaffected minorities in Scotland might fatally damage their chances of persuading Westminster to devolve power. But however mixed the motives, the elite rhetoric of inclusion was reiterated so often that it must have gradually become internalized if it were not already an article of faith. (27)

In his post-referendary article "Looking Up Scotland? Multinationalism, multiculturalism and political elites" (2015), Nasar Meer expands on Hussain and Miller's point of view on the subject and examines the position of ethnic and racial minorities in the debates surrounding Scottish nationalism in the context of the independence referendum. Attempting to respond to the neglected question of "how elite political actors are positioning minorities within projects of nation-building" (1), Meer notices that multicultural and plural conceptions of Scottish nationhood are still more aspirational than actual, and that several limitations to integration are still in place in Scotland as well as in Britain in spite of ethnic minorities' own self-identification with the nation they inhabit. Issues of inclusion and exclusion in both national and gendered terms are therefore a thorny component of the debate on Scottish nationhood, and they are reflected by the country's socio-political reality as well as by its cultural and cinematic imaginary. Stemming from such a reflection and shifting the focus to the remapping of predatory femininity within the geographies and temporalities of pre-referendary Scotland, I will look at Jonathan Glazer's adaptation of *Under the Skin* in the final section of this chapter as a commentary on the unstable position of the female and "alien" other in the context of the Scottish independence struggle.

Alien Transnationalism and Female Metaphorization in *Under the Skin*

The first twenty minutes of Jonathan Glazer's *Under the Skin* present the viewer with an uncanny and hardly intelligible account of a mysterious being coming to life. This process of genetic synthesis is suggested in the film's opening scene on both a visual and an auditory level. The enthralling morphing of circular halos of blue light and black volumes into a human eye epitomizes the assemblage of a human body, while the iteration of phonetic exercises superimposing Mica Levi's eerie soundtrack encapsulates the complexity of language-learning processes at a condensed pace. Following the opening title in minimal black font over white background, shots of a metaphysical and nocturnal landscape set the stage for the disturbing completion of this manufactured birth. An unknown man in a motorcycle-riding suit recovers the body of a woman from a ditch and throws it in the back of a white van. The inert body is then left to the mercy of another female character—a black silhouette barely recognizable as Scarlett Johansson—that strips it of its clothes and wears them as her own against the background of milky-white empty scenery. The metamorphosis is however not yet completed. The Female—granted not a name but only a gender classification—is left on her own by the motorcycle rider. Her first action in the outside world is to visit a local mall in order to buy make-up and alluring clothes for her newborn persona. The scenes that follow give a preliminary sense of her still undecipherable purpose, that is to lure young men into her van while perusing the streets of Glasgow,[59] seduce them into abandoned houses, and then witness their bodies disappear into the abyss of a petroleum-black liquid surface.

For the readers of Michael Faber's 2000 novel of the same title, the initial sequences of *Under the Skin* bear little if no secrecy: the unnamed woman is an alien in disguise, provided with charming anthropomorphic features and sent on Earth to procure food supplies of human flesh for her extra-terrestrial peers. For those unfamiliar with the original literary source, Glazer's third feature is an obscure journey into the discovery of the main character's motivations as she proceeds to question the nature of her being in the world. For all viewers alike, the opening sequences add a supplementary layer of complexity to the filmic intertext, as they witness the camouflage of Hollywood star Scarlett Johansson into the alien protagonist—a figure that simultaneously asserts and denies Johansson's persona onscreen. A multilayered

[59] Glimpses of the commercial areas of George Street and Argyle Street in Glasgow's city center are recognizable as Johansson's character starts her van expedition at the beginning of the film.

entity that maintains "a spiritual connection"[60] with the novel but follows its own path of narrative and genre/gender disruption, *Under the Skin* addresses a complex set of issues concerning film production dynamics, (de)construction of geographies and temporalities, gender performances, and stardom conventions. Given the complexity of its artistic gestation—the film took almost ten years to be completed—and the richness of its aesthetic and thematic fabric, Glazer's feature has attracted a considerable amount of academic interest in recent years, spawning dedicated panels at international film and media studies conferences and prompting an entire dossier in the 2017 issue of the online journal *Jump Cut*.

Under the Skin's reputation as a "difficult film," Lucas Hilderbrand explains in the dossier's introduction, brought scholars to "engage in the pleasures of attempting to puzzle the film out, through different lenses of analysis."[61] In this vein, I offer with this section a symptomatic reading of *Under the Skin* as a paradigmatic example of the interplay of gendered and national tensions in current Scottish cinema. Developed for over a decade under shifting conditions, Glazer's film was released in the United Kingdom in March 2014, six months before the first Scottish independence referendum was held. Despite the association of the film with the sci-fi genre in terms of visual and narrative tropes, the employment of guerrilla filmmaking techniques and the clear relocation of Faber's novel within the Scottish pre-referendary moment allow us to read *Under the Skin* in close relation to the contemporary socio-political landscape of Scotland and its quest for national independence. The choice of Scarlett Johansson as the foreign alien attracting Scottish men into her van epitomizes even further the scale system at play in the film in both national and gendered terms, especially in light of the transnational economics mobilized by the actress' stardom. The recent employment of Johansson's corporeal sensuality and disembodied voice as a trademark in sci-fi films such as *Her* (Spike Jonze, 2013), *Lucy* (Luc Besson, 2014), and *Ghost in the Shell* (Rupert Sanders, 2017), as well as her recurrent casting as a foreign body in *Lost in Translation* (Sofia Coppola, 2003), *Match Point* (Woody Allen, 2006), and *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (Woody Allen, 2008) has turned her into a global icon of post-

[60] In an interview for Film4, "Keeping it Alien", Glazer has explained how the first two drafts of the film's script, more linear in their narrative progression and faithful to Faber's novel, were abandoned in favour of a more subliminal approach to the literary material. ("Interview: Jonathan Glazer on Under The Skin," *Youtube*, 18 March 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZUvIfXKVVc Accessed 30 Nov. 2017)

[61] Lucas, Hilderbrand, "Loving the alien: introduction to dossier on Under the Skin," *Jump Cut* 57 (Fall 2016). http://www.ejumpcut.org/currentissue/-ConnorSkin/index.html Accessed 30 Nov. 2017

human femininity. But how can such an avatar of global femininity work as a conduit for local politics?

Focusing on the cross-gendered elements and cross-national forces at play in *Under the Skin*, I intend to reflect on Johansson's "disguised performance" in relation to Scottish cinema's national and gendered dynamics within a global scale. I am especially interested in the way the sex-lacking but not gender-neutral alien played by Johansson subverts and problematizes the urban and male scenario of Scottish cinema in the wake of its recent transnational turn, challenging Scotland's national narrative as a masculine realm. I will break my analysis of *Under the Skin* into two parts. First, I will look at the local-global conditions of the film's production, funding, and casting choices within the shifting historical context of Scottish cinema. Second, I will examine the filmmaking style, the bending of genre conventions, and the main character's narrative trajectory so as to trace the alternative temporality and cartography of gender mapped by the film. Feminist approaches to nationalism and gender will be employed to tackle the issues of female metaphorization and male anxiety raised in the final sequences of *Under the Skin* with respect to the Scottish national and gendered narrative. The polymorphic nature of Johansson's performance as iconic persona, star in disguise, and alien character will be the crucial point of convergence of these intersecting topics and methodologies.

In the sequence that follows the initial mise-en-scène—or rather *mise-au-point*—of Johansson's character and her predatory mission, the geopolitics at play in Glazer's film come subtly to the surface. Standing on a beach, the Female waits for a swimmer to come out of the water and asks him for some tips on surfing spots nearby. After discovering the young man is neither a surfer nor a local but a tourist from Czech Republic, she further inquires: "Why are you in Scotland?" Startled by the question the man spontaneously replies, "I just… wanted to get away from it all." "Why here?" presses the Female. "Because it's… it's nowhere," the man finally utters. This brief exchange, which precedes the failed attempt of the swimmer to save a couple from drowning, and his kidnapping at the hand of Johansson's character, seems to play no relevant role in the economy of the film. However, it sets the stage for a contextualization of *Under the Skin* within the local-global hybridity of current Scottish cinema.

Referring to Alan Rickman's *The Winter's Guest* (1997) in his essay "Scotland's Other Kingdoms" (2010), David Martin-Jones stated that "alongside the appeal of the film as taking place in a Scottish 'nowhere' and 'no-when', there is also the recognition of a very specific

'somewhere' and 'some-when', creating a cinematic reflection of the lives of its inhabitants" (113). This interplay of temporal and spatial vagueness and geo-historical specificity can be considered in broader terms a signature of contemporary Scottish cinema as a whole, which stands out among other cases of subnational cinema for its recent transnational potential. As explained in the first section of this chapter, the developments of Scottish cinema from the national momentum of NSC in the mid-1990s to the transnational openings of the 2010s brought scholars to recalibrate the balance of their academic intervention by focusing less on issues of national awareness and more on the plurality of forms Scottish filmmaking has assumed by traversing the local-global divide.

Under the Skin fits quite suitably into the hybrid scenario depicted by Murray in conclusion to his *The New Scottish Cinema*, not only for reasons concerning the film's production, funding, and circulation strategies, but also the polysemic nature of Johansson's casting choice and performance. In his piece for *Jump Cut*, "Independence and the Consent of the Governed," J.D. Connor outlines precisely this entanglement of local and global instances, locating in *Under the Skin* "the ideal case study through which to examine the international interstices, overlapping temporalities, and mediating institutions that compose independent moviemaking in general."[62] Connor identifies in Glazer's film the point of convergence of three "allegorical scenes," representatives of the complex geological stratifications of "the global system of independent motion picture production." At the first level lies the microcosm of Glazer's guerrilla filmmaking practices, which consisted of eight hidden cameras mounted in the Johansson-driven van with the purpose of allowing director, actress, and film crew to capture the alien's perspective in the making of her interactions with unaware male interlocutors.[63] At the intermediate level is the mesocosm of regional British-Scottish film funding, which Connor alludes to as the "harmonization of interest" of different production agencies held together at the macrocosmic level by Johansson's global appeal—the third and final stage of the film's scale system. Funded by the National Lottery, Silver Reel and Creative Scotland, in association with the British Film Institute, the UK Film Council and Film4, *Under the Skin* benefits from the conjoined efforts of Scottish, British, and US production companies, and situates itself at the

[62] J.D. Connor, "Independence and the Consent of the Governed: the Systems and Scales of Under the Skin," *Jump Cut* 57 (Fall 2016). http://www.ejumpcut.org/currentissue/-ConnorSkin/index.html Accessed 30 Nov. 2017.
[63] With the exception of few previously cast actors (Paul Brannigan as her third victim and Adam Pearson as The Deformed Man), the majority of men "lured" by Johansson during the making of the film are actual pedestrians who were only later informed that they had been filmed.

crossroads of subnational interest and international visibility as it premiered in competition at Venice Film Festival in 2013 and circulated widely on global film markets afterwards. With a total gross of more than five million dollars worldwide, over a budget of 13.3 million,[64] and the rapid acquisition of cult status among film fans all over the world, Glazer's ten-years-long project stands as a relative commercial and critical success for a cinematic scenario such as the Scottish one, otherwise characterized by the scarcity of domestic titles and non-domestic circulation. The reasons for the successful distribution and reception of *Under the Skin* both inside and outside the UK are to be specifically ascribed to the unorthodox recognisability and allure of Johansson's acting persona, which worked as a key factor for the existence of the film altogether. As Connor further points out:

> [J]ust as the production relied on her [Johansson's] drawing power to secure distribution, so its financiers rely on her all-but-masked attractiveness to negotiate their own contradictory relationship to the twin poles of art and commerce.

Connor's use of the term "all-but-masked" is particularly revelatory. The unconventional employment of Johansson's star image in *Under the Skin*, not only as the point of conjunction of arthouse cinema and commercial interests, but also as a strategy of camouflaged stardom, illustrates indeed even further the local-global dialogue addressed by Murray as a key component of current Scottish cinema.

As explained by Glazer himself in his interview for Film4 "Keeping it Alien," the filmmaker's initial impulse was to cast an unknown actress in the main role of the Female, in order to preserve "the credibility of the story." Parting ways from the first two drafts of the film's screenplay as "illustrative and direct" adaptations of Faber's novel, Glazer decided to adopt a realistic approach to the literary material, employing documentary filmmaking techniques and interpolating them with atmospheric segments of experimental play with light, sound, and imagery.[65] The aim to reproduce reality as it unfolded in front of the alien's eyes demanded for Glazer the removal of any sign of extra-diegetic recognisability, especially the immediate

[64] "Under the Skin," *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=undertheskin2014.htm Accessed 22 May 2017.

[65] Despite Glazer's claim that aesthetic and atmospheric components were not fundamental to his conception of the film—hence the decision to employ daylight cinematography and hidden cameras in the van and on shooting locations—*Under the Skin* features several instances of abstract and non-narrative imagery that critics have associated with the influence of Stanley Kubrick's work (Nicolas Rapold, "Lovely, Lethal and Out of This World Scarlett Johansson Falls to Earth in 'Under the Skin'," *The New York Times*, 28 March 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/30/movies/scarlett-johansson-falls-to-earth-in-under-the-skin.html Accessed on 31 Jan. 2017).

identification of a famous star. The idea proved however ultimately unviable from a production standpoint, as the absence of a recognisable actress in the main role of the alien seductress would impend the commercial chances of the film at the box office. Whereas the familiarity of the international audience with Johansson's persona conflicted with the director's intention to portray the alien's experience within the reality of everyday life ("How can it be *alien* if it is played by Scarlett Johansson?" Glazer commented), a solution was found in envisioning Johansson's performance as a form of "double disguise." In the attempt to separate the global allure of Johansson's acting persona from the low-profile seduction of her alien embodiment onscreen, Johansson's star body was subject to a twofold metamorphosis. The first one, from identifiable actress to concealed star, was achieved in the filmmaking process through the artifice of the British accent, the actual camouflage of clothing and styling, and the guerrilla-like acting mode. The second, from alien entity to human female, was presented in the initial sequences of the film described at the beginning of this section. Such a web of transformative processes reflects the multilayered architecture of the film itself, which concerns not only Johansson's morphing from actress to character, but also her onscreen passage from non-human to human, genderless to female being—a sequence of passing strategies that will further unveil the complex positionality of Johansson's persona and character examined later in this section.

The two main levels of local-global articulation considered herein—the film's production and circulation, and Johansson's disguised stardom—are therefore pivotal for situating *Under the Skin* within the specificity of Scottish current cinema. It is at the same time crucial to stress once again the exceptional nature of Scottish cinematic identity as caught in the midst of regional, national, and transnational tensions, so as to understand how a film like *Under the Skin* can fall under the definition of "Scottish film." Whereas in other subnational contexts such as Flanders the filmmaker's nationality is the *conditio sine qua non* for a film to be deemed Flemish,[66] the geographical provenance of directors and actors does not necessarily undermine one film's belonging to Scotland's cinematic imaginary—as Danny Boyle's determinant role in leading the rebirth of Scottish Cinema attested. Although made by a British director with a London-based crew, and starring Hollywood A-list actress Johansson in the leading role, *Under the Skin* has an undeniable and inevitable relationship with its Scottish surrounding, as Glazer's reluctance to set the film anywhere else but in Scotland—thus preserving the literary setting as one of the few

[66] See Chapter 1, Section 3.

concessions to the novel—seems to establish a significant bond with the Scottish landscape and its contemporary state of politics. This sense of immediate contemporaneity, marked by specific temporal references within the film, allows the transition to the second part of my analysis, which looks at the way *Under the Skin* revisits genre and gender conventions within the context of pre-referendary Scotland, focusing especially on the place alien femininity occupies within it.

As Glazer explained in "Keeping it Alien," the choice of shooting *Under the Skin* in an unadorned fashion, drawing from practices of guerrilla filmmaking, was justified by the intent to capture the "truth" of the Female's experience in her discovery of mankind, and therefore of herself. The use of hidden cameras on the van and in the streets of Glasgow, the employment of non-professional actors, as well as the decision to make Johansson a star in disguise, translated Glazer's desire to depict the world through the virgin eyes of a non-human creature, rather than to offer a narrative counterpart to the original novel. Such an overarching idea of recording reality "as it is" provides an alternative viewpoint of the sci-fi genre, as the specific coordinates of the film's setting aim to insert a disruptive turn into a clearly detectable present time, rather than envisioning a dystopian future. The film eludes the horrific drifts of intensive human farming depicted in Faber's novel, opting instead for a re-contextualization of the story into Scottish pre-referendary present—thus offering the possibility for discussing *Under the Skin* in relation to Scotland's interplay of national and gendered identity in such a political momentum.

In a brief transitioning scene that follows the first and only disturbing insight into the destiny of the alien's preys, Johansson's character is shown sitting in the van and listening to the radio while the death of the man drowning earlier on in the film is announced in passing. As the next bulletin starts, the speaker clearly states: "2014 is a very important year for Scotland… of course the referendum, we are expecting the date today." The reference to the upcoming referendum on Scottish independence (subsequently failed in September 2014) situates the film within a definite historical framework and a likewise definite geopolitical reality. Such a brief account of Scottish contemporaneity thus affects the way the film exists not within a suspended or dystopian temporality, but rather in the very present moment of Scotland's drives for national independence. As such, the trajectory mapped by the Female in her passage from alien apathy to human awakening has an equally unconventional impact on the cartography of gender designed by the film with respect to the economy of gendered spaces in current Scottish cinema.

Already in his early article "The New Scottish Cinema," Petrie explained how "[c]ollectively the predominant concerns of recent Scottish cinema has been contemporary, urban and masculine" (2000, 156). The NSC films of the 1990s distanced themselves from the "picturesque" past portrayed in *Rob Roy* and *Braveheart,* resituating the Scottish (male) subject within a metropolitan scenario, and reflecting on the transformation of the Glaswegian "hard man" of the industrial boom into the troubled man of pre-devolutionary national uncertainty.[67] In their previously mentioned account of the evolution of gender and spaces in Scottish cinema, Jane Sillars and Myra MacDonald broadened the scope of such a gendered inquiry even further. Departing from romanticized representations of the relationship between sexes in pre-modern Scotland, to more nuanced engagement with femininity on the transnational screen, the authors focused especially on how the metaphorical divide of masculine urban landscape and feminine natural space has been co-opted and rethought throughout the history of Scottish filmmaking. In the conclusion to their article, Sillars and MacDonald identified in a cluster of transnationally funded, female-centered and female-directed narratives such as *Breaking the Waves* (Lars Von Trier, 1996)*, Morvern Callar* (Lynne Ramsay*,* 2002) and *Red Road* (Andrea Arnold, 2006), examples of Scottish films that "show a receptiveness to the possibility of change and also some ways in which developing femininities and masculinities might attempt a fresh accommodation with the past" (197).

Under the Skin engages with such a possibility by reading against the grain of the female-natural/male-urban divide epitomized by post-industrial, postmodern Scottish films. The Female's movement from the metropolitan area of Glasgow to the wilderness of the Scottish Highlands halfway through the film contributes indeed designing an alternative geography that subverts traditional hierarchies of gender power associated with Scotland's different landscapes, as the character's predatory duties are carried out in the urban space and lost in her contact with wilderness. The city, traditionally connoted as a masculine territory in Scottish cinema, is taken over by the hunting duties of the female protagonist, whose mysterious task is rendered even more threatening by its gender-cleansing drift. As she progressively abandons the city to embrace the sublime of the natural landscape, the Female does not only lose her murderous agency, but she also grows aware of the impossibility of her fulfilling the criteria of being

[67] The trope of Clydesidism, which takes its name from the river Clyde in Glasgow and the surrounding neighbourhoods, is representative of this cinematic tendency to represent struggling working class urban masculinities as a central motif in NSC.

human: her body, assembled to match the canons of alluring femininity, reveals itself a mere shell, an anthropomorphic cover that can fool the eye but nothing more. The unconventional articulation of the film's gendered cartography has therefore crucial implications for the dynamics of power exercised and then endured by the Female character. Her movement towards the northern areas of Scotland, and therefore towards nature, coincides with an illusory quest for freedom: Johansson's character, no longer traceable and hence protectable, eventually exposes her vulnerability to the revenge of the male subject.

