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Imag(in)ed Diversity in a Small Nation: Constructing Ethnic Minorities in Dutch Cinema

by

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ABSTRACT
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This thesis investigates how non-Western ethnic minorities have been represented in Dutch cinema mainly during the last two decades. While it has been argued that national cinema contributes to the imagination of a cohesive national identity, migration and the resulting ethnic diversity in contemporary societies urges us to rethink the role of cinema in the construction of national identities. Whereas migration and minorities are often seen as a threat to the unity of a bounded and homogeneous nation, I argue that national cinemas can contribute to the imagination of a culturally diverse society. In debates about national cinemas, small nations like the Netherlands have largely been neglected. My original contribution to the field is the argument that even the cinema of a small nation like the Netherlands can represent cultural diversity. Not only because of its small size but also because it is one of the first European countries that developed multicultural policies, the Netherlands forms an interesting case to study the representation of ethnic minorities, particularly in times of reviving nationalism. A crucial research question is whether this increased attention to cultural diversity debunks or confirms prevailing stereotypes about the ethnic Other(s).

Ethnic minorities are not just a demographic given but also a construct of government policies. For this reason, I examine how Dutch media and integration policies have influenced the representation of ethnic minorities in television and cinema. In order to analyse how diversity is imagined in the Netherlands, I focus on the cinematic representation of the largest minority groups as identified by the Dutch ethnic minorities policies: the Moroccans, the Turks, the Surinamese and the Antilleans. Besides policy efforts to represent ethnic minorities in the media, I claim that the representation of ethnic minorities in Dutch cinema is also a market-driven phenomenon. Even if the Dutch film industry engaged in the production of films targeting ethnic minority audiences, I argue that directors with an ethnic minority background can introduce a more personal perspective on ethnic minorities in the Netherlands. Finally, through historical dramas about (post)colonial migrants I will demonstrate how Dutch filmmakers reimagine the colonial past of the nation. Highlighting the increased attention paid to ethnic minorities in Dutch cinema, I conclude that even in a small nation like the Netherlands the cinematic imagination is not limited to a homogeneous and bounded nation but can also produce a multicultural and transnational world cinema.

Notes

All translations from Dutch are mine if not otherwise stated.

For reasons of consistency and clarity, the first time I refer to films is by their original title, followed by their English language title. On subsequent references I use the English title.

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Declaration Of Authorship

I, Arne Saeys

declare that the thesis entitled

Imag(in)ed Diversity in a Small Nation: Constructing Ethnic Minorities in Dutch Cinema

and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. Parts of the introduction chapter were published as: Saeys, A. (2013). Imag(in)ed Diversity. Migration in European Cinema. In. B. Goss & C. Chavez (2013). Identity: Beyond Tradition and McWorld Neoliberalism. Cambridge Scholars Publishers, pp. 27-46.

Signed: ……Arne Saeys……

Date: ……19/04/2018……

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1. Imag(in)ed Diversity in a Small Nation

1.1. Introduction

"The world we live in today is characterized by a new role for the imagination in social life", states the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1996, p. 31). In the age of globalisation, mass-mediated images and human migration crosscut more than ever national borders. Images of migrants from far-away countries increasingly reach the homes of local people in Europe through television, films and other media. We are living in a 'society of the spectacle', where social relations between people are mediated by images (Debord, 2002 [1967]). In the context of the highly polarised debates about migration and ethnic minorities today, this thesis aims to investigate how non-Western minority groups are imag(in)ed in contemporary Dutch cinema.

In the first place, I aim to contribute to the debate on migrant and diasporic cinema. While there is a growing literature on migrants and diasporic communities in European cinema, many of these works have focused on the representation of specific ethnic groups like the *beurs* in France (Higbee, 2013; Tarr, 2005), Black British cinema (Alexander, 2000; Cham & Andrade-Watkins, 1988; Diawara, 2006; Korte & Sternberg, 2004; Martin, 1995; Pines, 1988) or Turkish-German cinema (Berghahn, 2007; Burns, 2006; Burns, 2007a; Göktürk, 1999; Hake & Mennel, 2012). From an authorship approach, much of this literature has hailed migrant and diasporic filmmakers as counterhegemonic voices telling authentic stories about their respective communities. In this move, however, film scholars uncritically take the ethnic identity of filmmakers as a determining feature of their films, neglecting the fact that migrant and diasporic filmmakers operate within the local film industry of a given nation. What is more, too narrow a focus on one particular ethnic group might obscure the multiculturalism and super-diversity of contemporary societies following increased international migration flows since the second half of the 20th century (Kymlicka, 1995; Vertovec, 2007). Today, many societies in Europe and beyond are characterised by the cohabitation of different ethnic groups within one national territory. Multiculturalism emerged as an umbrella term referring to a set of institutional arrangements for the recognition of ethnic minorities and the

accommodation of group-differentiated rights (Kymlicka, 1995; Taylor, 1994; Young, 1990). In more recent years, scholars even speak of 'super-diversity' referring to 'a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade' (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1024). Taking into account multicultural policies and the super-diverse composition of contemporary societies, I will compare the representation of different ethnic minority groups in one small nation. By comparing multiple minorities within the same local context, I aim to highlight not only the demographic diversity of a contemporary European nation but also the impact of local multicultural policies on the representation of ethnic minorities in the cinema of a small nation like the Netherlands.

Secondly, focusing on the Netherlands, this thesis contributes to the literature on the cinemas of small nations (Hjort & Petrie, 2007). As a small national cinema, Dutch cinema has largely been neglected in European film studies. In Europe, the literature on ethnic minorities in cinema has been dominated by studies on migrant and diasporic cinema in larger nations like the United Kingdom, France and Germany. While some authors published on migration and minorities in Italian, Spanish and Portuguese cinemas (Berger & Komori, 2010; Grassilli, 2008), the literature on ethnic minorities in small nations like the Netherlands is still an underexplored area. Very few book-length works have dealt exclusively with Dutch cinema (Albers, Baeke, & Zeeman, 2004; Hofstede, 2000; Verstraten, 2016). Until now, there are only a handful of in-depth analyses of Dutch films (Cowie, 1979; Mathijs, 2004; Verstraten, 2016), and some articles dealing with post-colonial and multicultural topics (Pattynama, 2005, 2007; Pisters, 2007). As there has not yet been any extensive discussion of ethnic minorities in Dutch cinema, the original contribution of this thesis is first and foremost its focus on ethnic minorities in a small national cinema. In this introductory chapter, I will first discuss the general debates about migration and ethnic minorities and how diversity is represented in the media in general and European cinema in particular. After discussing theoretical concepts like accented and transnational cinema, I will focus on the question of ethnic minorities in a small national cinema like the one of the Netherlands.

1.2. Migration and Cultural Diversity

Although cross-border movements and exchanges between Europe and the rest of the world have occurred for centuries, the growing presence of non-Western immigrants in European nation-states has led to important social and cultural changes in Europe since at least the latter half of the 20th century. Until the second half of the 20th century, European nation-states were not accustomed to the presence of many foreigners in their territories. During the economic revival from the end of World War II till the mid-1970s, however, most of the industrialised countries in Western Europe recruited foreign guest workers to meet the increased demands for cheap labour in their manufacturing industries. While France and the United Kingdom imported workers from their former colonies, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Austria and Switzerland looked for guest workers in Mediterranean countries like Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece and later in Turkey and Morocco. When the first postcolonial and labour migrants arrived in Western Europe, few people could predict the long-term social and cultural effects of this population movement. Contrary to the expectation that the presence of these foreign workforces would be temporary, many guest workers turned into permanent residents bringing their families with them and raising their children in the host countries. By the mid-1970s, Western European governments officially decided to stop the active recruitment of guest workers. Nevertheless, immigration continued through legal channels like family reunifications, marriage and asylum procedures as well as through illegal entry (Castles & Miller, 2009). By consequence, the number of immigrants in Western European countries continued to grow even after the official immigration stop, leading to mounting tensions with the local populations of the host countries. In the last decades, the civil wars in the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and more recently in Syria and Iraq have led to new waves of refugees and asylum seekers. Given the rising number of refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea and Southeast Europe, political leaders and journalists in the European Union even spoke of a European refugee crisis in 2015. In response to the unauthorised entrance of refugees and migrants, the European Union increased border patrols across the Mediterranean Sea and made efforts to fight migrant smuggling. The heightened control of the external borders of the Schengen area, however, led to complaints by organisations like Amnesty International about human rights violations against refugees and migrants trying to

enter ‘Fortress Europe’.

Beyond the widespread idea that we are experiencing unprecedented mass migration nowadays, it should be noted that migration flows in the 19th century from Europe to America also involved large population movements (Hatton & Williamson, 1998). What is different from the population movements of the past is the global scope of recent migrations (Castles & Miller, 2009). New mobility and communication technologies have greatly expanded the possibilities for people to move and to communicate over longer geographical distances. On the one hand, this has led to a diversification of today’s migrations coming from increasingly divergent places in the world. On the other hand, new technologies such as the Internet and communication satellites have enabled contemporary migrants to stay in close contact with their places of origin all over the world. While most of the 19th century transatlantic migrants in the New World ultimately got out of touch with their homelands and assimilated into the host society, contemporary migrants can sustain durable relations in more than one country (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992). These evolutions have lead to questions about the national belonging of immigrants and their will to adapt to the host society. The visible advent of culturally and racially different newcomers in Europe has sparked xenophobic sentiments among local populations. Dramatic events like terrorist attacks and the wars in the countries of origin of migrants have further nourished fears and anxiety about foreigners in the West.

In the last decades, migration and cultural diversity have become heavily politicised topics in many European countries. Immigration from poor, non-Western countries is often seen as a threat to the economic welfare and the cultural unity of Western European nation-states. For several decades, radical anti-immigrant parties have emerged in various European countries. In some countries like France, Belgium and the Netherlands, xenophobic parties like the *Front National*, the *Vlaams Blok* and the *PVV* have gained significant electoral success in the 1990s and 2000s. Since the turn of the 21st century, the terrorist attacks by radical Islamists first in Madrid and London, and more recently in Paris, Brussels and several other European cities have increased negative feelings towards Muslim immigrants in particular. On the other side of the political spectrum, many people have condemned racism and discrimination against immigrants through massive demonstrations and other forms of protest. Most importantly, many governments in Europe have now installed anti-

discrimination laws and institutions supporting the rights of immigrants and their descendants. Last but not least, immigrants themselves have founded their own organisations and have started to make claims for group-specific rights and privileges. All the actors mentioned here have propelled immigration and cultural diversity to the forefront of public debates in Europe and beyond. In these public debates about diversity, global and national media play an important role.

1.3. Diversity and the Media

The media play a crucial role in the way cultural diversity is imagined in contemporary societies. While every day many things happen in the world, the media decide to a great extent what is and what is not talked about. In selecting and displaying events, the media set the agenda for public debates. Film and television makers do not simply comment on reality through an objective and dispassionate camera lens. As Bourdieu (1998) states in his writings on television: 'The simple report, the very fact of reporting, of *putting on record* as a reporter, always implies a social construction of reality that can mobilize (or demobilize) individuals or groups. […] The news, the incidents and accidents of everyday life, can be loaded with political and ethnic significance liable to unleash strong, often negative feelings, such as racism, chauvinism, the fear-hatred of the foreigner or, xenophobia' (p. 21). While the early guest workers received relatively little attention in the media of their host nations, in recent decades immigrants have increasingly made the news, often in negative ways, as a problem or even as a threat (Cisneros, 2008; ter Wal, 2002; van Dijk, 1991). Immigrants usually receive media attention in the context of dramatic events, for example in the context of the terrorist attacks by radical Islamists in cities like Paris, Brussels and Berlin. Although these are urgent social issues that need to be resolved, current debates about immigrants and refugees have repeatedly been conflated with stereotypical images and essentialist diatribes setting up a pernicious 'us versus them' dichotomy. Even the second and third generation youngsters that were born and raised in Europe continue to be depicted as foreign aliens.

Following the arrival of non-Western immigrants and the resulting ethnic diversity in contemporary societies, the media in Western Europe and North America have become increasingly criticised as bastions of whiteness and Eurocentrism by

postcolonial scholars and activists (Bâ & Higbee, 2012; Bernardi, 2008; Dyer, 1988; Shohat & Stam, 1994). Eurocentrism can be defined as the tendency of the media to select and display content that mainly appeals to white majority populations. Targeting the largest possible audiences, the mainstream media tend to disregard the needs and interests of minority groups. Eurocentric visions are influenced by historical colonial power relations that have led to Orientalism and the exoticisation of the non-Western Other (Bhabha, 1983; Saïd, 1978). Analysing the view of Europeans on the rest of the world, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994) note how "Eurocentrism bifurcates the world into the 'West and the Rest' and organizes everyday language into binaristic hierarchies implicitly flattering to Europe: our 'nations', their 'tribes'; our 'religions', their 'superstitions'; our 'culture', their 'folkore'; our 'art', their 'artifacts'; our 'demonstrations', their 'riots'; our 'defense', their 'terrorism' " (p. 2). Due to the imperatives of newsworthiness and the prevalence of ethnocentric biases among media professionals, immigrants and their descendants have primarily been the objects of media attention on the occasion of crises and conflicts, for example, in relation to unemployment, school failure, criminality, riots, and, most worrying, even terrorism. Without denying the occurrence of these phenomena, it should be said that the mass media have a tendency to zoom in on the spectacular and the sensational while the daily and peaceful life of immigrants and their descendants often passes unnoticed. As media coverage about migration and ethnic diversity significantly affects public opinion and attitudes towards migrant communities, negative framing and stereotyping might activate or reinforce the discrimination of these social groups in society. While people with a non-Western background have made the news in the context of heated political debates about migration, the refugee crisis, crime and terrorism, they have remained remarkably underrepresented in popular entertainment shows and fiction films.

In order to break this vicious circle, policy-makers in various European countries launched at least since the 1980s anti-discrimination measures and started to promote a more positive view of cultural diversity in the media. In countries like the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, media laws have obliged public broadcasters to provide special programming for ethnic minority groups (Leurdijk, 2006). On the other hand, ethnic minorities themselves have sought alternative media resources in order to satisfy their specific cultural interests. Through modern communication technologies immigrants have access to the films, radio and television programmes

from their countries of origin. The presence of satellite dishes in immigrant neighbourhoods, however, has become an eyesore to the authorities of the host country fearing that the influence of foreign broadcasters will hinder the integration of immigrants and their descendants. This concern urged public broadcasters in the host countries even more to produce programmes that are oriented towards immigrants and ethnic minorities. This way, the governments of the host countries hope to gain more control over the media content that reaches immigrant groups and ethnic minorities. Besides specific programmes for ethnic minorities, there have also been increased efforts to include more diversity in the mainstream media, for example by casting ethnic minority characters in popular fiction series, TV shows and cinema.

1.4. Diversity in European Cinema

As migration and diversity have become hot political topics in Europe, more and more film directors in Europe have highlighted the experiences of migrants and minorities in their cinematic work. In order to empirically underpin the heightened production of films dealing with migration and diversity, we can point to statistical data that indicate the increase in European films dealing with migration and ethnic diversity. From a quantitative point of view, Terzera & Rivellini (2013) created a Database of European films on Migratory Topics that contains 256 fiction films dealing with migratory themes produced between 1991 and 2010 in at least one European country. The database shows a steady increase in the total number of European films dealing with migration issues from 1991 until 2005, with a peak of migration-related films produced between 2001 and 2005. Distinguishing between the different parts of Europe, Figure 1 shows that most films dealing with migration have been produced in Western Europe. This should not be a surprise as France, Germany and the United Kingdom are countries with both well-established film industries and large immigrant populations. Nevertheless, there has also been a significant production of films on migration in Northern and Southern Europe. This suggests that migration is a phenomenon that is affecting not only Western Europe but also the rest of the continent.

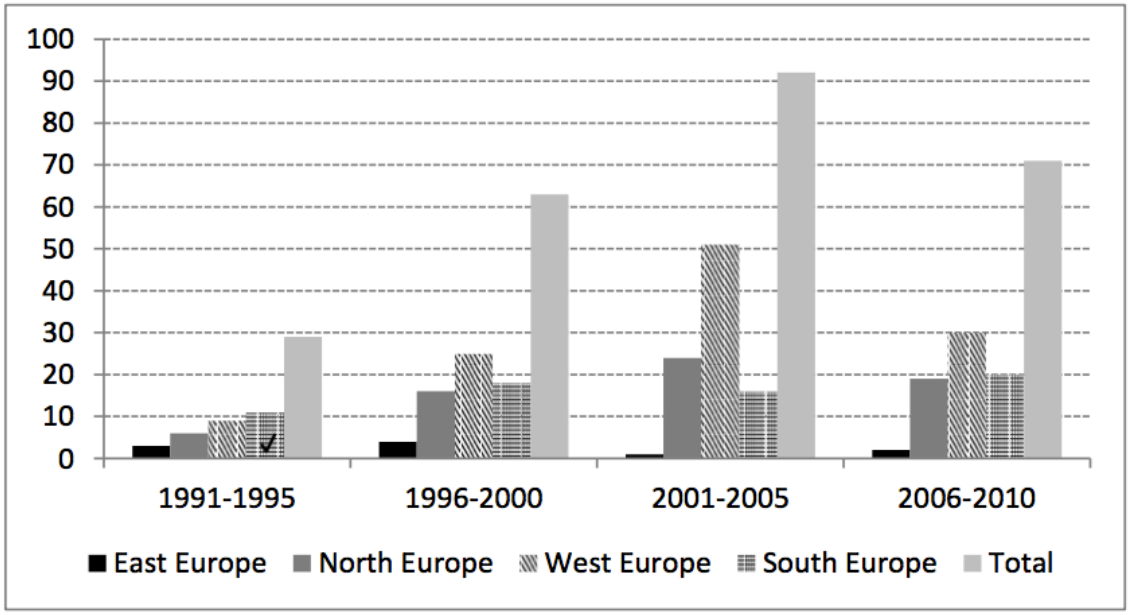

Fig. 1.1 European Films on Migratory Topics by macro-area and year of production

While the literature on ethnic minorities in European cinema used to be scarce, over the last years we have witnessed an exponential interest in the topic among film scholars. A comprehensive book focusing on the representation of contemporary migrants and minorities in European cinema is *Moving Pictures, Migrating Identities* (Rueschmann, 2003). Drawing on various theories of exile and diaspora, the book highlights how documentaries and fiction films have imagined the experiences of migration and exile in Europe and beyond during the 1980s and 1990s. Besides discussing well-known films about migration like the award-winning *Reise der Hoffnung* [Journey of Hope] (Xavier Koller, 1990), the volume also deals with smaller productions like the first documentaries by migrant directors like Seyhan Derin and Yamina Benguigui. More recently, the book *Screening Strangers* (Loshitzky, 2010) debunks overly optimistic myths of a post-national Europe, giving special attention to films that depict the difficulties of refugees to enter Fortress Europe, the discrimination and the exclusion of old and new migrants in European cities. Focusing on the ways in which European auteur films invoke negative images like riots, crime, terrorism, and honour killings to frame ethnic minorities, the book *In Permanent Crisis. Ethnicity in Contemporary European Media and Cinema* (Celik, 2015) denounces how ethnic minorities in Europe are often stigmatised as either perpetrators or victims of violence.

Whereas the previous authors predominantly dealt with films about migration

by renowned European filmmakers, the editors of *European Cinema in Motion* (Berghahn & Sternberg, 2010) selected lesser-known European films, privileging films made by migrant and diasporic directors and writers. Rather than focusing only on 'migrant and diasporic filmmakers', however, the editors speak of 'migrant and diasporic cinema' as they define their focus by the subject matter of the films rather than by the origins and the biography of the filmmakers. Most interestingly, Berghahn and Sternberg (2010) propose a definition of migrant and diasporic cinema. Drawing on the concepts of generation and memory, they distinguish 'migrant' (first-generation), 'diasporic' (second-generation) and 'non-migrant/non-diasporic' (native) filmmakers. Migrant and diasporic filmmakers would be able to activate respectively memorial and post-memorial connections to the migratory past, whereas non-migrant/non-diasporic filmmakers draw on a 'prosthetic memory' that is not circumscribed by any particular group identity. Moreover, they see migrant and diasporic cinema as a specific type of transnational cinema transcending the boundaries of the nation-state, reflecting the 'double consciousness' or 'diasporic optic' of its creators. The most ambitious argument of Berghahn and Sternberg, however, is the claim that migrant and diasporic cinema marks the ‘World Cinema turn in European cinema’, translating cultural hybridity into a new aesthetic paradigm. A more heterogeneous work dealing with cultural hybridity in European cinema is *Immigrant Cinema in the New Europe* (Ballesteros, 2015), a collection of essays that deals with immigrants in European cinema through the perspectives of masculine, female and queer identities, human trafficking, border-crossing road movies and diasporic identities.

The assertion that “European cinema is well advised to jump on the World Cinema bandwagon, utilising the exotic appeal of the other to rebrand itself” (Berghahn & Sternberg, 2010, p. 40), echoes what Thomas Elsaesser (2005) said about European auteur cinema: “The auteur’s natural home would then be world cinema, rather than the old national cinemas, thereby signalising a cinema that, while perhaps not suited for the national market, does well in international export markets, reaches the secondary markets of television or even the mass marketing of DVD releases with their vast network of internet-based fan sites and DVD reviews. A world cinema auteur thus can reach across many different countries, and under different reception conditions, can find a niche market with a dedicated audience” (Elsaesser, 2005, p. 499). Rather than becoming anonymous transnational productions,

European film industries highlight national identities as 'brands' to promote films as authentic in the global market of World Cinema. In the search for authenticity, production and consumption become design-intensive processes of constructing 'difference', for example in globally recognised 'brands' (Lash & Lury, 2007). Targeting the international markets of film festivals rather than national markets, European film industries offer opportunities to non-Western filmmakers who distinguish themselves by their cultural identity and their claims to authenticity. These claims to authenticity, however, might lead to practices of (self-)exoticisation where filmmakers perform exotic identities in the name of cultural diversity. As Thomas Elsaesser states: “It is as if European cinema first had to learn to be world cinema, with all the dangers of self-othering this entails, before it can be (once more?) European […]” (Elsaesser, 2005, p. 511).

1.5. From Colonial Exoticism to Accented Cinema

From a postcolonial perspective, several authors (Bhabha, 1983; Saïd, 1978; Stam & Spence, 1983) criticised the exoticist and Orientalist images of the Other in Western visual arts and literature. In film studies, Jack Shaheen’s *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (2001) denounced for example the misrepresentation and dehumanisation of Arab people in Hollywood films. In order to overcome Eurocentric and stereotypical representations of non-Western people, Shohat & Stam (1994) have proposed the concept of ‘polycentric multiculturalism’. According to them, a ‘polycentric multiculturalism demands changes not just in images but in power relations’ (p. 48). They analyse the imperial imaginary of Western filmmakers from the colonial era to recent adventure films and westerns. The interest in people from other parts of the world fuelled some of the first cinematographic projects. The invention of the motion picture camera at the end of the 19th century coincided with the heights of European colonial expansion. Due to an inequality in technological means and an ideology seeking to legitimise colonial rule, the first ethnographic film projects like for example the classic documentary *Nanook of the North* (Robert Flaherty, 1922) were characterised by skewed power relations between Western filmmakers and their foreign subjects. This power relation was present in genres such as scientific research films documenting newly discovered people, lyrical

ethnographic documentaries and commercial entertainment films (Rony, 1996). In the postcolonial era, the 'objectifying gaze' of Western filmmakers became heavily criticised. Instead of observing the subject as if it was an insect, the French filmmaker and anthropologist Jean Rouch (1974) proposed a *cinéma vérite*, underlining the filmmaker's presence and the subject's active participation in order to achieve mutual understanding. Filmmaker Sol Worth and anthropologist John Adair (1972) went a step further by teaching a group of Navajos the basic technical elements of filmmaking in order to let them tell their own story in their own visual language. With the concept of transcultural cinema, the ethnographic filmmaker David MacDougall (1998) argued that film is not culture-bound but a universal form of communication. In all these discussions, however, the aim to highlight the perspective of the Other remained quite paternalistic and exoticising.

A more radical turn in the history of film was the plea by the Argentine filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino in the 1960s against the dominance of commercial Hollywood productions (First Cinema) and European auteur films (Second Cinema). Rejecting both Hollywood's escapist film spectacles and the European cinema as a vehicle for artistic expression, Solanas and Getino (1976) called for a Third Cinema, a neorealist and political cinema advocating class struggle and even armed resistance. Although Third Cinema was mainly produced in the Third World, Teshome Gabriel (1982) stated that any cinema produced anywhere can be called Third Cinema, as long as it is oppositional and liberationist. On the one hand, authors like Roy Armes (1987) use the term 'Third World Cinema' to refer simply to the films produced by Third World filmmakers. On the other hand, Pines & Willemen (1989) define 'Third Cinema' in an ideological way as those films that address specific political and aesthetic aims, whether or not they are produced by Third World people. Shohat & Stam (1994) have summarised these distinctions in the following classification. First, there is a core circle of 'Third Worldist' films produced by and for Third World peoples that adhere to the principles of 'Third Cinema'. Secondly, there is a wider circle of all films produced by Third World peoples, regardless of the principles of Third Cinema. In the third place, there are the films produced by First or Second World filmmakers in support of Third World people and in line with the principles of Third Cinema. Finally, there are the recent diasporic hybrid films, which both build on and question the principles of 'Third Cinema'.

While the global spread of Western culture has been extensively discussed in the literature, there is a growing interest in the cultural exchanges and influences emanating from other parts of the world. Although Hollywood remains the most powerful film industry in the world, economic and technological developments have raised the profile of films and filmmakers from other parts of the world. The success of World cinema on international film festivals and the growing popularity of films from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East challenge the idea of global homogenisation by Hollywood. The success of Third World filmmakers in international film festivals can be understood as what Graham Huggan (2001) calls 'the postcolonial exotic', the late-capitalist commodification of cultural difference. While exoticism describes the aesthetic outsider perception that renders people, objects and places unfamiliar, the process of commodification adds economic value to exoticism, turning local cultures into commodities for mass-market consumption. At the same time, European film industries increasingly engage in international co-productions with Third World filmmakers. With the participation of Third World filmmakers in European film industries, the postcolonial paradigm of Western hegemony loses its ground to transnational and multi-connected conceptions of cultural production.

In the last decades, there has been a growing body of literature on migrant and diasporic cinema. While many scholars have focused on Western media and their stereotypical representations of non-Western people, some authors have highlighted the counterhegemonic responses by migrant and diasporic filmmakers living in the West. In her book *The Skin of Film*, Laura Marks (2000) launched the concept of 'intercultural cinema', referring to 'experimental styles that attempt to represent the experience of living between two or more culture cultural regimes of knowledge, or living as a minority in the still majority white, Euro-American West' (p.1). Focusing on experimental films, she argues that the works of ethnic minority filmmakers evoke cultural memories through an appeal to embodied knowledge and experiences of the senses. Contrary to the hegemonic Western media that privilege vision, intercultural filmmakers would engage their audiences bodily, through the senses of touch, smell and taste. In her emphasis on the 'embodied cultural memory' of minority filmmakers, Marks takes over a culturalist perspective that sees people as the product of their cultures, rather than the inverse. Limiting intercultural cinema to the small niche of experimental films, she further neglects the fact that minority

filmmakers are active in a much wider range of visual genres, ranging from independent documentaries to more commercially oriented film productions.

Focusing on a range of independent auteur films, Hamid Naficy's *An Accented Cinema* (2001) has been a highly influential work on migrant and diasporic cinema. From an authorship perspective, Naficy argues that Third World and other displaced filmmakers living in the West translate their personal experiences of exile, diaspora and ethnicity via an 'accented mode of production' into an 'accented style' of film aesthetics. His main argument is that "deterritorialized peoples and their films share certain features" (Naficy 2001, p. 3). Naficy defines migrant filmmakers in terms of their orientation to either their homeland, their ethnic community or to their host country. This leads him to define three categories: exilic, diasporic, postcolonial ethnic and identity cinema. "[E]xilic cinema is dominated by its focus on there and then in the homeland, diasporic cinema by its vertical relationship to the homeland and by its lateral relationship to the diaspora communities and experiences, and postcolonial ethnic and identity cinema by the exigencies of life here and now in the country in which the filmmakers reside" (p. 15). In a second move, Naficy defines 'accented cinema' by the formalist techniques used by filmmakers. As features of an accented cinema, Naficy discusses interstitial and collective modes of production, epistolary narratives and chronotopes of utopian homelands, border crossings and claustrophobic life in exile. In addition, Naficy describes accented cinema as an embedded criticism of the dominant Hollywood cinema. In Hollywood cinema, films are "realistic and intended for entertainment only, and thus free from overt ideology or accent" (p. 23). In this manner, 'accented films' are supposed to be highly political and critical of, not to say oppositional to, the classic Hollywood style and the national cinema style of any particular country. In his theorisation, accented filmmakers are relegated to a "liminal subjectivity and interstitial location in society and the film industry" (p. 10). I argue that the categorisation of accented filmmakers in terms of "in-betweenness" has some undesired consequences, particularly in the case of second-generation immigrants.

While the ethnic 'politics of the hyphen' can be seen as a sign of hybridised identities (Burns, 2007b), the category of 'accented cinema' puts migrants and minorities in a liminal nowhere, rather than being part of the host country cinema or part of the home country cinema. Migrants are conceptualised as forever 'homeless', outside national and international film categories. In this way, 'accented cinema'

creates a gap in the already existing film classifications, in order to summon an argument to fill that gap with a brand new classification that he dubs an ‘accented cinema’. In contrast, consider the example of Belgian-Palestinian director Michel Khleifi. His films are discussed in works on Belgian cinema (Mosley, 2001; Thomas, 1995), in works on Palestinian cinema (Dabashi, 2006; Gertz & Khleifi, 2008), as well as in works on World Cinema (Chaudhuri, 2005). What is the additional value of categorising Khleifi’s films as well under the heading of ‘accented cinema’? Creating a new film category, simply because the filmmakers have migrated, seems to offer little added value to already existing classifications. Moreover, labelling filmmakers as ‘accented’ reinforces the Othering of migrant filmmakers by film critics, academics and professionals. In fact, the ‘accented cinema’ puts the filmmakers into a new discursive ghetto. The ‘accented cinema’ is constructed as a stylistic category based on a generalised past of the filmmakers, modelled as a rupture from their natural territory of the nation-state. However, the ‘accented style’ not only fails to account for the personal and professional evolution of the filmmakers over time, but also obscures the role of the ‘non-accented’ political and economic context in contrast to which ‘accented’ film productions are defined.

With the critical and even commercial success of several ‘migrant and diasporic films’ in Europe, the contrast between ‘accented’ versus ‘mainstream’ cinema no longer holds. The opposition between ‘accented cinema’ and ‘mainstream cinema’ excludes in advance the possibility of accented films becoming mainstream. This is a highly problematic assumption, particularly because it reduces ‘accented’ films to a subcultural cinema, deprived of any wider audiences. In order to investigate whether ‘accented cinema’ can be mainstream, we also need to define what is understood by ‘mainstream’. Rather than limiting our understanding of mainstream cinema to the globally distributed Hollywood blockbusters, I posit mainstream cinema to also include local film productions that are commercially successful in specific national markets, as well as art cinema that is critically acclaimed at international film festivals. This more expansive account of mainstream cinema allows for a more dynamic interaction between ‘accented’ and ‘mainstream’ cinema than Naficy’s dichotomy. Particularly in the European context, where low-budget art cinema and popular local cinema are the constituents of national film industries, ‘accented’ films can achieve success as national films. Moreover, it can be argued that ‘accented’ filmmakers play with an advantage. By accentuating their otherness, they can

achieve success in the art cinema circuits, where foreign, if not exotic, films are highly valued. In more popular genres, ethnic minority filmmakers can substantiate their ethnicity by targeting the growing ethnic markets in European countries. As a cost-intensive product, however, films require a substantial return on investment. Thus, the films should reach the largest possible audiences. Even if there were large immigrant communities, filmmakers would rather target national mainstream audiences. By doing so, however, filmmakers must dispense with the rough edges that might alienate potential viewers. In this sense, the work of ethnic minority filmmakers might lose many of the characteristics that make their films 'accented'.

1.6. Exilic, Diasporic and Transnational Cinema

Beyond the a priori categorisation of migrant and diasporic cinema as 'accented' (Naficy, 2001) or 'intercultural' (Marks, 2000), I argue that films dealing with migration and diasporas need to be understood in the institutional context of the national film industry that shapes both the quantitative and qualitative output of filmmakers. For this reason, I adopt a socio-historical perspective that deals with the institutional context of Dutch television and film productions with regards to ethnic minorities. Instead of speaking of migrant and diasporic communities, I prefer to use the term 'ethnic minorities' as this relational term underlines the position of minority groups versus a majority population within a national context (Cottle, 2000; Staiger, 2005). In this thesis, I will compare different ethnic minority groups within one nation. By comparing different ethnic minorities within the same local context, I aim to highlight how the socio-economic position, the demographical size and the history of these minorities influence the ways they are represented in cinema. Rather than reifying the cultural Otherness of one specific ethnic minority group in opposition to the national context, I want to show communalities and differences in the representation of diverse ethnic minorities within one national context. Before elaborating why I prefer to use the concept of 'ethnic minorities', it is important to note that ethnic minorities have been conceptualised in several different ways. In this section, I will critically review alternative concepts like 'exile' and 'diaspora' that are frequently used within the humanities to describe ethnic minorities (Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1994; Rushdie, 1992; Saïd, 2003).

In film studies, the concept of exile has been applied to 'exilic' filmmakers. Exile can be defined as 'a painful or punitive banishment from one's homeland' (Peters 1999: 19). Film historians have studied, for example, filmmakers - often of Jewish origin - who escaped the Nazi regime in Germany to live and work in other countries (Bergfelder & Cargnelli, 2008; Gemünden, 2014; Phillips, 1998; Phillips, 2005). Beyond this historical context, some film scholars have expanded the concept of exile to the contemporary migration experiences of filmmakers (Atkinson, 2008; Naficy, 1999; Naficy 2001). In a globalised and transnationally connected world, however, the use of a term like exile is quite problematic. Exile, defined as internal or external banishment, has been extensively commented upon by literary critics (Allatson & McCormack, 2008; Israel, 2000; Kaplan, 1996; Ouditt, 2002; Rushdie, 1992). Modernist art and literature describes exile, as both fact and trope, in terms of isolation, solitude and alienation of the individual from an original community: the artist in exile is never 'at home'. This distancing has been aestheticised as a necessary precondition to produce high art. Edward Saïd (2003) famously noted: '[E]xile carries with it, I think, a touch of solitude and spirituality' (p. 181). Without dismissing personal testimonies like that of Saïd, Caren Kaplan (1996) observed that 'the formation of modernist exile seems to have best served those who would voluntarily experience estrangement and separation in order to produce the experimental cultures of modernism' (p. 28). Kaplan argues that the mystifying metaphor of exile, as contrasted with ordinary travel or tourism, helps to maintain the division between high and low culture – and between art and commerce. Indeed, in line with Kaplan's observations, one can see that what film scholars like Hamid Naficy (2001) describe as contemporary 'exile cinema' consists of more experimental styles and techniques (*e.g.*, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Mona Hatoum). Migrant filmmakers working in more popular genres, such as Ang Lee and John Woo, both working in Hollywood, do not correspond to the romanticised image of the solipsistic artist in exile creating high art. Exile has mainly been used to describe writers of literature. A complex process like film production even if experimental or low-budget requires the input of many diversely skilled people (Caves, 2000). The idea of the individual filmmaker in exile is also contradicted by the filmmaker's participation in multiple institutions, transnational co-productions and the use of multisource funding. Another critique of exile comes from anthropology. Categorising people as exiles is based on certain assumptions about the 'national order of things' (Malkki, 1995). Malkki

observes that, '[B]elonging (identity, community) and not belonging (uprooting, exile) to a place are spiritualized in a broad sense of the word. And this spiritualization can lead to dehistoricization and depoliticization. Malkki concludes that '[such] forms of idealization take for granted certain categorical forms of thought', and set up a 'conventional opposition of origin and exile' [...]' (1995: p. 515). As I will deal with films depicting how migrants are embedded in the historical and political context of the Netherlands, I believe the concept of exile is too limited to analyse the representation of migrants in Dutch cinema.

A second concept that is frequently employed in the humanities is the term 'diaspora'. According to Robin Cohen (2008), the notion of diaspora can be defined as a 'dispersal from an original homeland [...] to two or more foreign regions [...and] a collective memory and myth about the homeland' (p. 17). Diasporic communities would have 'a strong ethnic group consciousness [...] based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate' and they tend to have 'a sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement' (p. 17). In the same vein as the term 'exile', the concept of diaspora shows several shortcomings in describing the position of migrants in other countries. As Soysal Nuhoğlu (2000) notes, '[d]iaspora is the extension of the place left behind, the 'home'. Thus, there is the presumed rootlessness of immigrant populations in the here and now of the diaspora and their perpetual longing for then and there. This theoretical move, that is, designating immigrant populations as diasporas, ignores the historical contingency of the nation-state, identity and community, and reifies them as natural' (2000: p. 3). Where the term 'diaspora' highlights the relation with an ethnically defined community and homeland, Soysal Nuhoğlu argues that diaspora as an analytical tool is 'obscuring the new topography and practices of citizenship, which are multi-connected, multi-referential and post-national' (p. 13). After the first generations of the diaspora settled in new host countries, it should be noted that subsequent generations grew up within these host countries. Although the term 'diaspora' is broader than 'exile', it continues to focus on the rupture with the original homeland, even for generations that have never set a foot in the so-called homeland. While the concept of diaspora can be useful for the comparative study of migrants from the same origin dispersed over various host countries, this thesis rather focuses on the diversity of multiple ethnic groups living together in one particular host country.

In recent years, a third concept has gained momentum: 'transnationalism'. In a

broad sense, transnationalism refers to the border-crossing connections across different nations. In film studies, transnational cinema draws attention to phenomena like the migration of filmmakers, co-productions and the translation and adaptation of foreign films (Bergfelder, 2005). The transnational modes of film production, distribution and reception mean that it is not always evident to assign a single national identity to a film. Most interestingly, the literature on transnational cinema highlights not only the global hegemony of Hollywood in other film markets but also the counterhegemonic reactions by filmmakers from postcolonial and developing countries (Ezra & Rowden, 2005). Focusing on postcolonial filmmakers in the West and Chinese and East Asian cinemas, the critical transnationalism approach of Higbee & Lim (2010) highlights the power relations in transnational cinema. Others have drawn attention to the transnational aspects of World Cinema (Ďurovičová & Newman, 2010). While transnationalism can be useful to frame migration in the wider context of globalisation, it remains a very broad concept that covers a wide variety of border-crossing phenomena. It is important to note that not all films about ethnic minorities are by definition 'transnational'. A film about a multicultural school in Amsterdam, for example, does not necessarily imply any transnational movements.