Previous female-directed films such as Lynne Ramsay's *Morvern Callar* and Andrea Arnold's *Red Road* already posed a challenge to traditionally male-oriented Scottish narratives, portraying trajectories of female vengeance and liberation centered on female main characters redesigning the national urban space or moving transnationally outside the national borders and back. *Under the Skin* occupies a more complex position in these regards, as the predatory agency of its female character is not geared towards her emancipation—neither in gendered nor in ontological terms—but is instead supplanted by her final annihilation at the hand of a male assailant. As Ara Osterweil observes in her article "On the Perils of Becoming Female", the human existence and gendered connotation of the Female alien are indeed inseparable discourses, and while not conceived in terms of national security, her account of the film's deepest meaning seems to sustain the interpretation of its closing scenes as gendered crimes:

> *Under the Skin* asks the big questions about what it means to be human, but its true inquiry is into femininity. …[it] advances a radical proposition: to be female is to be alien. As the film eventually reveals, all of the aforementioned questions are inextricable from gender. In spite of the fact that the appearance of sex may only be skin deep, even alien forms of life become subject to misogynist violence when they are gendered female. (44)

It is not coincidental that the alien's transition from metropolitan to natural setting occurs in concomitance with other detectable formal and thematic shifts, which disrupt the routine established by the character in the first half of the film. One, chromatic in nature, can be traced in the passage from whiteness to blackness, discussed by Lucas Hilderbrand in his article "On the Matter of Blackness in *Under the Skin*" (2016) as a strategy of passing first (whiteness as a way for the alien to blend into mankind), and rupture afterwards (the revelation of blackness as a disruption of what is familiar to the viewer's eye). The other, more closely related to the Female's performance of gender, concerns the type of gaze exercised by and then upon the

character in her movement from the city into the wild. During her first predatory round around the streets of Glasgow, the alien's gaze—coincidental to that of the camera, and therefore to that of both director and audience—is oriented only towards male pedestrians, in accordance with the character's purpose of surveillance and manslaughter. The alien's subsequent decision to abandon her murderous task and break free is coupled instead with a decisive change in the gendered demographics and nature of her look. Not only the Female's viewpoint is redirected towards other female characters, but also towards herself: several shots of the character looking in the mirror in the act of gaining awareness of her body and her ontological presence in the human world counterpoint previous blank shots of Johansson putting on make-up without even paying attention to her reflected image. The most crucial change is however determined in the final segment of the film, when Johansson's character—the female predator—becomes subjected to the male gaze and therefore "predated upon" in return.

The film's final sequences are in this sense emblematic in both narrative and aesthetic terms. Opposed to the repetitiveness and slow pace of the first half, the film's ending captures the accelerated evolution and precipitation of the Female's trajectory, which deviates from its realistic path to dive into a nightmarish scenario. After discovering and embracing the possibilities of her human side in the encounter with a deformed victim, the Female disobeys her duty, let her prey go, and leaves the preordained paths of the city to head north, where she abandons the van and starts wandering on foot until rescued by a local man. As pointed out by Elena Gorfinkel's examination of the sensorial aspect of the film and the metonymic use of Johansson's body parts (mouth and invisible genitals), two failed experiences are crucial for understanding the unattainability of the character's human ontology: the impossibility of eating (epitomized in the film by the attempt to taste a slice of cake) and of having sex (2016). The unexpected experience of kindness and romance with her rescuer is indeed abruptly interrupted by the Female's discovery of her own sex, or rather, of the lack of one. While attempting to have her first sexual intercourse with the man, the character apprehends that her mechanically assembled body is not designed for human pleasure. Redirecting the light of a lamp between her legs, the character is confronted with a disturbing revelation, although the denied counter-shot of what the alien sees in lieu of her genital apparatus allows us only to speculate on what is hidden "under her skin." In shock, the Female departs once again and ends up in the nearby woods, where she tries to find rest in a shelter. While sleeping under the Rampant Lion of Scotland's

Royal Banner a fusion with nature occurs, as the Female's body becomes one with the surrounding environment (fig. 2.14-2.15).

Fig. 2.14: Female-as-nation

Fig. 2.15: Fusion with nature

The transition of Johansson sleeping in the shelter under the clearly detectable Scottish unofficial flag, and her figure materializing among the trees in an oneiric fashion, offers an interesting configuration of the female body as the metaphorical repository of the Scottish nation. Whereas in *Filth*'s opening scene the superimposition of the Scottish flag onto Bruce's character reinforced the construction of masculinity as the symbolic counterpart of the Scottish nation, the analogous framing in *Under the Skin* points towards the metaphorization of the female subject as a problematic replacement of the national soil. As Spike Peterson underlined in her article "Sexing Politics/Nationalism as Heterosexism" (1999), the protection of the Motherland from foreign penetration as predicated on the basis of the nation-as-woman metaphor is indeed a recurrent nationalist trope connoted in both geographical and temporal terms:

> Nation-as-woman expresses a spatial, embodied femaleness: the land's fecundity, upon which the people depend, must be protected by defending the body/nation's boundaries against invasion and violation. But nation-as-woman is also a temporal

> metaphor: the rape of the body/nation not only violates frontiers but disrupts—by planting alien seed or destroying reproductive viability—the maintenance of the community through time. (48)

Peterson's choice of the adjective "alien" is especially meaningful here. The representation of the alien character merging with the Scottish soil in *Under the Skin* transcends indeed the traditional metaphor of nation-as-woman/woman-as-nation when the dream sequence is disrupted by the sudden intervention of a forest ranger attempting to rape Johansson's character. The Female, precisely by virtue of her non-belonging to the human species, cannot be elevated as a signifier of the nation, and her gender-threatening presence on the national land has to be annihilated. The "alien seed" that menaces to destroy the maintenance of the community is embodied by the character herself, towards which the outburst of sexual violence seems therefore justified for purposes of national protection.

This chapter is not specifically concerned with questions of adaptations, even though both case studies derive from literary sources. It is nonetheless relevant to stress how, despite the profound differences between the film and Faber's novel for most of its narrative—to the extent that screenwriter Walter Campbell did not even read the book before writing the script—one of the most striking changes regards the reaction of the main character to the rape attempt. In the novel, Isserley, the female alien, is assaulted by one of the hitchhikers she has chosen to prey on, and reacts as follow:

> In a flash, exploiting the fact that she was balanced on the bonnet of the car, Isserley flung her arms backwards and upwards. She flung them like two whips, and her aim was precise. Two fingers of each hand plunged into each of the hitcher's eyes, right up to the knuckles, right inside his hot clammy skull. (186-187)

In the film, on the contrary, the Female is deprived of any agency, as she not only succumbs to the attack of her male opponent, but she is completely destroyed by it. After escaping from the shelter to get rid of her assailant, Johansson's character runs through the woods in search of help. Unable to put the ranger's truck in motion, she gets back into the forest, where she is reached by the man and assaulted again. While fighting for survival, something uncanny occurs, as the Female's skin tears apart and reveals a dark, anthropomorphic creature underneath. The alien surges from under the skin and glances for the last time to her previous shell, no longer human, no longer woman, but nonetheless a dangerous presence for the man behind her. The ranger pours gasoline on her and sets her on fire, then runs away while the alien

hobbles through the woods into the open field and dies in the snow, vanishing in a cloud of smoke.

Whereas in a simplistic reading of the film as a sci-fi allegory such a cruel ending might address in a broader sense the human fear of being conquered and colonized by the alien other, *Under the Skin*'s geopolitical specificity triggers a more symptomatic set of questions. The clear connotation of the other as both alien *and* female (and, Hilderbrand would stress, black) highlights the character's threatening stance towards the traditional predominance of masculinity in the discourse of the nation, demanding a critical engagement with the association of maleness and nationhood within the imaginary and practices of Scottish cinema. Through the unconventional employment of Johansson's stardom and female performance, *Under the Skin* thus proceeds to revert the paradigm of Scottish cinema as urban and masculine, posing femininity at the center of its inquiry while disclosing at the same time a great deal of national and gendered anxiety in the crucial moments preceding Scotland's demands for nation-state recognition.

Introducing her 2014 interview with Scarlett Johansson for *The Guardian*, Carole Cadwalladr commented: "transplanting a major Hollywood celebrity to a down-at-heel, working-class Scotland is about as close as you can get to seeing an alien walk among us."[68] The analysis of *Under the Skin* presented in this section stems from Johansson's dual status as global Hollywood icon and malleable tool for transnational embodiment, so as to read the alien nature of her role in Glazer's film as a productive reflection on the local politics and global reach of Scottish current cinema—and especially the revised role played by gender in it. *Under the Skin* and Johansson's role in the filmmaking process thus provide a fruitful path to explore and expand on broader questions of national identity, gender power structures, local-global film industries and imaginaries in the subnational context of pre-referendary Scotland.

Although partly subsequent to the film in chronological terms, the context of the media campaign for the 2014 referendum and the data collected on the gender divide of the Scottish electorate prior to the vote are revelatory in this sense. In both instances—the BetterTogether's unionist front and YesScotland's separatist one—the role played by women in deciding for national independence is indeed particularly compelling. One the one hand, political scientists

[68] Carole Cadwalladr, "Scarlett Johansson interview: 'I would way rather not have middle ground'." *The Guardian,* last modified 16 March 2014. https://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/mar/16/scarlett-johansson-interview-middle-ground-under-the-skin-sodastream Accessed 31 Jan. 2018

Robert John, Lynn Bennie, and Jamie Mitchell's 2012 study "Gendered Nationalism: The gender gap in support for the Scottish National Party" provided with generous evidences of gender disparity in the support for the SNP in the years preceding the referendum, arguing that "[w]omen are less inclined to support and to join the SNP because they are markedly less supportive of its central objective of independence for Scotland" (581). Three possible reasons for such a gendered disproportions were located by the authors in the "intensity and direction of national identity" (i.e. men feel more strongly Scottish than women); the masculine nature of the sectors mainly affected by independence (economics, foreign politics, and defence); and men's tendency to be "less risk-averse than women" (595-596). Despite the enthusiastic survey conducted in June 2014 by the website YouGov reversed the scholars' findings and presented an increasingly positive female-based support to the Yes front,[69] the conclusive polls collected in September still showed that 56% of the female electorate supported the No front with their final vote.[70] On the other hand, the portrayal of the Scottish woman as the "Patronising BT Lady" of a controversial Better Together campaign ad[71] struck as a further indicator of Scotland's struggle with its own gendered nationalism. In the ad, titled "The Woman Who Made Up Her Mind" and posted on Youtube in August 2014, a stereotypical Scottish housewife decides the future of her country while sipping her morning tea in the quiet of her kitchen. Confused by the complexity of her choice and only slightly aware of the weight of her agency in the process, the woman concludes that she will stand with the "No" vote in order to secure a better future for her children. The widely ridiculed portrait of the "Patronising Lady" (fig. 2.16) cannot be certainly considered the main cause of the referendum defeat, but it is at the same striking that such a cringe-worthy portrayal of womanhood did not discourage members of the female electorate from voting against Scottish independence. In order to address the reluctance of female voters to support national self-determination, the referendum campaign thus points towards the need for pro-independence parties to solicit and invest in a more productive idea of national femininity—

[69] "Scottish Independence: Narrowing gender gap pushes 'Yes' to new high." *YouGov,* last modified 30 March, 2014. https://yougov.co.uk/news/2014/03/26/scottish-independence-women-push-yes-to-new-high/ Accessed 30 Nov. 2017.
[70] "Scottish independence: poll reveals who voted, how and why" *The Guardian*, last modified 20 Sept. 2014. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/sep/20/scottish-independence-lord-ashcroft-poll Accessed 30 Nov. 2017.
[71] BetterTogetherUK, "The Woman Who Made Up her Mind," *Youtube*, last modified 26 Aug. 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLAewTVmkAU Accessed 30 Nov. 2017.

and for the relationship between gender and nationhood to be relocated at the center of Scotland's socio-political concerns.

Fig. 2.16: The "Patronising BT Lady" meme

As the final sequences of *Under the Skin* seemed to further suggest, the feminine other as a by-product of the male imagination and yet a threat to male-dominated gender power structures in the Scottish context functions as a symptomatic indicator of the thorny position of female subjects in the cultural fabric of the (sub)nation. However, the international reach of films such as Glazer's can open up to the circulation and reception of more complex understandings of the gendered landscape of Scotland's contemporaneity within and beyond the local-national scale of Scottish cinema, bringing the issue outside of the national screen and into the public debate.

Conclusion

Focusing on a circumscribed but resonant moment in Scotland's current struggle for national independence, this chapter has looked closely at two films within Scotland's pre-referendary moment as symptomatic case studies. Contextualized within the uneven progression of the Scottish film industry from its devolutionary boom of the mid-1990s to its post-devolutionary aftermath, the pre-referendary years have witnessed a persisting investment in the interconnected questions of gender and national identity in a constantly mutating transnational cinema. The analysis of *Filth* and *Under the Skin* conducted in the second and third section of this chapter has suggested how discourses of national anxiety can be inextricably linked to the flexibility of gender patterns and multicultural openings in a country on the verge of arbitrating its own future, while at the same time dealing with the supranational and global forces of Europe and the world. Despite their transnational components in financial and production terms, the chosen case studies

represent and reflect on a locally-specific reality that resonates within Scotland's current socio-political and cultural scenario, providing a fecund template for investigating the possible mutations occurring in Scotland's national and gendered master narrative as a masculine domain.

As David McCrone has noticed in his latest book *The New Sociology of Scotland* (2017), although vastly acknowledged from a cultural standpoint, the equation of Scotland's national and masculine identity in sociological terms is not supported by the actual identification of Scottish citizens with their gender in the first place. McCrone's survey shows indeed how the interviewers identify primarily as Scottish and parents rather than as men or women (271). In the same chapter "Gendering Scotland," McCrone attests however how, in spite of Scottish individuals' self-identification patterns, gender inequality is still particularly present in Scottish society in the years leading to the independence referendum, as previously attested by Bennie et al. in their 2012 abovementioned study. The change in leadership in the SNP, with Nicola Sturgeon taking the place of Alex Salmond after the referendum's defeat, is a signal that a shift might be in store for gender power structures in post-referendary Scotland, and that an increasing level of attention for the role played by gender in discourses of the nation might be the key to a better outcome in future decisions surrounding the country's self-determination.

At the cinematic level, the downfall of hard masculinity in concurrence with the instability of Scottish national identity remains at the center of Scotland's narrative, but without ceasing to put critical masculinity under thorough scrutiny. As an exemplary latest instalment of this trend, Danny Boyle's *T2 Trainspotting* presents a bittersweet portrayal of Scottish masculinity facing the sweeping forces of globalization. In the film's opening scene, Mark "Rent Boy" Renton (Ewan McGregor) returns to Edinburgh after two decades of absence and is welcomed at the airport by stewardesses in kilts distributing maps of the city. When asking one of them where she comes from, the answer is ironically startling: "Slovenia." The scene amplifies the global/local tensions of current Scottish cinema by relocating the poster boy of Scotland's devolutionary aftermath into a drastically changed environment, wherein national pride is blurred into global development and manhood is menaced once again by the paralyzing power of nostalgia. Supported by Sick Boy's critique of Renton as "a tourist in his own youth" Boyle's film is indeed entirely built on the very notion of nostalgia, which functions as both a narrative and a formal device, interpolating visual and music excerpts from the original *Trainspotting* into the fabric of the sequel in order to refresh the viewer's memory as well as to

activate the pleasure of nostalgic remembrance. Whilst the male characters survived from the 1996 film and still alive the end of the 2017 sequel are not evolving in any significant way from their younger avatars, the only noteworthy female character, the Bulgarian sex worker Veronika, is the only one to progress as she leaves Scotland to return to her homeland richer in money and life experience. By freezing manhood into a state of arrested development and granting womanhood the possibility to move forward (although outside of the Scottish confines), *T2 Trainspotting* thus ultimately reflects on Scotland's need for new models of national and gendered identification outside the limitations of white masculinity, and within the more nuanced facets of a multicultural, plurinational, gender fluid society. And, to reiterate Murray's position on the subject matter, it also calls for a sustained and continuous investment in researching the role(s) played by gender in the chameleonic fabric of Scottish cinema.

CHAPTER 3

In the Name of the Mother:
Rethinking the Family-Nation Allegory in Quebec Cinema

Fig. 3.1: The unconventional family unit (Screenshot, *Mommy*)

Introduction

During my first doctoral year in Montreal I shared an apartment with a young Québécoise woman in the predominantly francophone neighbourhood of Rosemont–La Petite-Patrie. At the time, I did not know much about the city, its geographical and linguistic configuration. My dissertation project was nothing but a chaotic ensemble of preliminary thoughts, as my main concern was to adjust to the new situation first. I had moved from Italy to find a better ground for my research on queerness in Canadian and Quebec cinemas, and I was tentatively looking at the work of Xavier Dolan as my privileged case study. What fascinated me the most was the way in which the absence of paternal figures and the challenge to heteronormative male subjectivities in Dolan's narratives disrupted the conventional structures of the Western nuclear family, questioning the centrality of fatherhood and heterosexual masculinities in a seemingly patriarchal society. Or at least, so I thought. One day, during a conversation on the subject matter, my roommate turned to me from the kitchen sink and uttered: "But Quebec is a matriarchal society!" Her statement was animated by an absolute, pristine conviction that left me thinking. What if she was right? What if my understanding of the patriarchal structures of Quebec society as ingrained in the broader context of North American and Western cultures was based on preconceived and fundamentally mistaken assumptions? All considered, my roommate was a Quebec-born young

woman with a first-hand grasp of the province's culture. The research that followed gave however only partial, if ambiguous validation to her adamant claim on Quebec's matriarchy.

A brief contextualization of the ties between gender and nationhood in the framework of Quebec's quest for national self-determination is a necessary point of departure to unpack and debunk the assumptions on Quebec's matriarchy anecdotally presented above. Distinct from the other nine provinces of Canada by virtue of its demographic and linguistic composition (with French as its official language), Quebec has undergone a complex history of colonization, facing on the one side the twofold domination of French and British settlers between the seventeenth and the eighteenth century, and exercising on the other the territorial expropriation and juridical repression of First Nations' rights and Indigenous cultures from the late eighteenth century onward. The stratification of Quebec's colonial histories—and the consolidation of the national question as a prerogative of white, Francophone societies in the mid-1900s—makes it a particularly compelling landscape for examining the entanglement of gendered and national trajectories in its contemporaneity.

The quest for sovereignty has been part and parcel of Quebec's history since the original founding of the colony of New France in the seventeenth century, and even more so with the British Conquest of 1759 and the founding of the Province of Quebec after the concession of North-American territories from France to Great Britain at the end of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), as established by the Treaty of Paris (1763). The attempt of the British colonizers to suppress and assimilate Francophone cultures during their colonial administration had the effect of exacerbating feelings of resentment, and fueling desires of national independence in the province. For our purposes, it is however only in the 1960s that we will trace the core of Quebec's nationalism in the advent of the so-called "Quiet Revolution." Although contested in its exact periodization, the Quiet Revolution identifies an intense succession of modernizing and secularizing processes that occurred in Quebec from the early to the mid-1960s. Marked as "quiet" due to its mostly peaceful nature, the pursuit of political and national independence over the previous domination of the Catholic regime and the authority of the Canadian nation-state was carried out in Quebec with relatively limited involvement of violence. The leftist terrorist group Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) was held responsible for the majority of violent acts, including mailbox bombings, the kidnapping of British diplomat James Cross, and the murder of cabinet minister Pierre Laporte during the October Crisis of 1970. The Crisis led to the first and

only use of the War Measures Act in Canada at the hand of Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and to what can be interpreted as the end of the Revolution itself. The Revolution thus constitutes a fundamental turning point for the interconnected developments of national and gendered awareness in Quebec. Such an historical landmark did not only signal a shift in the previously Catholic-oriented structures of Quebec politics, society, and culture, determining the emergence of national consciousness at the political and the cinematic level—as I will further examine in the first section of this chapter. It also raised crucial questions about the gendered and ethnic nature of Quebec's nationalist agenda as prevalently masculine, white, and Francophone.

Canadian historian Jeffery Vacante has written extensively on the connection between Quebec's political history and its history of sexuality (2005/2017). In his articles "Writing the History of Sexuality and 'National' History in Quebec" (2005) and "Liberal Nationalism and the Challenge of Masculinity Studies in Quebec" (2006), the author specifically locates in the Quiet Revolution the point of origin for the configuration of Quebec's nationhood as a heteronormative, androcentric project, wherein the promotion of male heterosexual power was conceived as a tool to overcome the myth of Quebec's "homosexual" nation—historically emasculated by the Church and subjugated by the Anglophone colonizer.[72] Such an equation of colonization and emasculation appears at length also in earlier writings on the metaphorization of female and queer subjects in Quebec's national narratives (Schwartzwald 1991/1993; Probyn 1997). Herein, the authors investigate "the ways in which Quebec is constituted as a normal nation through the use of gendered and sexualised metaphors" (Probyn 1997, 114), that is how the otherwise extraordinary display of female sexuality and queer inclusion in Quebec cinema, television, and literature is in fact the symptom of homophobic and misogynistic panic, camouflaged and "normalized" to reinforce the actual norm of heterosexual masculinity. In his volume *Nationalism and The Politics of Culture in Quebec* (1988), Richard Handler as well pointed toward strategies of normalization of otherness in Quebec's nationalist agenda, both

[72] As Vacante acknowledges, the call for secularization within the Quiet Revolution was supported by a strong reassertion of heterosexual masculinity based on two main arguments. On the one side, the rejection of the Church's educational system as an environment accused to instill feminine values in the boys and therefore preventing the production of "strong and virile leaders" for an independent nation. On the other, the homophobic dismantlement of colonial discourses based on the homosexualized, feminized metaphor of Quebec as the passive partner of the Anglophone colonizer. National independence thus became for the leaders and theorists of the Quiet revolution an instrument to allow both the men and the (white, Francophone) nation in Quebec to emerge from a state of weakness and dependence (Vacante 2005, 36-37).

within and beyond the Quiet Revolution's period, particularly in the assimilation of ethnic minorities. In a chapter aptly titled "A Normal Society," the author explains how the issues of immigration in Quebec have been central to the province's nationalist discourses since the 1960s, and particularly in the late 1970s, when the "white paper on cultural development" redacted in 1978 by sovereigntist Parti Québécois attempted to promote the integration of minorities without sacrificing the ambition of a homogeneous, monolingual nation (175-176). As Handler rightly asks, however, "…how can the desire for a homogeneous nation be reconciled with fair treatment of those elements in the nation that make for diversity?" (1976). Building upon such an interrogative, my purpose in this chapter will be to rethink familial dynamics in Quebec via the work of Québécois filmmaker Xavier Dolan and Swiss-French-Canadian Léa Pool—particularly their recentering of female, queer, and maternal figures in the national master-narrative. As I will further explain in this chapter, the focus on the gendered structures of the familial microcosm rather than on those of individual subjectivity is substantiated by the very structures of Quebec cinema as an Oedipal one, wherein the family acts a synecdoche of nationhood at large—that is the so-called "family-nation" allegory. By recentering their narratives on female and queer experiences, rather than on strictly masculine and heterosexual ones, Dolan and Pool's work will allow us to locate in their revised take on the family-nation a field of possibilities for inclusive practices of national and gendered belonging.