Besides the theoretical objections to the above-mentioned concepts, there is also another reason why I prefer to use the term 'ethnic minorities' in this thesis. Although the term 'ethnic minorities' is also subject to criticism, it suits more the objectives of this thesis to describe the relation between ethnic minorities and the national majority. It should be noted that official policy documents and public debates in the Netherlands do not make use of terms like exile, diaspora or transnationalism. In public debates and official policies, the term 'ethnic minorities' is used much more frequently. While I will discuss the policies of the Netherlands in more detail later, I will now turn to some theoretical insights that explain why ethnic minorities are a useful starting point for the analyses in this thesis.

1.7. Constructing Ethnic Minorities

'Ethnic minorities' is the term that has been used in Dutch official policy documents and public debates to designate certain groups of immigrant origin in the Netherlands. Obviously, the division of the population into ethnic minorities and an ethnic majority is not a natural division, but an 'ideological construction of social

reality' (Rath, 1991, p. 130). This division reflects the social and cultural criteria that people must meet in order to be considered as members of an imagined minority community. In the first place, it is important to ask how 'ethnic minorities' can be identified and what distinguishes them from the 'majority' population. In the sociological literature, 'ethnic groups' are defined as communities whose heritage offers important characteristics in common between its members and which makes them distinct from other communities (Modood & Berthoud 1997, p. 13). Regarding the origins of ethnic groups, scholars hold conflicting perspectives (Wimmer, 2013). On the one hand, there are the perrenial, primordialist and essentialist views that see ethnic group identity as a stable principle of social organisation that exists already since millennia in human history, whose membership is acquired through birth and which is invariable across different contexts. On the other hand, there are the constructivist, instrumentalist and situationalist views that underline the constructed nature of ethnicity, arguing that individuals can choose between different ethnic identities depending on the situation. Since the 1990s, the constructivist view on ethnicity has become widely accepted and contrary positions like primordialism, perrenialism and essentialism have largely been abandoned. This implies that much of the sociological research on ethnic groups currently focuses on the processes of ethnic boundary-making rather than on the cultural essence of ethnic groups. The metaphor of boundary-making goes back to the work of anthropologist Fredrik Barth.

Barth (1969) rejected the prevailing assumption that ethnic groups are simply culture-bearing units, with cultural differences as a result of the distance between the groups who developed their own traditions in isolation. This view implied that cultural differences between ethnic groups would gradually fade away when those groups start to interact. In reality, however, Barth noticed that the more contact there was between groups, the more ethnic oppositions intensified. In situations of interaction and exchange, objective cultural differences diminished but not the ethnic opposition. Objective cultural practices and ethnic identity turned out to be distinct aspects of mankind. This way, Barth drew attention to the active process of constructing ethnic identities. Groups construct a social boundary between themselves and 'the others' by attributing themselves and others certain subjective cultural characteristics. By consequence, ethnic groups are in fact categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves in order to organise interactions with other groups. Ethnic identity thus has more to do with a social process than with a fixed cultural content.

Groups select some cultural traits to articulate how they differ from other groups, for example by wearing ethnic clothing or by performing certain rituals. Cultural traditions that seem to be timeless and unchangeable are in fact socially constructed and often more recent than expected. Ethnic groups persist even if their cultural habits have changed. In this sense, cultural differences are not causal but secondary to ethnic boundaries. For this reason, the key distinguishing characteristics of ethnic boundaries vary across societies. The components of ethnic groups will be different within the Netherlands compared with, for example, Britain, where race is more central to public policies. In the case of the Netherlands, the groups of people that have been designated as ethnic minorities have in common a non-Western origin and a socio-economically deprived status. Beyond the focus on ethnicity, sociologist Louis Wirth (1945) defined a minority group as "a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination" (p. 347). This definition includes not only ethnic groups, but also groups based on race, gender and sexuality. It also underlines discrimination and unequal treatment by the majority who holds positions of social power. This implies that the minority status is determined by political power and does not necessarily refer to a numerical minority. Women, for example, count for half of the population but are often considered a minority group in terms of power.

Taking into account boundary-making processes and the power relationship between the majority population and minorities, I believe that a constructivist approach towards ethnic minorities can be a fruitful avenue to study cultural diversity in Dutch cinema. Starting from ethnic minorities also brings into focus the dominant majority of the nation-state. This opens up opportunities to link the discussion about ethnic minorities with debates about national cinema.

1.8. Ethnic Minorities in the Cinema of a Small Nation

While European cinema is usually described in terms of distinct national cinemas, transnational migration and ethnic diversity in European nations urge a rethinking of European cinema as the expression of monolithic national identities. As Benedict Anderson famously argued, mass media like cinema enable people to imagine a

national community beyond local face-to-face contact (Anderson, 1991 [1983], p. 35). Since the First World War, national governments became aware of the potential of cinema as a propaganda tool in order to mobilise their citizens for the national cause against a real or imagined enemy and to foster the feelings of national unity among their citizens (Thompson & Bordwell, 2003). In Europe, state-supported film industries predominantly privilege an art cinema that is supposed to reflect the nation and its history (Neale, 1981). Concerned with the image of the nation, national film industries as a rule select highly artistic films to represent the nation abroad. In this sense, national cinemas are seen as windows on the cultures of particular nations. The global hegemony of Hollywood and the concomitant worldwide spread of American culture, however, have prompted fears of globalisation effacing the diversity of national film industries around the world. In response to the threat of globalisation, national governments in Europe try to protect their domestic film industries and to safeguard their national identities.

Small nations like the Netherlands are more vulnerable to the processes of globalisation and the domination of their domestic markets by Hollywood. According to Hjort and Petrie (2007), the specific dynamics taking place in the cinemas of small nations are not only defined by the size of their population but also by the geographical scale, the gross national product, and, in some instances, the history of domination by other nations. Because of the limited size of their domestic markets, the film industries of small nations struggle to be economically viable. In consequence, the cinemas of small nations rely heavily on state funding and tend to emphasise their national identity quite strongly in order to compete with foreign films in the domestic and international film markets. Heavily reliant on the principles of state funding and high culture, the cinemas of small nations hold on to the defence of their national identity against external influences.

The governments of small nations take various measures to protect the national identity of their domestic film industries. Besides privileging a high-cultural art cinema, national film policies favour films that pay tribute to the cultural heritage of the nation. Language serves hereby as a primary marker of the national origin of films (Fowler, 2002). In many European countries, national film policies set limits to filmmakers applying for state support. National criteria for state support include conditions regarding the nationality of the film director, the crew, the actors, the language and the locations used in the film, just to name a few. In the Netherlands,

the Dutch Film Fund mainly supports films shot by Dutch directors with Dutch-speaking actors. The underlying ideology is that state-funded films need to express the cultural identity of the nation. National film policies privileging art cinema do not only influence the economic organisation of domestic film industries but also have effects on the textual content of the films. When it comes to the construction of a national cinema, Andrew Higson argues that “a process of inclusion and exclusion is enacted, a process whereby one thing is centralised, at the same time necessarily marginalising another, a process wherein the interests of one particular social group are represented as in the collective or national interest, producing what Anderson has called 'the imagined community of the nation'.” (Higson 1989, p. 44). These processes of inclusion and exclusion are also at work in the cinemas of small nations. While the literature on the cinemas of small nations is scarce, this thesis introduces the cinema of the Netherlands as an example of a small nation. Rather than highlighting the established national cinema of the Netherlands, however, I will focus on films that challenge the idea of the Netherlands as a homogeneous and bounded nation. Discussing ethnic minorities in Dutch cinema, I argue that even the cinema of a small nation can be culturally diverse without losing its national identity.

Against the idea that national cinema necessarily represents a homogeneous national identity, I agree with Hill (1992) that ‘[i]t is quite possible to conceive of a national cinema which is nationally specific without being either nationalist or attached to homogenising myths of national identity’ (p.16). In this sense, cinema can reflect the social and cultural diversity within a nation, dealing with nationally specific issues without being nationalistic. Willemen (1994) pointed out that national cinema can also be critical of the idea of a homogeneous national identity, as is the case with, for example, Black British Cinema. The question is, however, whether the concept of national cinema is still adequate to understand such films. Andrew Higson (2000) argued that the concept of national cinema creates an artificial separation between films produced in different countries and obscures the degree of cultural diversity within the film culture of a country (p. 64). He introduced the idea of a ‘post-national’ cinema in which culture and identity are no longer confined to the framework of the nation. In a globalised world, the boundaries of national cinemas have become increasingly challenged. Not only international co-productions and pan-European support mechanisms but also migration and ethnic minorities have undermined the idea that cinema expresses a singular national identity. Globalisation and migration

challenge the foundational principles of the nation-state. The movements of people across national borders undermine the sovereignty of the nation-state, the principle that a nation has the ultimate and independent authority over a fixed geographic territory (Castles & Miller, 2009). As Ernest Gellner said: 'Having a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity, but it has now come to appear as such. In fact, nations, like states, are a contingency, and not a universal necessity' (Gellner, 1983, p. 6). In this sense, ethnic minority films can be understood as what Mike Wayne (2002) paradoxically calls 'anti-national national films', films that are situated within a specific national cinema because they deal with the social, political and cultural issues within a particular national territory. At the same time, they are anti-national insofar as these films critique the myth of national unity by highlighting the position of minorities and unequal power relations within the nation.

Rather than rejecting the nation because of the myth of national unity, however, it might be more productive to rethink the nation in terms of multiculturalism. In opposition to the idea that the nation-state is one and indivisible, multiculturalism emerged as a new political philosophy in the Western world since the 1970s. Even if many contemporary societies are described as 'multicultural' because of their culturally diverse populations, 'multiculturalism' as an ideology refers to the normative politics of recognising the rights of ethnocultural minorities within the nation-state (Kymlicka, 1995; Taylor, 1994). Not only because of its small size but also because it is one of the first European countries that developed multicultural policies, the Netherlands forms an interesting case to study the representation of ethnic minorities. Multiculturalism has its origins in the struggle against discrimination and is aimed at protecting cultural minorities from oppression by the national majority culture (Parekh, 2000). Rather than eliminating discrimination, however, multiculturalism fosters positive discrimination and affirmative action. By promoting cultural differences, multiculturalism constructs a distinction between the national majority and ethnic minorities. Although nationalism and multiculturalism appear as radically opposed points of view, both ideologies share the same anthropological assumption that culture is the way of life of a group of people. Neither nationalists nor multiculturalists question the 'natural bond' between people and their culture. Both nationalism and multiculturalism are variants of what can be called 'culturalism' (Eriksen & Stjernfelt, 2009). Culturalism is the ideology that sees people as the product of cultures, rather than the inverse. It defines cultures as self-contained,

stable and homogeneous wholes, determining human life inside. As such, it is impossible for people to change, to deny or to escape their culture. Defining cultures as bounded to groups and territories, culturalism compartmentalises humanity into a global mosaic of distinct cultural islands (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992). While the monocultural myth of nationalism has been criticised extensively, the alternative form of multiculturalism that reduces all human behaviour and social inequalities to expressions of given cultural differences has received much less critical attention (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Soysal, 2009).

Instead of hailing the multicultural division of a nation into multiple ethnic groups as an unambiguously positive project, I believe it is important to remain critical of the stereotypical representations such a categorisation might imply. In this sense, the distinction between ethnic minority groups in this thesis should not be seen as a fixed reality but rather as a social process of ethnic boundary-making. For this reason, my analysis of ethnic minority films does not aim to offer an essentialist view on the unique cultural characteristics of these ethnic minority groups. Instead, the aim of this thesis is to analyse how the cinema of a small nation constructs and imagines ethnic boundaries within its population. Therefore, I will discuss extensively the institutional and political context of ethnic minority film production in a small nation like the Netherlands.

1.9. Methodology and Scope

In this introduction, I have discussed how cinema and the media play an important role in constructing the imagined community of a nation and, more recently, in representing cultural diversity. From a theoretical point of view, I have argued that migration and the increasing diversity within European nations challenges the conventional ways of conceptualising national cinemas as homogeneous and bounded entities. I will elaborate this argument in the context of a small European nation like the Netherlands with a focus on films depicting ethnic minorities during the last two decades. As migration and ethnic minorities are social phenomena that are intensely debated outside the context of cinema, my approach goes beyond the textual analysis of films and includes socio-historical, political and industrial considerations regarding the representation of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands.

In order to contextualise the cinematic representation of ethnic minorities, I start from a socio-historical perspective on migration and the origins of ethnic diversity in the Netherlands. The presence of immigrants and ethnic minorities, however, is not merely a demographic given. The access to the country and the integration of immigrants are heavily debated objects of politics. In the Netherlands, not only the integration but also the representation of ethnic minorities in the media has been subjected to policies. On the policy level, I will analyse how the Dutch government has elaborated special television programmes for ethnic minorities but maintained cultural restrictions for its national film productions. After discussing the general integration and media policies, I will turn to the cinematic representation of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands. Since the recruitment of guest workers in the 1960s, the Moroccan and Turkish communities have become the largest minorities in the Netherlands. In the aftermath of the Dutch colonial expansion, there has also been an important wave of postcolonial migrants from Suriname, the Dutch Antilles and Indonesia to the Netherlands. As the Moroccans, the Turks and the Surinamese have been identified as the main target groups of the Dutch ethnic minorities policies, I structured the chapters around the cinematic representation of each of these three minority groups. In the chapter on postcolonial migrants, I also briefly mention other postcolonial minorities like the Indonesians and the Antilleans.

In my approach to the cinematic representation of ethnic minorities, I start with a historical overview of the cinematic production concerning each ethnic minority. In this sense, I draw on the work of Allen & Gomery (1985) who claim that film history "attempts to explain the changes that have occurred to the cinema since its origins, as well as accounts for aspects of the cinema that have resisted change" (p. 5). The history of films can be approached from an aesthetic, a technological, an economic or a social perspective. Most Dutch films about ethnic minorities are no aesthetic or technological masterpieces but rather low-budget films by little known filmmakers. In economic terms, they usually do not achieve high box office results and often only run short times in art house cinemas or on television. By consequence, few are available on DVD or VHS except for the commercially most successful films. Given the fact that the representation of ethnic minorities is a social issue rather than a question of aesthetics, technology or economy, I will approach Dutch cinema mainly from a sociological perspective. According to Ian Jarvie (1970), a sociology of the movies asks the questions who makes movies, who sees them, what is seen and

how are movies evaluated. Sociological concepts like ethnicity, gender and class are used as heuristic tools in order to examine how films reflect society and how various social groups are depicted in the films of recent and less recent eras. Taking into account a wide array of thematically related films, my aim is to identify general tendencies in the representation of ethnic minorities in Dutch cinema over the last decades. After describing general historical tendencies, I will analyse in more detail some films that stand out because of their content or social impact. In what follows, I will give a short overview of the structure of this thesis. After the chapter on the Dutch integration and media policies regarding ethnic minorities, I will discuss the cinematic representation of respectively the Moroccans, the Turks and the postcolonial minorities in Dutch films.

With the case of the Moroccans in Dutch cinema, I argue that the representation of ethnic minorities in Dutch cinema is not necessarily a policy-based phenomenon but can also be a market-driven strategy. After the unexpected commercial success of the comedy *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* (2004), Dutch film producers understood that ethnic minorities were an underserved market that could be reached by casting ethnic minority actors. Since the early 2000s, an unprecedented amount of films have featured Dutch-Moroccan actors. Due to the recent boom of films about Moroccans in the Netherlands, film critics even speak about a wave of 'Mocro Movies' (Betts, 2009). From a historical perspective, we can see an evolution from a low-budget realistic social 'cinema of duty' (Malik, 1996) to more commercially oriented comedies, crime films and road movies with higher production values. The diversification of genres in the films representing Dutch-Moroccans illustrates the success of ethnic marketing. While other minorities have mainly been depicted in social dramas, the success of comedies, crime films and road movies with Dutch-Moroccan actors have led to the rise of local ethnic stars and the commercialisation of films about ethnic minorities. Contrary to the *beur* cinema in France and Turkish-German cinema, the directors of the 'Mocro Movies' in the Netherlands are predominantly white Dutch filmmakers. This leads to the question why ethnic minority film directors have remained so scarce in the Dutch film industry.

In the case of films about Turks in the Netherlands, I focus on the question of authorship. Although the number of films about Turks in the Netherlands remains limited, it is remarkable that there are several female Dutch-Turkish documentary filmmakers in the Netherlands. One of the most prolific female Dutch-Turkish film

directors is Meral Uslu. While the Dutch film industry is still dominated by white male Dutch directors, I argue that the voices of female minority filmmakers bring a different perspective on issues like migration and integration in the Netherlands. In order to illustrate this, I will discuss the documentaries of Meral Uslu, with special attention to her highly personal documentary about the extramarital children of her father, *De kinderen van mijn vader* [The Children of my Father] (2005). In the representation of ethnic minorities, documentaries play an important role. Dealing with social issues in a realistic manner, documentaries form a significant part of the Dutch film industry and contribute to the public debates on ethnic minorities. In order to highlight the differences between a minority and a majority perspective in the representation of Turks in the Netherlands, I will analyse as a second case the crime comedy *Gangsterboys* (2010) by the Dutch director Paul Ruven, featuring predominantly male Turkish actors. I argue that the representation of Turkish immigrants by a director of Turkish origin is not necessarily a more positive but a more realistic one based on lived experiences contrary to that offered by a Dutch director who primarily draws on indirect knowledge and stereotypes.

With regards to the postcolonial minorities, I underline the importance of colonial history of the Netherlands. I argue that colonial power relations still play a role in the Dutch cinematic representation of postcolonial minorities in urban ghettos today. On the one hand, Dutch Indonesians remain remarkably invisible. Even if they form a significant proportion of the Dutch population, they seem to be forgotten or are considered as completely assimilated into Dutch society. On the other hand, as descendants of the African slave trade, the Surinamese and the Antilleans are among the most visible minorities in the Netherlands. In the Dutch national imagination, the Surinamese and the Antilleans are often associated with poverty, crime and sexual excesses in black urban ghettos. Based on the idea that 'unlikely couple films' can be seen as a form of social criticism (Wartenberg, 1999), I will discuss two films dealing with interracial relationships in different eras. While the historical drama *Sonny Boy* (Maria Peters, 2011) remembers the challenges faced by an interracial couple in the Nazi-occupied Netherlands during World War II, the comedy *Alleen maar nette mensen* [Only Decent People] (Lodewijk Crijns, 2012) focuses on the sexual phantasies of a Dutch-Jewish boy about black ghetto girls in the present-day context of multicultural Amsterdam. Comparing these two unlikely couple films, I argue that their potential for social criticism remains limited.

To conclude, I return to the argument that migration and cultural diversity within European nations challenges the conventional ways of conceptualising the cinema of small nations as homogeneous and bounded entities. Taking into account the increased participation of ethnic minorities in Dutch cinema, I argue that Dutch national cinema contributes to the re-imagination of the Netherlands as a culturally diverse society. Nevertheless, the commercial interests of Dutch film producers make that many multicultural films are aimed at entertainment rather than at social criticism. While it could be argued that the participation of non-Western migrants and minorities in Dutch film productions contributes to a shift towards a European World Cinema, I conclude that the critical potential of a multicultural and transnational cinema still depends on the political and economic context of a small nation that shapes the possibilities of filmmakers to question deeply ingrained cultural stereotypes.

2. Dutch Media Policies Regarding Ethnic Minorities

In the second half of the 20th century, postcolonial and guest worker migration have led to growing communities of non-Western immigrants in the Netherlands. Even as a small nation, the Netherlands was during the first decade of the 21st century the stage of a dramatic shift from a seemingly peaceful multicultural society to a country where populist politicians gained electoral success with radical anti-immigrants diatribes. Paradoxically, the same decade saw a sharp rise in the visibility of Dutch multicultural television and film productions. Since the late 1970s, the Dutch authorities have broadcast television programmes on Dutch public television for the ethnic minorities in Dutch society. Behind this policy was the 'culturalist' idea of a natural bond between immigrants and their cultural traditions. Singling out the largest immigrant groups like the Moroccans, the Turks, the Surinamese and the Antilleans, the Dutch government defined ethnic minorities as distinct and culturally homogeneous groups. As these culturalist broadcast policies were criticised for encouraging ghettoisation and confining minorities to their own culture, the Dutch authorities shifted in the 1990s to new policies stimulating the mainstreaming of diversity in Dutch television programmes. This mainstreaming of diversity created new opportunities for individuals with an ethnic minority background to participate in the mainstream Dutch media with or without reference to their minority background.

In this chapter, I focus on policy-driven initiatives to represent ethnic minorities in Dutch national media. I argue that the shift in general Dutch policies from multiculturalism towards assimilationism has influenced the media policies regarding the representation of ethnic minorities. While multicultural policies stimulated the development of distinct cultural identities for ethnic minorities, later assimilationist policies encouraged minorities to adapt to the dominant Dutch cultural norms. I claim that this has led to different strategies to represent ethnic minorities in Dutch media. Taking into account the evolution of multicultural programmes on Dutch television, I further raise the question to what extent Dutch documentaries and fiction films have paid attention to ethnic minorities in the Netherlands. Although the Dutch government developed an elaborate system of state support for ethnic minority programmes on public television and radio since the 1970s, fiction films dealing with multicultural issues broke through in the Netherlands later than in other European countries like France or the United Kingdom. Even if the success of multicultural comedies in the

2000s launched the careers of some ethnic minority actors and actresses, the production of multicultural films remained mainly controlled by white Dutch directors and producers. While I briefly discus the 'whiteness' of Dutch cinema in this chapter, I will analyse in more detail how documentaries and fiction films have depicted ethnic minorities in the Netherlands in later chapters. In this contextual chapter, I will first discuss how several waves of immigration have changed the demographic composition of the Netherlands and how Dutch political debates have dealt with migration and integration in the last decades. After this historical contextualisation, I will look at the media policies that have encouraged specific television programmes for ethnic minorities in the Dutch public broadcasting system.

2.1. A Brief History of Migration to the Netherlands

As in many other European countries, immigration and ethnic diversity have become heavily politicised and mediatised issues in the Netherlands today. What is remarkable about the Netherlands is the shift from progressive and tolerant discourses promoting multiculturalism in the 1980s and 1990s to harsh debates in the 2000s blaming especially Muslim migrants for practicing a 'backward religion' and failing to integrate into Dutch society. This recent evolution is remarkable given the fact that the Netherlands has cultivated for many centuries the image of being a small but open and tolerant country.

Following its independence from the Spanish Empire in 1581, the Dutch Republic was a safe haven of religious tolerance for Sephardic Jews who had been expelled from Spain and Portugal and Huguenots who were persecuted in France. During the cultural revolutions of the 1960s, the Netherlands, and notably Amsterdam, became internationally renowned for being open to new lifestyles. The country adopted one of the most liberal legislations regarding drugs, prostitution, euthanasia and same-sex relationships. In the early 1980s, the Netherlands reinforced its tolerant reputation by being one of the first countries in Europe to adopt the progressive policies of multiculturalism that fostered the emancipation of postcolonial and labour migrants through public support.

In the period after World War II, the Netherlands officially became an immigration country as more people were entering the country than leaving. The major postwar migration flows to the Netherlands were composed of postcolonial and

labour migrants. Although migration from overseas Dutch colonies to the Netherlands occurred from the start of the colonial relations, the independence of former Dutch colonies like Indonesia (1945) and Suriname (1975) led to a significant increase in migration as many colonial citizens opted for a secure future in the Netherlands over the insecurity in the newly independent states. In addition, the Dutch Caribbean islands (the former Netherlands Antilles and Aruba) remain until today part of the Netherlands. As the citizens of these islands have Dutch nationality, migration from the Dutch Caribbean to the Netherlands has occurred frequently, mostly for economic reasons (van Amersfoort & van Niekerk, 2006).

Besides this postcolonial migration, the Netherlands also actively recruited labour migrants in Mediterranean countries. As in other industrialised countries, the economic revival of Dutch manufacturing industries after World War II created an increased demand for low-skilled workers. The Netherlands signed guest worker agreements with southern European countries like Italy (1960) and Spain (1961), and later also with Turkey (1964) and Morocco (1969). Most of the guest workers from these countries were low-skilled men with little education that were recruited for labour-intensive jobs in the textile industries and road construction (van Amersfoort, 1982). Both the Dutch authorities and the guest workers themselves expected the migration to the Netherlands to be a temporary solution to fill labour shortages. After the 1973 oil crisis and the consequent economic decline, the recruitment of foreign workers was stopped and many Spanish and Italian guest workers returned to their home countries. Turkish and Moroccan migrants, by contrast, remained in the Netherlands and even started to bring over their wives and children through family reunification programmes. The economic recession and the persistence of incoming migration flows led to more restrictive migration policies from the early 1980s onwards. In the 1990s, migration to the Netherlands diminished and consisted mainly of refugees and asylum seekers, most of them originating from the former Yugoslavia, the former Soviet Union, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan and Somalia. With the enlargement of the European Union in the 2000s, the Netherlands experienced new migration flows from Eastern European countries like Poland, Bulgaria and Romania.

As the Dutch government realised that many migrants were becoming permanent residents who were unlikely to return to their home countries, the ethnic definition of Dutch citizenship came under pressure. Dutch nationality law had been based on the ethnic principle of *jus sanguinis* (‘right of the blood’), by which

citizenship is conferred primarily by birth to a parent with Dutch citizenship. Non-Dutch migrants and their descendants, however, can also acquire Dutch citizenship not only by marriage or adoption but also by naturalisation. By consequence, being a Dutch citizen no longer means automatically being of native Dutch descent. Contrary to countries like France, the Dutch government keeps records of its citizens' ethnic origins even if they are born in the Netherlands and hold Dutch citizenship. The Dutch central statistics office defines persons who have at least one parent born outside the Netherlands as 'allochthones', a term derived from Greek literally meaning 'from another country'[1]. This classification includes not only non-Dutch citizens but also Dutch citizens of foreign origin. Both the first-generation immigrants and their second-generation descendants who are born and raised in the Netherlands are called 'allochthones'. As a matter of fact, a large majority of the second-generation Turks (94%) and Moroccans (93%) has Dutch nationality (Crul & Heering, 2008).

Between 1972 and 2010, the total number of people with a foreign background in the Netherlands has more than doubled. People with a foreign background accounted for 9% of the population in 1972 and for 20% in 2010 (see Table 1). This increase has obviously much to do with the fact that in the 1970s migrants were mainly single men who came as guest workers, while by 2010 the children and other family members of those migrants are included in the statistics. Within the general category of people with a foreign background, the Dutch central statistics office distinguishes between people with a Western and a non-Western background. Taking into account this distinction, we can see in Table 1 that the relative proportion of people with a foreign Western background[2] has remained quite stable over the years. People with a foreign Western background accounted for 8% of the total Dutch population in 1972 and for only slightly more (9%) in 2010. The proportion of people with a non-Western background[3], however, has augmented significantly from barely 1% of the total population in 1972 to 11% in 2010. It is particularly this group of non-

[1] Source: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/methoden/toelichtingen/alfabet/a/allochtoon.htm [Accessed 27 April 2013]

[2] The category 'people with a Western background' refers to people with origins in Europe, North-America or Oceania. The Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek also includes people of Japanese and Indonesian origin in this category.

[3] The category people with a 'non-Western background' refers to people with origins in Africa, Latin-America, Asia (excluding Japan and Indonesia but including Turkey).

Western migrants and their descendants that has attracted the most attention in current debates on migration and ethnic diversity.

Quite remarkably, the Dutch central statistics office puts people of Japanese and Indonesian origin in the category of people with a 'Western background' while people of Turkish origin, by contrast, are considered as 'non-Western'. This is indicative of the arbitrariness of the distinction between Western and non-Western people. Rather than using geographical or cultural criteria, the Dutch statistics office has based its distinction on socio-economic factors, as people of Japanese and Indonesian origin in the Netherlands generally have a socio-economic status similar to Western people. By consequence, the highly politicised and mediatised debates on migration and integration have mostly focused on the socio-economically deprived people of Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Antillean descent. Therefore, integration policies and debates have targeted specifically these non-Western people from lower-income countries. In the following section, I will discuss more in detail the historical development of the integration policies in the Netherlands.

Period / Ethnic Origins	1972	1980	1990	2000	2010
Total Population	13,270,000	14,091,014	14,892,574	15,863,950	16,574,989
Total Foreign Background	1,225,160 (9%)	1,617,219 (11%)	2,086,924 (14%)	2,775,302 (17,5%)	3,359,603 (20%)
Total Western Background (Non-Dutch)	1,062,840 (8%)	1,141,346 (8%)	1,221,227 (8%)	1,366,535 (8,5%)	1,501,309 (9%)
Total Non-Western Background	162,320 (1%)	475,873 (3%)	865,697 (6%)	1,408,767 (9%)	1,858,294 (11%)
- Turkish	30,692	112,774	203,647	308,890	383,957
- Moroccan	21,760	69,464	163,458	262,221	349,005
- Surinamese	53,508	157,081	232,776	302,514	342,279
- Former Dutch Antilles & Aruba	22,260	40,726	76,552	107,197	138,420
- Other Non-Western Origins	34,100	95,828	189,264	427,945	644,633

Fig. 2.1: The immigrant population in the Netherlands by size and origin.
Source: (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2013)

2.2. From Ethnic Minorities Policies to Assimilationism

While the Dutch authorities initially expected the presence of migrant workers to be a temporary phenomenon, by the end of the 1970s they started to realise that many migrants were unlikely to return to their home countries. Acknowledging the enduring presence of guest workers and their families, the Dutch government launched in 1983 as one of the first European countries an explicit integration policy for non-Western migrants, called the 'Ethnic Minorities Policy'. The idea behind this policy was 'to enable ethnic minorities to attain equal rights and to participate in society, to reduce socio-economic disadvantages and to prevent discrimination' (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken, 1983). The Ethnic Minorities Policy defined migrant populations by their collective ethnic identities. In this sense, the state organised a highly elaborate policy in which migrants were ordered in collective categories similar to other social groups like the Catholic, Protestant and Secular 'pillars' in Dutch society. The Dutch Ethnic Minorities Policy could be seen as a legacy of the historical 'pillarisation' of Dutch society in which each denominational group received state-funding to sustain a separate system of education, media, health care, social welfare, etc. (Maussen & Bogers, 2012). Likewise, the state supported migrants to found their own institutions as a means of safeguarding their own cultural identity. This policy subsidised not only religious organisations and mother-tongue education for the children of migrants but also ethnic radio and television broadcasting.

By the 1990s, however, unemployment rates among migrants remained high and the children of migrants systematically ended up with lower educational qualifications than native Dutch children. Moreover, the right-wing politician Frits Bolkestein started attacking the Dutch migration and ethnic minorities policies that he deemed responsible for the 'failed integration' of migrants in Dutch society. He also claimed Islam to be incompatible with Western democracy. Moving away from the group-specific support for ethnic minorities, a new 'Integration Policy' that emphasised the responsibilities of the individual migrant to integrate in Dutch society was launched in 1994. Rather than supporting the cultural and religious activities of migrants, the Integration Policy focused on socio-economic integration measures and courses introducing migrants to the Dutch language and culture (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken, 1994).

In the first decade of the 21st century, several discourses and major events reinforced the idea that the integration of migrants had failed. A newspaper article by Paul Scheffer (2000) described the Dutch multicultural society as a 'tragedy' and spurred a new national debate that blamed Muslims in particular for not adapting to Dutch norms and values. In the following years terrorist attacks by Islamic extremists in the United States, Madrid and London strengthened fears of Muslim migrants. In the Netherlands, Pim Fortuyn gained electoral success with harsh statements in the media such as: 'no Muslim migrant should be allowed to enter the country anymore', 'Islam is a backward religion', and 'anti-discrimination laws should be abolished' (Fortuyn, 2002). A few months after these statements, Fortuyn was assassinated by a Dutch environmental activist. In the aftermath of this tragedy, Fortuyn's right-wing party achieved a landslide victory during the Dutch general elections of 2002. Although his political party disintegrated in the following years, Fortuyn's ideas continued to shape the debate about migration and multiculturalism in the Netherlands.

From 2002 onwards, the Dutch government created a Minister of Aliens' Affairs and Migration and formulated in 2003 an 'Integration Policy New Style'. The new right-wing coalition narrowed the integration concept considerably to the cultural adaption of migrants to Dutch society and linked integration policies with migration control. The main focus of the policy concerned restrictions on the admission of new migrants, the forced return of failed asylum seekers and irregular migrants and compulsory civic integration courses. Non-European migrants became obliged to pass an exam that tests their knowledge of the Dutch language, culture and history before moving to the Netherlands. Once admitted to the Netherlands, the migrants still have to follow civic integration courses and to pass exams on which depends the renewal of their residence permit and their naturalisation (Bruquetas-Callejo, Garcés-Mascareñas, Penninx, & Scholten, 2007).

The ethnic tensions in the Netherlands escalated even further in 2004, when the controversial filmmaker Theo van Gogh, a friend and supporter of Fortuyn, was brutally murdered by a Dutch-Moroccan radical Islamist. This second assassination of a public figure in only a few years shocked Dutch society profoundly and sparked an unprecedented hostility towards Muslims, leading to arson attacks on mosques and Islamic schools. In this polarised climate, the far-right politician Geert Wilders received lots of media attention with his radical anti-immigration and anti-Islam

diatribes. Depicting Muslims as a threat to national security, social cohesion and the welfare system, his Party for Freedom became the third largest political party of the Netherlands by the 2010 Dutch general elections. In reaction, the ruling government parties were keen to show that they were tough on migrants. By consequence, they turned away from all multicultural policies and promoted ever more restrictive migration and integration policies.

While conservative and right-wing parties insisted on the cultural integration of migrants in the hope of restoring a fictitious homogeneous nation, social democrats rather emphasised the need for equal opportunities in education and the labour market. However, social democrats would also see cultural integration as a necessary prerequisite for socio-economic emancipation. In this sense, the majority of political parties called for the adaptation of migrants to Dutch culture. Even if some scholars have argued that the Netherlands returned to an approach close to old-style assimilationism where migrants are forced to conform to Dutch norms and values (Vasta, 2007), the popularity of multicultural television programmes and films indicates that a restoration of a culturally homogeneous Dutch nation is far from desired by large parts of the Dutch population.

After this general sketch of how migration and integration policies have developed in the Netherlands, I will now discuss how Dutch public broadcasting has dealt with ethnic diversity in the Netherlands. Despite the toughening discourses about ethnic minorities, public broadcasting services in the Netherlands have dedicated considerable attention to the representation of all social groups in society. At the same time, migrants and ethnic minorities themselves have become important actors too as media consumers and producers. Taking into account the evolution of the Dutch migration and integration debate, it is worth questioning how Dutch media policies have dealt with the representation of ethnic minorities in the Dutch media.

2.3. Television Programmes for Ethnic Minorities

When the Dutch government launched its Ethnic Minorities Policy in 1983, it dedicated attention to the possibilities of producing radio and television programmes especially for ethnic minorities. The idea was that ethnic minorities were not yet sufficiently or properly represented in the regular media and required distinctive attention, specific staff and time slots. It was believed that migrants would feel better

accepted in Dutch society if they would be informed in their own languages and if they could express their own cultural identity in the media. Dutch media policies have dealt with broadcasting for ethnic minorities on three different levels (Bink, 2002). First, the national public broadcaster introduced specific target programmes for ethnic minorities. Secondly, faith-based broadcasting associations were founded and incorporated in the Dutch public broadcasting system. Finally, there have also been local broadcasting projects specifically for migrants in metropolitan areas. Over the years, these different types of broadcasting to ethnic minorities in the Netherlands have experienced significant difficulties. In the following historical overview, I focus on the evolution of television broadcasting for minorities.

On the national level, the Dutch public broadcaster NOS[4] had the statutory obligation to provide programmes for social groups whose needs were not yet catered for by existing broadcasting associations (Bovenkerk-Teerink, 1994). Already in the 1970s, the NOS started transmitting educational and informative programmes specifically directed at ethnic minorities. These programmes were presented in the migrants' native languages, dealing with topics from both the country of origin and the Netherlands. The best-known television production was *Paspoort* [Passport] (1974-1992), a brief current affairs programme for guest workers, presented alternately in Moroccan, Turkish, Yugoslav, Italian or Spanish with Dutch subtitles (or vice versa). In the 1980s, similar programmes specifically oriented towards ethnic minorities were launched like *Medelanders-Nederlanders* [Compatriots-Dutchmen] (1983-1990) and the youth programme *Hollandse Nieuwe* [New Dutch] (1985-1990), although the latter was no longer targeting specific ethnic groups but migrant youths in general. In the early 1990s, there were still some target audience programmes on the NOS like *Najib* (1992-1993), a talk show for Moroccan migrants and *Aktuël* (1992-1993), a current affairs programme for Turkish migrants. The NOS, however, discontinued target audience television programmes in foreign languages. One reason was that migrants now had constant access to programmes in their own languages transmitted by satellite from their home countries, leading to a loss of viewers for the programmes on the Dutch public broadcaster. Another reason was the growing criticism of the 'failed integration' of migrants in Dutch society and the concomitant fear that target audience broadcasting in foreign languages would result

[4] NOS stands for *Nederlandse Omroep Stichting* [Dutch Broadcasting Foundation] and functions as the coordinator of the Dutch public broadcasting system as a whole.

in a highly segregated society in which different ethnic groups lead 'parallel lives' separate from each other (Leurdijk, 2008). Instead of stimulating migrants to develop their own cultural expressions, target audience programmes remained mainly informational and educational tools aimed at teaching migrants the Dutch language and culture. The last bastion of target group television continuing until the 2000s was the *Allochtoon Video Circuit* (1991-2002), an informative programme in Dutch for and about migrants and their descendants in the Netherlands.

Besides the state-initiated programmes for ethnic minorities on the NOS, the Dutch media laws have granted new faith-based associations broadcasting time on Dutch national television and radio [5]. Unlike the major Dutch broadcasting corporations, faith-based associations received only limited broadcasting time, ranging between 15 and 30 minutes per week on television and one or two hours per week on radio. The content of their programmes is mainly informative and religious, sometimes spiced up with cultural or musical acts. Occasionally, they receive money for larger projects like fiction or documentary films. From 1973 onwards, the Jewish Broadcasting Corporation (NIK Media/later JO) started broadcasting radio and television programmes about Jewish faith, traditions and culture. In 1986, the Islamic Broadcasting Foundation (IOS) was granted broadcasting time on Dutch television until 1993, when it was replaced by the Dutch Muslim Broadcasting Corporation (NMO). The NMO broadcast mainly informative programmes about Islam with some music and culture. As several Muslims considered the NMO as too liberal and not representing them, the NMO was forced to share its broadcasting time with the more conservative Dutch Islamic Broadcasting Corporation (NIO) from 2005 onwards until 2009, when both broadcasters ultimately disbanded themselves due to protracted managerial conflicts and financial problems. Another organisation that began broadcasting from 1993 onwards is the Foundation Hindu Media (OHM), targeting the

[5] This has to be understood in the context of the general organisation of the Dutch public broadcasting system. The public broadcasting time in the Netherlands is divided among different member-based broadcasting associations that do not have their own channels but are allotted time on the publicly owned radio and television networks. The hours and subsidies assigned to each association are roughly in proportion to the number of members each association represents. In line with the different ideological 'pillars' in Dutch society, the aim of this system is to give a voice to each ideological group in Dutch society. Since the early 20th century, different ideological sections of Dutch society created their own broadcasting associations like the Protestant NCRV, the Catholic KRO, the socialist VARA, the liberal AVRO, and the liberal Protestant VPRO (although these broadcasting corporations are much less linked to ideological movements today). In the 1960s, this public broadcasting system opened up for new broadcasters like the former pirate stations TROS and Veronica and the evangelical Christian EO.

Dutch Hindu community and people interested in Hinduism. Besides informative programmes, the OHM notably produced the television drama *Het land van Rama* [The Land of Rama] (2000) about a Hindu family living in the Netherlands and Suriname. Finally, the last non-Western religious broadcaster that was added to the Dutch public broadcasting system in 2000 is the Buddhist Broadcasting Foundation (BOS), producing programmes for Buddhist communities and people interested in Buddhism. In addition to its own programmes, the BOS has co-financed some documentaries and feature films related to Buddhism. Recently, the Dutch government announced that it will no longer support the small faith-based broadcasting associations (van Kampen, 2012).

Besides the nationally broadcast programmes of faith-based associations and the ethnic target audience programmes of the public broadcaster NOS, there have also been local and regional broadcasting initiatives. On local and regional levels, the Ethnic Minorities Policy stimulated several migrant broadcasting initiatives during the 1980s. More accessible than national broadcasters, local and regional broadcasters would offer migrants the opportunity to have programmes on their specific living and working conditions, particularly in urban areas. In the largest cities, the government and the municipalities supported migrant television initiatives like Migrant Television Amsterdam (MTV), TV Mozaïek in Rotterdam, SEGLO in Utrecht and Migrant Broadcasting Foundation (MOS) in The Hague. Most of these initiatives, however, disappeared after some time as the local and national authorities stopped investing in them. Only Migrant Television Amsterdam, founded in 1984, continued until 2001, when it became Multicultural Television Netherlands (MTNL) and started broadcasting not only in Amsterdam but also in other major Dutch cities. MTNL provided informative programmes by and for people of Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Antillean origin. Although MTNL made programmes in Dutch, Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Papiamento[6], from 2005 onwards the programmes were only made in Dutch. This change reflected the policies as formulated by the Minister for Immigration and Integration in the 'New Style Integration Policy Letter' (2003) that insisted increasingly on the assimilation of migrants to Dutch norms. By the end of 2013, MTNL ceased to exist as the Dutch government withdrew its subsidies.

[6] Papiamento is the most widely spoken language in the Dutch Antilles and the official language of Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao.

This brief history of national target audience broadcasting, faith-based associations and local multicultural broadcasting initiatives exemplifies how the Dutch government moved from multicultural policies in the 1980s to more assimilationist policies in the 2000s, ultimately abandoning most initiatives directed towards ethnic minorities. Even if many special media facilities for ethnic minorities have ceased to exist, they have provided a valuable breeding ground for media professionals with ethnically diverse backgrounds. Many of them gained their first experiences in producing television programmes and films at these specialised broadcasters. The Dutch-Moroccan documentary-maker Fatima Jebli Ouazzani, for example, started her career at the local TV Mozaïek in Rotterdam. In this sense, the end of these small-scale broadcasting initiatives led definitely to a loss of diversity in the Dutch media landscape. Since the 1990s, and even more so since the 2000s, new policy-makers considered target audience broadcasting as an obstacle to the integration of migrants in Dutch society. Instead of the first policies supporting ethnic target media, later media policies stimulated the incorporation of ethnic minorities in the mainstream Dutch media.

2.4. Cultural Diversity on Mainstream Television

Although the public broadcaster NOS abandoned its ethnic target audience programmes on television in the 1990s, it remained bound to its statutory duties to provide programmes for minority groups that were not yet sufficiently catered for by other broadcasting associations. In 1991, the Ministry of Culture even codified these tasks legally in policy measures. From 1995 onwards, the Netherlands Programming Service (NPS) took over the programming tasks of the NOS regarding ethnic minorities, culture and education. Instead of specialised programmes for ethnic minorities, the NPS shifted its focus to cross-cultural programmes that are targeting both majority and minority audiences. Programmes in migrants' mother-tongues became replaced by Dutch-language programmes. At the same time, the government specified that the NPS needed to dedicate at least 15% of its television broadcasting time and 20% of its radio broadcasting time to cross-cultural programmes that pay special attention to ethnic minorities. In 1999, the Secretary of State for Culture and Media, Rick van der Ploeg, avidly propagated in the 'Media and

Minorities Policy Paper'[7] that the cultural diversity of the Dutch population must be visible in the public media in terms of programmes, programme-makers and audiences. By stimulating programmes that include presenters, guests and topics that ethnic minorities can relate to, the policy aimed to increase the reach of the Dutch public broadcaster among minority audiences. This new policy also augmented the percentages of broadcasting time that the NPS had to dedicate to multicultural programmes to respectively 20% and 25% of its television and radio broadcasting time. In addition, the Dutch public broadcasters were obliged to report their efforts to include cultural diversity in their programming. The question is, of course, how to define the cultural diversity of a programme. In practice, it seems that cultural diversity in mainstream media programmes refers to the inclusion of 'ethnically different persons' as actors, presenters or guests in TV shows and series.

Following policy changes in the 1990s, the Dutch public broadcaster moved beyond the target audience programmes for ethnic minorities to multicultural programmes directed at mainstream audiences. This has first lead to programmes like *Meer op Zondag* [More on Sunday] (1993-1994), a live TV show with interviews and reports aimed at acquainting majority and minority audiences with each other's cultures. This programme, however, was criticised for its exoticism and replaced by *Telelens* (1994-1995), a TV show where a Dutch presenter interviews more or less famous people from ethnic minorities. Another tendency in the 1990s was to make more confrontational programmes, exploring the downsides of the multicultural society. Journalistic programmes like *Binnenland* [Interior Land] (1991-1996) and *Vreemd Land* [Strange Land] (1995-1998) revealed the alienation and the cultural conflicts migrants experienced in the Netherlands. By contrast, the programme *Urbania* (1996-2002) focused on people rather than on problems, providing close-up portraits of remarkable inhabitants of Dutch metropolitan areas. This successful programme included TV reports by the Turkish-Dutch filmmaker Meral Uslu, who later moved on to make many documentary films about the multicultural Netherlands.

Around the turn of the 21st century, multicultural programmes on Dutch public television wriggled from the straitjacket of serious, informative programmes to include comedy and entertainment as well. The Surinamese-Dutch stand-up comedian Jörgen Raymann made his breakthrough as the presenter of *The Comedy Factory*

[7] Media en minderhedenbeleid, Tweede Kamer, 1998/99, 26 597, nr. 1.

(1999-2002, resumed in 2005-2006), a TV show with performances from domestic and foreign stand-up comedians. Jörgen Raymann became a famous TV personality in the Netherlands with his subsequent late-night show *Raymann is laat* [Raymann is late]. Broadcast from 2001 until today[8], this became one of the longest-running programmes on Dutch television. Other television programmes that took a satirical approach to multiculturalism were *Surinamers zijn beter dan Marokkanen* [Surinamese are better than Moroccans] (2000) and its sequel *Surinamers zijn beter dan Turken* [Surinamese are better than Turks] (2002), a series of short TV reports that mockingly investigated various stereotypes about people of Surinamese, Moroccan and Turkish origin. In the context of the increased ethnic tensions in the Netherlands, more polemical programmes emerged on Dutch television. Such a television programme was *PREMTime* (2003-2008), in which the Surinamese-Dutch presenter Prem Radhakishun travels through the Netherlands to test discrimination in Dutch society. In the tense anti-Muslim climate after the murder of Theo van Gogh, the Dutch public broadcaster made a daring decision by launching *De Meiden van Halal* [The Women of Halal] (2005-2006), a talk show presented by three veiled but vociferous Muslim women who interviewed guests who often held views opposed to Islam. The three young Muslim women became well-known TV personalities as they were often invited as guests on popular Dutch talk shows and other programmes. One more humorous TV programme was *Ab & Sal* (2007-2010), in which two young Moroccan-Dutch men scrutinised and ridiculed current issues in Dutch society.

Fig. 2.2. Jörgen Raymann in The Comedy Factory (left) and *De Meiden van Halal* (right)

Besides comedy and polemical talk shows, the Dutch public broadcasters also started to produce television fiction with a multicultural cast. *Bradaz* (2001-2002) was

[8] In 2010, the programme changed its name to *zo: RAYMANN.*

the first Dutch television fiction series centred on ethnic minority characters. Set in a record shop run by two Surinamese brothers, the series was conceived as an urban sitcom with lots of comical situations and references to African-American hip-hop culture. While *Bradaz* was a sitcom mainly focused on black people in the Netherlands, other television fiction series like *Najib & Julia* (2002) and *Dunya & Desie* (2002-2004) were teen drama series that highlighted relationships between Moroccan and Dutch teenagers. Directed by the later assassinated filmmaker Theo van Gogh, *Najib & Julia* gave a dramatic turn to multicultural issues by telling the story of an impossible love between a Moroccan boy and a Dutch girl ending with the death of both. By contrast, *Dunya & Desie* was a more everyday teen drama focusing on the friendship and the shared coming of age issues of two teenage girls, one of whom happens to be of Moroccan origin. While ethnic tensions between Dutch and Moroccan characters were magnified in *Najib & Julia*, the makers of *Dunya & Desie* rather underlined the common experiences of teenage girls. Later, similar drama series focusing on the relationship between Dutch and ethnic minority characters were launched. The sitcom *Klein Holland* [Little Holland] (2006-2008), for example, comically depicted the incidental cohabitation of a traditional Dutchman with an Iranian migrant. Another case is the dramatic series *Moes* (2008), featuring a fatal love triangle between a Moroccan teenager and his Dutch friend, both in love with the same Dutch girl.

Where these examples are fiction series starring ethnic minority characters in leading roles, the public broadcaster also encouraged the incorporation of individuals from ethnic minorities in more general television programmes that are not directly related to ethnic questions or multicultural narratives. Popular Dutch soap opera's like *Onderweg naar Morgen* [On the Way to Tomorrow] (1994-2010), and the high school series *Spangas* (2007-...) have come to include ethnic minority characters in supporting and even leading roles. Although these programmes brought individuals from ethnic minorities in the purview of Dutch mainstream audiences, the content and the narratives of these programmes remain predominantly oriented towards Dutch spectators. Therefore, the question arises whether ethnic minority groups still can identify with these television programmes.

Finally, the policies aimed at displaying more cultural diversity on Dutch public television also affected film production in the Netherlands. In the following section, I will demonstrate how Dutch television and film industries are interconnected and how

cultural diversity made its appearance in the Dutch film industry. Moreover, the box-office success of multicultural films illustrates that cultural diversity is not only a policy-driven phenomenon but can also be a commercially profitable strategy of film producers to reach underserved audiences.

2.5. The Whiteness of Dutch National Cinema

Despite the elaborate multicultural media policies for ethnic minorities on public television, the Dutch film industry has predominantly remained a closed bastion of white Dutch film professionals. This 'whiteness' has been the unquestioned standard for a long time (Dyer, 1988). This is evident for example in 'The Canon of Dutch Cinema' (Nederlands Film Festival, 2007), a selection of the most important Dutch films according to a commission of Dutch film experts. Even if this canon is a very limited selection of films, it is symptomatic that the experts did not include any film on Dutch colonial history, migration or ethnic minorities. In spite of the postcolonial and labour migration and the resulting demographic diversity in the Netherlands, films portraying migrants and ethnic minorities have largely remained marginal to Dutch film history. This applies not only to Dutch documentaries and art cinema but also to the commercially successful Dutch entertainment films. In general, the Canon of Dutch Cinema evokes a rather conservative image of the Netherlands as a homogeneous nation of white Dutch natives.

In the first place, the whiteness of Dutch cinema can be explained by the fact that the Dutch film industry is a small world with limited film production. With an average market share around 10% in Dutch movie theatres between 2000 and 2010, Dutch film producers have been struggling to keep their heads above water in a domestic film market dominated by Hollywood blockbusters (Berden, Weda, & van der Noll, 2012). As the Netherlands produces only 30 to 40 feature films per year, there are not many job opportunities in the Dutch film industry in general, let alone for people of foreign origin. Some of the country's most talented filmmakers, Paul Verhoeven and Jan de Bont, even left the Netherlands to make big-budget films in Hollywood. Outside its national borders, Dutch cinema is barely known. Due to the little-spoken language, it is difficult to export Dutch films to foreign markets. Dutch cinema gained some international recognition with its documentary tradition and animation films. Because the Dutch government considers sustaining Dutch cinema a

matter of public interest and prestige, most Dutch films are financed by state funding and public broadcasters[9] (van den Heuvel, 2004). More than television shows, film productions are seen as a form of cultural heritage and, in this sense, as an expression of the Dutch national identity.

The whiteness of the Dutch film industry can furthermore also be explained by the cultural criteria that guide public support for film production in the Netherlands. Due to its small market share, film production in the Netherlands is heavily dependent on public support. To obtain public support, films need to have Dutch nationality as stipulated by the Dutch Ministry of Culture and the European Commission. In order to evaluate Dutch nationality and the cultural value of a film, the Netherlands Film Fund (NFF) has specified seven cultural criteria in the regulations of feature films and film investments (Seleky, 2008). To be eligible for public funding, a film production needs to comply with at least three of the following characteristics in the case of feature films and two in the case of minority co-productions[10]: (1) The screenplay on which the film is based should take place mainly in the Netherlands or in another European country. (2) At least one of the main characters should belong to the Dutch cultural or linguistic community. (3) The screenplay on which the film is based should be mainly written in the Dutch language. (4) The screenplay of the film should be based on an originally Dutch literary work. The rest of the eligibility criteria include that the main theme of the film should concern (5) artists or the arts, or (6) historical figures or events, or (7) contemporary cultural, social or political issues relevant to the Dutch population. Although film productions do not have to meet with all of these requirements, the cultural criteria outlined here oblige filmmakers to highlight the Dutch national identity in their films in order to obtain public funding. While these requirements apply to fiction films, the requirements for documentaries are more flexible. A Dutch documentary filmmaker is supposed to portray reality and can interview people in other languages and in other countries as long as Dutch subtitles are provided.

Finally, the third and maybe most important reason explaining the whiteness of Dutch cinema is the fact that few people from ethnic minorities have entered Dutch

[9] In general, the Netherlands Film Fund contributes a third of Dutch film production costs, while another 20% comes from Dutch (semi-)public investors like broadcasters, local authorities and other funds. Dutch private investors account for another third of the film production costs, while foreign private investors contribute the remainder (Berden et al., 2012).
[10] http://ec.europa.eu/eu_law/state_aids/comp-2007/n291-07.pdf

film schools. A formal education seems to be essential to start a career as a filmmaker in the Dutch film industry. In the Netherlands, the main higher education institute for aspiring filmmakers is the Dutch Film and Television Academy (NFTA). While the NFTA has close ties with the Dutch television and film industry, the film school is very selective in admitting students. Applicants not only have to speak Dutch and to be able to pay the high fees but they also have to pass an artistic admission test. While the NFTA receives around 500 applications each year, only 75 students are allowed to start each year. As the film school noticed that it lacked students with an immigrant background, several campaigns have been launched to promote film school in high schools with lots of migrant youngsters. In the applications for the next year, however, no effects of the campaign were found[11]. Given the poor socio-economic status of many migrant families, studying film is still not an evident choice for migrant youngsters. Even if the Dutch film industry remains dominated by native white Dutch, some filmmakers have shown an interest in other cultures and ethnic minorities. In what follows, I will discuss some classic Dutch documentaries and fiction films that have paid attention to non-Western cultures and minorities in the Netherlands. Most of these films were produced and directed by white Dutch filmmakers, which confirms in fact the whiteness of Dutch cinema despite the cultural diversity on the screen.

2.6. Dutch Documentaries Beyond the Netherlands

The Netherlands has a rich tradition of documentary filmmaking dating back to the first half of the 20th century with internationally renowned documentary makers like Joris Ivens, Bert Haanstra and Herman van der Horst. Documentaries are still an important part of the Dutch film industry. One of the largest documentary film festivals in the world, the International Documentary Film Festival (IDFA), is held annually in Amsterdam. As making documentaries is less cost-intensive than making fiction films, many Dutch directors have started their career in this genre. Less dependent on public support, documentary filmmakers have been able to film unusual topics in distant settings and in foreign languages. One of the founding fathers of documentary filmmaking, Joris Ivens (1898-1989), was also one of the most cosmopolitan directors in Dutch film history. As a politically engaged traveller, Ivens filmed not only social

[11] Interview with Ernie Tee, film professor at the NFTA, Amsterdam, 10 September 2009

issues in the Netherlands but also industrial progress in the Soviet Union, the Spanish Civil War, the Indonesian independence struggle, the war in Vietnam and the revolutions in Cuba and China. Due to his anti-colonial stances and communist sympathies, Ivens became persona non grata to the Dutch government and worked abroad for a long time. After winning many international awards with his documentaries, however, the Dutch government recognised his work and knighted him shortly before his death in 1989.

In the years after World War II, a new generation of Dutch documentary filmmakers like Bert Haanstra (1916-1997) and Herman van der Horst (1910-1976) became known as the Dutch Documentary School. While Bert Haanstra gained international awards with characteristic portraits of the Netherlands and its inhabitants, Herman van der Horst won the Golden Bear in Berlin with his ethnographic documentary *Faja Lobbi* (1960), also called *Symphony of the Tropics*, depicting the lives and the rituals of diverse indigenous tribes in the former Dutch colony of Suriname. It was the director's first colour film and his first film shot outside the Netherlands. Focusing on the tropical nature and on colourful images of Indians, Maroons, Javanese, Hindus and Dutch, the film was not very critical of the Dutch colonialism in Suriname.

After the Dutch Documentary School, independent filmmakers like Johan van der Keuken (1938-2001) attracted attention with more personal and socially aware documentaries. In *Face Value* (1990), Johan van der Keuken visited London, Marseille, Prague and Amsterdam in order to portray new faces in Europe after the fall of the Eastern Bloc and the consequent migration to the West. In his four-hour documentary *Amsterdam Global Village* (1996), Johan van der Keuken filmed diverse migrants and subcultures that emerged in Amsterdam during the 1990s. His camera tracked a delivery boy of Moroccan origin traversing the city on his scooter and visiting city dwellers of diverse origins in their houses. The documentary even followed some migrants to their home countries showing for example a Bolivian musician and cleaner traveling from Amsterdam to his native village in the Andes mountains, a refugee returning to the war-struck Chechnya, and an elderly Jewish woman visiting her World War II hiding address. Linking up global issues and personal stories, *Amsterdam Global Village* is an important contribution to the representation of migrants in Dutch cinema. In addition to *Amsterdam Global Village*, van der Keuken also shot *To Sang Photo Studio* (1997), a short film about a Chinese

photographer making family portraits of culturally diverse shopkeepers in Amsterdam. In this short film, van der Keuken self-consciously used the metaphor of filming a photographer, underlining the constructedness of images.

2.7. Dutch Fiction Films Beyond the Netherlands

As a small national cinema, Dutch cinema struggles to survive in a global film industry dominated by Hollywood. Even within the Netherlands, Dutch people generally watch more Hollywood films than Dutch films. Due to the limited spread of the Dutch language, most Dutch films do not travel outside the national boundaries. Only a very limited number of Dutch films have managed to attract large crowds in the history of Dutch cinema. The golden years of Dutch cinema can be situated in the 1970s when director Paul Verhoeven made various box-office hits. In the history of Dutch cinema, few fictional films took into account ethnic minorities. Nevertheless, some films dealt with the colonial past of the Netherlands.

During the 1970s, the flourishing period of Dutch cinema, director Fons Rademakers broke new grounds with his 1976 film adaptation of *Max Havelaar*, a famous 19th century novel about the colonial history of the Dutch East Indies. The theatrical release of *Max Havelaar* (1976) coincided with the release of the first major Surinamese fiction film *Wan Pipel* (1976) by the Dutch-Surinamese director Pim de la Parra. Together with Wim Verstappen, Pim de la Parra already made commercially successful films like *Blue Movie* (1971) and *Frank & Eva* (1973). Although Pim de la Parra made a fortune with these sexually explicit films, the high production costs of *Wan Pipel* (1976) brought him and his production company Scorpio films to bankruptcy. Films about the colonial past have remained relatively scarce. In the following decades, Dutch cinema struggled again to survive economically.

From the 1980s onwards, Dutch cinema attendance was in sharp decline. Besides the competition from home videos and television, the emigration of Dutch filmmakers like Paul Verhoeven and Jan de Bont to Hollywood and the bankruptcy of Scorpio films marked the end of a creative period in Dutch cinema. In the 1980s, director Dick Maas still achieved some commercial successes with thrillers and horror films like *De Lift* [The Elevator] (1983) and *Amsterdamned* (1988). Also his comedies about an ill-mannered Dutch working-class family, *Flodder* (1986) and its sequels *Flodder in Amerika* (1992) and *Flodder 3* (1995), became box-office hits in the

Netherlands. Although often described as the lean years of Dutch cinema, the 1990s was the decade when two Dutch films, *Antonia* [Antonia's Line] (1995) and *Karakter* [Character] (1997) achieved an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. Besides these exceptions, however, Dutch cinema in general did not perform well neither commercially nor artistically during the 1990s. After the turn of the century, the teen film *Costa!* (2001) about Dutch youngsters on holidays in Spain was the first Dutch film to achieve again commercial success since many years.

While attracting a young audience proved a good strategy to revitalise Dutch cinema, Dutch filmmakers also became increasingly aware of the ethnic diversity in the Netherlands. When fierce debates about the integration of Muslims in the Netherlands broke out, filmmakers responded with light-hearted comedies and alternative images of ethnic minorities. To the surprise of many, *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* (2004), a low-budget film with Dutch-Moroccan actors in the leading roles, became one of the most commercially successful Dutch films of the decade. At the same time, the film also received critical acclaim on international film festivals. In the wake of *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* (2004), many films with ethnic minority actors were made with the aim of targeting ethnically diverse audiences. Multicultural comedies like *Het Schnitzelparadijs* [Schnitzel Paradise] (2005), '*n Beetje Verliefd* [Happy Family] (2006), *Alibi* (2008), *Gangsterboys* (2010), *Pizza Mafia* (2011), *Alleen Maar Nette Mensen* [Only Decent People] (2012) and *Valentino* (2013) also performed well at the box office. Although the formula of the multicultural comedy was commercially successful and reached a wide audience, the question arises whether these films did not reinforce stereotypical depictions of ethnic minorities.

Despite the proliferation of multicultural productions, the best-selling Dutch fiction films in recent years remained those with an all-white cast like *Alles is Liefde* [Love is All] (2007), *Komt een vrouw bij de dokter* [Stricken] (2009), *New Kids Turbo* (2010) and *Gooische Vrouwen* [Viper's Nest] (2011). As their screenplays were set in the present, it is quite remarkable that these new films still imagined the Netherlands as a homogeneous white society. This is even more surprising because other films had already successfully highlighted the ethnocultural diversity of the Dutch population. In some films with a mainly Dutch cast, actors from ethnic minorities participated in more or less important roles. The Dutch-Moroccan actress Maryam Hassouni played for example a leading role in the thriller *Doodslag* [Manslaughter]

(2012) and a supporting role in the romantic comedy *Soof* (2013). The Dutch-Moroccan actor Ahmed Akkabi appeared in the crime film *Laptop* (2012) and in the comedy *Chez Nous* (2013). Both actors first played together supporting roles in the popular Dutch youth film *Anubis en het pad der 7 zonden* [Anubis & the Path of 7 Sins] (2008). In the romantic comedy *Bro's Before Ho's* (2013), the Dutch-Indonesian actor Daniël Arends played a leading role alongside a white Dutch actor. Even if some actors with a minority background have been cast, the narratives of these Dutch films usually remain unrelated to the experiences of ethnic minorities.

2.8. Conclusion

In this chapter, I aimed to highlight how the general political approach towards immigrants and ethnic minorities in the Netherlands has influenced their representation in Dutch television and cinema. In the second half of the 20th century, the image of the Netherlands as a homogeneous nation of native white Dutch people has become increasingly challenged. In the first place, migration has changed the demographic composition of the Netherlands. The Netherlands became more than ever an ethnically diverse country due to postcolonial and labour migration from Indonesia, Suriname, the Dutch Caribbean, Turkey and Morocco. In response to the permanent settlement of non-Western migrants in the Netherlands, the Dutch authorities developed an ethnic minorities policy. The target groups of this policy were the largest socio-economically deprived ethnic minorities: the Turks, the Moroccans, the Surinamese and the Antilleans. With the aim to integrate these groups in society, the Dutch state developed highly elaborate multicultural policies subsidising not only religious activities and mother-tongue education but also ethnic radio and television broadcasting. These 'culturalist' policies, however, can be criticised for confining immigrants within their own cultural traditions.

Since the 1990s, politicians increasingly blamed ethnic minorities policies to be responsible for the 'failed integration' of migrants in Dutch society. Dutch policy-makers considered specific television programmes for ethnic minorities as an obstacle to the integration of migrants in Dutch society. Shifting from multicultural policies to assimilationist policies, media policies in the 1990s and 2000s rather stimulated the incorporation of ethnic minorities into mainstream Dutch media. The Dutch authorities, for example, introduced quotas to guarantee a representative

participation of people with a minority background in mainstream Dutch television programmes. On the other hand, culturally specific programmes and broadcasters were gradually abandoned and minority language programmes were replaced by Dutch-language programmes. These measures aimed to encourage the adaptation of minorities to the dominant Dutch culture. While it could be argued that the cultural identity of minorities is no longer supported, individuals with an ethnic minority background began to appear in mainstream Dutch entertainment programmes, comedies, talk-shows as well as in fiction and drama series. Through this process, the media policies in the Netherlands succeeded in bringing more individuals of diverse origins into mainstream Dutch television programmes.

Despite the elaborate media policies for ethnic minorities on public television, the Dutch film industry has long remained a closed bastion of white Dutch film professionals. I argued that this is mainly due to the fact that the Netherlands has only a small film industry guided by policies that protect the Dutch national identity. Even if the Dutch film industry is still dominated by white Dutch film professionals, some filmmakers have shown an interest in other cultures and ethnic minorities. The small Dutch film industry, however, seems to offer few opportunities to newcomers, while the cultural criteria to obtain state funding further privilege films that depict the Dutch national identity, to the disadvantage of multilingual and transnational films with foreigners in other countries. Despite these obstacles, there has been an increasing amount of films in recent years featuring ethnic minority actors in leading roles.

Following the classification of ethnic minority groups as identified by the Dutch ethnic minorities policies, I will discuss in the next chapters the representation of respectively Moroccans, Turks and postcolonial minorities like the Surinamese and Antilleans in Dutch cinema. From a socio-historical perspective, I argue that the cinematic representation of these minority groups has developed from social realistic documentaries to more diverse fiction films in various genres. I will use the case of Moroccans in Dutch cinema to illustrate the shift from low-budget social realistic dramas to a market-driven diversification of film genres ranging from comedies to road movies featuring ethnic minority characters. In the chapter on Turks in Dutch cinema, I will focus on the question of authorship comparing the personal work of the Dutch-Turkish documentary filmmaker Meral Uslu with the commercial Dutch film *Gangsterboys* (Paul Ruven, 2011). Finally, the chapter on postcolonial minorities in

Dutch cinema aims to highlight how filmmakers imagine the colonial past in a historical drama like *Sonny Boy* (Maria Peeters, 2011) and the postcolonial present in a comedy like *Alleen maar nette mensen* [Only Decent People] (Lodewijk Crijns, 2012).

While films about ethnic minorities in the Netherlands for a long time remained marginal and reached very limited audiences, an unprecedented amount of multicultural films have been made since the first decade of the 21st century. The commercial success of some multicultural films in the Netherlands brought ethnic minority actors and actresses from the margins to the mainstream Dutch cinema reaching wide audiences and, thus, having more social impact. While the far-right politician Geert Wilders received lots of media attention with his radical anti-immigration diatribes, the popularity of multicultural films and television indicates that a restoration of a culturally homogeneous Dutch nation is far from desired by large parts of the Dutch population.

3. 'Mocro Movies': From Cinema of Duty to Box-Office Hits

Moroccan immigrants and their descendants form numerically one of the largest ethnic minorities in the Netherlands and one of the major target groups of the Dutch ethnic minorities policies. Although the presence of the first Moroccan guest workers and their families in the Netherlands did not receive much media attention, the second generation Moroccans increasingly featured in negative news items concerning riots, nuisance, juvenile delinquency, illegal drugs trade and Islamic radicalism. Since the early 2000s, populist right-wing politicians like Pim Fortuyn and Geert Wilders launched diatribes against Moroccans in the Netherlands scapegoating them as a problematic minority group. These ethnic tensions reached their peak in 2004 with the murder of filmmaker Theo Van Gogh by a radical Islamist of Moroccan origin. As a key event in recent Dutch history, the murder of Van Gogh and his criticism of Islam both in his films and media performances sparked extensive discussions about freedom of speech and political correctness. This political correctness implied that talking about controversial issues was avoided in order not to offend ethnic minorities.

It was in this intense political context that Moroccans surprisingly became, more than any other ethnic minority, the object of entertainment films in the Netherlands. While Moroccans were underrepresented in Dutch fiction films during most of the 20th century, an unprecedented amount of films have been made about them since the early 2000s. Due to the recent boom of films about Moroccans in the Netherlands, film critics even speak about a wave of 'Mocro Movies' (Betts, 2009), as the term *Mocro* is Dutch slang for Moroccans in the Netherlands. Beyond the heated political debates, it can be argued that fictional films offer an alternative way to deal with the reality of integration issues (Müller, Hirzalla, & van Zoonen, 2009). In the representation of Moroccans in the Netherlands, we can see an evolution from a social realistic 'cinema of duty' (Malik, 1996) to more commercially oriented comedies, crime films and road movies. I claim that this diversification of genres featuring Moroccans is not the result of top-down policy measures but a market-driven development. More and more film and television producers realised that ethnic minority consumers make up a significant share of their potential customer groups and saw an economic opportunity in making films that reach these underserved audiences. At the same time, the political correctness that characterised the first

socially engaged filmmakers avoiding negative depictions of Moroccans became increasingly replaced by images of Moroccans with their good and bad sides. Such images have been played out in the grim narratives of crime films as well as in more light-hearted comedies. Due to their higher production value and marketing, these films reached more admissions than the politically correct 'cinema of duty' that usually was only displayed in arthouse cinemas or educational institutions. The commercial success of comedies and crime films starring Dutch-Moroccan actors even led to the emergence of ethnic stars. Contrary to the beur cinema in France and Turkish-German cinema, however, the production of the 'Mocro Movies' in the Netherlands remained predominantly in the hands of white Dutch filmmakers. One of the questions in this chapter is why Dutch film companies started to produce 'Mocro movies' and, at the same time, why ethnic minority film directors have remained largely absent from this development in Dutch cinema. An exception is documentary filmmaker Fatima Jebli Ouazzani[12], one of the few filmmakers of Moroccan origin in the Dutch film industry.

Even if Dutch producers and directors are behind most 'Mocro Movies', it can be said that the rise of 'Mocro Movies' challenges the whiteness of Dutch national cinema. As a recent popular culture phenomenon, these films do not fit well with the myth of a timeless and homogeneous white Dutch culture. Therefore, I argue that Mocro Movies have some emancipatory potential for ethnic minorities. Whereas Moroccan youngsters used to be uninterested in Dutch cinema because they could not identify with the native Dutch characters, the rise of 'Mocro Movies' opened a space for them to express their identity in Dutch cinema (Lohy, 2005). Despite the democratising power of consumer choice and the expression of subcultural identities, popular culture still remains highly dependent on capitalist industries for its production and distribution. This intertwining of popular culture and cultural industries creates a paradox between the socio-political interests of the consumers and the commercial interests of the film industry. According to John Fiske, the cultural economy within which meanings and pleasures are created should be distinguished from the financial economy driven by profit maximisation: 'The gap between the cultural and the financial economies is wide enough to grant the cultural economy considerable autonomy, but not too wide to be bridgeable' (Fiske, 1987, p. 312). In

[12] I will briefly discuss her work here although I will elaborate the question of migrant authorship in more detail in the next chapter with the case of Dutch-Turkish filmmakers.

the case of the ‘Mocro Movies’, I argue that the commercial objectives of ethnic marketing eventually diminish the emancipatory potential of these films for ethnic minorities. Through the use of stereotypes, multicultural comedies aim at soliciting laughter and crime films aim at producing thrills rather than critical reflection. In the end, the recognition of Moroccans as consumers does not necessarily emancipate them from the persisting prejudices and discrimination in Dutch society.

In order to show the historical development of the representation of Moroccans in Dutch cinema, I will start with an overview of the documentaries that have been made about Moroccans in the Netherlands since the 1970s. These documentaries predominantly focused on social issues faced by the guest workers and their families in the Netherlands. I will then turn to the first fiction films about Moroccans that emerged in the 1990s. In the tradition of the so-called ‘cinema of duty’, the first films were mainly social dramas depicting Moroccans as victims of social deprivation. At the same time, however, it should be noted that Moroccans were frequently cast in stereotypical roles as villains in crime films. A turning point in the representation of Moroccans in the Netherlands was the comedy *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* (2004). Although this film reproduced some stereotypes about Moroccans, its comical approach also mocked Dutch culture. Inspired by the commercial success of *Shouf Shouf Habibi!*, a wave of ‘multicultural comedies’ were produced in the following years. Besides these multicultural comedies, Dutch filmmakers continued to make social dramas but also what I will call ‘postmulticultural’ films, films that feature Moroccan characters in more mature and diversified roles. Finally, I will discuss how transnational road movies crossing the borders between the Netherlands and Morocco extended the horizons of Dutch cinema. Even if some films continue to reaffirm prevailing stereotypes of Moroccans, I argue that the diversification of genres in which they feature leads to a more varied cinematic representation of this minority group than before. In this sense, the wide range of ‘Mocro Movies’ has more emancipatory potential than the limited amount of films about other minorities that I will discuss later. Although some films can still be criticised for their stereotypical typecasting, I conclude that the increased interest of Dutch film producers in Moroccan characters has created more opportunities and more varied roles for this ethnic minority.

3.1. A Cinema of Duty: Documentaries on Moroccans

The first Moroccan guest workers who settled in the Netherlands during the 1970s did not receive much attention in the Dutch media. Only a few socially engaged documentary filmmakers brought the poor living circumstances of these guest workers and their families to the attention. Most of the early documentaries on Moroccans in the Netherlands can labelled as a 'cinema of duty', a social-issue-based cinema with realist aesthetics (Malik, 1996). Originally coined by Cameron Bailey, the cinema of duty is "firmly responsible in intention – [it] positions its subjects in direct relation to social crisis, and attempts to articulate 'problems' and 'solutions to problems' within a framework of centre and margin, white and non-white communities" (Bailey cited in Malik 1996, 203-204). In the case of Dutch documentaries on Moroccans, we can observe this focus on social problems together with an implicit call to society at large to help these people. Göktürk (1999) also called this approach the 'social worker's perspective' on immigrants.

From a social worker's perspective, the first documentaries on Moroccan immigrants depicted the difficulties faced by the guest workers and their families who came to the Netherlands. One of the first Dutch filmmakers to portray the Moroccans in the Netherlands was Joost Tholens. He recorded the living and working conditions of two Moroccan guest workers in the Dutch mines in his documentary *Hier en daar een Marokkaan* [Here and there a Moroccan] (1970). A decade later, Marijke Jongbloed made the documentary *Ze zien liever mijn handen dan mijn gezicht* [They Like My Hands Better Than My Face] (1980) about the second generation Moroccans in the Netherlands. While their parents hoped to return to Morocco, the youngsters faced social deprivation and discrimination in the Netherlands, leading to violent behaviour and problems with the authorities. In the same vein, the documentary *Dag mijn klas, ik mis jullie allemaal* [Hello My Class, I Miss You All] (1988), director Leonard Retel Helmrich zoomed in on the problems of a Moroccan family that returned illegally to the Netherlands after a failed attempt to settle again in Morocco. Besides stories of unemployment, discrimination and language problems, the documentary illustrated the toughening of migration policies during the 1980s. While still very few personal stories of Moroccans appeared on television in the 1990s, the TV show *Kijk mij nou* [Look At Me] broadcast in 1994 the intimate portrait

of a Moroccan girl talking about her daily life in the Netherlands and her holidays in Morocco. Through a personal close-up, the documentary makers tried to make Dutch audiences empathise with people of Moroccan origin in the Netherlands. Some filmmakers traced the roots of the migrants back to their homeland. In the four-part documentary series *De toestand in Marokko* [The Situation in Morocco] (1998), director Theo Uittenbogaard and journalist Kefah Allush went to the Rif, a mountainous region in northern Morocco where many Moroccans in the Netherlands have their roots. Through interviews, the filmmakers tried to answer the questions why people left their hometowns, stayed in the Netherlands or returned to Morocco.

Whereas all the previously mentioned films were directed by Dutch filmmakers, Fatima Jebli Ouazzani was the first filmmaker of Moroccan origin in the Netherlands. Having been part of a migratory movement, this director would be able to activate what Paul Gilroy (1995) called a 'double consciousness' situated in the flux between two cultures. This 'double consciousness' is expressed in her documentary films where she looks at the culture of her ancestors through the eyes of someone who grew up in the Netherlands. Born in the Moroccan city of Meknes, she moved to the Netherlands at the age of 11 with her parents. After graduating from the Dutch Film and Television Academy and working at the local TV Mozaïek in Rotterdam, Ouazzani made the documentary *In het huis van mijn vader* [In my Father's House] (1997), based on her personal experiences with Moroccan and Islamic cultural traditions. As an unmarried and childless woman, she left the house of her father rejecting the traditional Moroccan marriage. In her documentary, the filmmaker denounces the importance given to the virginity of girls in the patriarchal Moroccan arranged marriage. She invokes scientific evidence from gynaecologists and sociologists to argue that the bleeding of the hymen is not a proof of virginity. Even if the film starts from a personal perspective and uses poetic images of Morocco, the narrative is in the same line as other Dutch documentaries portraying a backward Moroccan culture. As a critical take on Moroccan traditions, the film was well received by Dutch critics. Being the first Dutch-Moroccan filmmaker, Fatima Jebli Ouazzani won the Golden Calf Award for best documentary in 1998, one of the most prestigious awards in the Netherlands. Afterwards, however, Ouazzani did no longer make films focusing on Moroccan culture or migration. In her later career, she seemed to avoid the 'burden of representation' (Mercer, 1990), the expectation that is

cast upon an ethnic minority artist to act as the spokesperson for a whole cultural group. Her second documentary *Het was weer zondig* [It Was Sinful Again] (2000), for example, dealt with the issue of adultery without any references to her ethnic background. I will discuss the challenges faced by ethnic minority filmmakers in more detail through the case of the Dutch-Turkish director Meral Uslu in the next chapter. As female director of Moroccan origin, Fatima Jebli Ouazzani remained a notable exception in the Dutch film industry. In the years to come, Dutch directors dominated again from a majority perspective the documentary production about Moroccans. In the next sections, I will briefly discuss documentaries illustrating the majority Dutch perspective on Moroccans in the Netherlands.