To return to my starting questions about Quebec's assumed national matriarchy, then, it is crucial to determine how such an assumption has become entrenched in the gendered history of Quebec and how it can be challenged. The above outlined relationship between white masculinity and nationalism under the pivotal shifts of the Quiet Revolution has rendered the foundations of the concept of matriarchy quite unstable to begin with, and a further examination of academic inquiries on the subject uncovers the volatility of such a construct even more clearly. In his 2011 book *Gender, Nationalism, and War: Conflict on the Movie Screen*, political scientist Matthew Evangelista performs a comparative study of four geopolitical contexts—Algeria, Yugoslavia, Chechnya, and Quebec—looking at the intersection of gender, violence, ethnic conflicts, and national rhetoric in feature films produced in the examined countries. In the introduction to his volume, Evangelista affirms that "Québec is… the least patriarchal of the four societies, which some observers attribute to the traditional role of matriarchy in the native

populations and among the early French settlers who interacted with them" (2011, 22).[73] In the following chapter, "Quebec: *oui*, no, or *femme*", the question of matriarchy is however framed in less assertive terms, as Evangelista wonders if "the legacy of matriarchy, *whether imagined or real*" (italics mine) made any difference in determining the "quiet" nature of Quebec's sovereigntist uprising in the 1960s (2001, 242). Stemming from a recollection of Quebec's historical steps towards linguistic assertion and national (though failed) independence, the author samples Robert Lepage's political film *Nô* (1998) as a cinematic allegory of the role played by gender in the both peaceful and violent unfolding of Quebec's nationalism between the 1970s and the 1980s. Quoting from Lepage's interviews (Coulombe 1998; Dundjerovic 2003), Evangelista relies especially on the filmmaker's definition of Quebec as a matriarchal society pledged to "international patriarchal rules", without however offering further evidences to substantiate yet another resolute invocation of the existence of matriarchy in Quebec.

Conversely, earlier feminist contributions on the subject matter have largely scrutinized the essentialist assertion of matriarchal lineages in Quebec's modern and present society, soliciting a more nuanced and critical engagement with the intertwined histories of nationalism and gender inequality in the province. Scholars such as Chantal Nadeau, Diane Lamoureux, and Mary Jean Green have been particularly sceptical towards the unproblematic inference of Quebec's matriarchal status. Nadeau, who laments the lack of academic involvement with questions of engendered nationhood in Quebec's film scholarship, argues that "[t]he Quebec national space, despite the fear of matriarchy, is still secured as the land of that male heterosexual triumphant shepherd, St. Jean Baptiste[74]" (1999, 197). Since nationhood and (heterosexual) manhood are often conceived as overlapping concepts and mapped over one

[73] Evangelista's assertion of Quebec's matriarchy due to the matriarchal structures of Indigenous communities—further reinforced by the author's engagement with Lepage's interviews—is predicated on a twofold assumption. Firstly, it bypasses the history of suppression of those very structures in the aftermath of white, European colonial settlements in Quebec in the seventeenth century, and further on with the Indian Act of 1846 and its revision in 1985 (Bill C-31). In these regards, First Nation scholar Glen Coulthard thoroughly unpacked issues of gender discrimination and self-determination in his book *Red Skin, White Masks* (2014), where the analysis of the two acts attested to conspicuous gaps in Canadian legislation especially in regard to Aboriginal women, their marital status, and their position within Canadian society. Secondly, Evangelista's claim does not acknowledge the specificity of Indigenous communities as Nations themselves, not necessarily subsumed under or incorporated within Quebec's national culture at large. The presumptive assumption of matriarchy in Quebec has therefore less to do with the history of Indigenous socio-cultural structures, and more with the scope and purposes of Quebec nationalism, particularly in the use of the Motherland figure as a female metaphor of the national soil.

[74] The Nativity of St. Jean Baptist is celebrated as the National Holiday in Quebec on June 24th—a tradition that traces back to French colonialism in the province. For Nadeau, the intersection of nationalism and masculinism in Quebec thus derives from the association of the "fête nationale" with one of the key symbols of the heterosexual couple in the Catholic imaginary.

another, Nadeau states that the identitary discourses of Quebec cinema have been recurrently marked by the invisibility of female voices, concerns, and narrative, as well as by the silencing of "the coexistence between differences" of gender, sexuality, and ethnicity (207). Similarly, in *L'Amère Patrie*: *féminisme et nationalisme*, Lamoureux exposes the limitations of motherhood to its merely reproductive outcomes in pre-Quiet Revolution Quebec's society—that is before the secularizing process led by the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s. Particularly, she claims that "mothers might have the potential to give life, but they have no actual power nor authority. They are 'the origin of the world', but the world does not belong to them, it is part of the natural course of things, rather than of the human capacity to shape it"[75] (2001, 100). In *Women and Narrative Identity: Rewriting the Quebec National Text*, Green points towards analogous ideological constrains in the solely reproductive role of motherhood, and examines the struggle of female writers to insert themselves into the "identity narratives" of Quebec's national text as a masculine domain. Following Paul Ricoeur's definition of identity as postulated on the basis of what we write about ourselves (and, by extension, what we *film* about ourselves), Green underlines the exclusionary nature of national narratives, which privilege the relevance of certain voices to the detriment of "less relevant" others. In the specific case of Quebec, as Green indicates, these "other" voices have been largely female: "[b]ecause this identitary project, and the place of women within it, has historically been defined by masculine conceptions of the world, women's literary expression in Quebec has been severely constrained and, in some cases, completely silenced" (2001, 3-4).

Although seemingly at odds with the stakes of a research project on men and masculinities in subnational cinemas, the question of matriarchy is a nodal point from which to unpack the shifting stances of Quebec's manhood under the threat of unstable determinations of national identity. Provocative claims on the existence of matriarchy in Quebec seem indeed to forget how the roots of Quebec nationalism plunged into the masculine and heterosexist design of the Quiet Revolution—wherein women were considered central to the national project only in light of their reproductive role. The ambiguous status of matriarchy in Quebec's national imaginary thus constitutes a necessary point of entry to discuss the representation of heteronormative male subjectivities and bodies in crisis as the gendered norm in Quebec cinema,

[75] Author's translation.

and to enhance the contrast with the case studies analyzed in the last two sections of this chapter as attempts to tackle such normative stances from an alternative standpoint.

The debate around matriarchy, masculinity, and the gendered nature of Quebec's national project thus provides a starting ground for the issues explored in this chapter, which stems from the analysis of the relationship between masculinities and nationhood in Quebec's socio-political and cinematic discourses, to then reconsider the gendered articulation of the family-nation allegory via the emblematic work of two Quebec-based directors. Departing from the peculiarity of Quebec's political and sexual history in the aftermath of the Quiet Revolution and the double referendary failure of 1980 and 1995,[76] I will examine in the following sections of this chapter the reconfiguration of gender dynamics and the traditional nuclear family in the work of Xavier Dolan and Léa Pool—the first in its post-referendary inflection, the second in its Quiet Revolution setting. My choice of singling out the work of these two filmmakers over the long-standing and complex history of Quebec cinema is dictated not only by their shared interest in the themes of the familial, the maternal, the feminine and the queer, but also by the similarities in their approach to the latter two. Praised on the one hand for their contribution to Quebec cinema in terms of international visibility and engagement with issues of gender and sexuality, both directors have been also criticized for their outspoken detachment from "queer" and "lesbian" as self-identifying terms—either for themselves directly, or for their films by proxy. In this sense, both Dolan and Pool's work are presented and analyzed in this chapter as expressions of a "post-gay" and "post-lesbian" sensibility, as their engagement with non-normative experiences of gender, sexual, and national identity is embedded within a universalizing discourse rather than an overtly activist one.

Employed for the first time by British journalist and activist Paul Burston in 1994, the term "post-gay" was co-opted and unpacked by James Collard in his *Newsweek* article "Leaving the gay ghetto" (1998), where he defined the concept as follows:

It doesn't refer to someone who's simply switched sexuality…[n]or is it anti-gay.

[76] Following the sovereigntist agenda of René Lévesque's Parti Québécois (PQ), a provincial political party founded in Quebec in 1968, a first referendum on sovereignty-association was instituted to decide for the province's political and economic partition from Canada. Held on May 20, 1980, the referendum witnessed the triumph of the "No" for 59.56% over 40.44% positive responses. The following referendum on sovereignty-economic partnership with Canada launched by PQ's leader Jacques Parizeau on June 12, 1995, resulted instead in a tight margin of 50.58% "No" voters versus the 49.92% of "Yes" voters.

> Post-gay is simply a critique of gay politics and gay culture-by gay people, for gay people. (…) Post-gay doesn't mean "The struggle's over, so let's shop!" The struggle isn't over, and neither is the health crisis. But there's a pressure to conform within gay-activist politics, one that ultimately weakens its fighting strength by excluding the many gay people who no longer see their lives solely in terms of struggle.

Differing from the methodology of "post-queer" as a critical attempt to revisit queer theory by putting an emphasis on the *becomings* of queer experience rather than on the *being* of queer bodies and subjectivities (Ruffolo, 2009), the post-gay terminology underlines a disengagement with identity politics practices that position activism at the center of the gay experience, thus functioning quite aptly in relation to Dolan's approach to queer themes and aesthetics as disengaged from "queer" as a "ghettoizing" label (in the filmmaker's own words).[77]

An analogous discourse can be applied to Pool's work via the "post-lesbian" nomenclature. Although personally concerned with themes of cultural displacement and sexual fluidity since her early films (*La femme de l'hôtel* [1984], *Anne Trister* [1986], and *À corps perdu* [1988] are all centered around themes of female homosociality and triangulated love), Pool has also been reluctant to apply any label to her characters as well as to herself, rejecting self-identification processes in favour of a more fluid understanding of female-centered experiences and subjectivities. As Sarah Mullan has argued in her call for a renewed vocabulary for the field of performance studies, "post-lesbian" designates "a position that seeks to renegotiate 'lesbian' and the set of embodied practices that the term suggests" (2015, 101). Similarly to Collard's abovementioned definition of "post-gay," "'post-lesbian' does not disavow the identity category of lesbian, but accounts for the influence of queer and post-structuralist thought," thus attempting to find a middle ground between "lesbian" as a term linked to the specificity of identity politics, and "queer" as a notion that aims to encompass all categories of identity that fall outside the heteronormative spectrum:

> 'Post-lesbian', then, may provide an opportunity to amalgamate the benefits of the existing terminology while also compensating for its limitations. While 'post' accounts for the post-structuralist assertion that all identity is constructed, the foregrounding of 'lesbian' in this term (rather than 'queer') is a political move that

[77] In an interview for French magazine *Télérama*, Dolan discussed his controversial refusal of the Queer Palm Award in 2012 by claiming: "It disgusts me that such prizes even exist. What progress is there to make with awards so marginalizing and ostracizing that they would define films made by gays as gay movies? We divide with these categories. We fragment the world into little secluded communities. I did not look for the Queer Palm. They still want to give it to me. Never! Homosexuality can be present in my films or not" ("Xavier Dolan: 'Je me projette dans tous mes personnages'," *Télérama*, 2 Sept. 2014, author's translation).

> draws attention to, and refuses to dismiss, gendered experience, with all of its 'lived' effects. Thus it potentially offers a constructive intersection in the histories of both 'lesbian' and 'queer'. (Mullan 2015, 102)

A preliminary clarification of the post-gay and post-lesbian terminology is therefore central to the understanding of my later analysis of Dolan and Pool's films as alternative to an established norm in the configuration of the family-nation allegory on the Québécois screen. Using Christiane Tremblay-Daviault's notion of "*cinéma orphelin*" (1981) and Heinz Weinmann's "*roman familial*" (1990) as my theoretical points of entry at the end of the first section of this chapter I will unpack how the filmmakers' work—despite their disengagement with overt practices of LGBTQ+ activism and self-recognition—intervene in rethinking the way Quebec's family-nation operates from a gendered standpoint.

The remainder of the chapter will thus proceed through three sections that cut across and intersect the different temporalities of Quebec's political and gendered history. In the first section, the shifting representations of male subjectivities in Quebec cinema will be contextualized using the Quiet Revolution and the failed referenda as historical watersheds. Both the Quiet Revolution and referendary moments constitute a milestones for questions of nationhood and masculinity to emerge and conflate in Quebec cinema and society. Whereas the Quiet Revolution has been largely considered by film studies scholars as the moment of birth of Quebec national cinema, and by some historians and men's studies scholars as the period of reassertion of heterosexual/heterosexist masculinity, the post-referendary era has stood out as a period of crucial rethinking of both issues of nationalism and masculinism in the province. This interplay of socio-political history and history of sexualities in Quebec, examined at large by Vacante in his scholarship, will be further employed to unpack the shifting understandings of gender and family dynamics in Quebec's society, drawing examples from Quebec cinema from the 1960s onwards. The first section will thus serve as a tool to lay out the conceptual and theoretical framework employed in the chapter, that is to establish a connection between the otherwise disjoined fields of film studies, history of sexuality, and men and masculinities studies in Quebec. Moreover, the focus on the periodization of Quebec cinema and the concurrent emergence of gendered tensions in the understanding and rethinking of manhood will help contextualize and historicize the cinematic case studies analyzed in the following sections of the chapter.

In the second section, the work of Xavier Dolan will be put under scrutiny for its reconfiguration of Quebec's national design and, possibly, its future, in feminist and queer terms. Dolan's films will be examined as examples of queer engagement with the motifs of Quebec's national project and gendered structures outlined in the theoretical section of the chapter. The use of queer temporalities and spaces (Foucault 1967; Freeman 2000; Halberstam 2005), along with the dominant presence of queer sexualities and female/maternal subjectivities in the filmmaker's work will allow us to theorize an alternative futurity for gender dynamics, family structures, and national projects to be imagined in Quebec. In the third and final section, a selected film corpus by Léa Pool—namely *Emporte-Moi* (1999), *Maman est chez le coiffeur* (2008) and *La passion d'Augustine* (2015), all set during the Quiet Revolution—will be analyzed for their engagement with themes and practices of female experience and sexuality in relation to the family-nation allegory in Quebec's Quiet Revolution period. Despite the early critical reception of Pool's work as "indifferent" to the representation of female and lesbian subjectivities in openly feminist and queer terms (Nadeau 1994, 1999), the filmmaker's "revolutionary trilogy" offers a compelling portrayal of girlhood and womanhood at a crucial stage in Quebec's history; one that will complement and integrate the analysis of Dolan's cinema as predominantly concerned with the maternal and the non-normative from a male, albeit queer, point of view.

Gender, Nation, and Quebec Cinema

In the incipit to his chapter "Auteurism after 1970," Bill Marshall identifies two historical landmarks in the experience of a national cinema in Quebec—the 1960s and the 1990s:

> This periodization marks, like all periodizations, a transition. It is bound on one side not only by the emergence in the 1960s of a Quebec national cinema, but by the putting into place of political, cultural, and institutional arrangements which would structure in the following decades the paradigms in which that cinema and that society imagined itself and its contradictions. On the other side lies a new turn, the contemporary period, in which the ever-present exigencies of the "national"… have to contend with the inescapability of a globalized economy of cultures, identities, and cinematic practices. (2001, 133)

Whereas the "contemporary period" of post-referendary defeat and global openings is deemed responsible for a renegotiation of national-specific instances, the Quiet Revolution is underpinned as the moment of inception for a properly called "national" cinema to exist in Quebec. In his previous chapter "The Cinema of Modernization," Marshall had already

examined the process of secularization of the Francophone province—culminating in the foundation of René Lévesque's Parti Québécois (PQ) in 1968 and extinguished by the October Crisis of 1970—in lights of its ties with the effects of modernization and the hegemonic thrusts of nation-state ideologies on Quebec's socio-political history and cinematic imaginary (2001, 46-48). Marshall argues that the passage from a rural society heavily controlled by the Catholic Church to a urbanized and secularized nation-in-the-making is reflected by a cinema of uncertainty rather than wholeness, scepticism rather than triumphalism, where the re-inscription of Quebec's identity into a shifting political and cultural landscape is affected by symptoms of psychological instability and gendered anxiety.

Textbook example of this transitional moment, Pierre Patry's first feature film *Trouble-Fête* (1964) epitomizes the disorientation of a young Québécois man torn between the stagnation of the past and the possibility of the future, but ultimately trapped in the guilt of the present. A student in a Catholic college in the midst of the Quiet Revolution, Lucien (Lucien Hamelin) rebels against figures of religious and patriarchal authority, but his trajectory ends tragically with the accidental murder of a middle-aged homosexual who was chasing him through the streets of Montreal during the celebrations of the Saint Jean-Baptiste Day—Quebec's National Holiday. Read by Marshall as an example of Quebec's early attempt to build a tradition for popular cinema in the province, *Trouble-Fête* inscribes the rewriting of Quebec's national narrative and identity within a modern urban scenario, equally influenced by the contemporary emergence of the French Nouvelle Vague and by the cultural-economic imperialism of contemporary American society, "but with an inferiority complex" (2001, 64). The homophobic panic displayed by Lucien against the backdrop of Quebec's National Holiday, and the consequences of his gesture for his future as a national subject, function indeed as an apt metaphor for the intersection of gendered and socio-political instances at play in the cinema of the Quiet Revolution. Moreover, the coincidence of male anxiety and national celebration in the final scenes of the film is particularly emblematic of the tensions explored within this chapter. Building on Patry's film as a symptomatic point of entry, this section sets up the theoretical framework of the chapter and maps out key interventions in film studies, men and masculinities studies, and history of sexuality, addressing the entanglement of nationhood, gender, and politics in post-Quiet Revolution and post-referendary Quebec cinema and society.

Considered to this day one of the most comprehensive and nuanced contributions to the understanding of Quebec cinema's national intricacies for an Anglophone readership, Marshall's abovementioned *Quebec National Cinema* situates itself within a tradition of film studies scholarship concerned with mapping and historicizing the seemingly self-evident links between nationhood and cinema in Quebec. Although different in tones and scopes, such scholarly works find commonality in their examination of the Quiet Revolution as the original and yet conflicted moment of birth of Quebec national cinema.

Published for the first time in 1978 and then translated in English for *Jump Cut* on May 22, 1980—only two days after the referendum on Quebec's sovereignty-association—Michel Houle's article "Themes and Ideology in Quebec Cinema" attempts to trace a preliminary trajectory of Quebec cinema's evolution in the first four decades of its existence.[78] Houle's periodization spans across three crucial eras: the so-called "Great Darkness" of Maurice Duplessis' second appointment as Quebec Premier from 1944 to his death in 1959;[79] the years of the Quiet Revolution from the end of Duplessis' regime to the global rupture of 1968; and the "present" moment up until 1978. Houle's partition reorganizes Quebec cinema along three historical and identitary axes: the cinema of Catholic "propaganda" in the 1940s and 1950s, the "militant cinema" of national identity in the 1960s, and the cinema of "ordinary people" and marginalities in the 1970s. Houle is among the first scholars to identify a central shift in the cinema of the Quiet Revolution and particularly in the work of Pierre Perrault, which reflects the passage from the "French-Canadian" to the "Québécois" nomenclature as a sign of "nationalization" of the cinematic imaginary in the province. Marked as the Golden Age of Quebec national cinema other than just its incipit, the militant films of the 1960s attempt to determine the implications of this linguistic passage for the representation of Quebec's society, as well as for the troublesome consolidation of a stable national identity:

> The cinema of that period, whether guilt-ridden because of its revolt or its inability to make itself heard, might be described as an anxious, tormented cinema that above all reflected the conflict between values that were at stake in Quebec society through the confusion of its characters and their crises of conscience. It was, in the full meaning of

[78] Michel Houle, "Themes and Ideology in Quebec Cinema," translated by Marie-Claude Hecquet, *Jump Cut*, 22 May 1980, http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC22folder/QuebecFilm.html Accessed 11 Dec. 2017

[79] Maurice Duplessis (1890-1959) was Premier of Quebec from 1936 to 1939 and again from 1944 to 1959. Due to the conservative policies of his government, his mandate as Premier went down in history as *La Grande Noirceur* (the Great Darkness).