Fig. 3.1 Dutch-Moroccan director Fatima Jebli Ouazzani (Source: Filmkrant)

Since the 1990s, Dutch directors increasingly focused on Moroccan youngsters growing up in the Netherlands, often associating them with crime and social deprivation. Antoon Sturkenboom directed for example the two-part documentary *Marokkaans met zachte G* [Moroccan With A Soft G] (1998), about Tarik and Aziz, two troubled Moroccan boys in the Netherlands. While Tarik was in prison on the charge of violence, Aziz worked in a butter factory in order to pay his debts. After this difficult period, both youngsters went on to resume their lives. Also other documentary makers focused on the coming-of-age stories of Moroccan youngsters growing up in the Netherlands. In the framework of a weekly television programme, Chris Westendorp made the documentary *Mohammed* (2002) about young Moroccans living in The Hague. Although all the boys in the film have the name Mohammed, the most popular name in the city, the documentary maker presents a differentiated view on their daily lives, education, religion and unemployment in an infamous Moroccan neighbourhood in The Hague. Quite similarly, in the

documentary *Ik ben Mohammed* [I'm Mohamed] (2005), director Roy Dames portrayed the daily lives of Moroccan youngsters in the city of Rotterdam, emphasising how hard it is for these young men to stay away from crime and to find a decent job. Five years later, director Roy Dames followed in his sequel documentary *Mocros* (2011) the development of some youngsters from his previous film. In a period when Dutch politicians increasingly stigmatised Moroccans, the documentary showed how the youngsters struggle to stay on the right track. Likewise, in *Zuilen: 14 jaar later* [Zuilen 14 Years Later] (2007), documentary filmmaker Peter Tetteroo visited the multicultural Zuilen neighbourhood in the city of Utrecht where he filmed a group of unruly Moroccan youngsters back in 1992. Fourteen years later he returns to see what has become of them.

Beyond the rather negative depiction of Moroccan youths in the context of unemployment and crime, other documentaries directed the attention to more positive aspects and creative ways of dealing with hardship. In the documentary *Respect* (2004), Claudia Tellegen portrayed a young female rapper of Moroccan origin born in the Amsterdam East district. After her mother passed away, the Moroccan girl has to take care of her two younger brothers while studying and working at the same time. Struggling to make ends meet, she expresses her feelings through hip-hop music. *In Marokko swingt* [Morocco Swings] (2005), director Barbara Den Uyl recorded a masterclass in Amsterdam taught by the famous Moroccan singer Najat Aâtabou in May 2004 to four young Dutch-Moroccan singers. While the young singers wanted to show that they still respect the Moroccan traditions, the meeting with Najat nevertheless revealed how westernised they have become. In the documentary *Kasba in de Polder* (2006), Martin Maat and Hans Hermans followed the popular world music band Kasba during more than a year. Composed of five Moroccan and four Dutch musicians, the band mixes oriental and western influences into a unique style, setting the example for people of different origins to live together. Nordin Lasfar, a filmmaker of Moroccan origin himself, also tried to create alternative images of Dutch-Moroccan youngsters. In his documentary *Panna!* (2007), Lasfar portrayed two talented street soccer players from Amsterdam-West. In order to escape their lives on the street, they dream of becoming professional soccer players. In the documentary *De ongekroonde koning van Amsterdam-West* [The Uncrowned

King of Amsterdam West] (2009), the filmmaker followed a well-known doorman of Moroccan origin who made a career in Amsterdam's nightlife.

Another positive story is the documentary *Ahmed Aboutaleb, onze man uit Marokko* [Ahmed Aboutaleb, Our Man From Morocco] (2007). This film portrays the career of the Dutch-Moroccan politician Ahmed Aboutaleb, who gained popularity in the Labour Party and even became the mayor of Rotterdam as he managed to build bridges between different communities in the Netherlands. The film documents the life of Aboutaleb from his difficult youth in Morocco, to his migration to the Netherlands, his education and his political career as alderman in Amsterdam. Despite these favourable depictions of some Dutch-Moroccans, the fear of extremist Muslims stayed in the minds of the Dutch people. In the documentary *24 uur bedreigd* [24 hours Under Threat] (2009), Frank Vellenga followed the Dutch-Moroccan painter Rachid Ben Ali whose life was threatened by radical Muslims who felt insulted by the explicit and provocative nature of his paintings. In this short documentary, the positive attention to a creative Dutch-Moroccan painter became overshadowed by negative feelings about extremists.

While the public debate about Moroccans in the Netherlands has been dominated in recent years by the fear of Muslim extremism, some documentary filmmakers turned their attention again to the first generation of Moroccan guest workers. With *Aan ons den arbeid* [Work For Us] (2007), Jeroen Van Bergeijk made a documentary about the Moroccan guest workers that were recruited forty years ago by his father, the director of a Dutch biscuit factory. In a nostalgic way, the now retired Moroccans look back on their hard work in the Netherlands, lamenting that the tensions between the Dutch and the Moroccans have increased now. Similarly, the Dutch-Algerian director Karim Traidia focused in the documentary *Dakira* (2009) on 40 years of Moroccan migration to the Netherlands, letting the first generation of guest workers, their wives and political activists speak about their memories and their expectations for the following generation of Moroccans in the Netherlands. In the documentary *Twee levens in één hart* [Two Lives in One Heart] (2014), Marijn Poels also interviewed two retired Moroccan guest workers looking back on their migration from Morocco to the Netherlands and their subsequent lives between two cultures.

In this short overview, I discussed how documentaries have portrayed Moroccans in the Netherlands in different ways. Even if most of the documentaries

about Moroccans have been made in line with a social-issue-based 'cinema of duty' focusing on hardships and problems faced by ethnic minorities, we can already see some attempts to bring alternative and more positive stories on creative and successful Moroccans in the Netherlands. While documentary filmmaking about Moroccans already started in the 1970s, fictional films with Moroccan characters only emerged more than two decades later. Most surprisingly, fictional films with Moroccans in leading roles reached an unprecedented popularity in the first decade of the 21st century. In what follows, I will discuss the rise of what has been called 'Mocro Movies'.

3.2. From a White Dutch Cinema to the Rise of 'Mocro Movies'

For most of the 20th century, the history of Dutch cinema has been dominated by native white Dutch actors, directors and producers. The whiteness of not only directors and producers but also the cast and the themes in Dutch cinema is evident in both Dutch art cinema and Dutch entertainment films. When the Netherlands Film Festival composed the Canon of Dutch Cinema in 2007, the final list did not include any film on Dutch colonial history, migration or ethnic minorities. Examining the role of cinema in the imagination of a national identity, Andrew Higson argues that '[t]he search for a stable and coherent national identity can only be successful at the expense of repressing internal differences, tensions and contradictions - differences of class, race, gender, region, etc.' (Higson 1989, p. 43). This would explain why migrants and ethnic minorities have remained for a long time at the margins of the Dutch film industry. Nevertheless, social issues like the Dutch (post)colonial legacy, migration and ethnic minorities became increasingly relevant to the contemporary Dutch population. For this reason, some socially engaged film directors and producers tried to overcome the existing barriers to make films about these important social issues.

Besides socially engaged filmmakers who made films to raise the social awareness about minorities in the Netherlands, some Dutch producers and directors also saw commercial opportunities in making films about ethnic minorities. Films starring ethnic minority characters could reach underserved niche audiences in the Dutch film market. Starring Dutch-Moroccan protagonists, the film *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* (2004) was an unexpected box-office success. The producer of this film,

René Huybrechtse, explained that its commercial success was mainly due to the large groups of Dutch-Moroccan youngsters that went to see the picture in the film theatres[13]. Moreover, the fact that the main characters in the film are second-generation migrants who grew up in the Netherlands and who speak the Dutch language helped the film to obtain funding from the Netherlands Film Fund as the cultural criteria to be considered as a Dutch film were fulfilled. This might explain why many Dutch films about ethnic minorities deal with Dutch-speaking second-generation youngsters born and raised in the Netherlands. The director and producer of *Shouf Shouf Habibi!*, however, were still native Dutchmen. Contrary to the beur cinema in France or Turkish migrant cinema in Germany, there has not yet been such a movement of migrant filmmakers in the Netherlands challenging the dominant representations of ethnic minorities. Due to the limited opportunities in the Dutch film industry, ethnic minority directors in the Netherlands have mainly made documentaries or short films. Given the fact that various ethnic minority filmmakers are graduating from Dutch film schools, however, it can be expected that Dutch cinema will become more diverse in the near future. Meanwhile, however, a wave of Dutch films starring Moroccan characters in leading roles has attracted the attention.

Despite the fact that most films were directed by Dutch filmmakers, the increased production of films featuring Dutch-Moroccans has led to a diversification of genres representing this ethnic minority. I argue that this diversification has contributed to a less one-sided view on this minority group. While the first films about Moroccans were mainly a low-budget social 'cinema of duty', later films with higher production values in more popular genres like crime films, comedies and road movies were produced. This created new roles and opportunities for Dutch-Moroccan actors and actresses.

In the following sections, I will show how the representation of Moroccans evolved in Dutch fiction films. In the first films about Moroccans, they often were cast in stereotypical roles. The first social dramas depicted Moroccans as victims of discrimination and racism. Later, Moroccans became increasingly portrayed in the roles of criminals in thrillers and crime films. As Nicole Rafter (2000) argues, crime films reflect popular understandings of crime and shape social hierarchies. By featuring ethnic minority villains, these films reflect widespread theories that see

[13] Personal interview with producer René Huybrechtse, Dutch Mountain Film, Amsterdam, 20 August 2009

immigration as a cause of criminality. A turning point in the representation of ethnic minorities in Dutch cinema, however, was the critical and commercial success of the comedy *Shouf Shouf Habibi* (2004). Following *Shouf Shouf Habibi*, also other multicultural comedies starring ethnic minority actors became very successful in the Netherlands. Besides multicultural comedies, Dutch filmmakers continued to make social dramas in the post-multicultural era but filmmakers moved beyond the one-sided representation of Moroccans as victims of social deprivation towards films with more diversified roles for Moroccan characters. Finally, through transnational road movies Dutch filmmakers crossed the borders between the Netherlands and Morocco, leading to new settings and perspectives in Dutch cinema.

3.3. Moroccans in Dutch Fiction Films: From Victims to Criminals

Even if documentaries about Moroccan guest workers in the Netherlands have been made since the 1970s, this ethnic minority group remained for many decades largely absent from Dutch fiction films. Only from the 1990s onwards, some Dutch fiction films engaged with stories in which Moroccan characters played an important role. The first films were mainly social dramas highlighting the tensions between the native Dutch population and the Moroccan immigrants. In this context, Moroccans have been depicted first as victims of discrimination and violence, but later increasingly as perpetrators of criminal acts undermining the established order of the host society. What these films have in common is that they portray Dutch and Moroccan culture as incompatible, which leads to the tensions around which the narrative evolves.

One of the first Dutch fiction films dealing with Moroccans immigrants was the social drama *Walhalla* (1995) by the Dutch director Eddy Terstall. Set in a Flemish village, the film tells how a local grocer faces competition from a shop run by Moroccans. Instigated by a far-right politician and a malign property developer who wants to empty the neighbourhood in order to build a large furniture mall, a group of skinheads provoke ethnic conflicts between the villagers and the Moroccan immigrants. When the daughter of the local Dutch grocer and the son of the Moroccan shopkeeper nevertheless fall in love, the skinheads violently end the relationship. With the death of the Moroccan, the Dutch project developer is finally able to build his Walhalla furniture mall. In the Dutch media, the film was accused of portraying the far-right too sympathetically. The film director, however, argued that

his aim was to show that 'racist people are not evil but just dumb'[14]. In the end, the film nonetheless depicts a grim society that is built on the exclusion of immigrants.

In the following years, the fear of the Other would become more pronounced in films depicting Moroccans no longer as victims but rather as criminals threatening the law and order of the host society. Some films still bear the traces of the cinema of duty depicting Moroccans as victims but gradually shift to a more vicious representation of Moroccans as violent criminals. An example is the crime film *Marrakech* (Michiel van Jaarsveld, 1996) about a police detective who has to investigate the murder of a young Moroccan in a drugs-related context. As his own son has disappeared in Morocco, the police detective gets obsessed with the investigation denying that the search for his own son is over. In this film, the focus is on the Dutch protagonists while the Moroccan characters only play a secondary role. Nevertheless, the death of the Moroccan is directly linked to criminal activities. A film that even more explicitly depicts Moroccans not just as victims but also as perpetrators of violent criminal acts is the television drama *15.35 Spoor 1* [15:35 Platform 1] (Marcel Hensema and Tim Oliehoek, 2003). Based on a dramatic accident some years before, this film reconstructs how a Moroccan girl was pushed to her death in front of an Amsterdam subway train. A classmate of the girl discovers that the girl was raped and murdered by a Moroccan boy. Due to its inspiration by true events and its realistic style, the film gives the impression that the fictive story of the rape represents the reality behind the fatal accident. With this dramatic aggravation, the film wrongfully places Moroccan youngsters in a bad light and reinforces negative stereotypes. The criminalisation of Moroccans in Dutch fiction films would become even more intense in the context of global Islamic terrorism and the subsequent debates about the 'clash of civilizations' (Huntington, 1993).

In the Netherlands, the attitudes towards Moroccans in the Netherlands even further deteriorated when the Dutch filmmaker and columnist Theo van Gogh, a critic of Islam and supporter of the assassinated right-wing politician Pim Fortuyn, was murdered by a radical Islamist of Moroccan origin. While Theo van Gogh was cycling to his workplace in Amsterdam, the young Dutch-Moroccan Islamist Mohammed Bouyeri shot the filmmaker eight times with a handgun and implanted a knife in his

[14] Van den Heuvel, Dick (1995, 8 June). 'Nederlandse 'Walhalla' raakt omstreden onderwerp'. *De Telegraaf,* 8 June 1995. Retrieved from: http://krant.telegraaf.nl/krant/naslag/filmrecensies/film.walhalla.terstall.html

chest with a note threatening the Dutch-Somali politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali and everyone else who dared to offend Islam to suffer the same fate. In the aftermath of the assassination, the documentary *Mohammed B. Gemankeerde martelaar* [Mohammed B. Failed Martyr] (Nijpels & Slats, 2005) was broadcast on Dutch television. Beyond the many news reports, the documentary sought explanations in the past of this Dutch-Moroccan community worker before his radicalisation. For most of the people who knew him, it was unimaginable that this quiet young man would commit such a horrible homicide. For the years to come, the murder led to increased tensions between the Dutch and the Moroccan populations.

The brutal murder of van Gogh was a key moment in recent Dutch history and led to heated debates about freedom of speech and political correctness regarding minorities. Theo van Gogh was infamous for his provocative columns in which he insulted Jews, Christians, and, especially, Muslims whom he nicknamed 'goat-fuckers'. Moreover, a couple of months before his death, Dutch national television broadcast the ten-minutes short film *Submission: Part 1* (2004), directed by Theo van Gogh and based on a screenplay written by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Muslim apostate and ardent critic of Islam and its oppression of women. *Submission* tells four stories of a Muslim woman who is first forced into an arranged marriage, then abused by her husband, subsequently raped by her uncle and finally brutally lashed for adultery. Visually, the film shows a veiled woman with transparent gowns through which we can see her naked body covered with whiplashes and Quranic verses calligraphed on her skin. Announced as a provocation in Dutch newspapers, the short film attracted an unusually high number of viewers for the talk show during which it was aired. Knowing that the use of nudity and Quranic verses are considered blasphemous in Islam, Theo van Gogh and Hirsi Ali were likely to court controversy. Despite its attempts to solicit reactions from Muslims, however, the short film initially received very few responses from the target group (Moors, 2005). It was mainly after the murder of Theo van Gogh that the short film *Submission* gained widespread attention in the media.

Beyond his public image as a crude critic of Islam, it is important to note that Theo van Gogh was also one of the few Dutch directors who brought Muslim immigrants to the big screen. Besides his film *In het belang van de staat* [In the Interests of the State] (1997) about a Kurdish refugee, Theo van Gogh also directed

the TV series *Najib & Julia* (2002-2003) revolving around a love affair between a Moroccan boy and a Dutch girl who experience many adversities. Financed by a juvenile detention centre that sought media attention, Theo van Gogh shot the film *Cool!* (2004), a social project in which professional actors and juvenile delinquents played together. The film focuses on the Dutch-Moroccan Abdel who is in a gang committing petty crimes. The Dutch leader of a major gang discovers that Abdel is flirting with his girlfriend. He talks Abdel and his friends into robbing a bank. As the robbery fails, Abdel and his friends are caught by the police and convicted to the juvenile detention centre. When the Dutch gang leader shoots his girlfriend, Abdel jumps in front of her and dies saving her life. Although the film starts from a social realist perspective with real juvenile delinquents as actors in a real-life detention centre, the presence of famous Dutch actors and the musical hip-hop intermezzos create a blending of genres that undermines the social realism of the film. As film distributor Pathé refused to release the film arguing that it was not commercially viable, the film only reached a limited audience. Even if the Dutch-Moroccan characters are portrayed more positively than the Dutch opponents, the film still confirms the link between Dutch-Moroccan youngsters and criminality. Theo van Gogh's last film *06/05* [May 6th] was released posthumously in 2005. Based on the assassination of the anti-immigration politician Pim Fortuyn, the film retells a fictional conspiracy theory linking the murder to Turkish criminals and Dutch secret services. Distributed on the Internet, the low-budget film was neither a commercial nor a critical success. Historically, however, the fact that the last film of the murdered director Theo van Gogh dealt with the assassination of his friend and fellow Islam-critic Pim Fortuyn illustrates how his films reflected and reacted upon the social and political context of the Netherlands in the first decade of the 21st century.

The increased ethnic tensions between the Dutch and the Moroccans in the Netherlands were translated into a rising number of crime films and thrillers that put Moroccans in the role of the dangerous Other. In the post-9/11 era, the threat of Islamist terrorist attacks inspired the production of several Dutch crime films focusing on terrorism. Not all films uncritically took over the association of Muslims with terrorism. With the television film *Staatsgevaarlijk* [Public Enemy] (2005), the Dutch director Marcel Visbeen made a reflexive thriller about prejudices and anxieties. The film starts with an explosion in the harbour of Rotterdam witnessed by a Dutch girl who had just moved there together with her Moroccan boyfriend. As the deadly

attack is attributed to Islamist terrorists, policemen invade their apartment and arrest the young couple. Contrary to the girl who is soon released, her Moroccan partner is imprisoned on suspicion of complicity in the terrorist act. While the girl believes in his innocence and convinces her father to intervene with a lawyer, the Moroccan man is stabbed in prison and transferred to a hospital where his girlfriend is not allowed to visit him. After masked gunmen take him away from the hospital, the girlfriend starts to doubt his innocence. Looking for her boyfriend and the truth, the girl finds out that her Moroccan boyfriend is indeed innocent. In a dramatic climax, however, he gets killed. While the screenplay was inspired by the reactions of the Dutch population after the assassination of Pim Fortuyn, the film was released just after the murder of Theo van Gogh. The attacks on Muslims in the Netherlands in the aftermath of this last murder underlined the topicality of the film in its fight against the injustice of prejudices. Through the inner struggle of the Dutch girl who doubts whether she has to follow public opinion or to trust her boyfriend, the film illustrates how fragile intercultural relationships can be.

The fears of terrorist attacks in the Netherlands also encouraged the Dutch-Jewish filmmaker Dana Nechushtan, known for directing the teen television series *Dunya & Desie* (2002-2004) starring the Dutch-Moroccan actress Maryam Hassouni, to make the television thriller *Offers* [Sacrified] (2005) with the same actress in a leading role. Contrary to the feel-good teen series, the thriller now portrays the young Dutch-Moroccan girl as a member of a Palestine terrorist network. Starting with a suicide attack in Paris, the film follows a Dutch-Lebanese policeman whose mother got killed in the Paris assault. Driven by revenge, he accepts the request of the Dutch secret intelligence service to investigate the terrorist cell that is responsible for the attack in Paris. Entering the house of two Palestinian sisters, the policeman gets caught by the youngest of them. When she learns that her pregnant older sister is fleeing to Canada, the young woman forces the policeman to go after her sister. When a bomb explodes in the car of her sister, both the young woman and the policeman become suspects of terrorism. Learning that the Dutch ambassador collaborates with the terrorist network, the Dutch-Lebanese policeman and the young Palestinian woman negotiate with the Dutch secret service about their rehabilitation. Infiltrating in the terrorist group, both the policeman and the young woman record a video testament announcing a suicide bombing on Queen's Day in Amsterdam. Although it was negotiated with the Dutch secret service that the bombs would be

deactivated, the woman explodes in a small street while the policeman gets arrested for terrorism. While the film was only displayed on Dutch television, the Dutch-Moroccan actress Maryam Hassouni won the International Emmy Award for Best Actress with her role as a female terrorist. Although the thriller depicts the suicide bombers as puppets of more powerful organisations, the image of Muslim immigrants who blow themselves up blatantly reinforces the prevailing stereotypes about Muslims that have been frightening Dutch citizens since the recent assassinations. Despite praise in the United States, the film did not receive much publicity in the Netherlands. The film was only broadcast on public television and not commercially released in film theatres or on DVD. One of the reasons for this might be the fear that a film about Muslim terrorists might inflame the public opinion against Muslims so shortly after the assassination of Theo van Gogh.

In the following decade, Dutch films still continued to stereotype Dutch-Moroccans as criminals. Shot in black-and-white and inspired by Martin Scorsese's *Raging Bull* (1980), the crime film *Wolf* (2013) by the Dutch director Jim Taihuttu focuses on a Dutch-Moroccan kickboxer on parole who commits petty crimes with his friends. A Dutch boxing trainer, however, wants him in the ring to develop his boxing talent. A Turkish crime lord, by contrast, asks him to use his fighting skills for criminal activities. Rejected by his father who believes that his criminal son sets a bad example for his youngest son, the Dutch-Moroccan boxer nevertheless shows his soft side when visiting his terminally ill older brother. After beating up the new date of his girlfriend, the boxer gets tangled up in a deal with the Turkish crime lord to participate in a risky armed car robbery. After the robbery goes wrong, an insidious friend encourages the hothead boxer to beat up an intimate of the Turkish boss. In response, the Turkish crime lord tells the boxer to lose a crucial fighting game in the ring. When he sees his father and younger brother in the audience, the boxer keeps fighting, even if this means that the Turkish gang will kill him. As a formulaic crime film, the screenplay predictably confirms the stereotype of the young immigrant hothead who ends up in destructive behaviour. The film was nevertheless both critically and commercially successful. In 2013, the Dutch Golden Calf Award for Best Actor was awarded to Marwan Kenzari who played the Dutch-Moroccan boxer. The Dutch Golden Calf Award for Best Director was given to Jim Taihuttu.

In the same vein, the television film *Infiltrant* [Infiltrator] (2014) by the Dutch-Venezuelan director Shariff Korver also depicts Dutch-Moroccans as criminals. This

crime film starts with a suspended Dutch-Moroccan police officer whose superiors ask him to infiltrate a Dutch-Moroccan drugs trafficking gang. Pretending to be a corrupt real estate agent, the police officer gets into contact with two Dutch-Moroccan brothers who are looking for a house to grow cannabis indoors. When the police dismantle their first hideout, the phony real estate agent arranges a rural farm where the brothers can continue their illegal business. Being welcomed in their home and invited to their family parties and even travelling with one of them to Morocco, the undercover agent starts to develop a close friendship with the Dutch-Moroccan brothers. After the first brother is shot, the undercover agent warns the other brother that the police will catch him soon. Realising that he is an undercover agent, the remaining brother beats up the agent before the police shoots him. While the film resembles American infiltrator movies like *Donnie Brasco* (1997), there is less emphasis on the crime film genre conventions and more attention to the psychological development of the mixed-origin protagonist and his need to belong to a group. Portraying the undercover agent as a Dutchman who had a Moroccan father he never got to know, the film highlights the cultural traditions and the amicability of the Moroccan brothers. Even if the film focuses on Moroccan criminals, they are not portrayed as villains but as sympathetic characters. For the Dutch-Venezuelan director, the hyphenated identity and the question where one belongs are elements that give a personal touch to the formulaic crime film. In an interview, the director states: 'You start with a story and you find out that many elements of yourself end up in the film. I included things I've struggled with in the character development.'[15] Combining the crime story with the psychological search for an identity, the film blurs the boundaries between a conventional genre film and the 'accented' cinema in which directors with an immigration history express their personal experiences.

While the majority of fiction films discussed until now were crime films, some filmmakers working in other genres deliberately chose not to typecast Moroccans as criminals. This is the case of some family films targeting younger audiences. Although such family films might seem naïve and innocent, they offer a fresh and alternative view by portraying young Moroccans in other roles than as delinquents. An example is the popular film *Polleke* by the Dutch director Ineke Houtman (2003). The theme of the film is puppy love crossing ethnic boundaries. *Polleke* is based on a

[15] Curvers, Emma (2016). "Shariff Korver en Alex Wuijts over Infiltrant." *Cineville.nl*, 12 May 2016. Retrieved from: http://cineville.nl/magazine/shariff-korver-en-alex-wuijts-over-infiltrant

children's book about an 11-year-old blond Dutch girl who falls in love with a Moroccan boy. Because his conservative family wants him to marry a Moroccan girl, the boy breaks off the relationship with the Dutch girl. While the divorced mother of the Dutch girl starts a relationship with her daughter's teacher, the girl accompanies her drug-addicted father to a rehabilitation centre. Despite all problems, the mother of the Dutch girl invites the Moroccan family to her wedding with the teacher. During the wedding party, the Dutch girl asks the Moroccan boy to dance and in the end they kiss. Although the Moroccan family is stereotypically portrayed as conservative carpet sellers dressed in traditional clothes, the feel-good family film winds up in a happy-ending in which cultural differences are overcome when the Moroccan father allows his son to dance with the Dutch girl. As the film did well at the box office, a Dutch public broadcaster reworked the film into a television series. Another family film offering a non-stereotypical image of Moroccans is the television film *Impasse* (Sytske Kok, 2005). This film portrays a timid Moroccan boy who feels like an outsider in his family. During a family celebration, he has a conflict with his father and runs away from home. After a nocturnal meeting with homeless people in the underground and a stay in a hammam, the boy comes to understand his homesick mother and the feeling of not being able to go home. Through psychological portraits of a homesick mother, an absent father and an introvert son, the film goes beyond superficial generalisations about Moroccans and their cultural otherness. In the context of the brutal murders and the harsh political climate at the time, these family films went against the grain of criminalising Moroccans in many of the other Dutch films at the time. Even if these family films were successful, it was the release of the multicultural comedy *Shouf Shouf Shouf Habibi!* (2004) that became a turning point in the representation of Moroccans in Dutch cinema.

3.4. *Shouf Shouf Habibi*! (2004) and the Rise of Multicultural Comedies

While the previously mentioned social dramas, crime films and family films were mainly serious films about Moroccans in the Netherlands, a new trend of multicultural comedies emerged with the box-office success of the film *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* [Hush Hush Baby] (2004). This evolution in Dutch cinema is in line with the shift from the social realism of the 'cinema of duty' towards 'the pleasures of hybridity' identified by

Sarita Malik (1996) in Black British Cinema. Contrary to the social dramas and crime films characterised by dark narratives of racism, criminal gangs and terrorism, the genre of multicultural comedies introduced a light-hearted approach to ethnic differences in contemporary Dutch society. This light-hearted and comical approach soon proved to attract not only the native Dutch audiences but also Moroccan youngsters. Because of the commercial success of the comedy *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* (2004), Dutch film producers increasingly realised that ethnic minorities make up a significant share of their potential customer groups and saw an economic opportunity in making films for them.

Shouf Shouf Habibi! became a prototype of ethnic marketing in Dutch cinema. Whereas film marketing is generally aimed at attracting the largest audience, the practice of ethnic marketing focuses on a limited audience with a specific ethnic background different from the majority population of the country. The marketing strategies then make use the cultural needs of a specific ethnic group in terms of beliefs, values, norms, language, and religion in order to communicate to and persuade that audience (Pires & Stanton, 2015). As a case study of how film producers engaged in ethnic marketing, I will discuss in more detail how the production company Dutch Mountain Film came to produce films like *Shouf Shouf Habibi* (2004). Even if film producers aim to attract ethnic minority audiences, I argue that ethnic marketing does not necessarily lead to a less stereotypical representation of ethnic minorities. When ethnic minority actors make jokes about their own community, however, this tends to be perceived as self-depreciation and seems to be less offensive.

Producer René Huybrechtse was mainly known for developing and producing films for young audiences. After making youth programmes for public television, he started to make fictional youth films. As the founder of Theorema Films and Dutch Mountain Film, he was one of the first film producers interested in making films for migrant youngsters. In an interview I conducted with him[16], he explained how the film first originated from an idea of the Dutch-Moroccan actor Mimoun Oaïssa who was dissatisfied with the stereotypical roles he was offered in other film productions. For this reason, Oaïssa contacted the relatively unknown Dutch director Albert ter Heerdt to make a more light-hearted film in which Oaïssa would play the leading role.

[16] Personal interview with producer René Huybrechtse, Dutch Mountain Film, Amsterdam, 20 August 2009

Although Albert ter Heerdt had written some screenplays for television series, *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* would become his feature film debut. Nevertheless, it turned out to be difficult to find funding for the project because many Dutch producers assumed that a film with Moroccans in leading roles would attract very few spectators. Producer René Huybrechtse, however, had noticed that many Moroccan youngsters regularly frequented film theatres and saw a commercial opportunity in making films for this underserved audience. With a low budget for marketing, the production team focused its marketing efforts on Moroccan youngsters living in Dutch cities by analysing their life-world and making publicity in schools, on the radio, Internet, etc. After a test screening, the production team changed the original tragic ending of the film by adding a more comical closing scene. The producer and distributor also decided to market the film as a comedy with very cheerful publicity, much to the surprise of the director who saw the film as a tragicomedy. Through these marketing strategies, the production team succeeded in attracting Moroccan youngsters to their film. At the same time, some well-known Dutch actors were given additional roles in the film to attract also the wider Dutch audience. Ironically, the first film with a mainly Moroccan cast was advertised as a 'primal Dutch comedy' ('*Oerhollands*'). This suggests that the film also aimed to reach the wider audience of native Dutch in the Netherlands. Most interestingly, the distributor did not want to release the film at the International Film Festival in Rotterdam because he feared the image of an arthouse film would put off the general public (Blokker, 2004). The film finally was advertised with a flashy poster that underlined its comical intentions to avoid the label of 'migrant drama'.

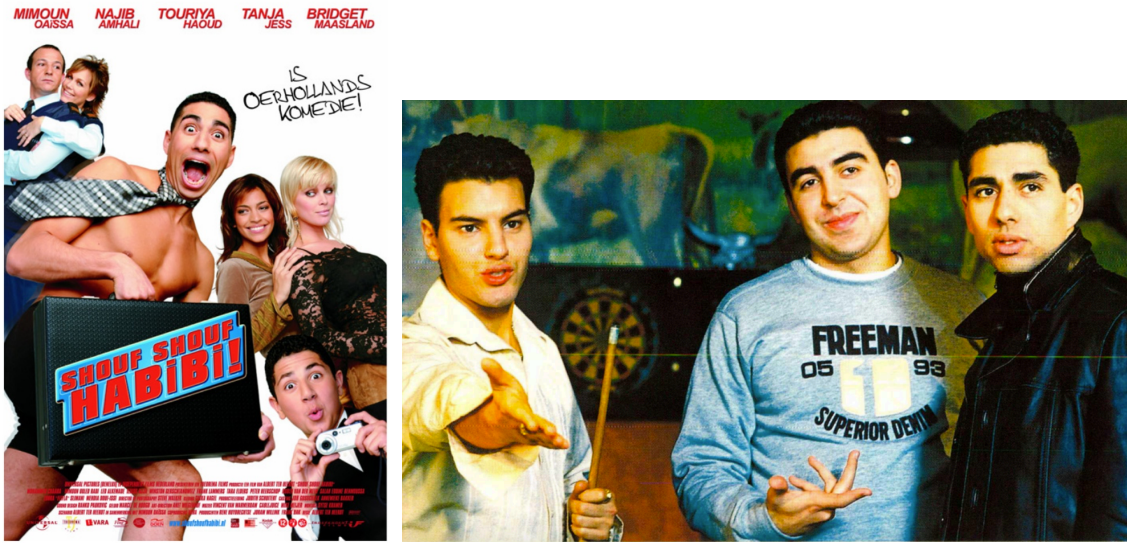

Fig. 3.2 Film poster *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* and film still depicting Ap and his friends

Even if *Shouf Shouf Habibi* (2004) became known as a comedy, the storyline still bears the traces of the director's original screenplay as a tragicomedy. The main theme of the film can be described as what has been called in political debates as 'the failure of integration', in which Moroccan and Dutch culture are depicted as incompatible. To make this tragic narrative more bearable, the Dutch-Moroccan actors added comical elements. Starting with a voice-over from the Dutch-Moroccan protagonist Ap (Abdullah) telling stereotypical commonplaces about Morocco as an underdeveloped country, the film introduces his Moroccan family and friends in a comical way. The film presents all the Moroccan family members as struggling with their position in Dutch society. While his conservative father upholds Moroccan traditions, his eldest brother is a completely assimilated policeman. His sister refuses to wear an Islamic veil at school, where his little brother is caught for misconduct. With help from his older brother, the unemployed Ap gets an office job but he fails to make a good impression. Although he first rejected the plan, Ap joins his friends who want to rob a bank but the robbery fails miserably. When his sister runs away from home to escape an arranged marriage and moves in with her Dutch lover, Ap goes after her and slaps her. After these acts, Ap promises his father that he will start a serious job and marry a bride from Morocco. Working in a butchery, Ap arranges a marriage with a Moroccan girl but just before the marriage ceremony he runs away. When his father dies, the whole family attends the funeral in Morocco. In a final scene, Ap and his friends seem to have found serious jobs as railway guards but they miss the train. In this final scene, cultural differences like Dutch punctuality are contrasted with stereotypical Moroccan habits like laidbackness. Through its light-hearted approach laced with many jokes and comical situations, the film distinguished itself from the overly serious 'cinema of duty' that dominated the representation of ethnic minorities in many socially engaged fiction films and documentaries. The comical use of prejudices, however, is two-sided. On the one hand, stereotypes like Moroccans robbing a bank confirm the negative image of this minority. On the other hand, the comical clumsiness of the robbery subverts the populist idea that the Dutch should fear those Moroccans. In the same vein, Ap is depicted as a thief, but stealing a child's four-wheeler makes the cliché of the Moroccan thief more comical than grim. Nevertheless, the persistent repetition of prejudices creates the image of two incompatible cultures. While the clash of these

cultures provokes hilarious situations, the film does not undermine these stereotypes but simply uses them as a device to cause laughter.

When *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* was first released in 2004, the film was well received by the Dutch press. Despite being advertised as a comedy, the film was taken seriously as a social drama as well. Journalist Bas Blokker (2004) even compared the film with Luchino Visconti's masterpiece *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (1960) as both films depict migrant families struggling to find their place in a new environment. Even the ever-critical Anil Ramdas praised the film for its attention to individual characters and self-depreciation within the Moroccan community: 'With *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* we realise that it is about the relationships within ethnic groups and that the key concept is not integration but emancipation.' (Ramdas, 2004). It was also observed that many Dutch-Moroccans came to the film theatres because of this film. While previously films featuring Moroccans only reached very limited audiences mainly in the circuits of educational screenings and some small art house film theatres, *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* surprisingly became the highest grossing Dutch film of 2004. With 318,026 admissions and a box-office result of 2,308,496 €, *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* was the only Dutch film that equalled the commercial success of American blockbusters like *Spider-Man 2* (2004). At a time of grim political debates about the integration of Moroccans in Dutch society, the popularity of the film proved that there was a demand for films that portray Moroccans in a humorous way. Besides its commercial success, the film also gained critical acclaim being selected for the Berlin International Film Festival and winning the Award of Dutch Film Critics and the Special Jury Award at the Netherlands Film Festival. In the aftermath of the film's success, the Netherlands Film Fund became more sensitive to the question how Dutch films can reach a more diverse audience (Lohy, 2005). Based on the film, the eponymous television series *Shouf Shouf* was broadcast with largely the same cast on Dutch public television from 2006 to 2009. While the film still had a dramatic storyline, the television series directed by Tim Oliehoek was in the first place a situation comedy revolving around a group of Dutch-Moroccan friends experiencing different situations each episode.

In the years following *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* (2004), the Dutch film industry released a wave of films featuring Dutch-Moroccan actors in leading roles. More specifically, several novels by the young Dutch-Moroccan writer Khalid Boudou like *Het Schnitzelparadijs* (2001), *De President* (2005) and *De Pizzamaffia* (2007) have

been turned into commercially successful films. The first book was brought to the big screen by the Dutch director Martin Koolhoven eponymously as *Het Schnitzelparadijs* [Schnitzel Paradise] (2005), a romantic comedy about a student whose Moroccan father wants him to study medicine but the young man prefers to work as a dishwasher in the schnitzel restaurant of a Dutch hotel chain. In the kitchen of the restaurant, the student meets a multicultural motley crew consisting of a crazy pirate-like chef, a Yugoslav butcher, a Turkish fool, a Moroccan braggart (played by Mimoun Oaïssa from *Shouf Shouf Habibi!*) and others. Amidst these colourful characters, the Dutch-Moroccan student falls in love with the pretty blonde niece of the Dutch hotel owner. While the young lovers keep their relationship a secret because their families would disapprove, the nasty assistant chef betrays them and the Dutch-Moroccan student gets fired by the aunt of the girl. In the end, the young man walks into a fancy dinner of the girl's wealthy family and runs away from them with the girl. This romantic comedy became the most commercially successful Dutch film of 2005, echoing the success of the other multicultural box-office hit *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* in the previous year. *Het Schnitzelparadijs* (2005) was selected for the youth programme of the Berlin International Film Festival and the motley crew in the kitchen won all together a Dutch Golden Calf award for Best Supporting Actors. In 2008, a television series based on the film but without the leading actors was broadcast across several weeks. As it did not reach a wide audience, the television series was soon discontinued. The film has been considered as a multicultural comedy because of the love story between a dark Dutch-Moroccan boy and a blonde Dutch girl, amidst ethnically diverse characters in the kitchen. Contrary to *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* (2004), the film actually pays little attention to the Moroccan culture of the protagonist and other characters. Rather than emphasising cultural differences, the film deals with class distinctions between the rich family of the girl and the poor workers in the kitchen. With its happy ending, however, the feel-good film claims that love overcomes ethnic and class differences.