> the expression, both individually and collectively, the cinema of an identity crisis. (1980)

Confusion, guilt, anxiety, and crisis are words that recur in Houle's take on Quebec cinema from the 1960s and will bleed into several later accounts of the cinematic production from the period in order to underline the unsettled foundations of the national concept in the province. The recognition of identitary troubles in the cinema of the Quiet Revolution is however not the only interesting argument raised by Houle's article. What is particularly compelling in Houle's understanding of the relationship between national project and cinema during the Quiet Revolution is the idea that militant films emerged in Quebec not *because of* the Quiet Revolution, but rather as firsthand testimonies that the Quiet Revolution was happening in its whole "*Québécitude.*" Cinema thus functions as the privileged barometer rather than as a mere consequence of Quebec's identitary turmoil—a consideration that calls for a more profound rethinking of the links between socio-political and cinematic discourses in Quebec.

Such a rethinking is however part of a broader tendency in film studies scholarship from Quebec and on Quebec cinema, which Houle's article is no exception to. The examination of the ties between cinema and national history is indeed often carried out through the chronological listing of films made within a given period, and the search for thematic correspondences between such films and the tropes of identity investigated by the author in question—a methodology that tends to be more quantitative than qualitative in its application. Christian Poirier's monumental work in two volumes *Le cinéma québécois* (2004), for example, provides an analytical interpretation of Québécois feature films from 1934 to the early 2000s, using the identitary question as the linchpin to his inquiry, and Ricoeur's concept of "narrative identity" as its core methodology. Poirier dilates Houle's threefold periodization into five eras that he considers cohesive in both temporal and identitary terms (1934-1957, 1958-1967, 1968-1974, 1975-1986, and 1987-2000). Looking at Quebec cinema through the prism of identity he singles out two main articulations of the national narrative: one hegemonic and exclusionary, characterized by essentialist conceptions of identity and national belonging, and therefore marked by a sense of lack and emptiness; the other plural and inclusive, open to the heterogeneity and diversity of integrated identities (2004, 12). Similarly to Houle, but with a more encompassing gesture, Poirier marks the distinction between a cinema of singularity and one of multiplicity, and locates

once again in the Quiet Revolution the moment of construction of Quebec's national subjectivity:

> Durant les années 1960s le démarrage des maisons de production, l'activité intense qui régnait au sein de l'office national du film et la volonté des jeunes cinéastes témoignaient du désir de participer activement au mouvement social et culturel qui secouait le Québec (la Révolution tranquille, 1960- 1966). Le cinéma québécois devait se réapproprier l'imaginaire monopolisé par Hollywood. Les cinéastes mettent alors l'accent sur l'importance de révéler les Québécois comme ils sont. C'est un cinéma d'identification, le film étant perçu comme un reflet de la réalité, participant à la construction identitaire du sujet québécois moderne en émergence.[80] (2004, 270)

The cinema of the Quiet Revolution thus coincides for Poirier with the emergence of Quebec's "national subject," but the association of the national question with that of national cinema is explored in his book mostly in "compilatory" terms, in the attempt to demonstrate the persistence of the identitary theme throughout the history of Quebec's filmmaking. The same can be said of Véronneau's article "L'histoire du Québec au travers de l'histoire du cinéma québécois. Le cinéma québécois a-t-il le goût de l'histoire?" (2008), which expands on the dialogue between national history and national cinema in Quebec by taking over Houle's interrupted periodization and extending it to the 2000s. Véronneau's work does not proceed by mere chronological completion, but seems to retroactively respond to Houle's final and open question on the future of Quebec cinema in the decades following his article. Whereas Houle's concern for the shrinking rate of film production in Quebec led to suggest a future dialogue with television rather than cinema, Véronneau's piece underlines the need to move from the Quiet Revolution to the two failed referenda as the new historical stepping stone for Quebec national cinema:

> L'échec du référendum de mai 1980 (avec 40 % des voix en faveur de la souveraineté), puis celui de 1995 (avec 49 % des voix) remettront en question toute la dynamique nationaliste. Il était inévitable que le cinéma fasse écho au référendum de 1980, d'autant plus qu'il n'est pas exagéré d'affirmer que dans son ensemble le milieu du cinéma accordait son appui à la souveraineté-association. Mais la victoire du Non rend les gens amers et tétanise le milieu culturel, ce qui va se refléter dans plusieurs

[80] "Throughout the 1960s, the emergence of production companies, the intense activity of the National Film Board (NFB) and the initiatives of young filmmakers demonstrated the desire to actively participate to the social and cultural turmoil that was shaking Quebec (the Quiet Revolution, 1960-1966). Quebec cinema had to regain control over an imaginary monopolized by Hollywood. Quebec filmmakers thus gave renewed centrality to the representation of Quebec people as they were. What emerged was a cinema of identification, wherein films were conceived as a reflection of reality and as means that took part in the identitary construction of the modern Quebec subject in the making." (Author's translation)

films.[81] (2008, 94)

The coincidence in periodization is by no means accidental, as both Poirier and Véronneau, like Houle and Marshall before them, situate in the Quiet Revolution and the post-referendary defeat the neuralgic centers of Quebec's societal and cinematic tumults. However, in Véronneau's as well as Poirier's writing greater importance is given to the way Quebec films from the 1960s onwards stage the identitary struggles of the post-Quiet Revolution and post-referendary periods, rather than to how they concretely interact with the changes at play in such historical moments. The authors' leading concern is therefore with what we can see *represented* in these films, rather than with what we can *do* with them as epistemological tools. Instead of simply remarking the thematic display of identitary distress and national anxieties in the representation of Quebec society from the post-Quiet Revolution and post-referendary era, I suggest a more fruitful methodological approach may be found in establishing a dialogue between such cinematic representations and the socio-political history of the province, its history of sexuality, and the contributions of gender and queer studies.

As considered in the introduction to this chapter, Vacante's scholarship is an inescapable starting point in these regards. Looking at the entanglement of nationalist drives and masculine revival through the lens of men's studies and historical writing in Quebec, Vacante exposes the heterosexist and masculinist design of the Quiet Revolution, and its implications for the province's gendered narrative. In his full-length contribution, *National Manhhood and the Creation of Modern Quebec* (2017), the historian explores how the threat of English colonization and the upheaval of imperialism and industrialization triggered the transition from the "domesticated and rural man" of pre-Quiet Revolution Catholic Quebec "as a resolutely *modern* figure" (25), to the drastic reinforcement of heterosexual manhood "as a central part of national manhood" in the twentieth century (38). As previously assessed in his chapter "Quebec Manhood in Historical Perspective" (2012), Vacante argues that although placed in the larger re-examination of manhood in post-industrial North-America, masculinity in Quebec has been significantly affected by the sense of gendered and national anxiety prompted not only by

[81] "The failure of the May 1980 referendum (with 40% votes in favor of sovereignty) and of the 1995 one (with 49%) profoundly challenged the nationalist agenda in Quebec. It was inevitable that Quebec cinema mirrored the effects of the 1980 referendum, especially since, without making an overstatement, the film scene at the time was in large part granting its support to of the sovereignty-association option. The victory of the "No" vote had however the effect of embittering people and paralyzing the cultural landscape of Quebec at the time—with consequences that were reflected also by several films produced at the time." (Author's translation)

modernity at large, but more specifically by the end of the Quiet Revolution, and by the consequent failure of the two referenda in the 1980s and mid-1990s.

Vacante's concerns with the masculinization of Quebec's national discourses under the Quiet Revolution resonate with Jean-Philippe Warren's piece "Un parti pris sexuel. Sexualité et masculinité dans la revue *Parti Pris*" (2009), which examines the stances of Québécois political and cultural magazine *Parti Pris* towards questions of sexuality and gender during its quinquennial existence in the years of the Quiet Revolution (1963-1968). Warren's inquiry is particularly interested in exposing the internal conflict between the self-proclaimed liberal vision of the magazine and its essentialist masculinist rhetoric—a mirror of the changing times of the Sexual Revolution in the 1960s, but also of the Sexual "Involution" triggered by the masculine agenda of Quebec's nationalist project.[82]

According to both Vacante and Warren's contributions, the links between nationhood and masculinity during Quebec's Quiet Revolution—and even more so in the aftermath of it—are therefore as self-evident as those between nationhood and cinema, to the extent that a zone of contact could be easily drawn among the three of them. The end of the Quiet Revolution, and its extended consequences into the defeat of the first referendum in 1980 are seminal moments of change in the ways sexuality and masculinity have been restaged on the Québécois screen, as both a reaction to and a testimony of the socio-political uproar occurring in the province. And it is compelling to notice how these three aspects—national anxiety, male crisis, and socio-historical turmoil—have converged only sporadically in writings about Quebec's nationhood and cinema: Michèle Garneau's "Les rendez-vous manqués d'Éros et du cinéma québécois" (2012), Tom Waugh's encyclopaedic *The Romance of Transgression in Canada* (2006), Marshall's chapter "Sex and Nation" (2001), and Lee Parpart's master thesis "Nostalgic Nationalisms and the Spectacle of the Male Body in Canadian and Québécois Cinema" (1997) being some of the few exemplary cases.

Parpart's work is especially significant in attesting the crucial intersection of masculine and national issues in post-referendary Quebec cinema and society. Jean-Claude Lauzon's *Un zoo la nuit* (1987) is taken therein as the most symptomatic example of the self-reflexive stances

[82] The term "involution" is used here to underline the contrasting stances of Quiet and Sexual Revolution in terms of gender politics. As a masculine and heterocentric project, rather than a quest for sexual and gender equality, the nationalist agenda of the Quiet Revolution stands indeed in stark contrast with the emergence of social movements for sexual liberation in Western societies in the 1960s.

of national and critical masculinity in Quebec. As Parpart argues, the film connects the crisis of Québécois manhood with a broader reflection on the colonial legacy and the homophobic panic associated with the failure of the Quiet Revolution's masculinist and separatist agenda in the years following the first referendum. In Parpart's words, Lauzon's first feature functions as "the *cri du coeur* of a stalled anti-colonial nationalism whose central metaphor turns out to be the suffering, threatened body of the neo-colonial Québécois male" (1997, 14).[83] Male anxieties are therefore linked, as Vacante already noticed, not only to the collapse of the Revolution's nationalist and heterosexist project, but also to that of Quebec's postcolonial struggle against the Anglophone "threat." The film follows ex-convict Marcel (Gilles Maheu) as he attempts to reconnect with his estranged father Albert (Roger Leber), while at the same time violently rejecting the erotic attentions of a corrupted Anglophone queer cop (Lorne Brass). The construction of Marcel's heteronormative masculinity grows more and more puzzling as the narrative unfolds. The character's trajectory cuts indeed across stages of hypersexual assertion (the intercourse with/borderline-rape of his ex-girlfriend Julie), homophobic revenge (the killing of the Anglophone cop with the help of a former inmate/possibly lover), and homoerotic incest, with the film's closing shot showing Marcel naked in bed next to the likewise naked body of his dead father. This last scene in particular, which stages the ritual washing of Albert's body, is read by Parpart in light of post-referendary feelings of nostalgic return to linguistic, cultural, and especially religious customs of the pre-Quiet Revolution era, that is to an originary form of spirituality antecedent to the British Conquest of Quebec in 1759 (1997, 60-61). However, the scene also contains elements of a non-normative relationship with male corporeality. The *lavacrum* of Albert's body conflates indeed Christian and queer iconography within the same frame, reconsidering the foundations of Quebec's historical and Catholic past, while at the same time pointing towards the desire for a renewed future in the rediscovered relationship between a

[83] Whereas the impact of postcolonial and neo-colonial issues on the masculine body of the Québécois man are part and parcel of the cinematic master-narrative of critical masculinity in the province, the subject will not constitute a central matter of inquiry in this chapter. Parpart's master thesis, mentioned in the current section, and her article "Pit(iful) Male Bodies: Colonial Masculinity, Class, and Folk Innocence in *Margaret's Museum"* (1999) provide rich material for a more in-depth analysis of the ties between colonialism and the national male body in Quebec cinema, as they focus especially on Francophone, white, heterosexual manhood in crisis as both the symbol and the outcome of Quebec's (failed) nationalist project. Moreover, Sean Mills' *The Empire Within* (2006) offers an encompassing view of the postcolonial ideologies and struggles at play specifically in 1960s Montreal. Particular attention is given to the debate triggered by Pierre Vallières' provocative book *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* (1968), wherein the postcolonial struggles of Quebec's Francophone minorities within Anglophone Canada, and North-America more broadly, are compared to the socialist agenda of Black Power Movements in the 1960s.

father and his son.

The staging of a troublesome father-son relationship in *Un zoo la nuit* is particularly remarkable, as it provides a blueprint for a central trope in post-referendary Quebec cinema: the inadequacy of paternal figures and its consequences on the production of functional, normative male subjects. According to Marshall, the cinematic examination of critical masculinities via defective models of fatherhood traces back to Francis Mankiewicz's pre-referendary film *Le temps d'une chasse* (1972)—which features an all-male narrative of difficult father-son bonding during a tragic hunting weekend in the Québécois woods. Mankiewicz's second feature, *Les bons débarras* (1980), contemporary to the first referendum, offers a female counterpart to *Le temps d'une chasse* by opposing a single mother and her feisty tomboy daughter against the backdrop of rural Quebec. In contrast to Heinz Weinmann's claim that PQ leader René Lévesque rehabilitated the father figure between 1970s and 1980s via his own "Father of the Nation" persona, Marshall argues that both films "are there to denaturalize and demystify this masculinist national narrative which is in fact full of sexual anxiety" (2001, 113). In the aftermath of the first referendary failure of 1980, the role of manhood more broadly, and of fatherhood more specifically, thus remains one of the central issues of Quebec's national self-representation, intensifying even further in the years leading to the second referendum and its subsequent defeat.

Released in 1995, Robert Lepage's *Le confessionnal* can be considered in this sense the gateway film to a multitude of post-referendary engagements with the themes of wounded masculinity and inadequate fatherhood. Set between 1952 and 1989, the film interpolates the fictional reconstruction of Alfred Hitchcock's filmmaking process for *I, Confess* (1953) with the contemporary narrative of two half-brothers in search of their genealogical roots. Back in Quebec City for the funeral of his father, Pierre Lamontagne (Lothaire Bluteau) meets his adopted brother Marc (Patrick Goyette) and embarks on a journey to help him find his real father—a former priest responsible for the pregnancy of a sixteen-year-old girl (Suzanne Clément) and her subsequent suicide. The film reflects on past and present legacies in Quebec by "the working through of macrocosmic national narrative through microcosmic family ones" (Gittings 2002, 127), and culminates in an emblematic final shot where the protagonist carries his dead brother's son over his shoulders across the bridge that brings them back to Quebec city. Pierre's words "[i]n the city I was born, the past carries the present like a child on its shoulders" offer a verbal corollary to the visual metaphor presented in the scene, foregrounding rather than

dismissing the potential for male futurity in Quebec through a reprisal of the paternal trope. Similarly to the closing scene of *Un zoo la nuit*, however, this optimistic open ending still stages the concerns for Quebec's gendered and national futures from an all-male point of view, locating in the correction of defective/absent fatherhood and disoriented manhood the possible answer to the character's issues.

As Marshall argued extensively in his work, fatherhood-centered narratives are therefore the privileged mode of engagement with the microcosm of the national family in Quebec cinema, whether by abundance or by equally notable absence (2001, 106). The predominance of such master narratives over those interested in the exploration of motherhood or mother-daughter relationships unveils a heightened sense of anxiety towards the instability of male legacy as intrinsically intertwined with the future of nationhood in Quebec—or lack thereof. The collapse of the Quiet Revolution's dream for a re-masculinized independent nation, and the disillusionment in the nationalist project defined by Bonhomme et al. as "post-referendary syndrome" (1989) thus affect the configuration of the male body as the once-to-be-symbolic equivalent of nationhood, resulting in the proliferation of cinematic representations centered on struggling masculinities and disrupted family dynamics in their male-to-male inflection. In order to understand how the familial microcosm has surged as the allegorical counterpart of Quebec's gendered nationhood onscreen, the work of Christine Tremblay-Daviault and Heinz Weinmann represent a pivotal point of departure, as both texts discuss the allegory of the national family in relation to Quebec cinema audiences from the 1940s to the 1980s.

In 1981, Tremblay-Daviault's seminal book *Le cinéma orphelin* examined the foundational features of Quebec's pre-Quiet Revolution, non-documentary cinema (1942-1953) through a sociological approach indebted to Marxism and historical materialism, which understands ideology as "a seemingly rigorous global system of concepts, images, myths, and representations… that allows us to rationalize a certain vision of the world and make it universal" (24).[84] Looking at feature films produced in the midst of the Duplessis era as her privileged corpus, Daviault intends to detect and examine the homology between Quebec's collective ideology at the time and the image of the world constructed by popular films as representatives of a given socio-cultural reality. The focus on the "archaic period" of Quebec cinema is therefore motivated by Daviault's interest in the way popular cultural products reflect

[84]Author's translation.

collective ideologies more openly than other forms of artistic and intellectual production. Understanding films as objects produced under certain economic and cultural conditions rather than as mere spectacles, Daviault's book attempts to understand why popular cinema emerged at such a specific moment in Quebec's history, and what functions it played in representing it.

Daviault identifies the main ideology at play in Quebec's history from the nineteenth century to the aftermath of the Second World War in that of a Catholic, conservative, and rural society characterized by two distinct national and economic classes regulated by relationships of linguistic and colonial domination: an English-Canadian bourgeoisie and a French-Canadian petite-bourgeoisie. Despite the contradictory nature of Quebec's core ideology as dominated by an Anglophone minority, the influence of Catholicism, rural life, and traditional family values is crucial for the cinematic representation of Quebec's society in the decade preceding the Quiet Revolution. The feature films produced in this time-span function indeed for Daviault as "receptors and producers of significant structures related to the imaginary of Quebec's society at a certain point in history" (21).[85] Although the author agrees to locate in the Quiet Revolution the emergence of an "authentically Québécois" cinema, the popular films analyzed in her volume are equally crucial for affecting and determining the collective ideology imbued in the cinematic depiction of Quebec's societal structures. Overlooked by a more "sophisticated" audience and often neglected by Quebec film historians for their compliance to the cinematic genres and modes of melodrama and télé-romans, such films as *Un homme et son péché* (Paul Gury, 1949), *Séraphin* (Paul Gury, 1950), *La Petite Aurore, l'enfant martyre* (Jean-Yves Bigras, 1952) and *Tit-Coq* (René Delacroix and Gratien Gélinas, 1953) hold relevance for at least three orders of reasons: their widespread reach, their understudied status, and their mirroring of contemporary Quebec's society. Mostly adapted from existing literary work by screenwriters coming from the theatre tradition, these films can indeed be considered as the "blockbusters" of Quebec's pre-Quiet Revolution cinema for their capacity to reach out to a wide local audience, as well as to speak about the contemporary situation of Quebec's socio-cultural context from both an approachable and a critical standpoint.

As depictions of a traditional society entrenched in religious and family values, Daviault's examined texts are particularly concerned with the societal role played by the family unit and its relationship with both the individual (the film's protagonist) and the collective. Rural

[85] Author's translation.

Quebec in the 1940s and 1950s operates as a system based on kinship and familial legacy, wherein the soil passes from fathers to children to ensure the survival of nationhood itself. As Daviault notices, however, the very structures of this society—and consequently of its cinematic representation and imaginary—are deeply affected by the advent of modernization and the influence of the "money society" of 1950s North-America over Quebec's traditional one. Two contrasting ideologies emerge from this moment onward at both the societal and the cinematic level: an "ideology of conservation" that looks at the Catholic Church as its unifying principle and aims to protect the linguistic, religious, and cultural heritage of Quebec (52); and an "ideology of contestation", which rises in post-war years in open disengagement with the traditionalism of the Duplessis era (57). The idea of Quebec's national identity as utterly different from that of other North-American contexts—and especially of other English Canadian provinces—hence strengthens between 1945 and 1960 as a site of contention of previous traditional ways of life, triggering a necessary revision and rethinking of the trope of the family-nation in Quebec cinema as well.