In the following years, several romantic comedies starred just one leading actor of Moroccan origin. Despite this ethnic casting, these entertainment films barely paid attention to Moroccan culture. Director Martin Koolhoven went on to make another romantic comedy *'n Beetje Verliefd* [Happy Family] (2006) with Yes-R, a Dutch-Moroccan rapper who also sings in the soundtrack of the film, in the leading role. As the grandson of a Dutch widower, the Dutch-Moroccan teenager encourages

his grandfather to find a new partner. When the old man falls in love with an energetic Flemish woman, his adult daughters oppose this relationship. Meanwhile, the Dutch-Moroccan boy is in love with a Turkish girl but her brother accepts the teenager only if he wins an oil-wrestling contest. As the grandfather used to be a wrestler, the Dutch-Moroccan teenager asks to be trained by him. Following some peculiar training activities, the teenager wins the wrestling contest. While the grandfather participates in a dance competition with his new lover, he falls to the ground because of his heart problems. After his recovery in the hospital, the whole family is present at the wedding party of the grandfather and his new partner. Starring well-known personalities like rapper Yes-R, the film can be seen as a commercial product aimed at attracting a broad, young and ethnically diverse audience. Although the film did well at the Dutch box-office and was later broadcast on public television, film critics rejected the film as cheap entertainment without a socially relevant message. Despite the presence of a Dutch-Moroccan teenager, his Turkish girlfriend and her brother, the storyline does not focus much on the ethnic backgrounds of the characters except for the Turkish oil-wrestling contest.

Following the trend of romantic comedies, the Dutch director Johan Nijenhuis, mainly known for his teen films, produced and directed *Alibi* (2008), a comedy about a Dutch-Moroccan rascal, played by Achmed Akkabi, who is interrogated by the police in Amsterdam. Through flashbacks, the natural-born liar tells how his deception skills attracted the attention of a wheeler-dealer who recruited him in his 'alibi company' that sells watertight excuses to people who want to mislead their partners, family or others. When the boss plans to cheat on his wife, he asks the Dutch-Moroccan novice to create an alibi for his extramarital activities. Meanwhile, the novice falls in love with a waitress who looks for complete honesty in a relationship. Once it turns out that his boss is actually seducing the waitress, the young man takes revenge by hooking up with the wife of his boss. In the end, the adultery comes out leading to a series of fights. After attempting to cover up his mistakes with another lie, the Dutch-Moroccan guy finally tells the truth and kisses the waitress. With 237,727 admissions, the film was one of the commercially most successful Dutch films of the year 2008. Despite the leading role of the Dutch-Moroccan Achmed Akkabi, the film did not engage with social issues like migration or Islam in the Netherlands. Downplaying the leading actor's ethnic background, the filmmakers only aimed at providing entertainment to a mainstream audience. In the

same way, the Dutch splatter comedy *Zombibi* (2012), directed by Martijn Smits and Erwin van den Eshof, also stars Dutch-Moroccan protagonists, inspiring the first title *Shouf Shouf Zombibi* that was later abbreviated to *Zombibi*. Despite the fact that the heroes of the film are two Dutch-Moroccan brothers, the splatter comedy is just an ordinary entertainment film without a social message. While the presence of Dutch-Moroccan actors seems to be a marketing strategy to attract Dutch-Moroccan youngsters to watch the film, the ethnic background of the leading actors is largely irrelevant to the story of a zombie attack in Amsterdam.

Contrary to the above-mentioned films, a romantic comedy in which the Moroccan background of the leading actor Najib Amhali does play an important role in the narrative is *Valentino* (2013), a remake by the Dutch director Remy van Heugten of the French film *L'Italien* (2010). The film focuses on Valentino, a successful Italian car salesman who is about to get promoted and to marry his boss's daughter. Although Valentino pretends to be Italian, he is actually of Moroccan origin. In order to keep up the appearance of being Italian, Valentino excessively enacts stereotypical Italian manners like wearing Italian suits, golden necklaces, a goatee, eating spaghetti and pizza and decorating his house with pictures of the Virgin Mary and the Italian national football team. When his father is struck by a heart attack, however, Valentino promises to him to fulfil the requirements of Ramadan during one month. Even if Valentino performs the Islamic rituals in secret, his strange behaviour compromises his promotion and his future marriage. Refusing to present his family to his fiancée, Valentino's true origins are eventually revealed to his boss by a rival colleague competing for the promotion. When the boss tells his daughter that Valentino is actually a Moroccan, she is first angry because of his lies. In the end, however, she accepts his Moroccan identity. In this sense, the film conveys the message that people should never hide their true origins and that love overcomes ethnic prejudices. With the popular Dutch-Moroccan stand-up comedian Najib Amhali in the leading role, *Valentino* (2013) became a commercial success in Dutch film theatres. While the film was not critically acclaimed, the playful way of dealing with stereotypes illustrates in an interesting manner how ethnic identities are constructed, performed and perceived. In this sense, the film helps to deconstruct the representation of Moroccan subjects in Dutch cinema.

Although most of the multicultural comedies mentioned here are directed by white Dutch filmmakers, the screenplays of films like *Het Schnitzelparadijs* (2005)

were based on the novels of the Dutch-Moroccan writer Khalid Boudou. Likewise, two other Dutch comedies, *Pizza Mafia* (2011) and *De President* (2011), are based on the work of Khalid Boudou. The young Dutch filmmaker Tim Oliehoek who already directed the television series *Shouf Shouf!* (2006-2009) with a Dutch-Moroccan cast also filmed *Pizza Mafia* (2011). The film *Pizza Mafia* focuses on the relationship between two Dutch-Moroccan cousins Brahim and Haas who work both as delivery boys for the pizzeria owned by Brahim's father. While Brahim's father is sick, his uncle, the father of Haas, runs the business. When money is lacking in the cash register, Brahim's father accuses Haas's father of theft. Outraged by these accusations, the uncle and Haas leave the place and start up a new pizzeria on the other side of the street, which results into a 'pizza war'. Angry with his father who is obstructing his dream of becoming a pilot, Brahim goes helping his uncle in the new pizzeria. When Brahim discovers that it was his cousin Haas who had stolen the money from his father and who sabotaged Brahim's relationship with his girlfriend, Brahim speeds after Haas on his scooter in a wild chase but gets seriously injured in a crash. By consequence, Brahim can no longer participate in the entrance exam of the Royal Netherlands Air Force. When Haas replaces Brahim and secures a place for him in the Royal Netherlands Air Force, the two families reconcile their differences and become friends again. As a film directed at a young audience of migrant origin, *Pizza Mafia* (2011) attracted many spectators during the first weeks of its theatrical release but did not manage to achieve the same commercial success of films like *Het Schnitzelparadijs* (2005). Like *Valentino* (2013), the film *Pizza Mafia* (2011) illustrates how Moroccans in the Netherlands play with their ethnic identity using their Mediterranean looks to run 'authentic Italian pizzerias'. In addition, the dramatic structure of the film highlights the feuds within one Moroccan family. Depicting diverse Moroccan characters like the intelligent Brahim, his authoritarian father, the friendly uncle and the villainous cousin Haas, the film shows that the Moroccans in the Netherlands are not a homogeneous group but diverse individuals with different personality traits and aspirations. Even if this film mainly provides entertainment, its representation of Moroccans is less stereotypical than in many social dramas.

An even more unconventional story, also based on a novel by the Dutch-Moroccan writer Khalid Boudou, is *De President* [The President] (2011). Directed by the Dutch filmmaker Erik de Bruyn, this political comedy tells the unlikely story of two Moroccan goat herders, played by Achmed Akkabi and Najib Amhali, seeking fortune

as undocumented migrants on a farm in the newly established republic of the Netherlands. When a fire breaks out on the farm, Achmed saves the life of a young Romanian woman. As the Moroccan immigrant is celebrated as a hero, one of the Dutch presidential candidates proposes him to be his running mate in the electoral campaign. On the day of the elections, the Moroccan running mate gains more votes than the actual Dutch presidential candidate and becomes the first Moroccan president of the Netherlands. While the Dutch-Moroccan president travels to Romania to find the girl he saved and to bring her back to the Netherlands, the Dutch vice-president secretly collaborates with a xenophobic political rival to defame and even to assassinate the president. After his Bulgarian bodyguard is shot, the president travels to Bulgaria to attend the man's funeral. Meanwhile, the Dutch vice-president and the xenophobic politician seize the power in the Netherlands declaring that the president has no legal passport. On his return, the Dutch-Moroccan president and his friends invade the presidential palace and kidnap the vice-president. In a television show, the Dutch-Moroccan president announces his retreat from politics in order to be with the love of his life and proposes a loyal collaborator as the new prime minister of the Netherlands. While the novel of Khalid Boudou was a dark political satire parodying the rise of populist and xenophobic politicians in the Netherlands, the film by Erik de Bruyn became unfortunately a superficial entertainment film. Despite its cast of highly regarded actors, critics lambasted the film because of its chaotic shifts from vulgar comedy sketches and romantic scenes to political intrigues. Even if the film targeted a mass audience, it was commercially less successful than other multicultural comedies.

Even if not all multicultural comedies have been well received, this genre of films still contributed to Dutch cinema by bringing Dutch-Moroccan actors to the big screen. In contrast to the grim political debates about Moroccans, most of these light-hearted comedies play on stereotypes. Hot political issues like migration and integration are suddenly no longer the monopoly of serious news reports, documentaries and journalists. In the format of popular entertainment, multicultural comedies manage to challenge the heavily politicised discourses about the allegedly 'failed integration' of migrants. The fact that the multicultural comedies have mainly been made by Dutch directors, however, raises the question from which perspective these comedies are made. Until now, there has not yet emerged a movement of Dutch-Moroccan directors to challenge the mainstream Dutch cinema to the same

extent as French-Maghrebi directors have done through the *beur* cinema in France. Regardless of their playfulness, it can be argued that the Dutch multicultural comedies also reinforce prevalent stereotypes of ethnic minorities.

3.5. Post-Multicultural Dramas

The first wave of multicultural comedies brought Moroccans and other ethnic minority actors to the attention of wide audiences in the Netherlands. While multicultural comedies laugh with stereotypes and cultural differences, some Dutch film directors felt that a more serious approach to the complex issue of the multicultural society was needed after the murder of Theo van Gogh. Beyond the entertainment-oriented multicultural comedies, a more artistic wave of what I would call post-multicultural dramas was produced in the following years. Post-multiculturalism can be seen as one of the last stages in the development of multiculturalism. After the dramatic murder of Theo van Gogh, multiculturalism became increasingly blamed for the fragmentation of Dutch society. From another perspective, multiculturalism has been criticized for treating ethnic minorities as homogeneous and bounded communities. Post-multiculturalism, then, is characterised by the emergence of alternatives to multiculturalism embodied by the concept of 'super-diversity'. Steven Vertovec (2007) launched the concept of super-diversity referring to 'a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants' (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1024). Rather than focusing on Moroccans as a homogeneous community, the concept of super-diversity allows us to look at the diversity within the Moroccan community. Taking on a more nuanced and differentiated view of Moroccans in the Netherlands, some more recent social dramas can be called post-multicultural as they portray Moroccan characters in more diverse and less stereotypical roles.

After directing the groundbreaking *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* (2004), the Dutch director Albert ter Heerdt went on to make the multi-narrative drama *Kicks* (2007), telling six interrelated stories that are united by one central moment when a Dutch police officer shoots a young Moroccan rapper who was breaking into a community centre run by his brother to find music equipment there. The Dutch police officer and his Moroccan colleague wrongly believed that the boy was armed with a gun (which

turned out to be a microphone). The event leads to a polarisation between ethnic minorities in the city who believe this was a racist act and the white Dutch population. Against this background, the film follows the lives of several characters of the rebellious Moroccan boy who is fired in the supermarket, his older brother (Mimoun Oaïssa) who is a kickboxing trainer, the Moroccan police officer (Maryam Hassouni) and her fiancée (Mohammed Chaara), an aspiring sergeant in the Dutch army. Besides the Moroccan characters, there is a Dutch advertiser who aims to make a socially relevant film by searching asylum seekers, while his girlfriend goes to kebab shops in order to find Turks. Rather than bringing a clear political message, the film evokes with its many subplots an impression of the ethnic tensions in the Netherlands in the early 21st century. With its complex mosaic narrative and its delicate theme of racism, the arthouse film positions itself as a Dutch version of award-winning films like Paul Haggis's *Crash* (2004) and Alejandro Iñárritu's *Babel* (2006). While *Kicks* (2007) was not a commercial success, the film obtained some nominations and awards on film festivals. A similar multi-narrative film is *Amsterdam* (2009), directed by the Belgian theatre director Ivo van Hove and also starring Mimoun Oaïssa. Following a rich American couple, two Dutch criminals, a French gay couple, a German working class family and two undocumented Moroccans, the arthouse film portrays different people who are at the same time in the multicultural city of Amsterdam without any further connecting narrative.

In the same year, Dutch public television broadcast a more conventional social drama *Coach* (2009), directed by Joram Lürsen, about an upper class Dutch woman who engages in a coaching project helping a Moroccan student to learn Dutch. Supporting the student's ambition to enter acting school, the woman comes into conflict with the Moroccan father who wants his son to work in his garage. When the daughter of the Dutch woman falls in love with the Moroccan boy, her xenophobic husband angrily leaves the house. In the end, the Dutch woman and her daughter prefer to host the Moroccan boy rather than to reconcile with the xenophobic husband. With its realistic depiction of family relationships and conflicts, the television film was well received by critics. Beyond the abundance of multicultural comedies, this social drama deals in a non-stereotypical way with relevant questions about prejudices, contact and conflicts in a multicultural society.

3.6. Transnational Road Movies

While most Dutch films about Moroccan immigrants have been shot in the Netherlands, some filmmakers cross borders and travel to Morocco exploring the country of origin of its protagonists. Transnational road movies can be excellent vehicles to frame themes like migration. Due to the high costs of filming abroad and the geographical limitations for public funding by the Netherlands Film Fund, however, transnational road films have remained exceptional projects in the Dutch film industry. Apart from some films in which some scenes are set abroad, we can mention films like *Roos & Rana* (2001) in which two girls travel to Turkey, *Mijn opa de bankrover* [My Grandpa, the Bank Robber] *(*2011) in which a Dutch-Surinamese girl travels to Suriname with her grandfather, or the classic *Wan Pipel* (1974) in which the Dutch-Surinamese protagonist returns to his country of origin. With regards to Dutch-Moroccan characters, there are films like *Dunya & Desie in Marokko* (2008), *Hitte/Harara* (2008) and Rabat (2011) in which the Dutch-Moroccan protagonists undertake a journey to their country of origin.

Based on the popular television series *Dunya & Desie* (2002-2004), the teen film *Dunya & Desie in Marokko* [Dunya & Desie in Morocco] (2008), directed by Dana Nechushtan, revolves around the friendship between a girl of Moroccan origin (Maryam Hassouni) and a blonde Dutch girl (Eva van de Wijdeven). While the television series depicts the daily life of the two girls in Amsterdam, the 2008 film is a road movie in which the two friends travel from the Netherlands to Morocco. Contrary to most films that focus on male Dutch-Moroccan protagonists, this film highlights the perspective of female teenagers. The film starts with a sharp contrast in the lifestyles of the Dutch and the Dutch-Moroccan girl. While the blonde Desie jumps from one boyfriend to another, Dunya has to travel to Morocco where her family is arranging a marriage for her with a cousin. Desie discovers that she is pregnant from her driving instructor who does not want the child. As her own mother tells that she regrets having giving birth to Desie without a father, Desie wants to know her father who moved to Morocco. Travelling to Morocco, Desie joins Dunya and her family, who are disturbed by her behaviour. When Desie decides to go to Casablanca to find her father, Dunya joins her. After some quarrels, the two girls find Desie's father and his new family in a remote service station. Desie's father reveals that her mother really wanted her as a baby. Satisfied with these words, Desie and Dunya return to Dunya's

family. Meanwhile, also Desie's mother and stepfather arrive in Morocco. Together, the two families bridge their differences and start dancing and singing around a campfire. After the Dutch public broadcaster relayed the 2002-2004 television series *Dunya & Desie* as publicity in the months before the theatrical release of the film, the film became a box-office success. The film was also critically acclaimed on youth film festivals in Sarajevo and Tel Aviv and was chosen as the Netherlands' official submission to the Academy Awards in 2008. While the television series emphasised the similarities between the two teenage girls in Amsterdam, the road movie rather contrasts the frivolous Dutch girl to the conservative Moroccan people. Nevertheless, by presenting the father of the Dutch girl as a Dutch expat in Morocco, the film suggests that migration goes both ways, not only from Morocco to the Netherlands but also the other way around.

Also the road movie *Hitte/Harara* (2008) by the Dutch director Lodewijk Crijns stars two female friends, a frivolous Dutch and a more serious Dutch-Moroccan girl, who are travelling by car to Morocco to buy furniture for their new henna- and nail studio. In Morocco, a Moroccan boy hits their car. He immediately offers to repair the car in the garage of his family. The Moroccan boy turns out to be a gay who wants the girls to smuggle him into the Netherlands where his Dutch boyfriend lives. On the ferry to Spain, however, the Moroccan boy dies. Although they decided to silence the event, the boyfriend of the Moroccan boy calls them to know what happened. Disturbed by the event, the two girls eventually stop with their henna- and nail studio and separate their lives. Based on a real story, the film was not theatrically released but broadcast on Dutch public television. With its smooth editing and prominent pop music soundtrack, the film targeted a youthful audience. Because of its focus on the opposing characters of the girls, the film obscures the social drama of the Moroccan boy, making it more a dramatic teen film than a social critique on human smuggling.

Fig. 3.3 Film posters of road movies *Dunya & Desie* (2008) and *Rabat* (2011)

With the road movie *Rabat* (2011), the young Dutch directors Jim Taihuttu and Victor Ponten made an impressive film debut starring three Dutch-Moroccan protagonists. The plot revolves around Nadir, a young economics graduate (played by Nasrdin Dchar) who is asked by his father to drive a taxi to his uncle in Rabat, Morocco. Against his will, his friends (played by Achmed Akkabi and Marwan Kenzari) decide to join him on his journey through the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Spain and Morocco. Along the way, they pick up a female hitchhiker who invites the boys to a party of gay friends in Barcelona. There, Nadir falls in love with the female hitchhiker while his friends are being kicked out of a nightclub. On the road in Spain, the Dutch-Moroccans are stopped by the corrupt police and treated unfairly. On a Spanish beach, Nadir reveals that his mission is not only to hand over the car in Rabat, but also to meet a potential bride that his father has arranged for him. After a fight over their future plans, the three friends get back together and cross the sea to Morocco. After repairing the taxi and delivering it to his uncle, Nadir walks with his potential bride along the coast when they confess to each other that they both oppose this arranged marriage. In order to make his uncle cancel the marriage, Nadir pretends that he wants to open a shawarma restaurant with topless waitresses. In the end,

Nadir plans to go back to the girl in Barcelona, while one of his friends wants to travel further to his family in Tunisia, while the other will return to Amsterdam to start up the shawarma restaurant. Critically, the film was well-received being nominated for many Dutch Golden Calf awards like Best Film and Best Screenplay. The leading actor Nasrdin Dchar won the Dutch Golden Calf award for Best Actor in 2011. More than a transnational road movie that brings the main characters from the Netherlands to Morocco, the film is a coming-of-age story of three young men who are thinking about their future and their role in society. Arriving in Morocco, they realise that their own future lies not in the country of origin of their parents but elsewhere.

While most films about Moroccans in the Netherlands have focused on Dutch-speaking second-generation youngsters who are born and raised in the Netherlands, few films have dealt with new migrants coming from Morocco. With *Atlantic.* (2014), the Dutch director Jan-Willem van Ewijk tells the story of a young Moroccan fisher who lives in a coastal village where every summer more and more European tourists come windsurfing. Befriending a Dutch windsurfer and his girlfriend, he falls in love with the girl. When the Dutch couple returns to the Netherlands, the Moroccan fisher, who has become an experienced windsurfer, decides to embark on a dangerous journey using his surfboard to traverse 300 kilometres from the Moroccan coast to Europe. Trough dreamlike close-ups of the Moroccan surfer alternated with shots of the waves in an endless ocean, the film does not reveal whether the adventurer is still on his way or if he arrived or returned with empty hands. Filmed with non-professional Moroccan actors, the film was premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and also nominated for awards at other festivals. Combining adventure and social drama, this transnational film highlights migration from the point of view of the sending country. Even if a white Dutch filmmaker directed the film, he wrote the screenplay together with a local villager in Morocco.

Crossing cultural and physical borders, the transnational films discussed here show how migration challenges the cultural and geographical definition of Dutch cinema. The travels of Dutch and Dutch-Moroccan men and women to Morocco illustrate how the two countries have become connected not only through the presence of Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands but also through tourism to Morocco. The transnational freedom experienced by European people, however, sharply contrasts with the difficulties experienced by Moroccans to enter Fortress Europe. The increased border controls and the strict rules that are designed to limit

migration to the Europe have all too often led to human dramas on the road and at sea. In this sense, we can only hope that the cinematic representation of migrants and their stories can help to raise awareness and solidarity among the audiences in Europe and beyond.

3.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed how the cinematic representation of Moroccans in the Netherlands evolved over the last decades. Beyond the idea that a national cinema upholds the myth of a homogeneous community, the proliferation of films featuring Moroccans in the Netherlands illustrates that even the cinema of a small nation can reflect the social and cultural diversity within a nation. The wave of 'Mocro Movies' in Dutch cinema, however, is a fairly recent phenomenon and illustrates how ethnic boundaries have become more pronounced in Dutch cinema. When the first Moroccan guest workers settled in the Netherlands during the 1970s, only a few socially engaged documentary filmmakers dedicated attention to them in a social-issue-based cinema. These politically correct films depicted Moroccans mainly as victims of social exclusion and discrimination. The political climate in the Netherlands nevertheless changed in the 2000s when populist politicians increasingly scapegoated Moroccans. The stigmatisation of Moroccans was further reinforced after the murders on Pim Fortuyn and Theo van Gogh. In the general debate, political correctness was replaced by harsh diatribes against Moroccans. The cinematic response to these evolutions was the rise of entertainment films featuring Moroccans in increasingly diverse genres. Apart from the politically correct cinema of duty, Moroccans were often portrayed as criminals in several crime films. In the years following the groundbreaking comedy *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* (2004), we have observed a diversification of film genres featuring Moroccan characters.

As we have seen in previous chapters, film production in a small nation like the Netherlands depends heavily on state funding. In line with the early TV programmes oriented towards ethnic minorities, Moroccans were clearly delineated as a target group defined by the Dutch government's ethnic minorities policies. Not surprisingly, the first documentaries and social dramas visualised the politically correct definition of ethnic minorities as socio-economically deprived groups. The major shift in the representation of Moroccans, however, was not policy-driven. In this chapter, I have argued that the rise of politically incorrect Mocro Movies and their

diversification were a market-driven phenomenon. Since the 2000s, film and television producers realised that ethnically diverse consumers make up a significant share of their potential customer group and saw an economic opportunity in making films that reach underserved audiences in an ethnically diverse society. The film *Shouf Shouf Habibi* (2004) was a turning point in Dutch cinema. While Dutch film producers used to target the general Dutch audience, the team of *Shouf Shouf Habibi* used ethnic marketing strategies targeting migrant youngsters as a niche audience. Beyond the economic motives, I claim that the Mocro Movies also broke with the political correctness of earlier documentaries and social dramas. Through their light-hearted approach laced with many jokes and comical situations, multicultural comedies were able to exploit cultural stereotypes and prejudices in order to cause laughter. The persistent repetition of cultural differences as comical device, however, also confirms the image of two incompatible cultures. Besides multicultural comedies, Dutch filmmakers nevertheless continued to make social dramas. Later social dramas, however, showed more mature and diversified roles for Moroccan characters. In what I have called post-multicultural dramas, filmmakers dealt in a non-stereotypical way with relevant questions about prejudices, contact and conflicts. In addition, Dutch filmmakers engaged in some transnational road movies crossing the borders between the Netherlands, Morocco and other countries, echoing the trajectories of migrants and challenging the geographical definition of Dutch national cinema as films made in the Netherlands.

Even if some films continue to reaffirm prevailing stereotypes of Moroccans, I argue that the diversification of genres in which they feature led to a more varied cinematic representation of this minority group than before. In this sense, I believe the proliferation of Mocro Movies might have an emancipatory potential. The success of these comedies, crime films and road movies have led to the emergence of Dutch-Moroccan stars and the commercialisation of films targeting this ethnic minority as a new market. Although the content of some films can still be criticised, the increased interest of Dutch film producers in Moroccan characters has contributed to more varied roles for this ethnic minority. Nevertheless, it is surprising that the production of these films has mainly been in the hands of white Dutch filmmakers. Except for documentary filmmaker Fatima Jebli Ouazzani, very few filmmakers of Moroccan origin have become established filmmakers in the Netherlands. Given the poor socio-economic status of many migrant families, studying film is still not an evident choice

for many Moroccan youngsters in the Netherlands. Even if the Dutch film industry remains dominated by native white Dutch, however, it can be expected that in future years more filmmakers of Moroccan origin will graduate from film schools and become active in the Dutch film industry. With the increased attention for Moroccans as a potential cinema audience, the developments discussed in this chapter suggest that it will become more likely for filmmakers of Moroccan origin to find producers to fund their projects in the Netherlands. In the last decade, the growing presence of actors and actresses of Moroccan origin in mainstream Dutch films indicates that the white Dutch film industry is opening up in order to better represent the diverse population of the Netherlands. In order to discuss the importance of ethnic minority filmmakers taking control over the image of their community, I will discuss in the following chapter the case of Dutch-Turkish filmmakers.

4. Turks in Dutch Cinema: *De kinderen van mijn vader* (2005) and *Gangsterboys* (2010)

The history of the Turkish community in the Netherlands shows many similarities with that of the Moroccans. Due to their shared religion, both Turks and Moroccans have become increasingly seen as 'the Muslim Other' in the Netherlands. In order to fill labour shortages in its flourishing industries during the golden 1960s, the Netherlands signed a recruitment agreement with Turkey in 1964. With the economic decline after the oil crises in the 1970s, Dutch enterprises no longer recruited new guest workers after 1974. Many guest workers who were already in the Netherlands became unemployed and ended up in deprived urban neighbourhoods. As the Dutch authorities expected that the Turkish guest workers would return to their country of origin, Dutch policy-makers paid little attention to them. Nevertheless, many of the Turkish guest workers brought over their families to the Netherlands through family reunification programmes. During the second half of the 20th century, the Turkish community became one of the largest ethnic minorities in the Netherlands. As soon as it became clear that many Turkish families would stay permanently in the Netherlands, politicians argued that Turkish people should integrate into Dutch society. In public debates, the question was raised whether the traditional culture of Turkish immigrants was compatible with modern life in the Netherlands. While Dutch policy-makers promoted tolerance and multiculturalism in the 1980s and 1990s, from the early 2000s right-wing populists like Pim Fortuyn and Geert Wilders used a harsh rhetoric against Muslims, arguing that their religion is not compatible with the norms and values of Dutch society. The rise of radical Islam in the 21st century and political violence in Turkey further strengthened prejudices and fears of Muslims and Turks in the Netherlands. Even if the Turks in the Netherlands are more numerous than the Moroccans, they have become less the object of entertainment films than the Moroccans. While 'Mocro Movies' became very popular since the early 2000s, films featuring Turkish characters have remained scarcer.

The case of Turks in Dutch cinema, however, is interesting because several filmmakers of Turkish origin have succeeded in making their own films, taking control over the image of themselves and their community. Given the male dominance in both the Dutch film industry and the Turkish community, it is even more remarkable that mainly women of Turkish origin have been able to establish a career as a

filmmaker in the Netherlands. This could be due to the increased attention to women in ethnic minorities policies. From the perspective of intersectionality, a concept coined by feminist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), it is argued that multiple dimensions of identity like gender, race, ethnicity and class are intertwined and lead to an intersection of multiple social and cultural hierarchies. Taking into account the intersectional perspective, we can analyse the position of women minority filmmakers not only within the Turkish community but also within the Dutch film industry and how their dual minority position influences their films.

In this chapter, I will first contextualise from a historical perspective the documentaries that have been made by majority Dutch filmmakers about Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands since the 1970s. Even if these Dutch filmmakers displayed a strong social engagement, their films look from an observational majority perspective at Turkish immigrants as victims of social injustice, a common theme in the so-called 'cinema of duty' (Malik, 1996). From a minority perspective, however, I argue that filmmakers of Turkish origin in the Netherlands have made more personal films about the Turkish community in the Netherlands. Often starting from their own family experiences, they show a multi-layered portrait of Turkish people in the Netherlands. As a case study, I will discuss in more detail the work of Meral Uslu, one of the most prolific Dutch-Turkish filmmakers in the Netherlands. Besides Uslu, also several other female filmmakers of Turkish origin have made personal documentaries about Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands. These intimate and low-budget documentaries sharply contrast with the multicultural comedies and crime films produced more recently by majority Dutch film companies. Following the commercial success of multicultural films with Moroccan characters, Dutch film producers also made entertainment films for the Turkish community in the Netherlands. Films like the crime comedy *Gangsterboys* (2010) featured predominantly male Turkish actors in leading roles. Despite their comical intentions, however, such films draw on negative stereotypes of migrants as criminals. In order to highlight the differences between a minority and a majority perspective in the representation of Turks in the Netherlands, I will compare the personal documentary *De Kinderen van mijn vader* [The Children of My Father] (2005) by Meral Uslu with the crime comedy *Gangsterboys* (2010) made by the Dutch director Paul Ruven. In doing so, I argue that the representation of Turkish immigrants by a director of Turkish origin is not necessarily a more positive but a more realistic one based on

lived experiences contrary to that offered by a Dutch director who primarily draws on indirect knowledge and stereotypes, even if a Dutch-Turkish screenwriter was involved to legitimise the authenticity of the film.

4.1. The Ethnographic Gaze of Dutch Documentary Filmmakers

Documentaries about Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands can be considered as a kind of ethnographic filmmaking. The position of Dutch filmmakers making films about Turkish immigrants resembles that of the ethnographic filmmakers in the sense that these filmmakers depict cultural differences. From a postcolonial perspective, quite some attention has been paid to the power relations in the cross-cultural encounter between Western filmmakers and the non-Western Other depicted in ethnographic films (Naficy & Gabriel, 1993; Rony, 1996; Shohat, 1993). In ethnographic documentaries, the filmmakers build up their authority within the film through styles of narration, selecting whom or what is to be filmed, etc. According to Heider (2006), a documentary is ethnographic if it is based on ethnography or making a detailed description and analysis of human behaviour based on a long-term study on the spot. Focusing on Turkish immigrants as their subject of interest, Dutch documentary filmmakers aim to understand the reality lived by this minority group. Like ethnographers, these filmmakers spend time with their subjects to gain their trust in order to obtain information and images for their documentary film. With the goal of truthful representation of the real world, documentaries relate to their filmed subjects in another way than fictional films. Documentaries are judged according to their faithfulness to the pre-filmic reality that is recorded. However, what constitutes reality and fiction in documentaries is not always easy to distinguish. As film scholar Dirk Eitzen states: “Every representation of reality is no more than a fiction in the sense that it is an artificial construct, a highly contrived and selective view of the world, produced for some purpose and therefore unavoidably reflecting a given subjectivity or point of view” (Eitzen, 1995, p. 82). This subjective point of view constitutes what I would call the ethnographic gaze of Dutch filmmakers on the Other. Within this ethnographic gaze, there are several ways of representing the Other. Based on the different subjective voices of documentary filmmakers, Bill Nichols (1991) identified five modes of representation within the documentary film genre: expository, observational, interactive, reflexive and performative. In the documentaries made by

Dutch directors about Turks in the Netherlands, we can find examples of expository, observational and interactive modes of representation while the reflexive and performative documentaries are less frequent. As an example of a performative and reflexive documentary, I will focus in the next section on the documentary *De Kinderen van mijn vader* [The Children of My Father] (2005) by the Dutch-Turkish director Meral Uslu.

When the first Turkish guest workers were recruited in the 1960s, their situation in the Netherlands did not receive much attention in the mainstream Dutch media except for some short newsreel items. Some engaged Dutch filmmakers, however, started to make films about these marginalised guest workers. The earliest newsreels and documentaries about Turkish guest workers in the Netherlands are characterised by the 'expository mode' of filmmaking. The expository mode creates the impression of objectivity through voice-over commentary and argumentative logic where images only serve a supporting role. Through the authoritative tone of a professional reporter, expository documentaries claim to give an objective representation of the real world based on qualities such as distance, neutrality, disinterestedness, and omniscience. In such documentaries, a Dutch commentator makes for example an argument on the living conditions of the Turkish guest workers while these immigrants do not speak for themselves. In addition to this approach, some documentary filmmakers turned towards the 'observational mode' of filmmaking that emphasises a direct engagement with the everyday life of subjects as observed by an unobtrusive camera. The camera looks into life as it is lived while the social actors engage with one another, ignoring the filmmakers. A third mode of documentary filmmaking is the interactive mode in which the filmmaker does interact with his or her subjects rather than unobtrusively observe them. The interaction between filmmaker and his or her subjects takes place by means of interviews or other forms of even more direct involvement. With regards to the documentaries about Turks in the Netherlands, we can see how socially engaged Dutch filmmakers enter the field not only to observe but also to interact with Turkish immigrants. Less frequent is the 'reflexive mode' of filmmaking drawing attention to the assumptions and conventions that govern documentary filmmaking. Only few filmmakers raised awareness about the constructedness of their film's representation of reality. Finally, the performative mode of documentary filmmaking can be found in the work of Dutch-Turkish filmmakers. This mode emphasises the subjective or expressive aspects of

the filmmaker's own engagement with the subject and an audience's responsiveness to this engagement. By incorporating autobiographical elements, the performative documentary filmmaker underlines the subjective qualities of experience and memory that depart from factual recounting. I will discuss later the personal documentaries of Meral Uslu and other Dutch-Turkish filmmakers as examples of this performative mode.

Based on these modes of representing reality, the documentaries by Dutch filmmakers on Turkish immigrants can be distinguished into three approaches: first, there are documentaries portraying the daily life and personal stories of immigrants, then there are documentaries intending to raise consciousness about political issues, and finally, there are documentaries focusing on cultural traditions and the question of whether these are compatible with Dutch society. Joost Tholens was one of the first Dutch filmmakers to deal with Turkish and Moroccan guest workers in the Netherlands. In his first documentary *Hier en daar een Turk* [Here and There a Turk] (1970) he portrayed with an expository voice-over the daily life and work of two Turkish men in the Netherlands and their previous lives in Turkey. At the same time, his mirroring documentary *Hier en daar een Marokkaan* [Here and There a Moroccan] (1970) showed in similar ways two Moroccan guest workers in the Dutch mines. In these expository documentaries, the director talks not with, but about the guest workers. Also the observational documentary *Gebroken Tijd* [Broken Time] (1982) by director Floor Kooij highlighted the daily struggles of male Turkish guest workers coming from rural areas in Turkey and having to adapt to modern city life in the Netherlands. While these documentaries focused on the prototypical male guest workers, other early documentaries made by Heleen de Wit, like *Maar deze moet leren* [But this one has to learn] (1979), dealt with Turkish schoolchildren in the Netherlands. Later, she focused on women in *Vrouwen in Turkije* [Women in Turkey] (1982), an interactive documentary comparing the position of women in rural versus urban Turkey. Directing the attention to children and women, this female Dutch director moved beyond the prevailing emphasis on the male Turkish guest workers and showed the challenges faced by migrant children and women. In the same line, another female Dutch director Barbara Den Uyl made *Met een zoen van de leraar* [With a Kiss from the Teacher] (1994), a documentary about a high school in Amsterdam where the majority of the pupils were children of Turkish and Moroccan

origin. Whereas the above-mentioned films portrayed almost exclusively Turkish people, the short documentary *Buren* [Neighbours] by Ad Blijlevens (1983) looked at the interaction between Dutch and Turkish neighbours in a local urban neighbourhood. Even if they lived in the same neighbourhood, the director showed how the Dutch and Turkish communities lived separate lives. Nevertheless, when a traditional Turkish party took place in a Dutch school the director concluded that living together and celebrating diversity is still possible. In the same vein, the Dutch filmmaker Floor Kooij and his Turkish wife Sibel Bilgin made *Parallel Portraits* (2000), a series of portraits of Dutch and Turkish people who despite different social backgrounds and careers appear to have more in common than on first sight. While the first documentaries dealt with the labour conditions of Turkish guest workers, later documentaries increasingly tackled the debate about the integration of Turkish people in Dutch society. A more recent documentary took a more transnational perspective and investigated the topic of return migration. In *Heimwee* [Homesickness] (2010), director Anne Marie Borsboom followed a Turkish couple that after living for 30 years in the Netherlands returned to Turkey with their youngest son while leaving behind their three grown-up daughters in the Netherlands. Even if the father is happy to be back in Turkey, the mother misses her daughters and the Netherlands. The documentaries discussed here dealt in an observational and interactive way with personal migration stories. Other documentaries took a more expository approach by explaining the political situation in Turkey.

In the aftermath of the political violence and coups d'état in Turkey during the 1970s and 1980s, the socially engaged film collective *Amsterdams Stadsjournaal* [Amsterdam City Newsreel] made some documentaries dealing with the political tensions in Turkey and refugees who left the country because of this. As member of this collective, director Floor Kooij and his wife Sibel Bilgin made the documentary *Gebroken Droom* [Broken Dream] (1985) about an exiled Turkish labour union leader who came as a political refugee to the Netherlands in order to escape the new regime in Turkey after the coup d'état. Although the documentary consists of interactive interviews with the union leader, the documentary filmmaker explains in an expository way the political repression in Turkey. Political refugees also make up the thread of several short documentaries by the Dutch filmmaker Leen van den Berg. In contrast to most other filmmakers, he used a performative mode of representation

featuring dramatised re-enactments of true stories experienced by the three refugees in his film *In afwachting* [Waiting] (1987). This way, he gave voice to the emotional struggles expressed by a Kurdish, an Eritrean and Chilean refugee. In a later documentary *Een schijn van fatsoen* [Keeping up appearance] (1992), Van den Berg told the story of a Kurdish refugee who was denied asylum in the Netherlands and ends up as an illegal alien. In an expository way, the director criticised the asylum policies in the Netherlands and their negative consequences.

More recently, Dutch documentary filmmaker Carin Goeijers used interactive and observational methods to represent cultural traditions of Turkish immigrants that are at odds with the values of modern societies. Controversial issues like honour killings and domestic violence have attracted much attention in public debates today. In the documentary *Zeynep's huwelijk* [Zeynep's marriage] (2012), Goeijers gives voice to the mother of a Kurdish girl who was killed by her husband in an 'honour killing'. After her daughter's death, the mother questions the Kurdish tradition of arranged marriages and tries to make sense of her life by building a house for abused women in Turkey. In similar vein, the director made the documentary *Bahar* (2013) about a young Turkish woman in the Netherlands who married against the will of her father a violent Turkish man. After nine years of marriage, Bahar decided to ask for a divorce but ultimately her ex-husband murdered her. Through the testimonies of the family, the director reconstructed the life of the young woman and her abusive marriage. While these films could be read as a denunciation of domestic violence, the setting within the Turkish community links domestic violence and honour killings with the patriarchal culture in Turkey. Despite of the interactive interviews with the family, the expository argument of the filmmaker reinforces prevalent discourses that highlight the negative aspects of Turkish or Kurdish cultural traditions.