Analogous themes and issues resonate in Weinmann's equally seminal volume *Cinéma de l'imaginaire québécois* (1990), wherein the author resumes the corpus already examined by Daviault and expands it to more recent key texts of Quebec national cinema, locating in Denys Arcand's *Jesus de Montréal* (1989) the point of arrival of a trajectory initiated by Bigras's controversial melodrama *La Petite Aurore, l'enfant martyre*. In a similar fashion to Daviault's sociological approach, Weinmann too understands cinema as a medium that fosters the encounter between the individual imaginary of a single viewer and the collective imaginary of a national audience. Stressing once again the concurrent emergence of fictional cinema and national imaginary in Quebec, Weinmann argues that popular films in particular allowed the audience to project themselves onto the screen and into the vicissitudes of the characters, strengthening the bond with their own national-belonging sentiments. Employing Edgar Morin's definition of "bisexual nation," Weinmann reads these sentiments as a psycho-affective phenomenon connoted by gendered and kinship ties. The notion of "mother-patriotism"—that is the coexistence of a feminine component (the motherland) and a masculine one (the paternal protection of the national land) in Quebec's national identity—is especially employed to

underline Quebec's peculiarity over other decolonized contexts.[86] Whereas "most nations, at the time of decolonization, cut their *symbolic* ties with the motherland" (italics mine, 18)[87] Quebec's psycho-affective links with its several colonial and neo-colonial motherland*s* (France, England, and the Canadian Confederation) were never completely cut off. Quebec cinema from the 1950s onward thus uses the genre of the "roman familial" as a way to engage with the complexity of Quebec's postcolonial dynamics and unresolved feelings of attachment, particularly those with the Catholic Church as a surrogate family/motherland.

Weinmann locates in the aftermath of the first referendary defeat of 1980 the peak of such a difficulty for Quebec to cut the last ties with its literal and figurative motherlands.[88] This crucial moment of shift is defined as an "age of silence," marked by the regression of Quebec to a state of infancy and inability to talk about the failure of sovereignty. As a result of this silent moment, representations of mono-parental families wherein the child takes over the responsibilities of inadequate single parents start proliferating in Quebec cinema. Whereas the titular orphan of Delacroix and Gélinas' *Tit-coq* embodied in the 1950s the desire/possibility for Quebec to rescind its ties with Canada as the allegorical oppressive parent, and endorse orphanhood as a way of life, films such as Claude Jutra's *Mon oncle Antoine* (1971) and Mankiewicz's *Les bons débarras* introduce the demystification of parental figures as a metaphor for out-dated and fought over institutions such as the Catholic Church and the Canadian nation-state.

Taken from Freud's 1909 text "Le Roman familial des névrosés,"[89] the concept of "roman familial" invoked by Weinmann as the privileged mode of expression of Quebec's cinematic imaginary thus points toward the centrality of parental issues at play in Quebec's master-narrative as a way to engage with the disillusions of the post-Quiet Revolution and post-referendary eras. Weinmann leaves the reader with a set of compelling questions concerning the

[86] The argument raised by Weinmann refers to the decolonization of white Francophone population from both French and British domination, as well as from the internal ties to English Canada. It does not however address the ongoing colonization of First Nations population within Quebec itself—a process still far from being resolved.
[87] Author's translation.
[88] Working on a film corpus that spans only until 1989, Weinmann's volume ends its inquiry before the second referendary defeat of 1995, which I will take into consideration in my analysis of Dolan's films.
[89] Freud discusses the "roman familial" as a fantasmatic and subconscious practice through which the pre-adolescent child imagines to be part of a different family unit (often more powerful and richer) either by abduction, adoption, or simply by substituting alternative parental figures to their actual ones. This activity constitutes a necessary stage in the construction of one's identity, as it allows the subject to emancipate from parental influence and escape Oedipal dynamics. In Weinmann's allegorical use of the term, Quebec represents the pre-adolescent subject and the province's motherlands its putative parents.

inclusion of otherness in Quebec cinema, and identifies in Arcand's *Le déclin de l'empire américain* (1986) and especially *Jesus de Montréal* (1989) the points of arrival of this renewed and self-reflexive cinematic imaginary, which recuperates the religious theme rejected by the Quiet Revolution as a possible vehicle for the acceptance of otherness in both cinema and society (254). Weinmann's book hence advocates for yet another rethinking of the white, heteronormative, male fabric of Quebec's cinematic master-narrative—a challenge taken over in the early 2000s by such work as Marshall's *Quebec National Cinema* and Waugh's *The Romance of Transgression*.

Daviault and Weinmann's texts thus raise two questions that are relevant to the analysis of Dolan and Pool's cinema performed in the following sections of this chapter. First, they both hint to the importance of popular cinema as a means to build and communicate with large national audiences as well as to translate their preoccupations onscreen. Borrowing from Lucia Nagib's understanding of world cinema as a "polycentric phenomenon" in which boundaries of popular and art cinema can and should be blurred (2011, 1), Dolan's and Pool's work can be read as popular by virtue of their circulation and reception among international film festivals and arthouse audiences within and outside Quebec. Second, Daviault and Heinzmann champion the crucial role played by the family-nation allegory in epitomizing the ideological and gendered tensions embedded in the socio-cultural history of Quebec, and potentially revising them.

The critique of failing masculinity examined in this section alongside its cinematic depiction is therefore only the tip of the iceberg of a more encompassing process of rethinking the gendered structure of Quebec socio-political and cultural representation. As Marshall once again aptly summarizes:

> Narratives of failed masculinity or of alternative gender and sexual identities may point to the historical specificity of Quebec's position as "minor" rather than "major" culture, and to the desirability of exploring the positive implications of that status rather than rejecting its deficiency. (2001, 109)

With the purpose of investigating such positive implications in the current developments of Quebec cinema—and particularly those concerned with "alternative gender and sexual identities"—the following sections will consider the work of Dolan and Pool as frameworks for the re-insertion of female, queer, and foreign subjectivities within nation-building and nation-imagining processes in Quebec. Moving beyond the employment of men's studies scholarship as the privileged point of entry to the issue of masculine nationalism in Quebec, I will read Dolan

and Pool's cinemas through the lens of academic contributions that address the question of gendered nationalism from a feminist and queer standpoint. As crucial interventions to redefine the ground of inquiry on Quebec's national and gendered identity, such perspectives will be taken into consideration with the intention of finding a more productive approach to Quebec's post-Quiet Revolution setting in gendered and political terms, as well as of sustaining the impact of Dolan and Pool's oeuvres in revising the father-centered allegory of the family-nation in Quebec.

Gendered Transgressions and National Disruptions in Dolan's "Quebec Corpus"

In a 2015 interview following the success of his fourth feature *Mommy* (2014) and discussing the upcoming shooting of his first Hollywood film *The Death and Life of John F. Donovan* (2018), Québécois filmmaker Xavier Dolan was asked to describe his relationship with his home country Quebec, as well as with his own family. The answers to both questions display a certain degree of similarity in their choice of words and in their conceptual formulation. In regard to his national-belonging ties, Dolan proclaims a "love-hate relationship" with Quebec, underlining proximity to but also critical distance from his own national culture:

> I feel at the same time very close to Quebec and then sometimes also very far. I feel very close to Quebec in terms of language, identity struggles, quest for survival, quest of culture, modernity, urban planning, multi-ethnicity, and at the same time very distant in terms of exactly the opposite, sometimes its racism, Anglophobia, Francophobia… because Quebec is a place where mostly Francophones and Anglophones cohabit, and there are old conflicts between them that do not concern me at all and leave people of my generation greatly indifferent…[90]

In response to the following question "What's family to you?" Dolan articulates his answer in spatial terms, addressing a similar tension of contiguity and separation in the relationship with his mother. Despite the difficulties entailed by physical and geographical distance, the filmmaker expresses a feeling of reassurance in relation to the maternal household, concluding that "…family to me is like a lighthouse in the sea [a play of words with the French terms "*mer*," sea, and "*mère*", mother]."

Emerging as a central preoccupation in Dolan's personal life and cinematic production, the relationship of the Québécois subject with his own national identity is inevitably formulated

[90] "Interview with Xavier Dolan on Mommy, family and John F. Donovan." *Youtube*, last modified 22 Jan. 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNWxa3qsMqU Accessed 18 Oct. 2016

in conjunction as well as in tension with the familial microcosm as a synecdoche of Quebec's nationhood at large. In Dolan's films, the narrative progression and emotional evolution of the main characters—mostly male and queer—cannot indeed be disjoined from their conflicted inclusion within a family unit they belong to either in terms of blood kinship (*J'ai tué ma mère*, *Laurence Anyways*, *Mommy*, *Juste la fin du monde*) or surrogacy (*Les amours imaginaires, Tom à la ferme*). The transgressions operated by Dolan's cinema and discussed in this section of the chapter thus stem from a reinterpretation of such a family-nation allegory, and deal more specifically with the relocation of motherhood and queerness at the core of Quebec's cinematic and familiar master-narrative. Whereas a large corpus of post-Quiet Revolution and post-referendary Québécois films has extensively reflected on tropes of struggling virility and future male legacy in Quebec—as mentioned in the first section of this chapter—Dolan has purposely refused to leave fatherhood and heterosexual masculinity at the center of his cinema. As I argued in a previous examination of Dolan's oeuvre (2016), paternal figures and heteronormative male subjects have been dislocated to the periphery of Dolan's work, challenging the hierarchy of gender power structures and bolstering the agency of female and queer subjects in Quebec's nation-building processes not only in the cultural imaginary, but also in the societal structures of contemporary Quebec.

In this section of the chapter I will expand on such a framework of analysis to unpack the transgressive nature of Dolan's cinematic imaginaries and trajectories. In the spirit of Waugh's *The Romance of Transgression* and his understanding of transgression as a *queering* gesture at the core of Canadian cinemas, sexualities, and nations (7), I will employ the concept of transgression to read Dolan's work as a system that engages with Quebec's interlaced histories, geographies, and sexualities in a way that subverts their linear understanding within a heteronormative framework of thinking. This methodological approach is however challenging in itself. As the work of a male, openly gay, white auteur deeply embedded in the structures of international film circuits and arthouse cinema, Dolan's films reinforce a series of formal and representational norms that contradicts the notion of transgression as a recentering of the marginal—namely the absence of non-white characters, the privileging of middle-upper class settings (with the notable exceptions of *Tom à la ferme* and *Mommy*),[91] and the tendency to place

[91] Discussing his visual influences in an interview for French magazine *Premiere*, Dolan provocatively stated: "I quickly realized, for example, that I hate the 'aesthetics of poverty' in films. I dislike the way some directors approach the subject of lower social classes through a "grey" way of shooting their films. I always found that

queer subjects within a universalizing framework. The filmmaker's refusal of "queer" as a ghettoizing label on the occasion of the Queer Palm awarded to *Laurence Anyways* in 2012, and his insistence on referring to his films as narratives of "universal love" particularly shift away from Waugh's use of transgression as a way to reflect on how "peripheries define the centre" of Canadian cinemas as predominantly queer (8).

Dolan's overarching intention to distance himself from the political implications of queer activism as an oppositional practice ("us" versus "them") thus falls under the conditions of a post-gay sensibility, wherein principles of acceptance and inclusion are predicated upon sameness ("us" *and* "them"). In this scenario, as Amin Ghaziani suggests, "boundaries between themselves [the queer subjects] and external audiences—and even among themselves internally" have to be profoundly renegotiated in order to allow for LGBTQ+ communities and identities to be formed (2011, 104). In his article "Post-gay Collective Identity Construction," Ghaziani argues indeed that post-gay practices exist along the tense lines of assimilation and diversity: "a post-gay society (1998 to the present) is distinguished by an increasing assimilation of gays into the mainstream alongside rapid internal diversification" (103). Such practices are, however, problematically linked to "politics of normalization," which entail the risk of valorizing subjects who conform to gender norms palatable to heterosexuals to the detriment of those bodies and individuals who do not. In this light, how can the argument of transgression be sustained in relation to Dolan's work? As I will discuss in this section, Dolan's cinema presents an articulation of non-normative subjects, spaces, and temporalities that lends itself to a queer revision of linear trajectories of historical and geographical articulation in Quebec's contemporaneity. My employment of the notion of transgression in relation to Dolan's work is therefore to be understood in the way his films champion maternal and non-normative male subjects over the centrality of fatherhood and heteronormative masculinity as the privileged repositories of national traumas, thus *transgressing* the norm of the Quebec family-nation as it has been present on the national screen in the post-Quiet Revolution and pre-referendary moments of its film history.

To do so, I will use queer and feminist contributions to examine the transgressive

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disgusting. It is for this reason that in Mommy I used the square format. The real subject of the film is in fact the way working class characters try to live the American dream, and how the American dream forcefully rejects them." ("Xavier Dolan: 'C'est hyper important pour moi de sentir que Mommy est aimé'," 7 Oct. 2014, http://www.premiere.fr/Cinema/News-Cinema/Xavier-Dolan-Cest-hyper-important-pour-moi-de-sentir-que-Mommy-est-aime, Accessed 18 Dec. 2017. Author's translation).

trajectories traced by Dolan's films in narrative, audiovisual, gendered and cultural terms. In particular, I will refer to Elizabeth Freeman, J. Halberstam, and Michel Foucault's interventions on queer temporalities and geographies so as to understand how Dolan's cinema performs a counter-reading of normalized and normative conceptions of Quebec's masculine national narrative through a revival of the national family theme. The transgressive qualities of Dolan's body of work will not be solely understood within the limited scope of thematic and representational aspects. I will extend my line of inquiry to questions of queer aesthetics, spaces, temporalities, and glocal film imaginaries, and the way in which they allow an alternative futurity for Quebec's national narratives and realities to be formulated. On the one hand, Dolan's work with formats, vernaculars, postmodern heterotopic spaces, and slippages of chronological and linear times will provide an audiovisual and narrative counterpart to his alternative take on Quebec's national and gendered historiography. On the other hand, the successful circulation of his films outside Quebec's domestic market and within the international film festival circuit will offer an opportunity to investigate how the representation of national matters is affected by and renegotiated through cinematic tensions of local and global nature. Reviving its past, narrating its present, and envisioning its future, Dolan has been rethinking Quebec's histories and geographies in light of the mutating position of Quebec's nationhood, its cinema, and the allegory of its national family in a globalized era. Looking closely at his Quebec-based films, I aim to assess how Dolan's work contributes to a crucial reimagining and rebuilding of Quebec's intertwined gendered and national histories, using family as its neuralgic center.

As discussed in the previous section of the chapter via Daviault and Weinmann's texts, the family-nation allegory is a pivotal trope enrooted in the history of Quebec cinema as well as of its scholarly interpretations, to the extent that in more recent times Marshall defined Quebec cinema's specificity precisely as a "conjunction of Oedipus, the family romance, and nationhood" (2001, 105). In his chapter "Sex and Nation," Marshall reflected particularly on the unbalanced nature of the gendered narratives based on family dynamics and brought onto the Québécois screen from the 1970s onward, and claimed that "[o]ne obvious complexity lies in the centrality of sexual difference to the scenario, and the way in which women (in the form of the mother) not only represent the ground on which father-son conflict is played out, but in addition play a silenced role in which the politically specific positions of gender assignment are neglected" (104).

Dolan's films represent an anomaly in this sense. Not only do they disrupt the primacy of father-son relationships in the national narrative of Quebec's post-Quiet Revolution and post-referendary cinema by erasing the paternal figure from their fabric, but they also revisit Quebec's cinematic and socio-political history by giving voice and presence back to those subjects lying at the margins of it. The five features made by the filmmaker between his debut in 2009 (*J'ai tué ma mère*) and the peak of his popularity in 2014 (*Mommy*)—which I will refer to as the "Quebec corpus"—constitute a pentalogy on gender and sexuality set across and beyond the last two decades of Quebec's post-referendary era.[92] In *J'ai tué ma mère* (2009), rebellious teenager Hubert (Xavier Dolan) struggles with the acceptance of his own homosexuality and the tumultuous relationship with his flamboyant mother Chantal (Anne Dorval). In *Les amours imaginaires* (2011) the irruption of Nicolas (Niels Schneider) into the life of two young Montrealers, Francis (Xavier Dolan) and Marie (Monia Chokri), threatens to disrupt their friendship. In *Laurence Anyways* (2012) 35-year-old teacher and aspiring writer Laurence Alia (Melvil Poupaud) decides to undergo a desired sex change at the risk of jeopardizing the relationship with his family and his long-time partner Fred (Suzanne Clément). In *Tom à la ferme*—an adaptation of Michel Marc Bouchard's eponymous play—advertising copywriter Tom (Xavier Dolan) embarks on a journey into rural Quebec to attend the funeral of his dead lover and meet his partner's mother and brother for the first time. Finally, in *Mommy* (2014), problematic teenager Steve (Antoine Olivier Pilon) is released from juvenile detention and remanded to the care of his mother Diane "Die" Després (Anne Dorval) and her neighbour Kyla (Suzanne Clément), in a near-future Quebec where fictional law S-14 allows parents of troubled children to hospitalize them without any due process. Included in a circular structure that opens with *J'ai tué ma mère* and ends with the reprisal of similar issues of mother-son conflict in *Mommy*, Dolan's "Quebec corpus" can be approached as an intertextual system that engages with the intertwined trajectories of Quebec's histories, geographies, and sexualities in disruptive terms.

[92] For matters of coherence, I will not include Dolan's sixth feature and French-Canadian co-production *Juste la fin du monde* (2016) into the "Quebec corpus" herein discussed. Although arguably shot in Quebec and displaying formal and thematic similarities with his previous films, the a-temporal and a-spatial nature of *Juste la fin du monde* does not entertain as clear as a relationship with the histories and geographies of Quebec I am interested in examining in this section. On the contrary, the removal of any reference to HIV seems to endorse the filmmaker's intention to de-historicize the socio-political implications of Jean-Luc Lagarce 1990's pièce the film is inspired by.

Moving backward and forward in the Quebec's recent histories, Dolan's cinema reflects the desire to revise crucial discourses of identity politics and national models of subjectivity with one eye turned to the past and one geared toward the future. The discrepancy between the chronological progression of the five abovementioned features, their actual historical setting, and the conscious anachronism of their mise-en-scène allows us to speculate on how Dolan's films operate within the discontinuities and ruptures of queer temporalities, both systemically and individually. The linear progression of his "Quebec corpus" can indeed be deconstructed and reassembled in accordance with the historical period depicted within each film's narrative. This reconstructed "queer chronology" situates *Laurence Anyways* at the beginning of the timeline, and *Mommy* at the end of it—the former covering the decade from 1989 to 2000, and the latter the slightly futuristic moment of 2015 (fig. 3.2). Whereas it can be argued that film time and historical time coincide in *J'ai tué ma mère* (2009), *Les amours imaginaires* (2011), and *Tom à la ferme* (2013)—since no explicit narrative marker seems to hint to a different time setting—the anachronism of décors and costumes as a recurrent feature in Dolan's work can be read as a strategy of queer historiography reminiscent of Elizabeth Freeman's "temporal drag."

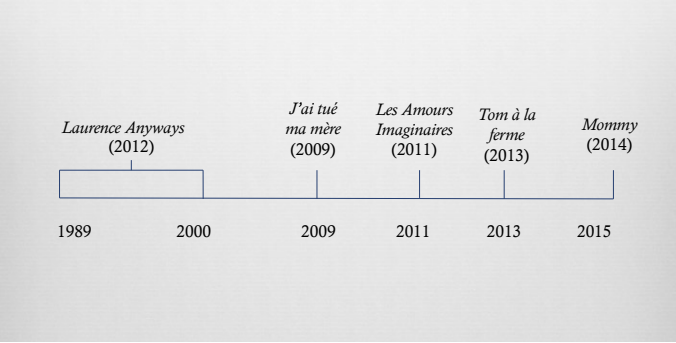

Fig. 3.7: The "queer chronology" of Dolan's films

In her article "Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations" (2000), Freeman introduces the notion of "temporal drag" to discuss the incongruities and temporal disruptions of gender-crossing practices that function "in the mode of stubborn identification with a set of social coordinates that exceeded [one's] own historical moment" (728). Establishing a critical dialogue with Judith Butler's seminal work on gender performativity (1990), Freeman argues for the recuperation of the past as a strategy to rethink queer and especially lesbian identification outside the parameters of drag as a sequence of "future-oriented and transformative repetitions" (728).

Whereas for Butler drag functioned as a re-enactment of the past along progressive lines of forward time (because everything that looks backward is a copy without originals), Freeman champions the anachronism and dissonance of one's performance of gender over the exact correspondence of gender identity to the criteria of one's contemporary socio-historical conditions. The shift promoted by Freeman's "temporal drag" thus suggests that the re-enactment of the past does not have to be limited to linear and conventionally generational understandings of time. Processes of queer identification should not be subsumed under straight temporal trajectories, but should rather constitute a movement backward, forward, and across time. Not "how" but "when" queer performativity takes place hence becomes a key question in regard to Dolan's oeuvre. Herein, the transgressive use of formal and narrative devices allows the filmmaker to resume and revisit past national and gendered histories in order to meditate on the state of queer and female subjectivities in Quebec's present. The kitsch extravaganza of Anne Dorval's clothing in *J'ai tué ma mère* (fig. 3.3), the vintage rebound of 1950s fashion in *Les amours imaginaires* (fig. 3.4), and the outdated excesses of the characters' wardrobe in *Tom à la ferme* (fig. 3.5) are the most evident signs of temporal drag on display in Dolan's film, as they generate inconsistencies between the characters' identities and the time of their narratives. Although the most explicit, the consciously anachronistic use of fashion is however not the only marker of temporal and queer transgression emerging from Dolan's cinema, which makes consistent use of postmodern means of expression at the level of narrative, audiovisual, temporal and spatial organization.

Fig. 3.3: Kitsch extravaganza in *J'ai tué ma mère* (Screenshot)

Fig. 3.4: Vintage fashion in *Les Amours Imaginaires* (Screenshot)

Fig. 3.5: Outdated style in *Tom à la ferme* (Screenshot)

In Dolan's work, narrative linearity is indeed often abandoned in favour of erratic reconstructions of the film's storyline as filtered through the characters' subjectivity and punctuated by moments of imaginative suspension. In this sense, the insistent use of slow-motion, intertitles, breaks of the fourth wall, and montage sequences in a music-video fashion translates onscreen the emotional turmoil and identity struggles of the films' characters. These formal and narrative expedients are therefore not just self-reflexive signs of citational authoriality,[93] but they rather work in tandem with Dolan's exploration and subversion of patriarchal and masculine lineages in Quebec's contemporaneity, immediate future, and near past, as they are often associated with the characters' complex and negotiated understanding of

[93] In *The Seventh Art*'s video-essay on Dolan's style presented at TIFF 2015 and narrated in voice over by Canadian filmmaker Patricia Rozema, the formal architecture of the filmmaker's oeuvre is conceived as a set of coherent tools to translate onscreen the identity, gendered, and familial endeavors of "characters in transition." Rather than being dismissed as "mercurial", Dolan's style is read indeed in close relationship to the subjectivities his films explore, as it is deemed "uniformly in service of establishing the portrait of these characters." (*Xavier Dolan Video Essay | TIFF 2015*. Youtube, January 5, 2015. Accessed on December 29, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaMzmQ0Mz_Y)

their own sexuality and gender but also of the times and places they inhabit in the world. My use of the "queer" terminology in relation to these subjectivities thus aims to define a larger spectrum of non-normativity that encompasses the fluidity of sexual orientations and gender self-identification practices, as well as non-conformity to social norms of mental health and psychophysical behaviour (i.e. Steve in *Mommy*).

In his debut film *J'ai tué ma mère*, the titular tale of matricidal rebellion and queer teenagehood is interpolated by segments of black and white video confessionality recorded by the filmmaker/protagonist as the privileged format to frame his subjectivity. Following an epigraphic quote from Guy de Maupassant's novel *Fort comme la mort* (1889),[94] the film opens on a close-up of Hubert talking about the impossibility of being a son for his mother. Details of the character's eyes and fingers are juxtaposed to the full close-up of his face, anticipating the sense of fragmentation further augmented by the following scene, a brief montage-sequence of kitsch paraphernalia and grotesque slow-motion details of Chantal eating her breakfast. Bits and pieces of Hubert's video-diary punctuate the narrative up to Chantal's discovery of the recordings towards the end of the film, when the two layers of diegetic narrative eventually collide. Along with these direct interpellations of the audience, the protagonist's subjective point of view is conveyed in the film through fantasy scenes that stage Hubert's mother as a dead body, a Carmen-Miranda-like figure, and a blood-crying saint. At the peak of Hubert and Chantal's emotional and physical detachment from one another, a dreamlike sequence occurs in which Hubert imagines himself desperately chasing his mother dressed as a bride, without ever reaching her. Such an allegory of impossible mother-son bonding is supplanted at the end of the film by glimpses of found-footage capturing Chantal and Hubert's blissful relationship at the time of the young man's childhood. This further interruption in narrative continuity suggests a renewed sense of affection between the two characters, which is achieved in the film through their eventual reconciliation in the intimate space of Hubert's "kingdom": a chalet in Montmagny (a city in the Chaudière-Appalaches region of Quebec).

The insisted recurrence of breaches in the narrative texture of the film—often accompanied by formal choices that underline their oneiric and subjective nature—thus intervenes to resituate the main character in a time and space that do not obey to conventional

[94] "On aime sa mère presque sans le savoir, et on ne s'aperçoit de toute la profondeur des racines de cet amour qu'au moment de la séparation dernière."/"We love our mother almost unknowingly, and we don't realize how deep the roots of this love are until we part from her forever." (Author's translation)

logics of linear progression, neither cinematically nor socially. Hubert's caustic and at times desperate escapism—a reaction to the homophobic society he is embedded into,[95] as well as to the incomprehension of his putative family—generates pockets of queer temporality in which traditional gendered and family dynamics can be provoked and subverted. The character's final relocation into the safety of his childhood space also complements the non-linear nature of the film's temporality with an abrupt but motivated alteration of the film's geography. Almost entirely shot in Longueuil (Dolan's native town), *J'ai tué ma mère* ends in fact on a potentially hopeful note that opposes the lacustrine landscape of Montmagny to the suburban alienation of the South Shore island. Shifting the film's closing location to a "place of the mind," and superimposing fragments of childhood memories to the present state of Chantal and Hubert's relationship, the two levels of the film's transgressive trajectory (non-linear time, non-coherent geography) collide into a moment that redefines and liberates both characters by resituating them into an alternative spatio-temporal dimension.

Similar to *J'ai tué ma mère* in its treatment of space and time from a queer angle, Dolan's second feature *Les amours imaginaires* presents a triangulated friendship as the alternative to the traditional family unit, by resorting once again to strategies of narrative and visual discrepancy. In-camera testimonies of over-romanticized or unfortunate love narrated by unknown characters/interviewees punctuate the film, functioning as interruptions to but also commentaries on the main storyline, which witnesses the annihilation of male-to-female friendship at the hand of an angelic intruder and romantic contender. The characters' self-destructive longing is epitomized in the film by a music-video-inspired sequence that presents Francis and Marie looking at Nicolas dancing with his mother Désirée (Anne Dorval) to the notes of The Knife's 2003 hit song *Pass this On*. Devoured by reciprocal jealousy, the protagonists exchange a series of passive aggressive remarks, with Francis particularly endorsing Désirée's observations on Marie's outfit: "It's true that your dress is slightly anachronistic."

Functioning as a meta-textual commentary, Francis' words underline how both characters are actually out of place in their own time and space. Whereas they both offer a representative sample of the hipster demographics and culture of Montreal's artsy Mile End neighbourhood, the

[95] In a 2009 interview with *The Advocate*'s Michael Glitz, Xavier Dolan discussed the autobiographical circumstances that brought to the gay bashing scene in *J'ai tué ma mère* as a visualization of the homophobic violence the filmmaker was victim of as a teenager ("Xavier Dolan on being gay, getting bashed," Youtube, last modified 24 March 2009, (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=II76GoslcGs Accessed 1 Feb. 2018).

two exist in a bubble of temporal suspension, dominated by subjective logics of over-fantasized but unrequited romance. This last point is particularly evident in the very same scene, as the characters look at Nicolas through the transfigurative lenses of their respective erotic fantasies—Jean Cocteau's homoerotic drawings for Francis, and Michelangelo's *David* for Marie—thus zooming out from their here-and-now existence to project their romance into the realm of the fantasmatic. Such an escapist, and ultimately delusional attitude of the film's protagonists is replicated as well at the spatial level. Both in the urban setting of Montreal and within the natural landscape that frames the friends' escapade to the Quebec woods (the sequences are shot between Portneuf and Sainte-Croix, two villages in the South Shore of the St. Lawrence River), Francis and Marie appear disconnected from reality, constantly caught between their own romantic obsessions and the destructive game that opposes one to each other in the quest for Nicolas' love. Whereas in *J'ai tué ma mère* nature functioned as a liberating space for the queer character in search of himself, and for the mother in search of his lost son, in *Les amours imaginaires* personal and mutual annihilation intervenes to destroy the cathartic and sexually freeing forces of the non-urban location, ultimately portraying Montreal as the locus of queer-to-female solidarity. The film's bitter ending shot, which hints at the revival of Marie and Francis' threesome-like obsession towards a flirty Louis Garrell in a short-lived cameo, suggests however the potential spiralling of the characters down the same path that triggered their self-destructive journey at the beginning of the film. Regardless of their physical setting, this closing scene seems to indicate that the only space for Francis and Marie to actually exist and love is the realm of fantasy rather than that of tangible reality—a form of spatio-temporal marginalization generated by the repression and rejection of their desires in the caustic confrontation with the only male heterosexual character in the film.

The *queering* of time and space in Dolan's cinema thus attempts to carve out a parallel dimension for subjects whose impulses and desires, as both individuals and parts of unconventional family/pseudo-family units, cannot be normalized and integrated within the rationale of heteronormative thinking and practices. In the introductory chapter to her volume *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005), J. Halberstam embarks on the "perhaps overly ambitious" task of defining queer times and spaces as indicators of intersectional practices of postmodern living (1). Moving away from the mere association of queerness and sexual identity, Halberstam theorizes unorthodox temporalities and geographies

that can function as times and spaces of contention for queer subjects existing outside the heteronormative logics of spatio-temporal and (re)productive progression. As they argue, "[q]ueer subcultures produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their future can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those pragmatic markers of life experience—namely birth, marriage, reproduction, and death" (2). Halberstam's rethinking of Western, white, middle-class, capitalist notions of reproductive time as the norm echoes Lee Edelman's claims on queer futurism outlined in his 1998 piece "The Future is Kid Stuff: Queer Theory, Disidentification, and Death Drive." Therein, Edelman champions the non-reproductive nature of queer pleasure as a strategy oppositional to the "temporalization of desire" embedded in conservative politics that conceive child-making practices as the only teleological option:

> The consequences of such a compulsory identification both of and with the child as the culturally pervasive emblem of the motivating end, albeit endlessly postponed, of every political vision as a vision of futurity, must weigh upon the consideration of a queer oppositional politics. For the only queerness that queer sexualities could ever hope to claim would spring from their determined opposition to this underlying structure of the political, their opposition, that is, to the fantasmatic ambition of achieving symbolic closure through the marriage of identity to futurity in order to reproduce the social subject. (1998, 23)

By opposing queer sexualities to the child figure as the embodiment of the future, Edelman presents a paradox: how can there be a future without reproduction? And how can there be a *queer* future when the very notion of queerness is antithetic to the survival of the child and therefore of the human subject as a whole? In her 2009 volume *The Queer Child, Or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century,* Kathryn Bond-Stockton expands even further on this point, looking at different embodiments of the queer child figure in twentieth century fiction. The author champions the queer child as the epitome of queer time precisely because its existence as a gay/homosexual child is denied by traditional historical narratives due to the taboos surrounding child's sexuality and childhood as an allegedly non-sexualized or heterosexual moment in life. Employing the notion of "growing sideways" in opposition to that of "growing up," Bond-Stockton proposes to re-locate the queer child within a non-linear, non-vertical, diachronic and horizontal history, which attempts to document the existence of a subject otherwise absent from canonical historical accounts.

The transgressive reprisal of the family-nation allegory as employed in Dolan's work can be therefore read as an example of queer temporality and queer futurism precisely for its disjunction of the family microcosm from reproductive outcomes/purposes that extend to the national macrocosm as well. Mothers exist in Dolan's cinematic universe as no-longer-generational entities and male queer subjects as transformative rather than generative ones: the matrilineal quality of his cinema works paradoxically both in accordance and in discordance with queer logics of non-procreative times and futures. Several of Dolan's narratives are indeed punctuated by the actual and/or metaphorical death of a child. The loss of a son is the starting point for *Tom à la ferme* as well as the implied trauma of Kayla in *Mommy*; the metamorphosis of Laurence in *Laurence Anyways* allows for the replacement of an unloved son with a loved daughter, but it also occurs to the detriment of Laurence and Fred's unborn baby, and Steve's suggested suicide attempt in the very last shot of *Mommy* hints to yet another instance of queer child's death. This "vision of futurity" that passes through the family and at the same time *by*passes the very concept of family as a reproductive unit lies at the core of Dolan's work. It also deconstructs the family-nation allegory by offering a privileged position for the interaction between female and queer subjects, and by deflecting the centrality of male heterosexual subjects from Quebec's national narrative. As mentioned above, such a double bind of de-construction and re-construction operates in Dolan's cinema through a series of choices that affect narrative and formal cohesiveness as well as temporal and spatial stability, resulting in the creation of those very times but also spaces of queer struggle investigated by Halberstam.

After defining queer temporality and counter-reproductive logics of time, Halberstam proceeds indeed to argue that "[a] 'queer' adjustment in the way we think about time… requires and produces new conceptions of space" (2005, 6). As queer spaces are a direct consequence of queer understandings of time and history, Halberstam revisits key writings in postmodern geography—such as Edward Soja, Fredric Jameson, and David Harvey's—to expose the absence of sexuality from their analysis. Conversely, Halberstam champions gender and sexuality, alongside race and ethnicity, as pivotal categories of inquiry for the creation of "geographies of resistance", that is subversive spaces of non-normative power where queer subcultures can survive and thrive (13). The queer reconfiguration of geographical and formal spaces in concomitance with the sexual, gendered, and familiar development of Dolan's characters establishes yet another connection to Halberstam's theoretical framework, reorganizing not only

the temporal existence of queer and female subjects, but also their spatial relocation in the contemporary grand narrative of urban and suburban Quebec.

Following *J'ai tué ma mère* and *Les amours imaginaires*, ruptures in narrative linearity, temporal, and spatial coherence consolidate as a staple feature in Dolan's work, recurring whenever the main characters are undergoing moments of distress or psycho-physical evolution in conjunction with their own sexuality, their gender identity, and their relationship with significant others or loved ones—the latter most exclusively in the form of the maternal figure. Almost completely erased from the films' narrative, fathers appear only sporadically, either as pathetic imitations of patriarchal authority (*J'ai tué ma mère*), out-of-frame figures (*Les amours imaginaires*), passive and silent presences (*Laurence Anyways*) or melancholic absences (*Mommy*), ultimately affecting the legacy of their sons only post-mortem, or not at all. As the use of narrative and aesthetic disruptions become even more ambitious and explicit in Dolan's following films *Laurence anyways*, *Tom à la ferme*, and *Mommy*—functioning as visual displays of Laurence's transformation into a woman, Tom's abusive relationship with his homophobic "brother-in-law" Guillaume, and Steve's mental illness—their complicity in the creation of queer forms of time and spaces of resistance continues to be linked to the way Dolan's characters come to terms with their gender and psychological troubles in unconventional family-nation microcosms.

Narrated in a somehow chronological manner from 1989 to the verge of 2000, *Laurence Anyways* features several interruptions of linear storytelling from its very opening scene, which stages the eponymous protagonist exposed to the intrusive and scrutinizing in-camera gaze of a multicultural pool of Montreal-based observers. Caught on her way to the interview that functions as the background to the film's narrative, Laurence—her face hidden by an overly cinematic haze—is presented from an external point of view and through the judgemental look of others, of *all* others (fig. 3.6-3.9). The very first instance of geographical determination *Laurence Anyways* is setting up for the viewer is in fact represented by this movement from the private space (the domestic safety of Laurence's apartment), into the dangers of the street and therefore of public and transphobic contempt.[96] Such a dichotomy of the private and the public thus acts as

[96] It is however worth mentioning that the scholarly reception of *Laurence Anyways* has been particularly ambivalent towards the transphobic critique embedded in its opening scene, as well as in its narrative as a whole. Despite positive critiques of the film as a "transgender love epic" in the general press, transgender researcher and advocate Katherine Espineira has argued that the film contains several instances of banalization and stereotyping of

a refrain throughout the film, granting Laurence the possibility of existing as her real self only within liminal spaces such as the cemetery or the Five Roses club, where old chanteuses and drag queens accept her as part of their, once again, alternative family.

Fig. 3.6: Scrutinizing gazes (Screenshot, *Laurence Anyways*)

Fig. 3.7: Scrutinizing gazes (Screenshot, *Laurence Anyways*)

the transgender figure that do not reflect the lived experience of transgender subjects nor allow their identification with the film's main character. (Karine Espineira, *Médiacultures: la transidentité en télévision. Une recherche menée sur un corpus à l'INA [1946-2010]*, 2015).

Fig. 3.8: Scrutinizing gazes (Screenshot, *Laurence Anyways*)

Fig. 3.9: Laurence in the mist (Screenshot, Laurence Anyways)

The transgressive nature of Dolan's spatial mise-en-scène is epitomized to the fullest by an iconic sequence occurring later in the film and showing Laurence and Fred reunited after years of separation. The couple walks down the deserted icy streets of the fictional location of the Île-au-Noir under a cascade of colourful clothes, accompanied by the upbeat of Moderat's electronic song *A New Error* (fig. 3.10). The imaginary space fabricated by the characters' fantasy and patchworked out of a series of different Québécois locations—both Bill Marshall and Valérie Mandia contend it might refer to l'Île-aux-Noix on the Richelieu river (Mandia 2014, 110; Marshall 2016, 202) and the Isle-aux-Coudres in the Saint-Lawrence River (Marshall 2016, 202)—serves as the setting for Laurence and Fred's impossible reconciliation, but also as an

heterotopic moment in which several layers of subjective times and personal geographies collide and superimpose upon one another.

Fig. 3.10: Laurence and Fred at Île-au-Noir

In his seminal article "Of Other Spaces," Michel Foucault locates in utopias and heterotopias the representative spaces of postmodernity, or rather of what he defines as "the epoch of simultaneity and juxtaposition" (22). As the hierarchical nature of medieval spaces (the sacred above the profane) is supplanted by spatial coexistence and heterogeneity—a result of globalization and demographic "displacement" of people and goods (23)—utopias and heterotopias surge to embody the intersectional qualities of postmodern spatiality. Whereas utopian spaces do not exist in real life but entertain a relationship of analogy with society as "perfected forms" of it, heterotopias are actual spaces in which "real sites, all the other sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (24). The emphasis on simultaneity as the defining feature of a postmodern sense of space recurs in Foucault's further theorization of the six principles of heterotopias: they exist in every world culture, they develop in different ways according to the society they belong to, they juxtapose several spaces into one (i.e. the cinema), they are "heterochronical" in that they break with traditional notions of time (i.e. the cemetery), they are at the same time open and closed, penetrable and impenetrable (i.e. the motel room), and finally, they create illusory spaces superimposed upon real ones (i.e. the brothel).

The superimposition of the Île-au-Noir's fictional setting to Laurence and Fred's previous romantic routine (the cascade of clothes as a reminder of Laurence's habit of tossing a load of

fresh laundry on Fred's head as she woke up in the morning) thus evokes the simultaneity of the heterotopic space as well as its "relation to all the space that remains" (27). The illusory nature of the geographical location, augmented by the oneiric detail of clothing precipitating from the sky and by the pretence of sexual and gendered freedom, points indeed towards the illusory nature of Laurence and Fred's romantic reunion as well as to the ineluctability of their breakup. The characters' existence as a couple rests only on the fragile spatiality of an island cut off from the harsh socio-cultural conditions of the real; a place where transgender subjects are resisting the rules of heteronormativity while at the same time sheltering themselves from the risks entailed by their own visibility.

Dolan's sense for diachronic detours, heterotopic, and ultimately "queer" spaces goes hand in hand with his interest in the manipulation of time and narrative continuity, but it is not limited to the characters' sexuality, their storylines, and representational unfolding. It extends also to the very form of the film itself. In both *Tom à la ferme* and *Mommy* explicit breaches in the storyline are indeed substituted by an unconventional use of film format(s). Shot in common US widescreen 1.85:1, *Tom à la ferme* witnesses a fluctuation in aspect ratios, with the screen letterboxing to the 2.35:1 format in concomitance with the protagonist's peaks of emotional distress and (homo)erotic tension. In *Mommy*, the introduction of the 1:1 format as an allegory of the characters' imprisonment as well as a hint to millennial practices of social media expression and portraiture such as Instagram and Snapchat is equally but even more explicitly prone to flexibility. The frame is literally opened by the direct intervention of the male protagonist halfway through the film, and again towards the end as a way to visualize the fantasy scene of Diane imagining an impossible happy-ending future for her son. Oscillating between hopeful opening and inexorable confinement, these variations in the film's aspect ratios add an extra layer of complexity to the transgressive architecture of Dolan's cinema, as they carve out of the screen itself several dimensions of temporal and spatial existence for female and queer characters to dwell into.