The documentaries discussed above illustrate the ethnographic gaze of Dutch documentary filmmakers depicting the Other. In terms of authorship, these documentaries on Turkish immigrants were all directed by native majority Dutch filmmakers. Nevertheless, there are also filmmakers of Turkish origin who made documentaries themselves challenging the majority Dutch perspective. Although filmmakers with an ethnic minority background are still scarce in the Netherlands, some have received support from Dutch media policies to realise their own film

projects. In the following section, we will take a look at the minority perspective of filmmakers of Turkish origin. One of the first and most prolific minority filmmakers in the Netherlands is Meral Uslu. Through the use of her own family history, she engaged in intimate documentaries expressing her personal feelings rather than claiming to offer an objective representation of Turkish migration to the Netherlands.

4.2. Meral Uslu: Migrant by Fate, Filmmaker By Choice

4.2.1. Biographical Background and Works

As a displaced filmmaker living in the West, Meral Uslu is what Hamid Naficy (2001) has called an 'accented' filmmaker. Accented filmmakers would translate their personal experiences of displacement and diaspora into an accented style of film aesthetics. Since the start of her career as a filmmaker, however, Meral Uslu rejects the label of 'migrant' or 'accented' filmmaker. As a director of programmes and documentaries about various topics, she stated: "I'm of Turkish origin but I don't want to be a migrant filmmaker. For this reason, it was fun to make programmes that had nothing to do with immigrant issues. I thought of myself just as a filmmaker. As a woman, and, besides this, as born in Turkey" (Van Zwienen, 2011). In refusing to be reduced to her ethnic minority identity, Meral Uslu does not stand alone. According to Anne Jäckel (2010), "the majority of film-makers working in and from Europe, including 'hyphenated' film-makers, choose to define themselves and their work in terms of individual vision and creative independence rather than under a collective label" (p.77). There are several reasons for this. In general, artists are offered grants and recognition on the basis of individual merits. In addition, migrant filmmakers might want to distance themselves from their ethnic background in order not to be redirected towards 'social work initiatives' (Kosnick, 2004) or to avoid the 'burden of representation' (Mercer, 1990). With the 'burden of representation', Mercer referred to the expectation that is cast upon any ethnic minority artist to act as the spokesperson for a whole cultural group. The refusal to be reduced to her ethnic background but also her rebellion against the traditional roles for women in Turkish culture characterised Meral Uslu's first films in particular.

Growing up between two countries, the fluid and uncertain conditions of deterritorialisation have undeniably marked the life and cinematic work of Meral Uslu.

Born in a small Turkish village in 1962, Uslu has spent her youth travelling between Turkey, where she lived with her grandparents, and the Netherlands, where her father had moved looking for work. Around the age of ten, Uslu joined her parents in the Dutch city of Haarlem. As a teenager, however, she ran away from home to escape her conservative and religious mother's strict rules. As a young girl, she travelled with a friend to Istanbul but then returned to the Netherlands and joined the squatters as well as the feminist movement in Amsterdam. Because many of the women in the feminist movement were educated, Uslu became interested in higher education. After studying social work for one year, she was hired by the Dutch director Hans Hylkema who needed a Turkish-speaking assistant director. With the help of Hylkema and a small subsidy, Uslu made her first short film about Turkish girls who wanted to leave their parental house. After this first experience with film, Uslu enrolled in the Netherlands Film and Television Academy in Amsterdam. In 1988, she graduated in cinematography and directing with a short documentary portrait of a prostitute. At the beginning of her career, Uslu became primarily known for her documentaries on sex and prostitution like *Hoeren* [Hookers] (1991) and *Pornografie, van Eros tot Megabyte* [Pornography from Eros to Megabyte] (1994) that were among the most watched documentaries on Dutch television at the time. In an interview, Uslu stated that prostitutes fascinated her maybe because of her Muslim background (van der Zee, 2001). By making a documentary, she obtained the permission to explore the daily lives of sex workers without being judged. Portraying prostitutes as strong hard-working women who have control over their lives, her documentaries revealed her feminist ideas rather than her ethnic roots.

As a socially engaged filmmaker, however, Uslu also paid attention to the situation of migrants in the Netherlands. Despite her opposition to the label of 'migrant filmmaker', Meral Uslu has used many autobiographical elements such as her immigrant background in her cinematographic work. Not surprisingly, she made several films about living between Dutch and Turkish culture. One of her first films, *Dilek & Kemal* (1990), was a short drama about a young independent Turkish woman who grew up in the Netherlands but whose marriage with a man from Turkey forced her into the role of a traditional housewife. This story reflects autobiographical elements as the director herself had been married to a man from Turkey, whom she later divorced. Around the same time, Uslu shot together with director Floor Kooij the

social documentary *De Fordfabriek* [The Ford Factory] (1991) about the lives of the (mainly Turkish) workers of the Ford factory in Amsterdam ten years after it closed down. Although this documentary focused on the Turkish labourers who lost their jobs, the director argued that the documentary could also have focused on Spanish labourers, but her knowledge of the Turkish language facilitated the contact with the Turkish workers. In other documentaries, she dealt with the issues not only of Turkish but also of other immigrants. In the two-part documentary *Ontheemde zielen* [Displaced Souls] (1995), Uslu investigated how immigrants deal with mental illness as patients on the one hand and as caregivers on the other hand. Therefore, she interviewed three patients of a transcultural psychiatric institution. In the short documentary *Sodad Sodad – De terugkeer van de familie Da Silva* [Sodad Sodad – The Return of the Da Silva Family] (1996), the filmmaker followed the remigration of an elderly Cape Verdean couple to their homeland after living in the Netherlands for more than thirty years. Although this documentary dealt with the vicissitudes of migration, the director did not tell her own story but followed other migrants.

While the above mentioned documentaries can be seen as observational and interactive filmmaking, Meral Uslu was also one of the first filmmakers to make performative documentaries in which she as a director was not just an observer but a participant in the documentary. An example is *De beginnende Turk* [The starting Turk] (1996), in which Meral Uslu filmed conversations with her sister Gunay, who, as a 23-year-old student born in the Netherlands to Turkish parents, married a Turkish man she had met during a holiday and moved to Eastern Turkey. The documentary revealed the adaptation problems and homesickness of the sister of the director in Turkey, the homeland of her parents. Documenting the experiences of her own sister, Uslu did not choose for an observational style of documentary filmmaking but rather for a personal approach in which the director herself also highlighted the relationship with her sister and her own personal experiences of being married in Turkey. In the following years, Meral Uslu would make again some more observational documentaries commissioned by television producers. For the Dutch television programme *Urbania*, Meral Uslu brought urban diversity to the screen by shooting around fifty portraits of multicultural inhabitants in Rotterdam during the late 1990s. Later, Uslu also made a documentary about the Turkish community in Germany, called *Berlin, klein Istanbul* [Berlin, Little Istanbul] (1998), a depiction of Kreuzberg,

the Berlin district known for its many Turkish immigrants. Uslu focused not only on her own co-ethnic group but also paid attention to the situation of refugees. In the documentary *Schaakkoning Ali* [Ali, King of Chess] (2002), she portrayed a 12-year-old Iranian boy who arrived in the Netherlands as a refugee and consequently became a chess champion while waiting for his residency permit. In the following years, Meral Uslu made some more migration-related documentaries for the VPRO television programme *De Toekomst* [The Future], like *Zwarte Tulp* [Black Tulip] (2006) about the identity questions of second-generation Turkish youngsters in the Netherlands, and *Be Mocro* (2006), a debate among Dutch-Moroccans about the future of the Netherlands when people of immigrant origin would outnumber the native Dutch. In the framework of a television programme in which Dutch people of foreign origin reflected on their country of origin, *Mijn Land* [My Country] (2010), Meral Uslu filmed what she and her sister experienced while travelling back to their native village in rural Turkey. This was again a more performative documentary in which the director interviewed many of her family members in the Netherlands discussing the question whether they feel Dutch or Turkish. Even if Meral Uslu also directed documentaries and TV reports about various other topics, it becomes clear that migration and the position of ethnic minorities in society are issues close to her heart.

Although Meral Uslu is primarily a documentary filmmaker, she also directed two fiction films. In line with her previous work, the fiction films also deal with the issues of migration and ethnic minorities from a personal perspective. Her first fiction film, *Roos & Rana* (2001), was actually based on the autobiographical fact that as a teenager she ran away from her conservative mother in the Netherlands and travelled with a friend to her liberal father in Istanbul. Broadcast as a television feature film and thus not theatrically released, *Roos & Rana* was the first Dutch fiction film based on the personal experiences of a Dutch-Turkish filmmaker. Nevertheless, the Dutch Paula van der Oest wrote the screenplay as Uslu herself had less experience in screenwriting fiction films. *Roos & Rana* (2001) became the fictionalised story of two teenage schoolgirls: Roos, a Dutch girl who has a bad relationship with her mother, and, Rana, a girl raised in a traditional Turkish family. Together, they run away from home and travel by train from the Netherlands to Istanbul. After many adventures during the train journey, the two friends arrive in

Istanbul where they encounter Rana's father with his mistress, a famous Turkish singer. As soon as Rana's mother finds out about her husband's affair, she also travels to Istanbul. In the end, Rana's parents reconcile and return with the two girls to the Netherlands. Not only was the journey to Istanbul an autobiographical element that the director elaborated in the film, but also the issue of the unfaithful father was a part of Uslu's real life experiences. In the documentary *De kinderen van mijn vader* [The Children of My Father] (2005), she focused on her personal experience of growing up with a promiscuous father who had children with several women. In the following section, I will discuss this documentary in more detail as it illustrates how a documentary can be a personal testimony of a filmmaker.

With *Snackbar* (2012), Meral Uslu ventured again into the realm of fiction films. Even if the film figured professional actors playing a role, the film was actually shot with a handheld moving camera in documentary style. Following her long experience as a documentary filmmaker, Uslu shot the film in a neorealist style with lots of improvisation. As in a documentary, the filmmaker observed and recorded the lives of three Dutch-Moroccan youngsters loitering around a snack bar owned by the Turk Ali in the city of Rotterdam. Without sugarcoating, the film shows the street kids while they are bored, dealing drugs, smoking pot, picking a fight or committing petty crimes like stealing a bike, etc. Due to these negative images, public broadcasters did not want to fund the film as they feared that this way of depicting migrant youth would strengthen xenophobic sentiments: '[it] would feed the PVV [Dutch far-right]'[17]. The fact that the director herself is of Turkish origin apparently did not guarantee that the film could offer an unbiased view on migrant youngsters. By consequence, *Snackbar* was not broadcast on television but became the first theatrically released film from Meral Uslu. Although the film did not receive much attention in the Netherlands, it was premiered at the Berlinale in 2012 and critically awarded at a film festival in Tallinn as best youth film. In the past, Meral Uslu had gained more recognition in the Netherlands with *De kinderen van mijn vader* [The Children of My Father] (2005), a documentary about her family that won her the Dutch national Golden Calf Award for best short documentary in 2005. As a highly personal story, *De kinderen van mijn vader* contrasts with more observational films like *Snackbar* (2012). Focusing on her own father as the main character of the documentary, Uslu

[17] Linssen, Dana (2012). 'Dwars door een groepje kutmarokkaantjes durven lopen'. *De filmkrant*. Retrieved from: http://www.filmkrant.nl/TS_maart_2012/7786

challenged the conventional image of the poor Turkish guest worker facing hardships in a foreign country. Depicting the flamboyant character of her father, his romances and his illegitimate children, Uslu explores what family and fatherhood mean in the context of diaspora and adultery. In the following section, I will discuss this personal family documentary in more detail.

4.2.2. Shooting the Diasporic Family in *De kinderen van mijn vader* (2005)

In migration stories, the family often plays an important role. This has led some scholars to ask the question to what extent migration causes shifts in the definition of the nuclear and extended family. In anthropological literature, the family is conventionally defined as 'a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation, and reproduction' (Murdock, 1949). The migration of family members to other countries challenges the idea that a family necessarily shares a common residence. Migration and transnational mobility fundamentally transform the daily lives of families. In the context of increased migration and mobility, scholars have paid attention to migrant, diasporic or transnational families. Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) define transnational families as 'families that live some or most of the time separated from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely, 'familyhood', even across national borders' (p. 3). While the term 'transnational family' can also be associated with social elites who are mobile because of their international careers, I prefer to use the term 'diasporic family' in the context of postwar labour migration, as this term is more linked with ethnic minority groups.

In the book *Shooting the Family*, Patricia Pisters (2005) argues that the conventional idea of the family is under pressure and being altered by the forces of globalization and migration. In this sense, she claims that the family is 'shot to pieces' (p. 7). At the same time, family matters are being constructed and refigured by the media, for example in soap operas, melodramas but also in home videos. This is what she calls the 'reel family' or the visual family shot. According to Daniela Berghahn (2013), 'diasporic family films succeed in muting the fear of the Other' for two reasons. First, families are something universal that everyone can relate to. Secondly, family narratives promote inclusivity by framing what may be deemed marginal or socially contested as familial. Nevertheless, I argue that migration puts into question conventional ideas about the family. In a diasporic family, the home is

no longer directly connected to the homeland. Migration causes a discrepancy between the 'home' where family members live and the 'homeland' where they were born. While melodramas and soap operas usually depict dominant models of what family life should be like, very little attention is paid to the challenges faced by diasporic families and the consequences of families living between different countries. The effects of migration on family life, however, cannot be underestimated. In this section, I will discuss how Meral Uslu 'shot' her own diasporic family on film in the documentary *De kinderen van mijn vader* [The Children of My Father] (2005). This documentary tells a highly personal family history against the background of the postwar Turkish labour migration to the Netherlands.

The first guest workers who came to the Netherlands in the 1960s were often single men or men who had left their families in their homeland for the time they would be working for a Dutch employer. According to the European Convention on Human Rights, every person would have the right to have a family life. Based on this convention, the Dutch law provided family reunification programmes for the guest workers who had their wife and children in the homeland. Since the 1970s, many women and children came from Turkey to the Netherlands to be reunited with their husband or father. This was also the case of Meral Uslu who moved at the age of ten from Turkey to the Netherlands to join her father. For many years, however, her father carried a painful secret with him. This secret would become the main topic of Meral Uslu's documentary film *De kinderen van mijn vader* (2005).

Ata Uslu, the father of director Meral Uslu, departed from his native mountain village in Turkey in 1965 in order to look for a job in the Netherlands. By doing so, he left his wife alone with the then three-year-old Meral Uslu and her brother Tuncay. Ata Uslu arrived in Amsterdam at the end of the 1960s, the heyday of the sexual revolution and the youth protests against conservative norms. Working first as a miner and a docker, he soon became an entrepreneur buying declining businesses, revitalising them and reselling them for a much higher price. Contrary to the idea that Dutch people feared foreigners, Ata Uslu easily developed relationships with the local Dutch population, in particular, with Dutch women. As a charming, well-dressed Don Juan in his twenties, Ata Uslu dated several women in Amsterdam. These love affairs, however, were not without consequences. Ata Uslu turned out to have at least four extramarital children with other women while his wife and her children were still in Turkey. When Meral Uslu was ten years old, she and her mother came to live

with her father in the Netherlands. From that moment onwards, her father could no longer lead the single life he was used to. Although Meral had a suspicion that her father had been seeing other women, he kept the existence of his extramarital children secret for many years. Meral discovered the secret only when she was an adult. While Meral's younger sister Gunay did interviews for her graduation thesis with ten first generation guest workers about their experiences in the Netherlands, her father casually mentioned that he had another child from an affair with a Dutch woman in the city of Haarlem. When Meral Uslu heard this news, she was left flabbergasted. Despite the shock, she was also fascinated by this secret family history. By that time, Meral Uslu was already an established filmmaker. In an interview, she stated: '[I] thought I should make a film about this. I found such a man who came from a village but started all kinds of relationships here a fascinating subject.' (op den Velde, 2005). With the help of three researchers, Meral Uslu traced her half-brothers and half-sisters. Meanwhile, her father had already returned to the Turkish countryside several years before. For this reason, the film was shot not only in the Netherlands but also in Turkey. In her own words, Uslu explained:

> My film is about the relationship between the East and the West, between man and woman and the big issue: fatherhood. I always asked myself: Do I have a father? I'm not moralistic but I find it very grim that he had so many children for whom he did not take responsibility. I asked myself how his illegitimate children saw this. (op den Velde, 2005)

The opening scene of the documentary starts in the Turkish village where the father of Meral Uslu is building a new house. Through a voice-over, the director introduces us to her family members. Meral Uslu states how her father has always been a father from a distance. By the end of the 1990s, her father had moved back to the village in Turkey together with her mother Fadime. Her father, however, married in the village a second and much younger wife called Handan. In the documentary, Meral Uslu included scenes that illustrate the difficulties she had shooting the family. When she is filming her parents while they are picking tomatoes, her father is clearly annoyed by her camera and says: 'Help us first and film afterwards! You're filming but you should be picking tomatoes.' In response, Meral Uslu legitimatises her filming: 'Everyone does his or her job. This is my job. Picking is your job.' This way, she positions herself as a professional filmmaker but creates a distance towards her

parents. Her filming is also not appreciated by her father's new wife Handan who does not want to be filmed. Without having her face filmed, Handan characterises Uslu's father as a wilful, strong and funny person who is everybody's friend. In a voice-over, Meral Uslu recalls her first memories of her father. When she was a child, he was driving her to a hospital on a motorcycle when she lost a shoe. In the following years, however, her father migrated to the Netherlands. In the documentary, Uslu shows a photograph that her father took with him to the Netherlands. In the photograph, we see the director as a child, together with her mother and sister. As there was no telephone in the village and her mother could neither write nor read, Meral Uslu had to learn to read and write in order to be able to answer the letters from her father abroad.

Fig. 4.1 Family photograph and image of a young girl with her father on a motorcycle

The documentary is a good example of transnational and border-crossing filmmaking depicting 'people caught in the cracks of globalization' (Ezra & Rowden, 2005, p. 7). Creating a dialogue between Europe and Turkey, the camera alternates between interviews with family members in the Turkish village and interviews with family members in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, the director films her younger brother Tuncay driving a car on a highway. He recalls how his father was a villager who arrived in the Netherlands with a stick to scare away dogs. Tuncay describes his father as a smart man who managed to become self-employed in the Netherlands even if he lost everything through gambling. The son briefly refers to the promiscuous life of his father saying that his father learnt kissing and other things in the Netherlands. The documentary brings us back to the Turkish village where father Uslu recalls how Dutch women were fancying him as an exotic object telling stories

about a far-away country. Then, we move again to the Netherlands where the director's younger sister Gunay remembers how her father arrived in the Netherlands during the heydays of the Flower Power movement with their ideology of freedom and sexual liberation. However, Gunay reads a letter from the then Turkish ambassador warning of extramarital relationships between Turkish guest workers and Dutch women claiming that these relationships and even more the children born out of these relationships would hurt Dutch people.

In one of the following scenes, the documentary introduces the first Dutch mistress of her father, Carla Van Bentem. Through an acquaintance, she met Ata Uslu. The Dutch woman describes him in the following terms: 'He was a handsome man. He did not look like a real Turk. He did not have the ragged appearance of a Turk. He was well-dressed.' This quote illustrates the stereotypical image Dutch people had about Turkish guest workers and how the encounter with Ata Uslu defied this image. While having an affair with Ata Uslu, the Dutch woman was informed by the Immigration Office that her lover's wife and his children were coming to the Netherlands. Most surprisingly, Ata's wife and her two children were hosted the first six months in the house of his Dutch mistress. Obviously, this led to conflicts. Also the young Meral Uslu would not have felt at ease in the Netherlands. After a couple of months, she and her brother Tuncay were sent back to Turkey. While her mother stayed with her father in the Netherlands, Meral and her brother were sent to live with their grandparents in Turkey. Meanwhile, her second brother Atilay was born. At the age of ten, Meral Uslu and her brother Tuncay came back to the Netherlands to join their parents. By that time, the Uslu family consisted of the parents, Meral, Tuncay, Atilay and their newly born sister Gunay. Father Ata Uslu became very popular in the Turkish community in the Dutch city of Haarlem.

Getting more and more personal, director Meral Uslu interviews her sister and brothers about their views on their father. Her sister Gunay recalls how her father was staying one day with his family and then one day with a mistress or other people. She argued that 'there was a structure in his absence'. Gunay also experienced that her father often had fights with her mother due to their different views and opposite characters. Even if they had an arranged marriage, however, the couple is still married. In another testimony, brother Atilay describes his father as a social person and a successful entrepreneur who enjoys life. He believes his father was a good father, although he casts some doubts about his father's attitude regarding women.

After the testimonies of her siblings, director Meral Uslu muses in the voice-over about how the relationship with her father changed when she grew older. She remembered that her father took her to bars with him where he presented her to his friends. At the time she became a teenager, her father wanted her to stay at home with her mother. In the documentary, she claims that her sexual development limited her freedom: ‘My fun moments with him were finished because I was getting breasts’. Her conservative mother wanted her to go the Koranic school and to raise children. Meral Uslu, however, longed for the liberal life that her father lived and ran away from home at the age of 17. Her father was really angry because of this and it took years before she would be welcomed again in the family.

In the first part of the documentary, we hear the views of various family members on father Ata Uslu. The turning point in the documentary, however, is the moment that director Meral Uslu asks her father about the family secret: his illegitimate children from extramarital relationships. First, her father reluctantly argues that she should not dig too much into the past. Nevertheless, he reveals in front of the camera that he has at least four children with other women. As her father lost contact with his extramarital children, Meral Uslu placed advertisements in the newspapers to find her half-brothers and half-sisters. In the first instance, the search ended without results. Nevertheless, the director managed to trace the existence of a deceased half-brother and a living half-sister. A dramatic scene in the documentary is when Meral Uslu and her brother Tuncay walk through the cemetery of the Dutch city of Haarlem looking for the grave of their half-brother Atakan. The young boy died at the age of three in a fire in the apartment where he lived with his mother. This woman also gave birth to a second child, daughter Seda. A DNA test proves Seda was also a child of Ata Uslu. Seda currently lives in Turkey, so director Meral Uslu and her sister Gunay go to meet Seda in Turkey. The confrontation with their half-sister can be seen as the climax of the documentary. The young woman turns out to have suffered a lot from the absence of a father figure and a mother who allegedly was a heroin junkie. She blames both her mother and father Uslu for being irresponsible parents. In response, Gunay argues that it is thanks to her mother Fadime that she and Meral Uslu have grown up in a decent way. In the following scene, the camera focuses on mother Fadime saying: ‘We are no dogs or cats that don’t take care of their children. Allah has given me these children, so I should take care of them.’ The mother further reveals that she had lost her own father shortly after she was born.

For this reason, she did not want her children to grow up without a father. About her marriage with Ata Uslu, she says: ‘I stayed with your father but actually it was intolerable. As a wife, I suffered a lot. Not financially, but emotionally’. The documentary closes with a last scene in which director Meral Uslu confronts her father with his selfish and irresponsible behaviour. Ata Uslu, however, dismisses her accusations and states: ‘I let you go to school in Europe. You grew up in prosperity. I gave you those opportunities’. When Meral replies that she and her siblings had to fend for themselves, her father hesitatingly admits that he should have been more at home in order to avoid the mess he had caused. To illustrate this, he reveals to have also another illegitimate daughter with a woman who is married. Because the girl does not know he is her real father, he proposes that she should be left in peace. When he asks his daughters Meral and Gunay if they are angry with him, Gunay hugs him saying: ‘Whether you are a father or not, we stay close, even at a distance.’

Fig. 4.2 The director’s sister Gunay hearing the confessions of her father Ata Uslu

Despite the troubled relationship she had with her father, director Meral Uslu managed to make a nuanced documentary in which she does not condemn her father’s adultery. Rather than making a sensationalist story about an immoral and irresponsible father, she showed multiple aspects of her father’s personality seen through the eyes of various persons. The film, however, is not only about her father but also about herself as his daughter. Filming her own family, Meral Uslu actually made an autobiographical documentary that tells us where she comes from and what she has lived through as a child. By emphasising the subjective aspects of the filmmaker’s own engagement with the subject, this documentary can be considered what Bill Nicholls (1991) has called a performative documentary. The performative

documentary filmmaker underlines the subjective qualities of experience and memory that depart from factual recounting. This way, the documentary clearly distinguishes itself from other documentaries about Turkish migrants made by Dutch filmmakers. By letting her own family and herself perform in the documentary, the Dutch-Turkish filmmaker takes control over the image of Turkish migrants and debunks several stereotypes that prevail in other documentaries made by native Dutch directors. As an 'accented' filmmaker, Meral Uslu draws on her personal experiences of living both in Turkey and in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, the documentary does not emphasise her Turkish identity. Rather than focusing on Turkish cultural traditions, Islam or other things that Turks are often associated with in the Western media, her documentary portrays a family that has to deal with the unconventional behaviour of her father. The behaviour of her father is not attributed to Turkish culture but to his personality. In this sense, the documentary does not claim to represent the experiences of the Turkish community in the Netherlands, but offers a highly personal family history.

The story that the director tells about her own father is actually not a very positive one. Far from idealising her father, Meral Uslu deals with a morally questionable aspect of his life: his adultery and his irresponsibility to take care of his legitimate and illegitimate children. The documentary is characterised by rawness and unpolished directness. The director does not avoid asking painful questions. Instead of covering up and sugar-coating uncomfortable facts, Uslu mercilessly 'shoots' her family and asks them daring questions with a directness that is seldom seen in Dutch documentaries. Obviously, making a documentary about such a delicate issue did not go without a hitch. We hear the protests of her father to be filmed from the start of the film until the end, when he finishes with the words: 'That's enough'. By leaving the objections of her father against the film project in the documentary, the director invites the spectator to reflect about the limits and ethics of filmmaking. If the film director were not his daughter, it is unlikely that Ata Uslu would have allowed someone to make a documentary about his adultery and his illegitimate children. For this reason, I argue that the documentary is both reflexive and performative. The director plays an important role in the documentary and she lets her subjects question the fact that she is filming them. While this approach contributes to the authenticity of the documentary, the ethical question arises which consequences this documentary might have for the family of the director and for the

illegitimate children of her father. Clearly, this documentary balances on the border between an intimate family portrait and an intrusion into the private lives of the filmed subjects. Portraying her father in a sympathetic way, however, director Meral Uslu succeeds in avoiding too simplistic judgements of his behaviour and created a documentary that gives an insight in the challenges faced by a diasporic family.

In the end, the story of Meral Uslu's family illustrates what it is to grow up in a diasporic family. Beyond depicting the geographical dispersion of the family, the documentary also challenges conventional notions about the integration of Turkish immigrants in Dutch society. While the mother and her children were still in Turkey, Meral Uslu's father took the freedom to start relationships with Dutch women in the Netherlands. On the one hand, these intercultural relationships contradict the general image promoted by politicians that Turkish immigrants would not be able to integrate into Dutch society. On the other hand, the fact that Ata Uslu has extramarital children also undermines the socially accepted ideal of the nuclear family consisting of two parents and their children. During the film, the documentary filmmaker confronted her father with the pain felt by her mother and the commentaries by her sister and brothers on the jovial but egocentric personality of her father. After an arranged marriage, her father and her mother nevertheless stayed together for more than forty years. Rather than attributing her father's behaviour to Turkish cultural traditions, Meral Uslu made a film about family issues that is universally recognisable for spectators regardless of their cultural origin. This might explain the success of the documentary at the Netherlands Film Festival where her documentary won the Golden Calf Award for best short documentary in 2005.

4.3. The Intersectional View of Female Dutch-Turkish Filmmakers

At a time that most documentaries about Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands were made by Dutch filmmakers, Meral Uslu was one of the first filmmakers who could make films based on her own experiences as a child of Turkish immigrants. In the following years, several other 'accented' filmmakers of Turkish origin started to make documentaries. From an intersectional perspective, it is important to note that these filmmakers are not only 'accented' but also 'gendered'. Many filmmakers of Turkish origin in the Netherlands happen to be female. Besides Meral Uslu, it has been mainly women of Turkish origin like Gülay Orhan, Zeynep Özkaya, Gülsah Doğan

and Fidan Ekiz who have made documentaries about Turkish migrants in the Netherlands. At the time of this research, I could barely find any male Turkish filmmaker in the Netherlands. An explanation for this predominance of female Dutch-Turkish filmmakers could be sought in the educational achievements of migrant youngsters. More female than male Dutch-Turkish youngsters enter higher education (Pásztor, 2012). At the same time, males would more often choose for business studies to secure a successful career. Another explanation could be the shift of minority policies towards gender relations. According to Roggeband and Verloo (2007), the emancipation of migrant women is viewed as a crucial step towards the emancipation of migrant communities in general. Muslim women are often singled out as a group in particular need of emancipation from a patriarchal Islamic culture. Against such a patronising view, the case of female Dutch-Turkish filmmakers illustrates how these women take control over the image of their community. Rather than focusing on the conventional story of the patriarchal male Turkish guest worker, the female filmmakers often highlight the role of women in the Turkish migration to the Netherlands. In this section, I will briefly review the films by some Dutch-Turkish documentary filmmakers. Several of them also engaged in filming family portraits highlighting a highly personal perspective on the experiences of migration to the Netherlands.

In the first place, director Gülay Orhan founded already in 1988 Fatusch Productions, a multimedia organisation that gives a voice to migrants in the Netherlands. Over 25 years, Fatusch Productions directed more than 40 documentaries like for example *Engelen huilden om mijn lot* [Angels Cried For My Destiny] (1992) about the first generation of Turkish women who followed their husbands to the Netherlands and another documentary about the first generation of Turkish guest workers in the Netherlands, titled *In Anatolië glinsteren de sterren* [The Stars Are Sparkling in Anatolia] (1996). Based on many interviews with first generation Turkish immigrants, these films can be considered as interactive documentaries. Through the interviews, Gülay Orhan tries to reconstruct the history of Turkish migration to the Netherlands. Due the observational style of filming, however, the filmmaker remains largely absent in the documentaries. Therefore, the documentaries lack the personal engagement with the subject that is present in Meral Uslu's work.

A more personal approach in documentary filmmaking can be found in the work of Zeynep Özkaya. Born in Turkey in 1966, she moved to the Netherlands in 1980. After studying Film and TV in Amsterdam, she worked at the Multicultural Television Netherlands (MTNL) and at the Dutch radio station NPS. With the support of the Dutch Muslim Broadcasting Corporation (NMO), she made the short intimate documentary *De Haren van Hilal* [Hilal's Hair] (2005) about the doubts of a 12-year-old Muslim girl who had to start wearing an Islamic headscarf in public places. With much empathy, the filmmaker portrays the fears and doubts of the girl. With her next documentary *Leyla & Mecnun in den Vreemde* [Leyla & Mecnun Abroad] (2008), Özkaya recorded the personal love story of her parents through the voice of her mother who remembers how the migration of her husband from Turkey to the Netherlands changed her life. Filming her own family, this documentary echoes the personal approach of Meral Uslu. Zeynep Özkaya, however, uses a much more poetic and observational style of filming. The film focuses on how her parents dealt with the challenges of a long-distance relationship. Despite romantic acts like sending audiotapes with sung love letters to each other, her father and her mother are now divorced. The documentary won several awards in Turkey and the Netherlands.

Another Dutch-Turkish filmmaker, Gülsah Doğan, focused as well on a personal family story in her documentary *Liefdeswinter* [Winter of Love] (2010) that depicts the daily visits of her uncle to his Alzheimer-struck wife in Dutch eldercare, remembering how their arranged marriage in Turkey developed into a lifelong commitment ending up in the Netherlands. The director chose to film the love story of her uncle and aunt in order to understand what is love about. Zooming in on their apparently ideal relationship, however, she discovers that the relationship is not all roses. In 2011, the documentary won the Prix Europe Iris for best television production about diversity in Europe. Later, Gülsah Doğan also made another documentary *Naziha's Lente* [Naziha's Spring] (2014), telling the story of the Dutch-Moroccan single mother Naziha and her nine children. Naziha became known as the mother of one of the largest Moroccan problem families in Amsterdam. Through fly-on-the-wall observations and many interviews, the filmmaker depicts how an immigrant woman tries to take her life into her own hands.

Family portraits prove to be a very common and popular topic among the female Dutch-Turkish documentary filmmakers. Also based on the personal

experiences of her family, Fidan Ekiz, who worked as a journalist in the Netherlands and Turkey, directed the five-part documentary *Veerboot naar Holland* [Ferryboat to Holland] (2010). This documentary tells the emigration story of five Turkish families looking for a better life in the Netherlands. One part of the documentary focuses on the testimony of her own parents. The filmmaker highlights the high expectations of the Turkish families about life in the Netherlands. After the disappointment that they did not manage to connect with Dutch society, the filmmaker shows that much solidarity developed between the Turkish families. In her next documentary *Ik zie een verre reis* [I See A Far Journey] (2012), Ekiz followed the return of her sister and other young Turkish people born in the Netherlands to Turkey. In the end, the youngsters feel at home neither in the Netherlands nor in Turkey, the homeland of their parents. In the same vein, the Dutch-Moroccan director Fatima Jebli-Ouazzani made the documentary *Hier woon ik, daar leef ik* [My House is Here, My Home is There] (2012). Through the testimonies of four women, the director tells the history of three generations: from the first Turkish women who moved to the Netherlands 45 years ago to young Turkish women born in the Netherlands who decided to move back to Turkey.

The predominance of family portraits in the documentary films of these female immigrant filmmakers leads to the question why they prefer to focus on this aspect of the migration story. In practical terms, it can be argued that filmmakers have easy access to their relatives, which facilitates the process of interviewing people. The filmmakers do not have to look for respondents and do not have to spend much time in gaining their trust. Most of the above mentioned documentary filmmakers are independent filmmakers with limited financial means. Interviewing people close to themselves helps to keep the film budget low. Furthermore, many of the above-mentioned filmmakers are second-generation migrants who struggle with their identity as they grew up between two cultures. When they are adults, they start asking questions to their parents and other family members about their roots and the migration history of the family. In this sense, the family portraits can be seen as a quest for the identity and roots of the filmmaker. This supports the thesis of Hamid Naficy (2001) that filmmakers with an immigration history translate their personal experiences into an ‘accented’ mode of filmmaking. Finally, family portraits attribute an important role to women in the migration story. While the early documentaries

often focused on male guest workers, the female immigrant directors shifted the attention to the family and the role of women in holding the family together across borders and other ordeals. The family documentaries also avoid the Othering of Turkish immigrants. As Daniela Berghahn (2013) has argued, families are a universal part of life that everyone can relate to.

To conclude, the documentaries discussed here aim to offer a truthful representation of the lives of Turkish people in the Netherlands. While documentaries are judged according to their faithfulness to the pre-filmic reality that is recorded, this is less the case with fictional films. In the following section, I will discuss how fictional films depict the Turkish people in the Netherlands. Contrary to the documentaries I have discussed here, most of the fictional films are not based on personal experiences of migration. The fictional films are usually made with larger budgets and directed by native Dutch filmmakers. As they generally reach wider audiences than documentaries, fictional films play an important role in the way the Turkish community is imagined in Dutch cinema.

4.4. Turks in Dutch Fiction: From Social Dramas to Crime Comedies

From a historical perspective, Dutch fiction films representing Turkish immigrants emerged much later than the documentaries about them. While documentaries about Turkish guest workers were already made in the 1970s, the first fictional films about Turkish immigrants only appeared a decade later. In the first instance, these films were mainly social dramas focusing on the problems of Turkish guest workers to integrate into Dutch society. In the narratives of these films, the Dutch directors highlighted the differences between Turkish and Dutch culture and how this would lead to conflicts and tensions. While such conflicts fuel the dramatic plot of the films, they depict Turkish immigrants one-sidedly in terms of their cultural background. Other Dutch filmmakers focused on the Kurdish refugees from Turkey. Despite their fictional narratives, these films touch upon a very sensitive political issue. While some filmmakers succeeded in making nuanced films about Turkish and Kurdish immigrants in the Netherlands, others turned to more sensationalist approaches. While social dramas portrayed Turks as culturally different from the Dutch, some crime films went further with even more negative stereotypes of Turks as villains and criminals. Not all crime films, however, took the subject very seriously. As a cross-

genre film, the film *Gangsterboys* (2010) by the Dutch director Paul Ruven combines the conventions of the crime film with that of a comedy, mitigating the frightening image of dangerous Turkish criminals with humour. In what follows, I will first give a short historical overview of the fictional films made about Turks in the Netherlands. Then, I will discuss the film *Gangsterboys* (2010) in more detail in order to illustrate how this film plays on the prevailing stereotypes of Turks as gangsters.

When the first Turkish guest workers arrived in the Netherlands, only a few documentary filmmakers had made films about their situation in the 1970s. In the 1980s, the socially engaged Dutch filmmaker Hans Hylkema became one of the first directors to dedicate a fiction film to Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands. His film *Turkse Aarde, Hollandse Bodem* [Turkish Earth, Dutch Soil] (1982) was a dramatised documentary played by amateurs. In line with the previously discussed documentaries, the film highlights the role of the family in the migration story. The plot revolves around a Turkish guest worker who lets his family come over to the Netherlands. While his wife feels unhappy in the city of Rotterdam, the Turkish man fears that his children are getting out of touch with the traditional Turkish norms and values. For these reasons, the guest worker and his wife dream of a return to Turkey. When the family goes on holidays to Turkey, however, they feel estranged from their country of origin and realise that their future is in the Netherlands. As an assistant director, Meral Uslu started her career in the Dutch film industry with this film. Contrary to the documentaries of Meral Uslu, however, the Dutch director underlines in this film the cultural Otherness of Turkish immigrants. Five years later, Hylkema made a second film about Turkish immigrants with professional actors and a more dramatic narrative than his previous film. *Julia's Geheim* [Juliet's Secret] (1987) tells the story of a Turkish girl in a Dutch high school who is selected to play the role of Juliet in a school theatre performance of *Romeo & Juliet*. As her parents want to marry her off to a man from their home village in Turkey, she identifies intensely with Juliet. Without her parents knowing, she sneaks to the rehearsals. Once her father finds out about her secret activity, he takes her away from the school and moves the forced marriage to an earlier date. The schoolteachers, however, can convince the father to let his daughter perform the theatre play. In the role of Juliet, the daughter holds up a mirror to her father who in the end understands that he has to let his daughter decide herself about her life. Co-funded by the Dutch Centre for Foreigners, Hylkema's films had the educational purpose to generate among Dutch audiences an

intercultural understanding of Turkish immigrants. Drawing a parallel between the authoritarian father who holds on to the tradition of forced marriages and the 16th century story of *Romeo & Juliet*, the filmmaker in fact depicts Turkish culture as archaic and outdated (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998, p. 57). In the end, the film's conclusion promotes the adaptation of the Turkish father to the norms and values of individual freedom prevailing in the Dutch society. Even if the film was made with the well-meaning intention to create an intercultural understanding, the plot propagates the idea that immigrants should unidirectionally adapt to a supposedly 'superior' Dutch culture.