Despite Dolan's international profile and own detachment from specific issues of national identity—in a way that could be read as "post-national" insomuch as his attitude toward queerness can be interpreted as "post-gay"—the formal, temporal, and spatial transgressions of his cinema lend themselves to be interpreted as signs of Quebec's shifting stances in regard to the national question. As Marshall has argued in his recent contribution "Spaces and Times of

Québec in Two Films by Xavier Dolan" (109), Dolan's queer treatment of temporal and spatial trajectories—particularly in *Laurence Anyways* and *Tom à la ferme*—is not simply contingent on the filmmaker's engagement with issues of transgender awakening and homosexual-homophobic tension, but establishes also a clear link between his work and the "re-shapings in th[e] risky category [of] a Quebec national narrative, or more specifically, in shifts in perceptions of self and the world among (largely white) Francophone Québécois audiences" (2016, 190). Marshall situates Dolan's films within the broader history of queer cinema in Quebec, from the pre-Omnibus confrontation with threatened masculinities in the 1960s to current narratives of queer coming out epitomized by Jean-Marc Vallée's *C.R.A.Z.Y.* (2006). In spite of the filmmaker's own rejection of the "queer label," Marshall underlines how Dolan's work promotes a more encompassing understanding and employment of queerness as a way to problematize identity rather than enclosing it into the limitations of identity politics discourses. This is achieved, as analyzed above, by bending time and space to counter-heteronormative logics that mirror the sexual and gendered transgressions of Dolan's characters as well. What is especially resonant in Marshall's contribution is the way it revisits via Dolan's work the very national paradigm that informed his earlier volume *Quebec National Cinema*. Rather than seeing in Dolan's cinema, its use of space, time, and language, a sign of post-national shift—that is the possibility to move beyond a national framework of inquiry—Marshall identifies in Dolan's transgressive trajectory and imaginary the epitome of a modernized, millennial understanding of the relationships between the local and the global, the national and the world, the Anglophone and Francophone souls in Quebec's cinema and current society:

> [T]he national 'we' now so at home (in diverse, contradictory and even conflictual ways) in the suburbs is located in a space which, thanks to audio-visual media, internet networks, and a décrispation of relations with the English language, is in a position to relay the multiple surfaces of belonging which constitute the new horizons of 'Québecness.' (2016, 201)

Instead of presenting a series of national allegories in the limited sense of the term, Dolan's work thus comes to symbolize nationhood in its most current complexity: a concept in flux, a construct that opens up and becomes malleable, no longer confined within univocal and modern conceptions of linear time, enclosed space, and gender binaries. The insistence on the notion of "allegory" in Marshall's piece as well as in this section of the chapter as a whole is therefore not reliant on the processes of metaphorization and "normalization" of female and

queer subjects as scrutinized by Schwartzwald and Probyn in their abovementioned articles "Fear of Federasty: Quebec's Inverted Fictions" (1993) and "Bloody Metaphors and Other Allegories of the Ordinary Nation" (1997). Both Probyn and Schwartzwald pointed out how Quebec's post-referendary fiction (be it in the form of television, cinema, or literature) endorsed the reduction of female and queer characters to scapegoats for the failure of Quebec's sovereigntist project—or, as Probyn defines it, the achievement of "national normalcy." As a defining trope of the colonial relationship between Quebec and Canada in the province's fictional imaginary, the feminization and homosexualization of the Québécois nation versus the heterosexist, hyper-masculinization of the Anglophone colonizer perpetuated the construction of a national narrative that sees in women and queer subjects "wounds" and threats to the achievement of national sovereignty and self-determination. Dolan's cinema, on the contrary, works critically against such narrative paradigms by removing heterosexual masculinity from its framework and by giving material and discursive presence to queer subjects and maternal/female figures as agents of community building. Women and queer subjects are no longer synonymous with the failures and lacks of Quebec's re-masculinizing project, but rather step out of the dark and into the core of a revisited family-nation allegory—a vehicle towards the reimagining and reconstruction of Quebec's present and future history.

A central scene in *Mommy* staging Diane, Kayla, and Steve singing Celine Dion's *On ne change pas* in the kitchen of Diane and Steve's house serves as the perfect encapsulation of such a revised family-nation allegory. Dressed fully in black, wearing eyeliner and black nail polish, Steve exhorts his mother and neighbour to participate in a homemade karaoke-version of Dion's "Quebec anthem" (fig. 3.11-3.12). The song, dedicated by Dion to her francophone Quebec-based audience lamenting her absence from the local scene, is a hymn to her national-belonging roots, her language, her culture, her territory. It is therefore not an unusual choice that, among the more international songs featured in *Mommy*'s soundtrack (Oasis's *Wonderwall*, Andrea Boccelli's *Vivo Per Lei*, Lana Del Rey's *Born to Die* among others), Dion's song is the one that brings together the film's unconventional family members: the queer child and his two "mothers" (fig. 3.1). And it is even less casual that, when soliciting Kayla to join them in the duet, Steve bursts out in an enthusiastic "ouais, chante, c'est le trésor national ostie!" (loosely translatable as "come on, sing, it's our fucking national treasure!").

Fig. 3.11: Dancing to the "national treasure" (Screenshot, *Mommy*)

Fig. 3.12: Dancing to the "national treasure" (Screenshot, *Mommy*)

The integration of the distinctive Québécois religious swearing (*les sacres*) into the characters' domestic vernacular points towards yet another heterotopic aspect of Dolan's cinema, which concerns its language as well as the local-global nature of its presence on the international film market. As Valérie Mandia contends in her analysis of Dolan's work from a linguistic standpoint, "… the remarkable versatility of its characters [and their] language, stamped with the seal of mobility, allow them to handle several registers and to move between different accents and different languages according to their situation and their interlocutor" (107). The use of code-switching, *franglais*, and intertwining registers within the same film—and at times within the same character—allows for the characters to situate themselves into different spatio-temporal

dimensions, thus enhancing the overlapping and superimposing nature of Dolan's character study in linguistic terms as well as in narrative and visual ones. Criticized by Paul Warren on the pages of *Le Devoir* for his "acadianization" or bastardization of the French language in *Mommy*,[97] Dolan's employment of *joual* [98] as a marker of the characters' social status as well as of their national belonging has more to do with the transgressions of his imaginary rather than with the downplaying/vulgarization of Québécois French via cinematic re-appropriation. Defined by Lysiane Gagnon as an "invented language",[99] the vernacular spoken by the characters in *Mommy* as well as in *Tom à la ferme* is yet another heterotopic juxtaposition of the several linguistic registers converging into the transgressive imaginary of Dolan's film universe: a mixture of English, "proper" Québécois French, and Montrealer jargon adopted by the characters and adapted to their emotional state.

These latter linguistic remarks, along with the bending of spatial, temporal, formal and narrative conventions examined in this chapter, make Dolan's work a particularly compelling example of how Quebec cinema can reimagine its national and gendered history within both a local and a global framework. Whereas the locally specific qualities of their recognizable geographical locations, internal cultural references and regional vernaculars make them immediately relatable to Quebec-based audiences, Dolan's films are able to reach global audiences by virtue of their translatability into an emotional register that is almost universally comprehensible. The accessibility of Dolan's work from both a globally universal and locally intimate perspective is especially evident in relation to *Mommy*, which represented Dolan's biggest splash into the international film market following the Grand Prix of the Jury at Cannes 2014. The film's successful reception in Quebec as well as abroad is sustained by box office data, which register a total gross of over eight million dollars and three million dollars respectively in Quebec's ancillary markets, France and the US. It is however not only through figures and awards that the global impact of a filmmaker's work can be established. Referring back to the linguistic palette of Dolan's cinema, a further observation is made possible by the

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[97] Paul Warren, "*Mommy*: un grand film, oui, mais…," *Le Devoir*, 11 Oct. 2014, http://www.ledevoir.com/culture/cinema/420876/mommy-un-grand-film-oui-mais Accessed 11 Dec. 2017.

[98] The social dialect of working class Francophone speakers in the Montreal region, popularized by playwright Michel Tremblay from the late 1960s onward.

[99] Lysiane Gagnon, "La Langue de Mommy," *La Presse*, 21 Oct. 2014, http://www.lapresse.ca/debats/chroniques/lysiane-gagnon/201410/20/01-4811004-la-langue-de-mommy.php Accessed 11 Dec. 2017.

heterotopic juxtaposition of the universal language of the cinematic medium to the local (and ultimately queer) vernacular of the film's characters. In his material and psychoanalytic examination of the queer voices in Dolan's cinema, and especially in *Mommy,* Jason D'Aoust concludes indeed by arguing that the power of the *sacres* and the *joual* spoken in the film—their *distressing* power—should not be attributed to their vulgar nature but rather to the "revival of those intimate places that are indeed the sacres québécois, because it is by women and their queer sons that they are uttered" (2016, 50). Whereas it is precisely in those intimate places of female and queer resistance that the transgressive potential of Dolan's cinema can be found, the filmmaker's interest in the feminine and the maternal is still inevitably framed within the perspective of a queer, male auteur. Very much in line with the tradition of such directors as Todd Haynes, Pedro Almodóvar, and more recently Luca Guadagnino, the centrality of the female figure in the shape of actresses/muses Anne Dorval, Monia Chokri, Suzanne Clément, and Nathalie Baye is filtered in Dolan's cinema as well by the prevailing, though worshipping gaze of gay male authorship. In the last section of this chapter, I will therefore take into consideration the work of Léa Pool—and particularly what I will refer to as the "revolutionary trilogy": *Emporte-Moi*, *Maman est chez le coiffeur*, and *La passion d'Augustine*—as the emblematic example of a cinema of femininity that reconsiders the family-nation allegory of Quebec's Quiet Revolution period from an intimately female perspective.

Female Experiences and Maternal Bonds in Pool's "Revolutionary Trilogy"

As outlined in the first section of this chapter, the Quiet Revolution was not only identified by film studies scholars as the starting moment of a properly defined "national" cinema in Quebec. Historians and gender studies scholars also attested to the role the Revolution played in reshaping Quebec's nationalist agenda as a heterocentric, masculine domain, wherein gendered and ethnic otherness was absorbed and relegated to the periphery of a national narrative centered on heterosexuality and homogeneity as the norm. Such a convergence of gender and national identity issues in concomitance with the consolidation of a national film industry and imaginary in 1960s Quebec enforced the reading of Quebec cinema as an Oedipal system, structured around the family-nation allegory as representative of Quebec's nationhood at large.

According once again to Marshall—whose comprehensive account of Quebec cinema in its national inflection is built upon such an Oedipal framework of inquiry—the Revolution

induced “a profound shift” in the way motherhood was conceived under the Catholic regime, affecting the lives and representations of women in the peculiar context of Quebec’s society and cinema (2001, 209). Such a shift was especially characterized by the passage from “private patriarchy” to “public patriarchy,” which meant the re-inclusion of women into public life, but also their paradoxical relegation to solely reproductive functions in the construction of Quebec as a modern nation. The theme of motherhood as a sheer matter of national continuity endorsed by the masculinist project of the Revolution thus appears in Marshall’s writing not only as a political factor but also as a cinematic one, which determined the emergence of “women’s cinema” in Quebec as a controversial term in a controversial time. The political program of the Quiet Revolution as a hypermasculinized and heterosexualized project rendered it indeed difficult for the “feminine” to find its place within such a gendered national narrative, making it problematic to establish a “women’s cinema” nomenclature without avoiding the perils of classification as an homogenizing tool. As Marshall further attests, some female filmmakers in Quebec have in fact refused the idea of “films made by women” as a category of belonging. Such a move resonates with Dolan’s abovementioned refusal of the queer label as a means to oppose identity politics discourses that risk circumscribing otherness to a separate domain. Despite its complexity as a concept, Marshall is however adamant in considering women’s cinema “a viable working term,” and even an “essential” one, “if the analysis of gender constructions in Quebec cinema is to be complete” (208). In order to make the term viable Marshall finds it necessary to understand “how the idea of ‘the national’ [can] be articulated with the ‘feminine’ both in general and in particular” (208). Using the family-nation allegory as the general term of the equation, and Léa Pool’s films set during the Quiet Revolution as the particular one, I will proceed to examine in this section how the filmmaker’s recent work makes such an understanding possible.

Pool occupies a remarkable position among the female filmmakers who have brought femininity to the forefront of Quebec’s national screen. Emigrating in Quebec in 1975, at the age of twenty-five, Pool started her filmmaking career in 1978 by co-directing the short documentary *Laurent Lamerre, portier* as her graduating project at Université de Montreal. Debuting two years later with her first feature film *Strass Café* (1980), Pool has directed, to date, fourteen features, two documentaries, and two short films, thus achieving “one of the most stable positions in contemporary Quebec cinema” thanks to the financial support of Quebec’s

government and film subsidies (Marshall 2001, 231). For a female director operating in a subnational film industry, Pool's ability to attract international film festival goers and arthouse audiences, as well as to gain commercial recognition in Quebec, situates her at the rare conflation of the "popular" and the "marginal." As Nadeau has previously observed in her piece "La Représentation de la Femme comme Autre: l'Ambiguité du Cinéma de Léa Pool pour une Position Feministe," Pool's cinema bypasses indeed the discrepancy between fictional cinema as a masculine territory and experimental cinema as the means of expression for "the majority of female directors [in Quebec]"—a novelty that makes her a compelling case study for the entanglement of gendered and national issues in Quebec cinema, but also a debatable one (1994, 84-85). Pool's peculiar and ultimately privileged position, coupled with the choice to detach herself from identity politics labels as both a woman and a filmmaker,[100] has in fact surrounded her cinema with an ambivalent aura of praise and criticism.

In the first scholarly contribution on her work, Janis L. Pallister has included Pool within a "worldwide feminist cinematic iconography," defining her films "gynefilms" and claiming that "[l]ike most feminist works of art, Pool's films present the woman's cosmos; men are characteristically marginal to the story line or to the visual preoccupations of the work" (1991, 112). In the abovementioned follow-up to Pallister's chapter, Nadeau has conversely condemned the director's apolitical and indifferent approach in framing the "woman-other" ("la femme-autre") as a normalized body and subject, thus rejecting the feminist implications of her work raised by other academics. Nadeau refers to Pool's early films *La femme de l'hôtel* (1984), *Anne Trister* (1986), and *La demoiselle sauvage* (1991) as examples of female-directed cinema that is not advancing the mise-en-scène of women as "eccentric subjects" in a patriarchal and phallocentric scenario such as the Québécois one. Employing Teresa De Lauretis' definition of eccentric subjectivity as "a position attained through practices of political and personal

[100] Interviewed by Isa Tousignant for the release of her first Anglophone and most explicitly lesbian-themed film *Lost and Delirious* (2001), Pool voiced her disinterest in the lesbian label in the same way Paulie (Piper Perabo) does in the movie: "[t]his is a point that has always been close to my heart; it has always annoyed me that people have such a need to reduce things, as if sticking a name onto something somehow simplifies its reality." Asked if she considers herself an advocate (for LGBTQ+ rights), the filmmaker further replied that her motivation for making films on such "unusual themes" is to provide a different perspective on them and educate the audience in the process, creating "hybrids" between independent and commercial filmmaking. In a similar way to Dolan's later wording, Pool considers indeed *Lost and Delirious*—a potentially commercial queer film—a necessary project "to break from the ghetto either of the festival circuit, or the art—and—essay circuit, both of which have extremely limited audiences" (2001, 5).

displacement across boundaries between sociosexual identities and communities, between bodies and discourses" (1990, 145), Nadeau argues that the lack of political engagement with questions of female sexuality and alterity makes Pool's work complacent in the construction and perpetuation of the same homogeneous national identity presented in contemporary Quebec cinema at large. Contrarily to Pallister's definition of Pool's films as "counter-cinema"—a term also co-opted from Claire Johnston's seminal essay "Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema" (1979)—Nadeau ultimately questions Pool's choice of universalizing female experiences and sexualities by superimposing the intimate on the collective as a move that reduces the political potential of the woman-other to silence (1994, 93).

In the reprisal of her own argument in 1999, Nadeau confirms her view on Pool's cinema as disconnected from feminist concerns as well as from the concrete experience of the woman-other onscreen. Stressing once again the filmmaker's failure in advocating for female and lesbian issues via "the materiality of sexuality as constitutive of representation" (206), Nadeau polemically wonders how female subjectivity can be constructed when its constitutive elements, sexuality and identity, are denied or neutered (207). In more recent times, Florian Grandena's analysis of the triangulation of homoerotic/lesbian sex and desire presented in Pool's films has followed in the steps of Nadeau's critique, identifying "elusiveness" as the core trait of the filmmaker's work:

> By firmly placing herself outside gender/sexuality-based categories, Pool aims at highlighting the universality of human desires and, consequently, at transcending identity categories. In other words… Pool portrays characters expressing same-sex desires without anchoring them in specific identity categories. (2010, 144)

Similarly to Dolan's vehement rejection of the queer label for his films, Pool's attitude toward queer (self)identification in person and onscreen is read by Grandena as a marker of indifference towards bodies and subjectivities whose material and political significance is ultimately denied. In his conclusion, Grandena echoes and reinforces Nadeau's position by critically affirming that such a "systematic refusal" to represent marginal communities and their relationship with dominant groups is particularly "dubious." The danger entailed by such a gesture is in fact the potential annihilation of those very communities and individuals that Pool's films attempt to normalize by disentangling them from identity politics discourses:

> Can one aspire to the transcendence of identity categories if the latter are denied an existence? Can one ignore the specific relations of, say, gender nonconformists to the

> so-called traditional family without running the risk of misrepresenting or even obscuring the individuals in question? (158)

Scholars such as Waugh and Marshall, on the other hand, have argued in favor of Pool's treatment of otherness on the Québécois screen. In his profile of the filmmaker for the "Portrait Gallery" of *The Romance of Transgression*, Waugh reads against the grain of Pool's own disengagement with overt self-identification practices. Championing her as "Quebec's most prolific and visible queer woman filmmaker," Waugh's concise portrait underlines how the fascination for "border zones" and "interfaces between desires and outsiderness" are indeed seminal components of Pool's cinema (2006, 490). Marshall as well is particularly lenient towards Pool's mise-en-scène of gendered and sexual otherness, even within a universalizing framework. Addressing the question of materiality as a political tool absent from the filmmaker's work, Marshall acknowledges the weight of Nadeau's critical assessment but intervenes also to counterbalance it:

> While the Pool spectator may not be addressed as a concretely situated woman in social conflict, nor is he/she addressed as an Oedipalized assumed male. Pool's "universalism" is about the blurring and dissolution of boundaries, and it is the import of this procedure that needs to be addressed. (234)

Following Marshall's remarks, then, the neutrality of Pool's gaze could be understood less as a strategy of political indifference and more as a tendency to capture alternative expressions of female subjectivity without necessarily stressing counter-normativity as their most defining feature. It is my contention that, as in Dolan's case, such an attitude towards identity politics and explicit activism—as not automatically central to the life of all LGBTQ+ individuals—is not completely emptied of its critical potential. In the specific case of Pool's herein examined film corpus, this potential lies in presenting Quebec's national narrative from an alternative perspective, particularly in the way the family-nation allegory is regendered under specific historical circumstances.

A central component of Nadeau's reading of Pool's 1980s and 1990s films was the lack of engagement with the themes of femininity and lesbianism in a crucial period for women-directed cinema in Quebec. The author wondered how a filmmaker who "has received the greatest amount of support" in Quebec's film industry could shy away from using the privileged platform of govern-funded cinema to talk about sexuality, ethnicity, and subjectivity as nodal issues in Quebec's "project of *l'identitaire*" (1999, 207). If Pool failed to the task of exploring

"issues of relations to the female-body" in the peak period for women's filmmaking in Quebec (Nadeau 1999, 204), what can be said of her work in the 2000s, when the filmmaker looked back to the 1960s to rethink the female experience under the Quiet Revolution? By focusing on Pool's feature films set in the 1960s—*Emporte-moi, Maman est chez le coiffeur,* and *La passion d'Augustine*—I will show in the remainder of this section how the changes brought in Quebec by the Quiet Revolution are filtered through the female gaze and articulated around relationships of maternal filiation rather than around tropes of paternal legacy and male centrality, though in crisis. My choice of the term "revolutionary" to define the chosen trilogy is therefore motivated not only by the films' historical setting, but also by their complicity in framing womanhood and motherhood as central to the family-nation allegory rather than subsumed under the male-centered ideology of the Revolution.

Lizzie Thynne's analysis of filial and homosocial relationships between women in *Anne Trister* is a useful point of departure in this sense. The author argues that Pool's film "reframes rather than disavows the protagonist's primary bond with her mother," thus challenging the "phallocentric model of female sexuality" proposed by Freud as a necessary step for female maturation (1995, 102). Thynne employs Luce Irigaray's idea of female solidarity and existence *alongside* the mother (rather than *against* her in order to take her place) as a healthier way to conceive female sexuality vis-à-vis Freud and Lacan's masculine and patriarchal paradigms of female castration and maternal suppression. This gesture allows Thynne to read lesbianism and the formation of female subjectivity in Pool's films as a result of the characters' interactions with their mothers: "the relationship to another woman as mother is not repressed but given expression to provide the ground for a separate sense of female subjecthood and a reevaluation of femininity that makes lesbian love possible" (111). Thynne is cautious to reject a "direct equivalence" between lesbianism and daughter-mother relations, but recognizes that "reconceptualizing the primary relationship of our early life and the way that it subsequently figures in adulthood is an important part of validating the choice of a woman lover" (102).