Some of the immigrants from Turkey actually belong to the Kurdish minority living in the east of Turkey. The family film *De jongen die niet meer praatte* [The Boy Who Stopped Talking] (1996) by the Dutch director Ben Sombogaart tells the story of a young Kurdish boy living in a small village in Eastern Turkey while his father works as a guest worker in the Netherlands. As the father hears about political problems in Eastern Turkey, he lets his family come over to the Netherlands. After the family ends up in miserable housing conditions in the cold and rainy Netherlands, the little boy misses his friends and the village. Angry with his father, he decides not to talk anymore. In school, however, he befriends a Dutch boy. After witnessing the mistreatment of an undocumented Kurdish man in the harbour, the Kurdish boy joins the man in his attempt to travel back to Turkey as a stowaway in a ship. His Dutch friend, however, stops him. Finally, when his father has an accident, the Kurdish boy decides to speak again. Although the background of the film is the political conflict between the Turkish authorities and the Kurdish minority, the film focuses in the first place on the psychological drama of a young refugee and his father. Without making a clear political statement about the Kurdish question in Turkey, the film shows the poor living conditions of involuntary migrants with and without documents. According to the director, the film 'tried to tell the story so that the audience can identify with the character without really having to understand the whole political situation'[18]. Although the film attracted few spectators, the film won the UNICEF award at the Berlin International Film Festival. A more political film about a Kurdish activist who seeks asylum in the Netherlands is *In het belang van de staat* [In the Interest of the State] (1997) by the murdered Dutch director Theo van Gogh. This political thriller tells how

[18] Stienen, François (1996). 'De jongen die niet meer praatte'. *Filmkrant*. October 1996. Retrieved from: http://www.filmkrant.nl/_titelindex_J/3499

the Turkish government requests the extradition of the Kurdish refugee claiming that he murdered several Turkish officers. In response, the Dutch security services spy on the refugee and blackmail him and his lawyer. As the director could not find a Turkish actor for his film, a Dutch-Serbian actor played the leading role of the Kurdish refugee. This fact illustrates how sensitive the issue was for Turkish actors in the Netherlands. Broadcast on Dutch television, the film was critically well received and won the Dutch Golden Calf Award for Best TV Drama in 1997. With its emphasis on suspense against the political background of the Kurdish-Turkish conflict, the film focuses less on the issue of cultural integration than previous social dramas.

Few Dutch fiction films are based on real stories or personally lived experiences of the director. An exception is the film *Roos & Rana* (2001) by the Dutch-Turkish filmmaker Meral Uslu. While I discussed her documentaries in the previous section, Meral Uslu also made two fictional films. Based on her own vicissitudes as a teenager, the road movie *Roos & Rana* (2001) tells the story of two teenage schoolgirls who ran away from home and travel together to Istanbul. This film is also one of the few films with female protagonists. Highlighting the friendship between a Dutch and a Turkish girl, the narrative moves beyond the dramatisation of cultural difference that we have seen in other films by Dutch directors, as for example in those of Hans Hylkema, the man who introduced Uslu in the Dutch film industry. Nevertheless, Meral Uslu also made the fictional documentary *Snackbar* (2012) about three Dutch-Moroccan youngsters loitering around a snack bar owned by the Turk Ali in the city of Rotterdam. Using a documentary style to film professional actors, the film depicts the street kids while they are bored, dealing drugs, picking up a fight or committing petty crimes. Hereby Uslu taps into prevailing negative stereotypes about Moroccan youngsters. This film, which is not based on personal experiences, illustrates that even a film director with an immigrant background can be influenced by the dominant discourses associating migrant youngsters with nuisance and even criminal activities. Contrary to more personal films in which the director draws upon her own lived experiences, Uslu looks in this film through an ethnographic gaze at the Moroccan youngsters. Even if she spent some time on the street with them, the film depicts a reality that Uslu as a middle-aged Dutch-Turkish woman only knows from secondary sources and brief encounters.

Not only Moroccans but also Turkish immigrants have repeatedly been associated with crime and terrorism. In his comical short film *Turkse Chick* [Turkish

Chick] (2006), the Dutch director Lodewijk Crijns created a highly caricatured image of Turkish immigrants. The plot evolves around a Dutch boy who phantasises about sex with a veiled Turkish woman. When her brothers who look like terrorists find out, they blow themselves up. Under the pretext of comedy, this short film reinforced again the association of Muslims with terrorism and the oppression of women. Even if a crime film focuses on Dutch criminals, the plot can attribute a significant role to Turkish immigrants. The crime film *Van God Los* [Godforsaken] (2003) by Pieter Kuijpers, for example, tells how two Dutch men commit murders on behalf of the Turkish mafia. On public television, the crime film *Undercover* (2015) by the Dutch director Boris Pavel Conen also depicts Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands as gangsters. The film follows a Dutch-Turkish policewoman who is asked to infiltrate a Turkish restaurant in Amsterdam that is suspected of trafficking cocaine.

In comparison to the recent abundance of Dutch films featuring Moroccan protagonists, the number of fictional films about Turks in the Netherlands remains limited. This could be due to the fact that Turks are less stigmatised in the Dutch public opinion than Moroccans. In terms of genre, we can observe an evolution from social dramas to crime films. In terms of content, the representation of Turks in the Netherlands has evolved from a focus on cultural differences to even more negative depictions of Turkish immigrants as criminals. In the following section, I will first discuss how crime films represent ethnic minorities. Then, I will elaborate the case of *Gangsterboys* (2010). This film is not just a crime film but also a comedy that deals with stereotypes of Turks as gangsters in a playful way. As a fictional film on young male immigrants, *Gangsterboys* (2010) contrasts with the previously discussed family documentaries made by female Dutch-Turkish directors.

4.4.1. Fear of the Other in Dutch Crime Films

In debates about the integration of Turks in the Netherlands, there has been a concern not only with the first generation of Turkish guest workers and their cultural traditions, but also with the second generation, the children of immigrants who were born and raised in the Netherlands. Apart from other social categories like ethnicity and gender, we should take into account age as an important factor in how people identify and position themselves in society (Pilcher, 1995). The generation of young adults born in the Netherlands from immigrant parents constitute a growing part of the urban population in the Netherlands. Most of these youngsters had their

education in Dutch schools and started to enter the labour market in considerable numbers. Anti-immigrant parties like the PVV (Party for Freedom), however, have vigorously promulgated discourses that associate youngsters of Turkish and Moroccan origin with unemployment, crime and even Islamic extremism. On the other hand, migrant youngsters complain that they are more than others the target of police actions. In this context, it should not be a surprise that there are many anxieties and prejudices regarding young males of migrant origin in Dutch society. This fear of the Other has also been expressed in Dutch cinema, particularly in crime films.

In the Dutch cinematic imagination, several crime films have put male Turkish and Moroccan migrants in the role of villains or criminals. The depiction of ethnic minorities in the role of villains or criminals is not limited to Dutch cinema. In the United States, for example, Hollywood has been fascinated with Italian-American gangsters. Cortés (1987) argued that ethnic gangsterism, and in particular Italian-American gangsters, became ‘a major film personification of America's social failures, including the crisis of the increasingly elusive American Dream’ (p. 110). In the same vein, we can argue that the Dutch-Turkish gangsters personify the social ills of Dutch society. As way out of school problems and unemployment, some Dutch-Turkish youngsters seek their salvation in illegal activities in order to achieve prosperity and pride. Independent from the political debates, there are also researchers who claim that migrant youngsters are overrepresented in the Dutch crime statistics (Blokland, Grimbergen, Bernasco, & Nieuwbeerta, 2010). In the media, the association of migrant youngsters with crime is commonplace, not only in news items but also in cinema. As we have seen in the fictional films mentioned in the previous section, Turkish immigrants figure not only as amateur drug dealers but also as members of professional criminal organisations.

The crime films discussed above predominantly portray criminals in a realistic way. This stylistic approach contributes to the thrills that crime films are supposed to generate in the spectators. According to Thomas Leitch (2002), the central function of the crime film is ‘to allow viewers to experience the vicarious thrills of criminal behaviour while leaving them free to condemn this behaviour, whoever is practicing it, as immoral’. In addition, he argues that the cultural task of crime films would be ‘to examine the price of social repression as imposed by the institutions of the justice system’ (p. 306). Leitch (2002) also identifies three leading roles in every crime story: ‘the criminal who commits the crime, the victim who suffers it, and the avenger or

detective who investigates it in the hope of bringing the criminal to justice and re-establishing the social order the crime has disrupted' (p. 13). In Dutch crime films, the Turks are usually cast as the criminals, while the victims and the avengers are generally Dutch. In the film *Gangsterboys* (2010), however, the line between criminals and victims is blurred. In the film, the two migrant youngsters playing the leading roles are victims and criminals at the same time. While the youngsters commit petty crimes, the real criminals in the film are a group of older Turkish gangsters. In line with the stated crime film conventions, the Dutch police are the avengers. Through a combination of the crime film genre with comical elements like slapstick and exaggerations, however, *Gangsterboys* (2010) distinguishes itself from the conventional crime films that have previously been made in the Netherlands. The predominance of humoristic scenes makes that film equally qualifies as a comedy. Through its exaggeration of stereotypes about immigrants and criminals, the film can be seen as a parody on the more serious crime films. In the following section, I will discuss the crime comedy *Gangsterboys* (2010) in more detail.

4.4.2. Male Migrant Youngsters in *Gangsterboys* (2010)

As a cross-genre crime comedy that aims to be commercially successful, *Gangsterboys* (2010) sheds another light on the representation of Turks in the Netherlands than the documentaries and social dramas that we have discussed previously. *Gangsterboys* (2010) is based on an idea from the Dutch-Turkish newcomer Orhan Sahin, who was born in Turkey but moved to the Netherlands at the age of four with his parents. Working in the ICT sector, Orhan Sahin had been thinking for several years about making a crime film featuring Turkish gangsters. Echoing American hood movies, *Gangsterboys* (2010) focuses on male urban youngsters, hip-hop music and gangsters. In the film project prospectus[19], Sahin explains why the topic of gangsters fascinated him:

> A large part of my childhood I spent with young people who dreamed of a life as a gangster. Because as a gangster, you will get money, beautiful women, big expensive cars and especially power and respect. (p. 9)

[19] www.filminvestering.nl/documents/0000/0100/Prospectus_Gangsterboys.pdf

Taking the confrontation of these wild dreams with the real lives of criminals as a starting point, Orhan Sahin wrote a screenplay and made a trailer to apply for subsidies. The Dutch Film Fund, however, rejected this request because the film was not artistic enough. Sahin, however, took the screenplay to the Dutch director Paul Ruven who was enthusiastic about the authenticity of the script. In an interview, Paul Ruven stated:

> I immediately fell for it. I noticed that it touches a feeling that does not occur so often in [Dutch] films. The dream of money, respect and bitches. In the Netherlands, we have had *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* and *Het Schnitzelparadijs*, which were actually goody-goody, bourgeois films that you can quietly watch with the family. I wanted to make a film that is more on the edge. (Melchers, 2010b)

What director Ruven considers as the authenticity of the script resembles to a great extent the ghetto clichés of black American hood films and hip-hop culture in which 'money, respect and bitches' are dominant themes (Massood, 2003). In this sense, the director did not fall for an authentic 'Turkish' story but rather for a ghetto narrative that he likely already knew from American movies. As American movies proved to be popular among migrant youngsters, it could be assumed that a ghetto movie featuring Turkish gangsters would attract the interest of these youngsters. Even if the director liked the idea of making a film about Turkish gangsters, he told Orhan Sahin that his screenplay was too grim. For this reason, Ruven adapted the screenplay by adding more comical sketches parodying the gravity of crime films. As a director, Paul Ruven is mainly known for his box-office hit *Filmpje* (1995), a comedy starring the very popular Dutch comedian Paul de Leeuw. Besides directing many commercials, Ruven also made some critically acclaimed (short) films. In more recent years, he had written several guidebooks for filmmakers, like for example *Screenwriting for money and awards* (2008). Although Orhan Sahin wrote the first screenplay, Paul Ruven, as a much more experienced filmmaker, took the lead in directing the film and turned the crime film into a comedy. One of the reasons to include more comical scenes was to attract a young audience. In this move, we can also notice the influence of producer René Huybrechtse, with whom director Paul Ruven had already collaborated for the film *Mafrika* (2008).

Producer René Huybrechtse was already known for the groundbreaking multicultural comedy *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* (2004). In 2006, he produced another film with ethnic minority actors in leading roles, the musical film *Bolletjes Blues* [Gangsta Blues] (Brigit Hillenius & Karin Junger, 2006) about urban gangs and drugs-dealing youngsters of Surinamese origin. Given his experience in producing films featuring ethnic minority actors and topics, it should not be surprising that René Huybrechtse was involved to become the producer of *Gangsterboys* (2010). According to René Huybrechtse, *Gangsterboys* would be the first Dutch-Turkish film and it would be the long awaited Turkish answer to Dutch-Moroccan films such as *Shouf Shouf Habibi* (2004) and *Het Schnitzelparadijs* (2005). As a producer, René Huybrechtse clearly defined the target group of the film as youngsters of Turkish origin in the Netherlands. In the first place, he chose the comedy genre in order to attract a young audience. Secondly, he underlined the importance of authenticity in order to make the film credible within the Turkish community in the Netherlands. In the prospectus for the film, René Huybrechtse states:

> [T]he comedy genre is the favourite genre of a young audience. It is also important that the film is authentic and connected to their world. To achieve this, Orhan Sahin is the real guarantee because of the very recognisable screenplay that he wrote. Orhan has written everything from an insider perspective and knows what is happening within his own community. (p. 11)

In this quote, the producer refers to screenwriter Orhan Sahin as the source to legitimate the authenticity of the film as a product of the personal experience of a Dutch-Turkish immigrant. In order to legitimate the authenticity of a story about Turkish gangsters, the film obviously also had to feature Turkish actors. Discussing the casting of Turkish actors for the film, René Huybrechtse claims:

> That is again this legitimation, this authenticity. Many times people just speak Turkish in the film and that has to be real. As a Turkish spectator, you have to get the feeling that it is right.[20]

[20] Personal interview with producer René Huybrechtse, Dutch Mountain Film, Amsterdam, 20 August 2009

Being able to speak Turkish, however, was not the only reason to cast actors for this film. For the leading roles in the film, two rappers were cast. While the Dutch-Turkish rapper Önder Doğan, also known as Murda Turk, played the leading role of a young rapper called Mahmut in the film, the other leading role of Appo was played by the popular rapper Yesser Roshdy, known as Yes-R, who is actually of Moroccan-Egyptian origin. Even if Yes-R already played a role in the film *'n Beetje Verliefd* (Martin Koolhoven, 2006), he and Önder Doğan were not professional actors. Both were young rappers in their twenties at the start of their careers in the music industry. Whereas Önder was not yet an established rapper in the music industry, Yes-R already had some chart-topping hits and won some music awards. By casting Yes-R in one of the leading roles, the production team obviously aimed at attracting his fans to the cinema theatre. The fact that Yes-R was not Turkish was solved by presenting him as 'half Turkish' in the film, which also inspired some jokes by 'real' Turks in the film. In many of the supporting roles, Dutch-Turkish actors were cast, like for example Cahit Ölmez as leader of the Turkish gangsters. Most interestingly, the Dutch-Turkish Fatma Genç and the Dutch-Surinamese Jeffrey Spalburg were cast as the two police officers in the film. By casting two actors with an ethnic minority background in the roles of police officers, the film production team seems to avoid the Eurocentric dichotomy between the 'brave' Dutch police officers and the 'bad' ethnic minority criminals. While Dutch-Turkish actors are predominant in the film, the Dutch-Moroccan actor Mimoun Ouled Radi, known for his role in *Shouf Shouf Habibi* (2004), was cast in the supporting role of Achmed, a funny friend of the two rappers. Other rappers with an ethnic minority background like Darryl and Negative completed the multicultural cast of the film. At the same time, some famous Dutch actors made short appearances in the film, probably cast with the aim to attract also a wider Dutch mainstream audience.

Fig. 4.3 Film poster *Gangsterboys* (left) and two stills depicting Yes-R and Turk as rappers (right above) and in confrontation with the real Turkish gangsters (right below).

While the film production team cared about the authenticity of the film by casting actors with a Turkish or another ethnic minority background, the original screenplay by Orhan Sahin had gradually been turned from a realistic crime film into an absurd comedy entertained with hip-hop music. The plot of the film revolves around Apo and Mahmut. As sons of poor Turkish greengrocers in Amsterdam, they dream of escaping a future in their fathers' retail stores by becoming rappers. In order to finance their participation in a rap contest on television, they deal drugs until the police arrest the two boys. In return for reducing their sentences, the police officers ask the boys to infiltrate a Turkish criminal organisation. When Apo and Mahmut find out that the Turkish gang is extorting money from their fathers, they agree with the plan of the police officers. With the help of the police, they go undercover as wannabe-gangsters with the aim to get access to the Turkish gang. Learning that the two petty thieves want to become real gangsters, the Turkish gang leader puts them to humiliating tests ranging from doing the laundry, babysitting to serving coffee in women's dresses. At this point, the film turns into a burlesque comedy with absurd sketches. When the Turkish gang wants to execute a man, the leader of the gang allows him the last rites and asks Apo and Mahmut to pick up an African voodoo

healer at the airport. The boys screw up their assignment when they let the African die in an accident. Frightened of the Turkish gang's reaction, the boys ask a friend to dress up like the African healer. In a rather artificial subplot, the Turkish gang abducts Dutch television personalities from a nearby studio. This subplot seems to have been added to showcase some popular Dutch television personalities in the film. With the help of Apo and Mahmut, the police find the hiding place of the Turkish gangsters and shoot them dead while freeing the Dutch television personalities. After this adventure, the boys succeed in winning the rap contest on television.

Even if the Dutch press savaged *Gangsterboys* (2010) because of its incoherent screenplay and lowbrow humour, the film was commercially successful. With 140,067 admissions and a box-office revenue of 1,093,251 €, the film received 'Golden Film' status (i.e. an award at the Netherlands Film Festival for Dutch films that achieved to have more than 100,00 admissions in a given year). As only a few Dutch films achieve such commercial success, it is remarkable that this crime comedy mainly oriented toward the niche market of Dutch-Turkish youngsters reached this number of admissions. In the press, journalists criticised the chaotic plot and the failed attempts of the actors to be funny. Nevertheless, one journalist recognised the merits of a comedy about multicultural society in the Netherland wishing the jokes would not be so repetitive:

> *Gangsterboys* shows exaggerated views of Dutch culture and society […]. We see a Dutch man who wants all Dutch people out of the country, and a Turk who wants to rap about windmills. The film is full of such jokes about cultural differences and that gets sometimes a little boring. If something is funny once, that does not mean that it has to be repeated several times. (Melchers, 2010a)

The aim of the filmmakers was not to gain critical acclaim but to make a commercially successful film targeting the niche market of young cinemagoers of Turkish origin. Even if the film is not considered an artistic masterpiece, it is interesting to discuss it because of the commercial success of the film in the Netherlands. Research has shown that migrant youngsters often visit cinema theatres to watch Hollywood movies but are relatively uninterested in Dutch films (Lohy, 2005). Besides judging Dutch films to be of low quality, the migrant youngsters could not sufficiently identify with Dutch films portraying only white Dutch natives. The unexpected success of

Shouf Shouf Habibi! (2004), a film starring Dutch-Moroccan protagonists, led to a wave of multicultural films produced in the Netherlands. These films launched the careers of a new generation of young actors of immigrant origin that profoundly changed the white Dutch film landscape. The number of admissions to multicultural films like *Gangsterboys* (2010) indicates that there is a demand for this kind of films. While previously migrant youngsters could only see ethnic minorities in American films, the production of Dutch films depicting minorities certainly met a need in an increasingly diverse Dutch society.

It is paradoxical, however, that a film like *Gangsterboys* exploits so much the stereotype of Turks as criminals and still manages to reach such a wide and diverse audience including Turkish youngsters. Despite the fact that the original screenplay was written by a Dutch-Turkish person, the narrative and the comedy sketches are full of hyperbolic clichés associating Turks with criminality, violence and masculinity. In the words of Barbara Mennel, *Gangsterboys* could be called a 'ghettocentric' film focusing on 'the space of the urban ghetto as an imaginary site of racialized criminality' (p. 135). Echoing representations from African-American youth culture, the film highlights the importance of hip-hop music and the dream to escape the ghetto by becoming a famous rapper. While the early Dutch 'cinema of duty' portrayed Turkish immigrants merely as victims, a film like *Gangsterboys* departs from this victimisation and presents Turkish characters as agents, in good and bad ways. In terms of the three leading roles identified by Leitch (2002) in crime films, the criminals in *Gangsterboys* are Turkish. The scenes depicting the extortions of greengrocers, the kidnappings and tortures of opponents underline the cruelty of the gangsters. Alternatively, the young Turkish rappers Mahmut and Apo are portrayed more sympathetically. On the one hand, they are agents, and even heroes, as they undertake the undercover mission within the Turkish gangster world. Because of their naivety and clumsiness, however, they become the victims of the Turkish criminals. The real gangsters humiliate the young wannabe gangsters by subjecting them to several ordeals. Also some Dutch television personalities end up as victims of the cruel Turkish gangsters in the kidnapping scene. In the apotheosis of the film, both the Dutch police officers and the young rappers play the role of the avengers, who intervene in the crime 'in the hope of bringing the criminal to justice and re-establishing the social order the crime has disrupted' (Leitch, 2002, p. 13). While the young rappers lead the police officers to the hiding place of the gangsters, the police

kill the gangsters and free the kidnapped Dutch television personalities. Given the fact that one of the police officers is also of Turkish origin, the film contradicts the stereotype that all Turks are criminals. By having Turkish actors not only in the roles of criminals, but also as victims and as avengers, *Gangsterboys* does not reproduce the fear of the ethnic Other that is so common in crime films.

Laced with many comical sketches, *Gangsterboys* makes fun not only of ethnic boundaries but also of gender stereotypes. By juxtaposing real gangsters and wannabe gangsters, the film puts the machismo of young Turkish males into perspective. Even if male characters dominate the film, several comedy sketches subvert and parody the masculinity of the wannabe gangsters. Examples are the scene in which the young gangsters have to serve coffee in women's dresses. Also the closing scene of their friend Achmed bottle-feeding his newborn son, a baby with chest hair and a gold chain, makes fun of the stereotypical attributes of machismo in the gangster rap subculture.

4.5. Conclusion

In the cinema of a small nation like the Netherlands, Turks have remained remarkably underrepresented, especially given the fact that this ethnic minority is demographically more numerous than the previously discussed Moroccans. This difference indicates how the salience of ethnic boundary-making in political discourses affects one group more than another, regardless of objective characteristics. Even if there are similarities in the representation of Turks and Moroccans as the Muslim Other in the Netherlands, shifting from a socio-realistic cinema of duty to more commercial entertainment films, I discovered more film directors of Turkish origin than of Moroccan origin in the Netherlands. For this reason, I decided to focus on the question of authorship in this chapter, comparing films made by directors of Turkish origin with films produced by Dutch directors.

Following Naficy's (2001) auteur theory about 'accented' filmmakers, it can be argued that the subjective position of filmmakers influences the content and the style of their films. In a historical overview, I discussed documentaries of Dutch filmmakers and their ethnographic gaze on Turkish guest workers. From a majority point of view, these observational documentaries looked at Turkish immigrants as victims of social injustices in the tradition of the so-called 'cinema of duty' (Malik, 1996). From a

minority perspective, ‘accented’ filmmakers of Turkish origin in the Netherlands have made more personal films about the Turkish community in the Netherlands. In addition, I claim that this personal perspective is influenced not only by ethnicity but also by gender. Taking into account the intersectionality of ethnicity and gender I discussed films made by female filmmakers of Turkish origin. Often starting from their own family experiences, these filmmakers show a multi-layered portrait of Turkish immigrants not only as victims but also as agents. As a case study, I analysed the work of the female Dutch-Turkish filmmaker Meral Uslu, and in particular her highly personal documentary *The Children of My Father* (2005). As an ‘accented’ filmmaker, Meral Uslu drew on her personal experiences as a child of Turkish immigrants. Rather than claiming that her documentary represents the objective reality of all Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands, however, she focuses on the personal story of her unconventional father and his adultery that led to various illegitimate children. While the topic could have led to a juicy and sensationalist story about adultery, the film is not just about her father but also about the film director herself as his daughter. By emphasising the subjective aspects of the filmmaker’s own engagement with the subject, I argue that *The Children of My Father* (2005) is what Bill Nicholls (1991) has called a performative documentary. By emphasising subjective experiences and memories, the performative documentary filmmaker goes beyond a factual recounting by claiming ownership of the story. In this sense, the personal approach of a female filmmaker with an ethnic minority background clearly distinguishes itself from the ethnographic gaze of majority Dutch filmmakers in their observational documentaries on Turks in the Netherlands. Challenging the dominant perspective of the Dutch majority, Meral Uslu and other Dutch-Turkish directors took control over the representation of themselves, their families and, by extension, the image of the Turkish community in the Netherlands, even if these filmmakers do not want to be reduced to their ethnic origin.

In order to contrast this minority perspective with the dominant Dutch majority view on Turks in the Netherlands, I also discussed films about Turks made by Dutch directors. When Dutch directors made the first fictional films about Turks in the Netherlands, these were mainly social dramas highlighting the incompatibility of Turkish and Dutch culture. Later, Dutch crime films depicted Turks even more negatively as criminals. Following the commercial success of multicultural films like *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* (2004), Dutch film companies became increasingly interested in

making films for Turkish people in the Netherlands. In order to gain authenticity, the makers of *Gangsterboys* (2010) used the screenplay of a Dutch-Turkish writer. Despite the partially 'accented' authorship, the film draws upon dominant clichés associating Turks with criminality, violence and machismo. By turning the crime film into a comedy, however, the Dutch director could exaggerate the stereotypes of Turks as gangsters and eventually make fun of the machismo and the dream of male Turkish youngsters to become gangsters. Although the screenplay was written by a Dutch-Turkish screenwriter, *Gangsterboys* (2010) does not really qualify as an 'accented' film because of the dominant role of the Dutch director and Dutch producer. As a commercial entertainment film, the ethnic background of the screenwriter mainly served to legitimise the authenticity of the film and to make the narrative and jokes acceptable for Turkish youngsters in the Netherlands.

In terms of generic conventions, the documentary *The Children of My Father* (2005) and the crime comedy *Gangsterboys* (2010) take very different approaches to their representation of Turks in the Netherlands. Documentaries and fictional films relate in distinct ways to reality. While the documentary strives to represent a real and personally lived story, the crime comedy offers an exaggerated narrative with absurd jokes. Despite their differences, however, both the documentary and the crime comedy have in common that they do not depict Turks in the Netherlands as voiceless victims of social deprivation but as agents with their own bad habits. Rather than portraying Turks as a homogeneous cultural group, both the documentary and the crime comedy show their protagonists as individuals with unique characters. Whereas the documentary portrays an adulterous and irresponsible father, the crime comedy features two clumsy and naïve wannabe gangsters. Through very different approaches, both films counter more or less the dominant stereotypes about Turks in the Netherlands. On the one hand, the personal story of a female director about her unconventional father debunks the myth of the poor guest worker failing to integrate into Dutch society. On the other hand, the humorous treatment of gangsters demystifies the world of criminals and makes fun of the machismo of young rappers. In both films, there is a gendered perspective on Turks in the Netherlands. While the documentary of Meral Uslu gives a voice to her mother, sisters and a mistress of her father, the crime comedy by Paul Ruven and Orhan Sahin mainly focuses on male characters. The diversity of perspectives in both films illustrates that there is not just one way but various ways to represent the Turkish minority in the Netherlands.

Through personal stories and humour, these films offer some counterweight to the tense political debates about minorities in the Netherlands.

While contemporary debates about multiculturalism in the Netherlands mainly focused on Muslims like Turks and Moroccans, other minority groups in the Netherlands also gained more and more attention in Dutch cinema. Besides the guest workers from Turkey and Morocco who came to the Netherlands in the 1960s, the Netherlands also received migrants from its former colonies in Suriname, the Dutch Antilles and Indonesia. The arrival and settlement of these postcolonial migrants in the Netherlands confronts the nation with its colonial history on its own territory. Whereas Dutch colonialism has long been silenced in the collective memory, recent films have recalled this dark episode in Dutch national history. In the following chapter, I will discuss the way Dutch cinema has dealt with the colonial past in the context of the growing presence of (post)colonial migrants in the Netherlands.

5. From the Colonies to the Urban Ghettos: *Sonny Boy* (2011) and *Alleen maar nette mensen* (2012)

Some of the ethnic minorities living in the Netherlands today have their roots in former Dutch colonies. Although the Netherlands did not have as many colonies as the British and the French empire, the Dutch possessed overseas territories in Indonesia, the Dutch Antilles and Suriname. When it comes to debates about the integration of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands today, this colonial past has largely been obliterated in the Dutch collective memory. On the one hand, Dutch Indonesians remained remarkably absent from debates about ethnic minorities and are not even included in the Dutch ethnic minorities policies. Even if they form a significant proportion of the Dutch population, they seem to be forgotten or are considered as completely assimilated into Dutch society. On the other hand, as descendants of the African slave trade, the black Surinamese and the Antilleans are among the most visible minorities in the Netherlands and major target groups in the Dutch ethnic minorities policies together with the Moroccans and the Turks.

More than other minorities the postcolonial migrants in the Netherlands are the result of the European history of colonial expansion and imperialism. While the Surinamese and Antilleans share a colonial past with other minority groups like the Indonesians in the Netherlands, they also share the history of the slave trade with black minorities in other countries. Taking the movements in the transatlantic slave trade as a starting point, Paul Gilroy (1995) introduced the metaphor of 'the Black Atlantic', referring to the cultural contact zone between Africa, Europe and the Americas, which according to him shaped black cultures and identities across the ocean. Challenging the assumptions of both Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism, Gilroy claims that striving to be European and black gives rise to a 'double consciousness', implying that these two identities are not mutually exclusive. This 'double consciousness', however, would lead to an internal psychological conflict that subordinated people deal with in an oppressive society. In the words of W.E.B. Du Bois, double consciousness is 'this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity' (Du Bois, 1903). In a white supremacist society, black people would internalise the racist views that others have of them, which would result in a low self-esteem and a self-fulfilling confirmation of stereotypes.

In the Dutch national imagination, the black Surinamese and the Antilleans are often associated with concentrations of poverty, crime and sexual excesses in ghettos on the outskirts of large cities. Few Dutch filmmakers have dedicated attention to the history of colonisation and the transatlantic slave trade in the Dutch colonies. Only in recent years, Dutch filmmakers have released films like *Tula* (2013) and *Hoe duur was de suiker?* [The Price of Sugar] (2013), respectively about the slave trade in the Dutch Antilles and the sugar plantations in Suriname. Despite the increased awareness of the colonial past, films dealing with the Surinamese and Antillean minorities in the Netherlands predominantly focus on social problems in the deprived urban neighbourhoods.

In what follows, I will give a brief historical overview of the Dutch colonial past, and discuss the documentaries and fictional films made about the Dutch colonies and the subsequent migration of Indonesians, Surinamese and Antilleans to the Netherlands. While the cinematic imagination of Dutch colonial history and postcolonial migration has taken form in various genres, I believe that one of the genres that makes the power relations between the Dutch and their (post)colonial subjects most visible is what Thomas Wartenberg (1999) has called 'the unlikely couple film'. As examples of unlikely couple films, I will analyse the historical drama *Sonny Boy* (2011) and the multicultural comedy *Alleen maar nette mensen* [Only Decent People] (2012). Both films deal with interracial relationships in different historical contexts. While the first film remembers in a dramatic way the challenges faced by an interracial couple in the Nazi-occupied Netherlands during World War II, the second film takes a comical approach to the sexual phantasies of a Dutch-Jewish boy about black ghetto girls in the present-day context of multicultural Amsterdam. Based on the idea that interracial relationships violate dominant social norms in Dutch society, I argue that these 'unlikely couple films' can be seen as a form of social criticism. Both films, however, differ in the way they use stereotypes and deal with sensitive issues like racism. While the first film reveals the racism of a historical past, the second one plays on stereotypes in a contemporary urban setting. Even if both films bring interracial relationships to the big screen, the way they depict the (post)colonial Other can undermine as well as confirm prevailing prejudices. If we accept that cinema is not merely entertainment but also has a socially critical

function, I argue that it is important to be aware of the power relations of the colonial past and how colonial views continue to influence contemporary popular culture.

5.1. The Dutch Colonial Past

In the process of nation-building, it has been argued that history is used to create a common national identity (Smith, 1986). This history is not always based on objective facts but often consists of mythologised interpretations of historical events. In the collective memory of a nation, some events are memorialised but others not (Halbwachs, 1992). What is remembered and what not depends on the actual political context and serves to justify current politics. Migration and ethnic minorities are often depicted as contemporary phenomena in globalised and transnational societies. By consequence, many films dealing with migration and minorities are set in the present or recent past. While migration is a hot political topic today, people have nonetheless crossed boundaries and settled in other areas since time immemorial. It should be noted that the establishment of colonial empires implied the migration of European settlers to overseas territories. On the other hand, the transatlantic slave trade brought Africans from their homelands to the colonies in the New World. Migration from the colonies to Europe has been the next movement in these global migration flows. These movements have been described by Paul Gilroy (1995) as the 'routes' of diasporic identities. Beyond the emphasis on 'roots' as an essentialist concept that limits identity to one's origins, Gilroy prefers to speak about 'routes' referring to the movements and exchanges that shape hybrid identities.

In order to understand the position of postcolonial migrants in the Netherlands, we have to look back at their 'routes' in the colonial past. In postcolonial studies, much attention has been paid to the cultural legacy of colonialism and imperialism in the context of the large British and French colonial empires. The colonial history of small nations like the Netherlands has received much less attention. With their strong naval power, however, the Dutch became a major player in the global maritime trade in the 17th century. Through chartered companies of Dutch merchants, namely the Dutch East and West India Companies, the Netherlands acquired colonial possessions in Asia, Africa and the Americas.

Since the early 17th century, the Dutch East India Company set up several trading bases in Indonesia and occupied the surrounding territories in order to

safeguard their commercial activities (Vickers, 2005). After the nationalisation of the Dutch East India Company, these territories became the Dutch East Indies, which came to include the entire Indonesian archipelago in the 19th century. This archipelago remained the largest Dutch colony until 1945, when the modern Republic of Indonesia declared its independence from the Netherlands. As an intermediate station for its ships on the route to Asia, the Dutch also founded the Cape Colony on the south coast of South Africa in the 17th century, which was later conquered by the British.

Besides setting up colonies in Asia and Africa, the Dutch were also active in the Americas. After the Dutch West India Company established settlements in North America, rivalry and war led the Dutch to hand over their colonies in North America to the English by the end of the 17th century. In exchange, the Dutch obtained the plantations in Suriname from the English. The colony of Suriname consisted mainly of plantations producing sugar, coffee, cacao and cotton to be exported to Amsterdam. Through the transatlantic slave trade, thousands of African slaves were shipped to Suriname to cultivate the plantations. Some African slaves managed to escape to the jungle where they formed hidden communities of fugitives called Marroons. In the 19th century, many contract labourers from India and Indonesia were recruited to work in Suriname, leading to an ethnically diverse population in the colony. For centuries, Suriname remained the largest Dutch colony in South America until its declaration of independence in 1975.

In the nearby Caribbean Sea, the Dutch West India Company also conquered several islands in the early 17th century. The Dutch West Indies, long known as the Netherlands Antilles, currently consist of the major ABC-islands (Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao) and the smaller islands Saba, Sint-Maarten and Sint-Eustatius. In the early colonial era, the islands mainly served as a base for trade and privateering in the Caribbean Sea. Later, plantations were established to feed the settlers and to grow tradable crops. As manpower was required to cultivate the plantations, the Dutch became very active in the transatlantic slave trade. Soon, the Dutch colony of Curaçao developed into a key location for the slave trade from Africa to the Americas. Besides selling African slaves to the colonies in South America, the Dutch also used slaves on their own plantations in the Antilles and in Suriname until slavery was abolished in 1863. While Suriname gained its independence in 1975 through negotiations with the Dutch government, the Dutch islands in the Caribbean Sea

gained some autonomy but remain constituent parts of the Kingdom of the Netherland today. This brief introduction to the Dutch colonial history illustrates the historical transnational connections of the Netherlands with overseas territories. In the following sections, I will discuss how this colonial history has been represented in Dutch cinema.

5.2. Dutch Colonialism on Film

In the construction of their national identity, the Dutch often present themselves as a tolerant multicultural society. Public debates about migration and ethnic minorities, however, rarely link the presence of immigrants in the Netherlands to the Dutch colonial occupation and exploitation of Suriname, the Antilles and Indonesia. As Pattynama (2005) argues, in the postcolonial era 'the Dutch presence in the East was relegated to a dark corner of national history, ostensibly "forgotten"' (p. 240). The same goes for the Dutch involvement in the slave trade and the plantations in Suriname and the Antilles. The colonial history, however, cannot be ignored in a multicultural society today. The legacy of colonialism and imperialism can be observed even in contemporary media and film products. According to Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994), the European colonial domination of other people goes hand in hand with Eurocentrism, a fictitious sense of natural superiority of European cultures and people. This Eurocentrism features in many transnational film projects. In recent discussions about transnational cinema, Higbee & Lim argue that "[t]he concept of 'transnational cinema' cannot be merely descriptive because all border-crossing activities are necessarily fraught with issues of power" (Higbee & Lim, 2010, p. 18). The power relationship between Dutch filmmakers and colonial subjects is most evident in the films shot when the Dutch were still ruling the colonies. Many of these films present the Dutch colonisers as heroes while the colony just serves as an exotic background. Nevertheless, some counterhegemonic filmmakers also criticised the exploitation of the local population in the colonies. In the following sections, I will give a brief historical overview of the films that dealt with the Dutch East Indies, Suriname and the Dutch Antilles.

5.2.1. The Dutch East Indies

During the colonial era, a handful of Dutch films were set in the Dutch East Indies or current-day Indonesia, be it with mainly Dutch protagonists. One of the first sound films *De Jantjes* [The Tars] (1934) featured three Dutch sailors returning from the Dutch East Indies, but the film did not tell anything more about the colony. In the comedy *Suikerfreule* [Sugar Lady] (1935), directed by Haro van Peski, a Dutch woman follows her Dutch husband to the Dutch East Indies. Although the story took place in Indonesia, the film was shot in the Netherlands with a Dutch cast. To evoke an Indonesian atmosphere, outdoor shots with exotic landscapes were added to the film. One of the earliest Dutch films shot outside Europe was *Rubber* (1936), directed by Johan de Meester and Gerard Rutten. The setting of the film was a rubber plantation in Indonesia. The plot of the melodrama evolves around a Dutch worker in the rubber plantation whose fiancée comes over from the Netherlands to Indonesia to marry him. During a massacre by an Indonesian madman, the Dutch husband saves his wife and they renew their love for each other despite extramarital affairs. From a Eurocentric perspective, these colonial films uncritically represented the Dutch colonisers as heroes while Indonesians were either absent from the story or stereotypically imagined as dangerous madmen. In these colonial comedies and melodramatic stories, little attention was paid to the political context of oppression and resistance in the Dutch East Indies.