Such a reading of maternal and lesbian bonds in Pool's work is beneficial to the analysis of the "revolutionary trilogy" conducted in this section from a thematic as well as formal point of view. Whereas in Pallister's above cited piece *Anne Trister* was thoroughly deconstructed using the geometrical and stylistic figure of the triangle, Thynne's argument makes it possible to observe a core duality in Pool's "revolutionary trilogy," which organizes female-to-female

interactions (especially between biological/surrogate mothers and daughters) through the figure of the couple. *Emporte-moi* in particular—which Pool dedicates, not surprisingly, to her own mother and daughter—frames the relationship between protagonist Hannah, her elusive mother (fig. 3.13-3.15), and, occasionally, her dedicated teacher (fig. 3.16-3.17), as a romantic/homosocial dyad, suggesting the conflation of the familiar bond with a platonically homoerotic one, even when an actual love triangle is in place (fig. 3.18).

Fig. 3.13: Hannah and her mother (Screenshot, *Emporte-moi*)

Fig. 3.14: Hannah and her mother (Screenshot, *Emporte-moi*)

Fig. 3.15: Hannah and her mother (Screenshot, *Emporte-moi*)

Fig. 3.16: Hannah and her teacher (Screenshot, *Emporte-moi*)

Fig. 3.17: Hannah and her teacher (Screenshot, *Emporte-moi*)

Fig. 3.18: Hannah, her brother, and their shared love interest (Screenshot, *Emporte-moi*)

Set in 1963 Montreal—the periodization is deducible from the screening of Jean-Luc Godard's *Vivre sa vie* attended by the protagonist—*Emporte-moi* follows one year into the life of thirteen-year-old Hannah (Karine Vanasse), from one summer to the next. Daughter of a Jewish writer (Miki Manojlovic) and a Catholic couturière (Pascale Bussières), Hannah attempts to navigate the ambiguities of her cultural and sexual identity by following the onscreen example of

Anna Karina in Godard's film, and the off-screen love for her depressed and suicidal mother. Neither entirely European nor Québécoise, Catholic nor Jewish, straight nor gay, driven only by the pursuit of freedom, Hannah embodies the uncertainties and overlapping identities of Quebec on the brink of modernization, caught between the past and the future but still not entirely sure of how to deal with the present. The distance between the advent of the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s and the making of the film in the late 1990s allows Pool to explore the historical and cultural tensions experience by the female protagonist from a less dramatic point of view than the cinema *of* the Revolution, whose sense of immediacy also carried the weight of individual disorientation and collective disillusion—as epitomized in the Introduction to this chapter by Patry's *Trouble Fête*.

The passage from rural to modern society is symbolized in *Emporte-moi* by the character's move from childhood to adulthood at the beginning of the film. Closely connected to the landscape inhabited by the protagonist, such a passage is also visualized through the juxtaposition of the rural environment in the film's opening sequence and the urban setting of Montreal, where Hannah returns when summer is gone. While spending the holidays at her grandparents' house in the countryside, Hannah enjoys the last bits of her carefree youth. This seemingly idyllic moment is however interrupted by the abrupt passage to womanhood, as the film starts with Hannah having her first period. "C'est quoi être une femme,"[101] Hannah's grandmother comments, but the protagonist attempts throughout the film to move away from such a limited idea of reproductive femininity, particularly by challenging the gendered norms surrounding her. At the core of Hannah's rebellion is in fact her sexuality, which oscillates between the incestuous relationship with her brother, the infatuation for her schoolmate Lisa, and the unresolved/unrequited love for her mother. To compensate for the lack of the latter, Hannah resorts to mimicking the behavior of Anna Karina in *Vivre sa vie*, to the extent of prostituting herself and falling victim to sexual abuse in one of the final sequences of the film—which mirrors the structure of Godard's one almost frame-by-frame. The event, coupled with the hospitalization of her mother after her last suicide attempt, results in Hannah's brief escape and return home, where the character eventually finds purpose thanks to the intervention of her teacher. By lending her a camera for the summer, the woman provides Hannah with the tools to

[101] "This is what it means to be a woman." (Author's translation)

cut ties with her cinematic double (Anna Karina) and to construct her own narrative without the interferences of male authority in the figure of the father and the film *auteur* (Godard).

The coupling of womanhood and filmmaking device strengthens the reading of Hannah's character as a modern and modernizing figure, emblematic rather than metaphorical of the status of Quebec in the midst of the Revolution, but from a feminine perspective. This intersection of real and filmic discourses is also crucial to the understanding of *Emporte-moi* as articulated along two main axes: that of coming-of-age, and that of cinephilia—which are, as well, closely interconnected with the question of female centrality in the building of Quebec's national narrative. As Pallister argued in relation to *La femme de l'hôtel,* Pool's film is not only "a gynefilm concerned with the haunting of one woman by another… [but] more importantly, it is devoted to speculation on the art of film… the problems of making a film, the emotional involvement of the director in making a film—here a woman's film, moreover" (1991, 112). The same could be said of *Emporte-moi*, where the relationship between the female protagonist and the cinematic dispositif is as central to the narrative as Hannah's maturation as a woman. Pallister points to yet another central theme in Pool's work, which resonates with the "revolutionary trilogy" herein examined: the agency of female characters over the usage of media devices (film in *Emporte-moi*, television in *Maman*, radio and newspapers in *La passion*) that are also employed in the making of the modern nation as an "imagined community" (Anderson 1993). In *Emporte-moi,* cinema as a form of movie-going and filmmaking becomes for Hannah a source of escapism but also a way to look at her own life no longer through the gaze of others (her Godardian doppelgänger in particular). The camera thus becomes a device to build her own narrative, and in this process assert herself as the main storyteller but also reinsert the maternal into her life, as both a cinematic presence and an actual one. In the film's closing scene, Hannah returns in fact to the countryside to spend the summer at her grandparents' place and is eventually rejoined by her mother, who appears first in camera and then in the flesh, allowing for a final reconciliation that is once again framed in an homosocial light (fig. 3.19-3.21).

Fig. 3.19: Final reconciliation (Screenshot, *Emporte-moi*)

Fig. 3.20: Final reconciliation (Screenshot, *Emporte-moi*)

Fig. 3.21: Final reconciliation (Screenshot, *Emporte-moi*)

Whereas in *Emporte-moi* the lens of the camera allows for the mother to reappear as a bodily and emotional presence in Hannah's life, the same occurrence is reversed in *Maman est chez le coiffeur*, whose entire narrative revolves around the maternal as a structuring absence. In the summer of 1966, on the off-island suburb of Beloeil, the life of teenager Élise (Marianne Fortier) is overturned by the sudden departure of her mother, journalist Simone (Céline Bonnier), who abandons the family household after the abrupt discovery of her husband's homosexuality.

Self-removed from the narrative early in the film, Élise's mother materializes once again only on a television screen, where she appears in her new role as an anchorwoman in London (fig. 3.22-3.23). The appearance wreaks havoc in Élise and Benoit's already unsettled life, bringing Élise to tears and triggering the destruction of the TV screen at the hand of Benoit (fig. 3.24-3.25). The scene acts not only as a catalyzer for the children's emotional turmoil, but also as a subtle reminder of the condition of women under Quebec's modernization. While taking away the materiality of Simone's physical body, her cathodic presence gives in fact proof of her existence as an independent woman, and not, as she previously reminded her husband, just a trophy housewife: "Je suis journaliste, te rappelle, pas juste une parure."[102] Although brief, Simone's TV appearance thus represents the crux of the film and the most explicit hint to the changed attitude of women in 1960s Quebec. *Maman* references only in passing to the Revolution, in a brief scene where Élise, standing at an ice cream kiosk, comments to her peers: "My mother said that it is because of the Church that we live in a Great Darkness." A girl's response "Do you have no electricity at home?" sparks Élise's hilarity, but offers also a further testimony of the "otherness" of Élise's mother as a woman with a clearer view of the political landscape of her own country. A country she had to remove herself from in order "not to die."

Fig. 3.22: Onscreen appearance (Screenshot, *Maman est chez le coiffeur*)

[102] "Mind you, I am a journalist, not just a decoration piece." (Author's translation)

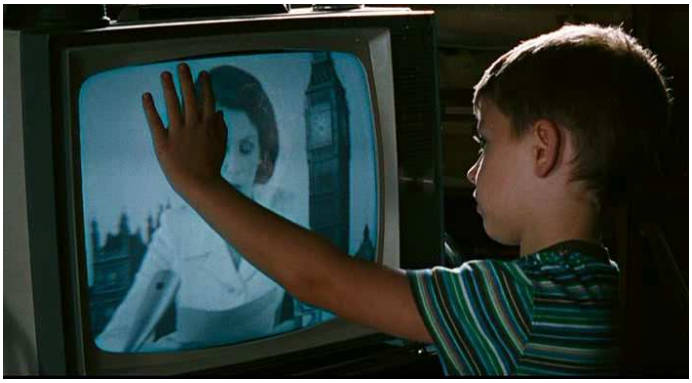

Fig. 3.23: Onscreen appearance (Screenshot, *Maman est chez le coiffeur*)

Fig. 3.24: Élise's reaction (Screenshot, *Maman est chez le coiffeur*)

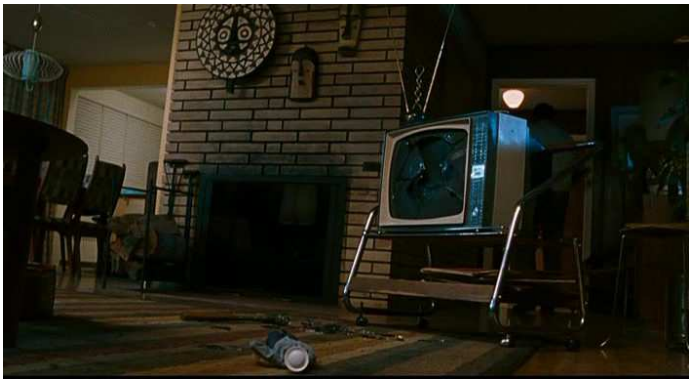

Fig. 3.25: Benoit's reaction (Screenshot, *Maman est chez le coiffeur*)

It is however in *La passion d'Augustine* that the feminization of the Quiet Revolution is relocated at the core of Pool's concerns with gender and nationhood. Set in 1960s rural Quebec, in a small convent in St. Ours, the film interweaves two parallel storylines. The overarching one follows the titular Mother Augustine/Simone Belieau (Céline Bonnier) as she fights to keep her music school alive under the cuts and modernizing changes induced by the Second Vatican

Council (1962-1965) and the concomitant raise of the Revolution in Quebec. The secondary narrative concerns the difficult relationship between Augustine and her niece Alice (Lysandre Ménard), a talented but rebellious piano player left at the convent by her dying mother (the character's illness is unveiled only at the end of the film).

Among the strategies to save the convent from extinction, the use of media by Augustine and her fellow sisters is the most compelling one, as it grants not only women, but *religious* women, the possibility of gaining recognition in a context where femininity is still seen as subjugated to men. By reclaiming their presence in the national eye, both the nuns and the students of Augustine's convent intervene to defy the idea of women as simply "the wives of Quebec's great men," but also to contrast the slogan of the Quiet Revolution that sees men as the "masters in the house" of the Quebec nation.[103] *La passion*—which focuses on the microcosm of an all-girls Catholic boarding school—thus intersects two complementary rewritings of the family-nation allegory under the Quiet Revolution: a general and a particular one. The general one stages Augustine as a collective maternal figure and the convent as the family-nation microcosm resisting what Lamoureux defines as the passage from the "mother-Church" to the "father-State" (2001, 98). Presented as a matriarchal space seeking independence from the "motherhouse," Augustine's convent can be read indeed as a symbolic counterpart of Quebec pursuing independence from the Anglophone "motherland," but it also reverses the nationalist paradigm of Quebec as a masculine nation by focusing on the efforts of women to regain equality and recognition under the forces of modernity. In this general framework is inserted the particular narrative that focuses on Augustine and Alice in the role of surrogate mother and daughter, whose final embrace after Alice's victory in the piano competition that closes the film recuperates the dyadic framework of *Emporte-moi* (fig. 3.26). The defeat of Augustine's fight for the convent and her renounciation to religious life is therefore not a bitter note for *La passion* to end on, but rather a hopeful one. Contrasting Nadeau's argument on Pool's female characters as eventually reduced to "normality," the film's ending plays out as an act of "eccentricity," as it allows the two women to pursue a new life together and signals the end of a regime of submission to a Catholic authority that has become obsolete in its traditional inflection.

[103] "Maîtres chez nous," "masters in our own house," was the motto coined by *Le Devoir* editor André Laurendeau and used by Liberal Party's leader Jean Lesage during the Quiet Revolution. Although collective in nature, the catchphrase arguably remains gendered in its utterance.

Fig. 3.26: Augustine/Simone and Alice embrace (Screenshot, *La passion d'Augustine*)

By shifting the focus to maternal filiation and female agency, Pool's "revolutionary trilogy" thus resumes the concerns expressed by Kay Armatage et al. in the introduction to their *Gendering the Nation: Canadian Women's Cinema* (1999). Herein, the authors interrogate "the relationship between the discourses of women's cinema, with all the tensions between particular and universal concepts of gender that attend such a category, and Canadian cinema with all the tensions between particular and universal concepts of nation" (12). Pool's recent work ultimately explores such a conflation of gender and nation, paying attention to the particularity of both within the general scheme of Quebec's family-nation allegory. And is from such an interaction that Pool's work emerges as a continuous and cohesive attempt to relocate the subjectivity and point of view of women at the center of a cinematic experience that, as the filmmaker herself argued in a 2017 interview, "is way more accustomed to a masculine gaze than to a feminine one" (Vaillancourt 2017).

Conclusion

Building upon the historical contextualization of the ties between masculinity, nationalism, and film imaginary in post-Quiet Revolution and post-referendary Quebec, this chapter has looked at the selected corpus of contemporary filmmakers Xavier Dolan and Léa Pool in order to explore alternative articulations of the family-nation allegory in Quebec cinema. Despite the refusal of the queer and lesbian terminology, either personally or in relation to their work, Dolan and Pool's films have provided a productive template to reconsider the gendered and national lineages of contemporary Quebec cinema no longer in dependence on the centrality of fatherhood and failing masculinity, but rather of motherhood, femininity, and queer subjectivity.

The aim of this chapter has been twofold. On the one hand, it has offered a methodological approach to the study of gendered and national issues in Quebec cinema not simply as an inventory of themes and figures recurring in single case studies, but rather as a symptomatic reading of the interdisciplinary convergence of the socio-political history and the history of sexuality in Quebec, and its translation on the national screen. On the other hand, it has looked at two filmmakers that have produced a coherent body of work structured around a gay male and female perspective, so as to explore a field of possibilities for other subjectivities to find their place within an otherwise heterosexual and masculine national narrative.

Similarly to Chapter 1 and 2, this current chapter as well has served as an opportunity to produce a methodological and theoretical answer to the key questions surrounding the role of subnational cinemas in reconfiguring masculinity and its relationship with the national. Herein, I have dealt specifically with the relationship between gender and nation, but only tangentially with intersectional practices that account for race and ethnicity, other than gender and sexuality. Furthermore, the focus of my inquiry has been circumscribed to a limited film corpus vis-à-vis the longstanding history of Quebec filmmaking and production. Therefore, my intention has not been to provide a comprehensive and exhaustive account of the relationship between gender and national identity in contemporary Quebec, but rather to propose a viable path to interrogate the gendered structures of Quebec cinema as a complementary tool to the understanding of Quebec's socio-political reality.

CONCLUSION

> *If manliness has reflected the hopes and wishes of modern society, what then would happen if these changed drastically, if there was no further need to reconcile order and progress, and if the dynamic thought vital to the functioning of society was no longer perceived as threatening the longing for harmony?*
>
> - George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man* (1996, 193)

In the final pages of *The Image of Man*, Mosse wondered about the potential decay of traditional images of manhood symbolically associated with the construction of modern nation-states and to their representation. In order to imagine such a radical disentanglement, the author had to envision a pivotal shift in the societal conditions that elected men as the privileged representatives of the nation. More than twenty years after the book's publication, the doubts cast by Mosse on the actual occurrence of such a shift remain confined within a theoretical conundrum: "[t]he importance of masculinity as part of the cement of modern society makes the manly ideal difficult to defeat. History cannot so easily be undone." (193). Whereas this latter point is undeniable, it cannot constitute a hurdle to the reconceptualization of dominant masculinities and the position they occupy in the globalized world today. It is not in the "undoing" of history, but rather in its "redoing" that a different relationship between nationhood and manhood can be conceived. And it is in light of such a potential redoing that this dissertation has analyzed the infrastructural and representational aspects of subnational cinemas, so as to suggest a possible renegotiation of national identities and masculinities in geopolitical contexts where the notion of nationhood, and its correspondence with manhood, has been profoundly challenged. In Chapter 1, the examination of accented masculinities in current Flemish cinema has displayed for example that the concept of "harmony" does not have to be solely predicated upon the same ideas of congruence and consonance Mosse refers to in the abovementioned quote. Paradoxically, harmony could be rather found in difference and dissonance, in the interplay of composite forms of national and gendered identities that inhabit geopolitical spaces and cinematic imaginaries at the crossroads of the local and the global.

Such a quest for heterogeneity, hybridity, and multiplicity—which informs my work as both a theoretical and methodological principle—informs not only the possibility of revising the relationship between national identity and masculinity, but also of reconfiguring of the national

cinema paradigm as an effective tool for assessing the relevance of subnational cinemas in a global scenario. Departing from a passage in Dudley Andrew's "An Atlas of World Cinema," Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie pointed out in the introduction to their co-edited volume *The Cinema of Small Nations* that nations are inescapable and impossible to remove from the study of cinema. The endurance of the national cinema framework is however not synonymous with stagnation, but rather with amelioration: "…reference to nations and to their inevitable persistence in film culture also acknowledges, at least implicitly, that innovative ways of understanding national elements must be part of the critical shift that is currently occurring in film studies" (2007, 1). The analysis of Flemish, Scottish, and Quebec cinemas, as conducted in the three chapters of this dissertation, has served the purpose of illustrating how such innovative understanding could take place in film industries and imaginaries that do not correspond to traditional notions of national cinemas. The interconnection of regional, national, transnational, and global forces in the examined case studies has allowed us to propose an opening for traditional patterns of national cinema, and has provided the basis for an analogous rethinking of the gendered structures, geographies, and temporalities of these cinemas in representational terms as well.

In the case of Flanders, the cross-regional and crossover nature of film production and circulation, both locally and internationally, have challenged the limited understandings of national identity as territorially and linguistically circumscribed, but also as univocally connoted in gendered terms. The plurality of national identities and gender configurations coexisting in the male protagonists of *Rundskop* and *Welp* have presented the first layer of complexity of Flemish "split screens" and "split subjects," while the intersectional renderings of diasporic and migrant masculinities in *Turquaze* and *Image* have intervened to nuance the dualistic composition of plurinational approaches to the question of identity. The example of Scottish cinema and its uneven development as a national industry and a transnational phenomenon has provided the backdrop for challenging tropes of hard masculinity and for revisiting performances and topographies of gender related to Scotland's quest for national independence. The case of Quebec cinema examined in the last chapter has advanced a regendering of national master narratives in contrast with male-oriented intersections of political history and history of sexuality.

The three chapters have therefore traced an organic trajectory that moves from the initial unpacking of men and masculinities in crisis, to the subsequent theorization of possible scenarios in which national gender discourses and building processes are not necessarily defined by their privileged relationship to dominant masculinities, but rather to marginalized subjects and bodies other*ed*. In a global moment characterized by the increasing resurgence of protectionist policies, anti-establishment ideologies, and xenophobic nationalisms—epitomized over the past two years by the tumultuous uprising of the "Trump era"—the risk of a return to fabricated notions of national homogeneity, as well as to equally constructed equations of manhood and nationhood seems particularly threatening. As Anikó Imre has argued in the final chapter of her book *Identity Games: Globalization and the Transformation of Media Cultures in the New Europe*, "local nationalisms have historically tried to compensate for their permanent cultural, political, and geographic instability by sustaining especially strict and conservative regimes of gender" (2009, 168). To propose models of nationhood and nationalism that, to resume Canclini's quote from the incipit of this dissertation, do not thrive in isolation, opposition, and separation, but rather prosper in the promotion of difference, intersection, and dialogue is therefore the necessary premise as well as the open-ended process this research has sought to initiate. Whereas the three main chapters and their related case studies have situated subnational cinemas at the center of a growing body of scholarship on global masculinities and small national/global cinemas, they have also not exhausted the several paths of inquiry that compose the "mosaic" approach of this dissertation. As stated in the Introduction, the goal of this project has been in fact to establish a horizon of possibilities for the study of gendered and national configurations in subnational contexts, situating subnational cinemas on a global map and pointing at their productive role in complicating the relationship between nationalism and dominant masculinity. Several paths of inquiry could stem out of each chapter: from a broader and comprehensive overview of accented cinema practices and gendered representations in Flemish cinema (with specific attention to Brussels as the center of Belgium's ethno- and film-scape), to a wide-ranging examination of female filmmaking and female representations in Scottish cinema as a further challenge to local gendered cartographies, to an equally extensive inquiry of family and gendered dynamics in current Quebec cinema. It is therefore not in the vein of teleological completion, but rather of epistemological progression that this work remains open to further explorations and interdisciplinary dialogues.

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