With the process of decolonisation after World War II, some unruly Dutch filmmakers started to make anti-colonial films. With *Indonesia Calling* (1946), the Marxist filmmaker Joris Ivens made a short documentary about the Dutch suppression of the Indonesian movement that strived for the independence of the archipelago from Dutch colonial rule after the Japanese conquest of the Dutch East Indies during World War II. This anti-colonial film brought him into conflict with the Dutch authorities. Only many years after the official independence of Indonesia in 1949, other filmmakers started to produce critical fiction films about Dutch colonial rule. The famous novel *Max Havelaar,* written by Multatuli, the pen name for the Dutch civil servant Eduard Douwes Dekker, denounced already in 1860 Dutch colonial practices in Indonesia. More than a hundred years later, Dutch director Fons Rademakers adapted the novel into the feature film *Max Havelaar* (1976). As in the novel, the film follows Max Havelaar, a newly arrived Dutch administrator in the Dutch

colony of Java, discovering how Dutch coffee traders and a local regent abuse their power to exploit Indonesian farmers. Forced to grow tradable crops such as sugar and coffee instead of staple foods such as rice, the local population suffers from poverty and starvation. In his attempts to expose the corruption of the local regent, Max Havelaar is thwarted by his superiors and earns their enmity. Even if the story evolves around the heroism of a white protagonist, it remains nevertheless a strong plea against the colonial system and its consequences for the local population.

When in 1945 the Indonesian National Revolution broke out, the Dutch state conscripted many young men in the Netherlands to join the Dutch troops restoring law and order in the colony. In the film *Gekkenbriefje* [Crazy Going] (1981), director Olga Madsen portrays a young Dutch conscript called up to the Dutch army in Indonesia in 1947. After being drilled and humiliated by his superiors, the young man pretends to be a lunatic in order to be hospitalised and to avoid fighting in the war. Attacking a high officer, the young man receives a letter rejecting him from the army on psychiatric grounds, which enables him to travel homewards. From a postcolonial perspective, the film can be considered as a plea for conscientious objection against colonial violence.

The independence struggle of Indonesia also featured in the film *Oeroeg* [Going Home] (1993) directed by Hans Hylkema. Based on a 1948 novel by the renowned Dutch writer Hella Haasse, the film tells how Johan, the son of a Dutch plantation owner in Indonesia, grows apart from his Indonesian childhood friend Oeroeg. As a servant on the plantation, Oeroeg's father died while trying to rescue Johan from drowning. During World War II, Johan signs up for the Dutch army. When Johan returns to Indonesia in 1945, he discovers that his father has been murdered. Johan suspects Oeroeg, who has joined the rebellion against Dutch colonial rule, taking revenge for the loss of his own father. This postcolonial memory of an interracial friendship can be read as a metaphor for the troubled relation between the Netherlands and its ex-colony (Pattynama, 2005).

The decolonisation struggle of Indonesia has further been depicted in the film *De gordel van smaragd* [Tropic of Emerald] (1997) by director Orlow Seunke. For ten years between 1939 and 1949, the film follows a love-story between a Dutch plantation owner and a local mixed-race woman against the background of historical events. While the Dutch are in full colonial power, the Dutchman Theo arrives in

Indonesia and starts an affair with Ems, a married Dutch-Indonesian woman. During the Japanese invasion of the colony in 1942, the Dutch husband of Ems is killed while Theo is imprisoned in a Japanese war camp. After the Japanese occupation, the Indonesian war of independence breaks out and Ems helps Indonesian rebels who set on fire Theo's plantation. At the time of independence, the couple decide to leave Indonesia, but at the very last moment Ems jumps off the train to stay in her homeland while Theo returns to the Netherlands. Through a melodramatic story about the impossibility of an interracial relationship, this postcolonial film would exemplify the Dutch incapacity to engage with its colonial past (Pattynama, 2007).

5.2.2. Suriname and the Dutch Antilles

In Suriname and the Dutch Antilles, few films were made during the colonial era except for newsreels and propaganda items justifying the Dutch presence in the colonies. One of the first independent feature films shot in the colony of Suriname was Herman van der Horst's ethnographic documentary *Faja Lobbi* (1960) also called *Symphony of the Tropics*. As an observational documentary, the film depicts the tropical nature and colourful images of Indians, Maroons, Javanese, Hindus and Dutch living in the colony. Characterised by a skewed power relation between the Dutch filmmaker and his colonial subjects, the film was not very critical of Dutch colonialism in Suriname. In the 1960s, this colonial power relationship did not prevent the film from winning a Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival.

One of the first films to criticise the relationship between white masters and black slaves in the Dutch colonies was made by a foreign filmmaker in the 1960s. The New Zealand director Michael Forlong shot the Dutch spoken film *Plantage Tamarinde* [The Tamarinde Plantation] (1964), based on a theatre play about a Dutch family of planters on the Dutch Antillean island of Curaçao. The plot evolves around a conservative father who refuses to sell his inherited estate even when his plantation is lossmaking. At the moment his daughter wants to marry the son of the black housemaid, the father expels his children and stays alone on the plantation. After the father falls into a coma, the coloured husband of his daughter heals him. This urges the father to accept his daughter's husband. Against the background of the economic decay of the colonial plantations, the film was an early critique of the racism inherent in the colonial system. However, the film was taken out of circulation

shortly after its release. Officially this was due to the film's low production quality, but it certainly suited the colonial authorities that the film remained fairly unknown.

Films that were more critical of colonialism appeared only after the independence of Suriname in 1975. The Dutch director At Van Praag, founder of the social activist Cinema Club Freedom Films [Cineclub Vrijheidsfilms], made the first documentary in the Surinamese language: *Vrouwen van Suriname/Oema Foe Sranan* (1979). Portraying the daily lives of four women in Suriname and the Netherlands around the time of the independence struggle, the documentary was refused by its broadcaster in the Netherlands because it criticised the colonial exploitation of Suriname. In the 1980s, Dutch public broadcasters started to show more openness about the colonial past of the Netherlands. One of the first directors of Surinamese origin was Astrid Serkei. For Dutch television, she made several short documentaries and television programmes highlighting the role of the Surinamese during World War II, African myths in Suriname, the first president of Suriname, domestic violence against Surinamese women, etc. These films informed Dutch audiences about Suriname without strongly criticising Dutch colonialism. Other filmmakers denounced more explicitly the Dutch colonial past by giving a voice to anti-colonial activists. In the three-part documentary *Wij slaven van Suriname* [We, Slaves of Suriname] (1999), Frank Zichem and Luc Haekens highlighted the ideas of the Surinamese anti-colonial activist Anton De Kom and labour union leader Louis Doedel who mobilised the first large demonstrations in Suriname. In the last part of the trilogy, they portrayed the lives of rural women in Suriname. More recently, the Dutch-Korean director In-soo Radstake made the documentary *Het is zo fijn om Surinamer te zijn* [It's Good To Be Surinamese] (2008), depicting a group of Surinamese youngsters undertaking action to develop their country. In this kind of socially engaged documentaries, the filmmakers go beyond the exoticism of colonial documentaries like *Faja Lobbi* (1960) and highlight the social struggle of the local population in the former Dutch colony.

Even if some filmmakers criticised Dutch colonialism, the history of slavery and the role of the Dutch in the slave trade has remained for many years an untold story in Dutch national cinema. Due to the influx of postcolonial migrants who are the descendants of African slaves working on Dutch plantations in Suriname and the Dutch Antilles, the Netherlands became increasingly confronted with this black page

in its history. After years of silence on the Dutch involvement in the transatlantic slave trade, the Netherlands celebrated in 2013 the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery. On this occasion, Dutch filmmakers produced two historical dramas to remember the slavery in the former Dutch colonies. One film, *Tula* (2013), was set on the Dutch Antillean island of Curaçao, while the other film, *Hoe duur was de suiker?* [The Price of Sugar] (2013), was set in Suriname.

With the English spoken film *Tula, The Revolt* (2013), the Dutch director Jeroen Leinders, who spent his youth on Curaçao, re-enacted the 1795 slave uprising on Curaçao when the island was a Dutch colony. As France had abolished slavery and the Netherlands was at that time a client state of the French empire, Tula, an African slave on Curaçao, argued that his Dutch master should free all his slaves. Humiliated by his master, Tula heads a march towards the governor of Curaçao with more and more slaves from other plantations joining. Although Tula wanted to negotiate a peaceful solution, the Dutch decided to execute him and his followers. Remarkably, the film production lost financial support from the Netherlands Film Fund because no Dutch was spoken in the film. Although the film did not reach large audiences, it achieved critical acclaim at some international film festivals. The film brought a long-repressed part of Dutch national history to the big screen, even if the characters in the film are rather one-dimensionally portrayed in a dichotomy of brave slaves versus evil masters.

On the same occasion of the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery, a second film *Hoe duur was de suiker?* [The Price of Sugar] (2013) was made, this time focusing on an interracial relationship from the point of view of a female black slave in the Dutch colony of Suriname. Based on a 1987 novel by the Surinamese writer Cynthia McLeod, the Dutch director Jean van de Velde filmed the story of two Dutch stepsisters and their personal slaves living on a sugar plantation in 18th century Suriname. From the point of view of the domestic slave Mini-Mini, the film follows the romantic affairs of her capricious Dutch mistress Sarith, who married a rich Dutch planter on whom she cheats with a Dutch soldier. When the old planter finds out about the adultery, he divorces Sarith and starts a relationship with her black slave Mini-Mini. After Sarith takes revenge by selling Mini-Mini on a slave market, the Dutch planter saves Mini-Mini. After the commercially successful release as a feature film, a more extended version of the film was broadcast as a four-part television series in early 2014. As a melodrama, both the film and the series focus on

the romantic relationships between simplified black and white characters. In this sense, the historical fact of slavery in the Dutch colony is used as a background to contrast good and bad Dutch slave owners. The cruel treatment of slaves is only linked to the frustrated and immoral Sarith, while other Dutch characters treat their slaves well. For this reason, I argue that both the film and the series miss out on the opportunity to deliver a strong social criticism of Dutch colonial racism that is relevant to the contemporary relations between the Dutch and their former colonial subjects. In the following section, I will discuss in more detail a film that also deals with an interracial relationship, this time set in the Netherlands before and during World War II.

5.3. An Interracial Romance in Dutch National History: *Sonny Boy* (2011)

After discussing films about the colonies, I will now turn towards the representation of migration from the colonies to the Netherlands. Migration from Indonesia, Suriname and the Dutch Antilles to the Netherlands already started during the colonial era but reached its height during the decolonisation process in the 20th century. With the Indonesian War of Independence from 1945 till 1949, thousands of people of Dutch, mixed-race and Indonesian origin migrated to the Netherlands. From the time that Suriname was a Dutch colony, Surinamese people had been travelling to the Netherlands mainly to study or to work. Since the 1970s, however, almost half of the Surinamese population moved to the Netherlands driven by high unemployment rates and the political turmoil leading to the independence of Suriname in 1975. While migration from the Dutch Antilles to the Netherlands first consisted of students, the migration of working-class Antilleans increased significantly after the closing of the oil refineries in Aruba and Curaçao in 1985 (Sharpe, 2005). As the Antilles remain a part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, its inhabitants can travel relatively easy to the Netherlands. All together, these recent and less recent migration waves from the colonies to the Netherlands contributed to the growing diversity of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands today.

While migration is a hot topic in contemporary public debates, much less attention has been paid to the arrival of the first migrants from the colonies in the Netherlands. An obvious reason might be that there were much less migrants arriving in the Netherlands before World War II than in the postwar decades. During the

colonial era, only a limited number of people, mostly from the local elites, came from the colonies to the Netherlands in order to study. Historical films dealing with migration, however, remain scarce in the Netherlands. Only in recent years have Dutch filmmakers started to dedicate more attention to migration from a historical perspective. According to Friedrich Spielhagen, we can speak about a historical drama if it 'portrays a time on which the light of the living generation's memory no longer falls in its full force' [cited in Roberts (1965), p.12]. Historical dramas or heritage films help to create or sustain the myth of a national identity by mobilising a collective memory around certain events. According to Andrew Higson (1996), 'one of the central pleasures of the heritage film is the artful and spectacular projection of an elite, conservative vision of the national past' (p. 233). Colonial history, in this sense, has often been justified as 'bringing civilisation to the savages' and brutalities like slavery and exploitation have been minimalised as exceptional acts. Beyond the idea that heritage films necessarily reproduce a conservative and elitist imagination of the nation, however, I will discuss here historical dramas that focus on the colonised rather than on the coloniser, on the excluded rather than on the elite.

In Dutch cinema, many historical dramas have dealt with the German occupation of the Netherlands during World War II. Hofstede (2000) even goes so far as to claim that the collective memory of the Second World War is part of Dutch national identity construction. Before *Sonny Boy* (2011), another World War II drama already focused on the true story of a colonial migrant during the war. While *Sonny Boy* tells the story of an unknown Surinamese migrant, a couple of years earlier the film *Boy Ecury* (2003), about a well-known Antillean resistance hero during World War II, was released by the Dutch-Jewish filmmaker Frans Weisz. This historical drama was based on the real life of Boy Ecury, a young black student from the Caribbean island of Aruba who died in the Netherlands during World War II. After the war, Boy Ecury's father travelled from Aruba to the Netherlands to find his dead son. The film reconstructs the life of Boy Ecury through flashbacks of witnesses. As the only black pupil in a 1930s Dutch boarding school, Boy Ecury joined the resistance against the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. Carrying out sabotages and bombings against the German occupier, Boy Ecury was eventually arrested and executed in 1944. In the film, Boy Ecury's father is confronted with the executioner of his son. This encounter gives rise to questions about guilt and forgiveness. In the end, the father brings the corpse of his son back to Aruba where Boy Ecury was

buried with military honours. Although the film contributed to the commemoration of a Dutch Antillean migrant as a historical figure in the Dutch national history, Boy Ecury was already a known figure in Aruba memorialised through a statue, street names, a documentary film and a book (Schouten, 1985). This was not the case of Waldemar Nods, the Surinamese man on whose real-life story the film *Sonny Boy* (2011) is based. What makes *Sonny Boy* (2011) interesting is the fact that the narrative does not focus on an individual hero like Boy Ecury but on an interracial romance between a Surinamese man and a Dutch woman against the background of World War II. I argue that the narrative focus on this unlikely relationship can be read as a criticism of past and current racial divisions in the Netherlands.

The story of one of the first Surinamese immigrants in the Netherlands and his Dutch wife would have remained fairly unknown to the general public if the Dutch author Annejet van der Zijl had not published a book about it in 2004. The author learnt about the existence of Waldemar Nods through one of her colleagues who was married to a grandson of the Surinamese migrant. As a journalist who had written some biographies of famous people, she became fascinated with the life story of this unknown Surinamese migrant during World War II. The biography of Waldemar Nods reads indeed as a script for a historical drama. Born in 1908 in the Surinamese capital of Paramaribo, Waldemar Nods was the son of a gold prospector and grandson of a slave. In 1927, he moved to The Hague in the Netherlands in order to study. There he met Rika van der Lans, a white Dutch woman twice his age and mother of four children. She had just left her husband and rented out rooms in order to make a living. As a black student, Waldemar had difficulty finding a place to stay but Rika accepted him as a tenant. Against all odds, they started a relationship and one year later they even had a child together. Born in 1928, their son was nicknamed ‘Sonny Boy’ after a popular Al Jolson song at the time. After completing his studies, Waldemar moved with Rika and their son to a seaside town where they opened a guesthouse during the Great Depression of the 1930s. After the outbreak of World War II, the Germans invaded the Netherlands. When the Nazis started to construct the Atlantic Wall in 1942 to protect occupied Europe from an anticipated Allied invasion, Rika and Waldemar had to leave their seaside house and moved to another place. At the request of the Dutch resistance, they started hiding Jews from the Nazis in their new home until they were betrayed. Rika was sentenced to imprisonment in a Dutch concentration camp while Waldemar was sent to a German camp. After

suffering from dysentery, Rika died in the concentration shortly before the liberation of the Netherlands in 1945. Meanwhile, the German camp was evacuated and the prisoners were put on a ship that was eventually scuttled by Allied warplanes. Waldemar managed to swim to shore but was then killed by child SS soldiers who received the instructions to gun down any survivors.

After doing research about the forgotten history of Waldemar Nods and his Dutch wife Rika van der Lans, Annejet van der Zijl wrote the book *Sonny Boy* that was published in 2004. Based on letters, diaries, interviews and testimonies, the author created a historical biography that put the personal history of these unknown people against a background of the great dramas of world history. In an interview, she explained her motivation to write about these unknown people: 'I like to study history from the perspective of everyday life. This way, you can peel off the deceptive layer of clichés and stereotypes' (Kieskamp, 2005). As a journalist, Annejet preferred a non-fictional approach rather than adding fictional elements to the real-life story. In this context, she stated: 'With Sonny Boy I was initially planning to write a historical novel. But then there emerged letters written by the main characters from within the concentration camps and I thought, no, I don't have to invent anything' (Floor, 2010). The true love story soon became a bestseller and sold more than 600,000 copies in the Netherlands, making it the best-selling Dutch non-fiction book in the Netherlands in 2005. It was also translated into other languages and received several awards and nominations.

In a society that has become increasingly sensitive to the issue of migration, the Dutch film director Maria Peters and screenwriter Pieter van de Waterbeemd decided to bring this previously unknown story of a Surinamese migrant during World War II to the big screen. Shortly after the publication of the book, they acquired the story rights and wrote a screenplay. Because the book did not contain dialogue but only descriptions of events and excerpts from letters, the screenwriter had to invent the dialogues. As a book adaptation, however, the film stayed close to the original story. The director and screenwriter argued that they could not add too many fictional elements to a real-life story, in particular because the then 82-year-old Sonny Boy, the son of the two main characters, was still alive[21]. The filmmakers collaborated with

[21] Peters, Maria (2011). 'Maria Peters: De film Sonny Boy gaat over de levens van mensen'. *Oerdigitaalvrouwenblad*. Retrieved from: www.oerdigitaalvrouwenblad.com/story/maria-peters-de-film-sonny-boy-gaat-over-de-levens-van-mensen

him, his family and the writer Annejet van der Zijl to stay as close as possible to the real story and fleshed out the personalities of the characters based on testimonies.

5.3.1. Shooting History Beyond the Nation

Making a historical drama set in both Suriname and the Netherlands during the 1930s and World War II obviously required a high budget for costumes, scenography, mise-en-scène and locations. Funded by the public broadcaster KRO, the Netherlands Film Fund, the Cobo Fund, the Flemish Community and the city of The Hague, the filmmakers achieved to obtain a budget around 6 million €, which makes *Sonny Boy* (2011) one of the most expensive films dealing with migration ever made in the Netherlands. This fact alone already distinguishes this film from other previously discussed films about migration, which were mainly low-budget productions. When she applied for funding, director Maria Peters was already an established filmmaker in the Netherlands. After graduating from the Netherlands Film Academy in Amsterdam in 1983, she worked as a film producer, director and screenwriter. In 1987, she founded with her husband the Shooting Star Film Company and became primarily known as director and screenwriter of several successful family films (*De Tasjesdief, Kruimeltje, Pietje Bell, Pietje Bell 2: De Jacht op de Tsarenkroon*). *Sonny Boy* was her thirteenth film project but it was the first time she made a film dealing with the issue of migration and racism. While all of her previous films featured white Dutch protagonists, *Sonny Boy* was her first film with an ethnic minority actor in a leading role. As a book adaptation, the film is not based on personal experiences of the director. Nevertheless, the director had some affinity with the history of Dutch colonialism and migration. Even if the director, Maria Peters, is a white Dutch woman, she was born in 1958 on the colonial island of Curaçao in the Dutch Antilles. In an interview, she explained how her personal experiences motivated her to make this film: ‘I grew up between coloured and white people. Exactly that feeling of belonging to their culture and their colonial history mattered a lot to me’ (Peters, 2011). Nevertheless, the film focuses not just on colonial history but also on the experiences of an unusual couple in the Netherlands during the 1930s and 1940s.

Fig. 5.1 Film poster of *Sonny Boy* and film still of the 'unlikely couple'

While the title of the film and the book suggests a story that evolves around Sonny Boy, the mixed-race son of a Surinamese father and a Dutch mother, both the film and the book actually focus on the story of his parents. As the film is based on a real-life story, the filmmakers looked for actors with characteristics that resembled as much as possible the physical appearances and personalities of the people that really existed. With its focus on physical appearances, film is a medium that lends itself very well to visually display the contrast between black and white in an interracial relationship. For the leading role of the Surinamese Waldemar Nods, the 29-year-old actor Sergio Hasselbaink was cast. Although Hasselbaink is of Surinamese origin, he was born in Amsterdam and had never been to Suriname before the film was shot there. In fact, he was working as a shoe salesman and doing other casual jobs in the Netherlands. In his spare time, he did performances at a dance collective where he was asked to follow acting classes. It was his acting teacher who encouraged him to audition for the role of Waldemar in the film Sonny Boy[22]. As a relatively inexperienced actor, Hasselbaink surprisingly got the leading

[22] Hasselbaink, Sergio (2011). 'Interview Sonny Boy: "Ik moest op etiquette les om net zo braaf te worden als hij".' *De Amsterdammer.* Retrieved from: deamsterdammer.wordpress.com/2011/05/04/interview-sonny-boy-ik-moest-op-etiquette-les-om-net-zo-braaf-te-worden-als-hij/

role in this big-budget film. One of the reasons for his casting could be the scarcity of professional actors of Surinamese origin in the Dutch film industry. The casting of the young black amateur actor contrasts sharply with the choice for the ten years older white professional actress Ricky Koole as the leading lady in the film. Since the 1990s, Ricky Koole had performed in many theatre, film and television productions. Besides being an actress, she was also a singer who had released several albums. The filmmakers cast these two actors not only because of their contrasting skin colour and their age difference, but also because of their opposing personalities. While Ricky is known as outgoing and self-confident, Sergio appeared more serious and introvert. Through selection of these personal characteristics, the actors were to resemble as much as possible the real couple based on testimonies of the 82-year-old Sonny Boy and others who had known them. In the supporting roles, various white Dutch actors and actresses were cast. Apart from Sergio Hasselbaink, not many actors of Surinamese origin played a significant role in the film, except for the mixed-race Sonny Boy, played by the child actor Daniel van Wijk. The whiteness of the rest of the cast obviously reflects the historical reality of the Netherlands in the 1930s, when there were barely coloured people in the country.

Even if the film is mainly set in the Netherlands, it could also be called a transnational film, not only because it focuses on the experiences of a Surinamese migrant in the Netherlands but also because the film was shot in more than one country. While the lion's share of the film is set in the Netherlands during the 1930s and 1940s, the opening scenes were shot in Suriname. These opening scenes depict colonial Suriname in the 1920s, which required a historical scenography. For this reason, the film crew had to bring over the costumes, cameras, light sources and other equipment. In Suriname, the filmmakers made use of the local population as extras in the film. In the final version of the film, however, the scenes in Suriname only last for about five minutes. In these scenes, we see the young Waldemar swimming in the Suriname River when his father leaves on a boat and, in the subsequent shot, a seven years older Waldemar saying goodbye to his family when he moves to the Netherlands. Except for these scenes that very succinctly summarise Waldemar's Surinamese origin, the film nevertheless focuses on what happened in the Netherlands, more specifically in the cities of The Hague and Scheveningen. Only in the final scenes, the film again crosses national borders when Waldemar and Rika are brought to German concentration camps in respectively

Ravensbrück and Neuengamme. Linking the colonial history of the Netherlands with the German occupation during World War II, the film contradicts the idea that nations are independent and geographically bounded entities. If historical dramas imagine the national identity of a country, this film shows the interdependence of the Netherlands and other countries and illustrates how a historical drama can contribute to a transnational imagination of historical events.

5.3.2. An Interracial Romance as Social Criticism

Although historical events play an important role in *Sonny Boy*, the focus of the narrative is on the romantic relationship of Waldemar and Rika. For this reason, the film can be seen not just as a historical drama but also as a romance. Even if the romance film is a category often used by film distributors and reviewers, film scholars have undertheorised the romance film and considered it as a mix of already theorised genres (Dixon, 2000). This lack of academic interest reflects the fact that romance films are often debased as objects of 'low culture'. Traditionally aimed at women, romance films nevertheless have codes and conventions constituting a structure recognisable across films. The narrative usually focuses on the journey of the main characters through dating, courtship and marriage, whether or not hindered by various obstacles that threaten the relationship. Influential film scholars like Laura Mulvey (1975) have argued that narrative cinema is complicit with the structures of social domination. In this sense, romance films would consolidate the hierarchy of the patriarchal order. Against this assumption, Thomas Wartenberg (1999) highlights the emancipatory potential of a specific type of romance films which he called 'the unlikely couple films'. From a social perspective, a couple is unlikely when the relationship violates the social norms regulating romances. From a romantic perspective, however, the two partners make their relationship likely by setting their love above any social conventions. Even if the films are seen as mere entertainment, unlikely couple films can confront various forms of social oppression and include important social criticism of hierarchies of class, gender, race and sexual orientation.

Not all films about unlikely couples, however, are critical of social hierarchies. The film *Papa's Song* (1999) by the Dutch director Sander Francken, for example, depicts the relationship between a Dutch man and an Antillean woman in a rather stereotypical way. Set in 1990s Amsterdam, this melodrama evolves around a Dutch magistrate and his wife from Curaçao. When the wife's sister arrives from Curaçao to

pick up her sons, it becomes clear that the two women have a troubled relationship and a traumatic past with an abusive father. Because of this, the Dutch husband feels that he does not know his Antillean wife very well. When his wife, unable to have children, asks him to impregnate her sister, the family relationships get even more complicated. In the end, it turns out that the Antillean wife has been involved in a murder. Characterising the Antilleans as quarrelsome and hot-tempered in contrast to the calm and rational Dutchman, the film reproduces colonial hierarchies. The many melodramatic twists and the stereotypical characterisations hinder this film to create a more balanced image of an interracial relationship and reinforce the distinction between black and white.

The subversive potential of the unlikely couple film is much more evident in the historical drama *Sonny Boy*. Bringing the romance between a young black student from Suriname and a Dutch mother of four children to the big screen, *Sonny Boy* depicts a transgressive romance that violates the social norms of an era when colonial hierarchy and racial divisions between black and white were taken for granted. In the film, we see several characters disapproving of the interracial relationship between Rika and Waldemar. In the beginning, Rika and Waldemar try to hide their relationship. When the children of Rika notice that their mother touches the black man tenderly, we see their unsettled faces. Even Rika herself is worried about the relationship. As soon as she discovers that she is pregnant by Waldemar, she looks for a place to undergo a secret abortion. After telling Waldemar that she considered an abortion, Waldemar disappointedly says that ‘she is like all the others’. In the end, however, Rika decides to have the baby despite being aware that this will cause a scandal. Indeed, while she is pregnant her two oldest sons run away to their father. The former husband of Rika informs her that he will be stationed in Indonesia and asks her to come with him. While he was first even willing to recognise Rika’s new baby as one of his own children, he gets very upset once he learns that a black man is the father. In the scene where he meets Waldemar, Rika’s former husband shouts that he does ‘not accept that his children would live under the same roof with two niggers!’. The Dutch lawmakers agree with the former husband’s racist view and Rika loses custody over all her four children who are sent to her former husband. In addition, the former husband refuses a divorce in order to prevent Rika marrying Waldemar. Even Rika’s brother is no longer willing to support his sister financially with the rent of her house claiming that ‘she did this to herself’. As Rika and

Waldemar have difficulties paying the rent, their landlord evicts the couple from the house.

Despite these hardships, the narrative of the romance between Waldemar and Rika questions the extent to which these social hierarchies and divisions are legitimate. Showing how love overcomes the social objections against miscegenation, the filmmakers highlight the subversive potential of the unlikely couple. In an interview, director Maria Peters summarises how both protagonists defy social expectations in order to make their romance succeed:

> We thought it was important that Rika unconditionally chooses the young Surinamese Waldemar even if her surroundings disapprove of this and she is 'punished' because she can see her children only once a year. Waldemar comes to the Netherlands with a dream to study. Afterwards, he would return to Suriname to make his life there. That was his plan. But that dream never comes true because he chooses Rika, and in particular when they have a son together, Sonny Boy. He is nostalgic about his country, but never returns. That pain is inside him throughout the whole film. We found it beautiful that their love survived against all odds, and how they tried to survive the war. (Peters, 2011)

The subversive potential of the narrative is not limited to the interracial romance between Waldemar and Rika. Also other relations crossing social boundaries challenge the categorical divisions in the Dutch society of the 1930s. After being evicted from their home, Waldemar and Rika are repeatedly refused by other Dutch landlords, until an outsider saves the mixed-race family from the street. A Jewish man who owns a bar gives Waldemar, Rika and their baby shelter and lends them the money to start a guesthouse in the city of Scheveningen. Through the depiction of an interracial family helped by a Jewish man, the film destabilises categorical distinctions between black, white and Jewish, and proves the audience the limited validity of ethnic classifications and stigmatisation. Set in the years before World War II, the film shows how love and friendship can cut across race, ethnicity, age and other barriers. When World War II breaks out, Waldemar and Rika help to hide Jews in their new house. This way, *Sonny Boy* links the experiences of a colonial migrant with the experiences of Jews during World War II. While many films about World War II have dealt with the situation of the Jews, *Sonny Boy* also highlights the racism faced by a colonial migrant. On the one hand, it could be said that the historical

context makes the social criticism of the way immigrants are received even stronger as the filmmakers draw parallels between the hostility towards the black student and the persecution of the Jews. On the other hand, depicting racism in the context of the Nazi-occupied Netherlands also diverts the attention away from Dutch colonialism. The German occupation makes the Dutch look like victims of the Nazi regime ignoring that for centuries the Dutch were main actors in the transatlantic slave trade and the exploitation of colonial subjects.

Where the racism against the Surinamese Waldemar plays an important role in the first part of the film, anti-Semitism and the persecution of Jews becomes more prominent in the latter half of the film when the Germans occupy the Netherlands. The Jewish man who helped the interracial couple has to wear the Jewish yellow badge and is not much later brutally taken away by the Nazis. On the request of the Dutch resistance, Rika and Waldemar start to hide Jews in their house as well as a Dutch SS deserter. The film again challenges social divisions by showing how the former SS soldier lives together with Jewish hiders and develops a friendship with the young mixed-race Sonny Boy. After an anonymous phone call, the Nazis invade the house of Waldemar and Rika and discover the hiders. During the raid, the Nazis shout racist insults to Waldemar and his mixed-race son. At this point, we see how Rika and Waldemar suffer the same fate as the persecuted Jews. Both the hiders and their hosts are taken away and sent to labour camps. The young Sonny Boy is allowed to go back to his maternal grandparents who send him to a farmer in the countryside in order to keep him out of the hands of the Nazis.

Unlikely couple films use, according to Wartenberg (1999), narrative strategies to resolve the tension between the romance and the social norms it transgresses. On the one hand, a victory of love over social norms proves these norms to be wrong. On the other hand, a tragic ending exhibits the unexpected harm caused by unfair social norms. Contrary to romance films with a happy ending, the story of Rika and Waldemar ends in a tragic way. Even if the filmmakers preferred a more positive finale, the film stayed loyal to the real biographies of Rika and Waldemar. Working twelve hours per day in an overcrowded and unhygienic female labour camp, Rika dies of dysentery. Waldemar is sent to another labour camp where he is allowed to work in administration thanks to his knowledge of German. In the film, he sarcastically remarks: ‘At least there is a place where they value my degree!’, a direct criticism of the racism he had experienced in the Netherlands.

Unlike other tragic love stories, the unfortunate destiny of the Dutch-Surinamese couple is not a consequence of their transgressive romance but of their act of hiding Jews and a deserter. In this sense, the painful deaths of both Rika and Waldemar do not serve as a social criticism of the racism that they experienced in the prewar Netherlands. Rather, their tragic deaths underline the injustice of the war. In particular, the pointless murder of Waldemar by two children after he survived the labour camp and a shipwreck illustrates the irrationality of the war. Highlighting the Nazi atrocities, however, the prewar racism in the Netherlands slides into the background. At this point, the film becomes a World War II drama rather than an unlikely couple film. Even if the lives of Waldemar and Rika have a tragic ending, the filmmakers show that there is also a positive outcome to the unlikely romance. In the final scene of the film, we see the young Sonny Boy reading the last letter from his mother who urges him to be courageous. In the postscript texts at the end of the film, we learn that Sonny Boy became a journalist and married. Despite the death of his parents, Sonny Boy survived the war and stayed in the Netherlands. In this sense, Sonny Boy incarnates the victory of miscegenation over the social norms of the past.

5.3.3. Reaching Mainstream Audiences

For almost sixty years, the story of the relationship between a Surinamese migrant and his Dutch wife had remained as good as unknown to the general public. Only after the turn of the 21st century, the story was published as a book and later released as a film, immediately reaching wide audiences. When *Sonny Boy* was theatrically released in January 2011, the film soon became commercially successful. With 421,000 admissions and a box office revenue of 3,270,528 €, Sonny Boy was the fourth highest-grossing Dutch film of 2011. While the other commercially successful films had an all-white Dutch cast, *Sonny Boy* was the first Dutch film with an actor of Surinamese origin in a leading role to attract such a wide audience. At the Netherlands Film Festival, the film received the status of Platinum Film, an award recognising domestic box office achievements for films that reached more than 400,000 visitors. Also the DVD sales went very well and the film reached the status of Platinum DVD, with more than 100,000 DVDs sold. This indicates that the story struck a chord in the Netherlands at a moment that multiculturalism had become increasingly attacked by populist politicians. In the light of the recent political

backlash against immigrants in the Netherlands, the historical drama contains a message of tolerance for the contemporary Dutch mainstream audience.

By September 2011, *Sonny Boy* was nominated to be the Dutch entry for the Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film in Hollywood. The film, however, did not make the final shortlist. Although the film received nominations for best leading actress, best cinematography and best music at the annual Netherlands Film Festival, it did not win any of these awards. Despite its commercial success, the film did not gain much critical acclaim. In the press, the film received mixed reviews. In major newspapers, reviewers argued that the dialogues of the main characters were too artificial and that the historical drama lacked subtlety. In particular, it was argued that the character of the Surinamese Waldemar remained underdeveloped, that the interracial relationship went surprisingly smooth and without conflicts while also the age difference between the protagonists apparently did not cause any frictions (Ramdas, 2011). Nevertheless, the reviewers also recognised the importance of the film in making the mainstream audience aware of the racism that has been present in Dutch society since the colonial past. In his review, journalist Bor Beekman stated:

> [T]he way the coloured Waldemar is received in the Netherlands, and the virulence with which the Dutch are depicted - as if we were racist and narrow-minded people - make Sonny Boy a remarkable film. Even if her directing is on many occasions mediocre, Peters holds up a mirror to society that was missing in our national cinema. (Beekman, 2011)

Despite the criticisms, *Sonny Boy* was the first (by Dutch standards) big budget film focusing on the experiences of a Surinamese migrant in the Netherlands reaching a mainstream audience. The film meant a lot to the 82-year-old Sonny Boy, who stated that ‘the book gave back my parents, the film gave back my whole family’ (de Waard, 2015). The film did not only bring back to life the forgotten story of one of the first Surinamese migrants, but also raised awareness about the racism that was predominant at the time. On the online film discussion forum Moviemeter.nl, one of the participants of the forum was impressed by the racism in the film:

Before this film I actually did not realise that the Dutch also used to be huge racists. At this point, it was an eye-opener. Getting down with a young waitress in the barn was okay but providing shelter to a black person was taboo! I'm glad that is over.[23]

According to the Dutch-Surinamese writer Anil Ramdas (2011), however, the racism depicted in the film is relatively innocent. He argues that the director actually softened the racism. For example, when Waldemar wants to join a snowball fight, the Dutch boys shout to him: 'We don't play with you, nigger!'. His Dutch wife Rika solves the issue by throwing snowballs herself to everyone, including Waldemar, who subsequently joins the snowball fight. This scene suggests that racism is due to ignorance and would easily disappear as soon as people learn to know the foreigner. Ramdas, however, points out that racism still exists in the Netherlands today and pessimistically concludes that racism could be attributed to ignorance in the 1930s but the persistence of racism even after Nazism and the Holocaust is no longer due to ignorance. By relegating racism to a historical past, the film created a safe distance from contemporary discrimination and racism in the Netherlands. Although the film can be read as a criticism of the colonial past and the racism of the Dutch, I argue that the film focused too much on the historical events of World War II and missed out the opportunity to criticise the enduring causes of racism beyond the historical context of colonialism and Nazism.

While *Sonny Boy* offers a mainly Dutch perspective on the colonial history, there are also filmmakers from Suriname and the Dutch Antilles who made films about their homelands. Although they did not always deal with the issue of migration to the Netherlands, I believe it is relevant to briefly mention their work in order to show the broader context of postcolonial cinema in the Netherlands.

[23] Comments on *Sonny Boy* (2011). Retrieved from: www.moviemeter.nl/film/64944

5.4. Postcolonial Filmmakers from Suriname and the Dutch Antilles

After World War II, a wave of decolonisation dismantled the large colonial empires of the British and the French. Also the Netherlands lost their largest colony with the declaration of independence by Indonesia in 1945. Suriname was granted full independence several years later in 1975, while the Dutch Antilles gained some autonomy but remain until today a part of the Netherlands. With their independence, the people from Suriname and Indonesia sought to affirm their own national identities. In Dutch film history, it is worth mentioning some film directors who brought the postcolonial experience to the big screen. While the previously discussed films about the colonies were mainly made from a Dutch perspective, the Surinamese director Pim de la Parra and the Antillean director Felix de Rooy made films about their homeland from an indigenous perspective. As they migrated to the Netherlands, they can be called 'accented' filmmakers who translated their personal memories of their homelands into an 'accented cinema' (Naficy, 2001). The major contribution of these filmmakers is that they introduced a Third Cinema in the Netherlands dealing with the nation's former and actual colonies from the perspective of (post)colonial subjects.

Born in Suriname in 1940 from a Dutch-Jewish family that lived there since centuries, Pim de la Parra moved in 1960 to the Netherlands to study at the Netherlands Film Academy. After making some commercially successful Dutch films, he invested his entire fortune in the production of the first post-independence Surinamese fiction film *Wan Pipel* (1976). This film tells the story of a young Surinamese Creole who hears that his mother is dying in Suriname. Subsequently, the leading character abandons his studies in the Netherlands and his Dutch girlfriend in order to return as soon as possible to Suriname. Back in Suriname, the young man wants to marry a Hindustani nurse, causing a stir in both the conservative Hindustani and Afro-Surinamese communities. When his Dutch girlfriend comes over to take him back to the Netherlands, however, he refuses to come back as he believes his duty is to help building up Suriname. Beyond a simple love story, the choice between two women can be read as the conflict between two cultural identities, resulting in the optimistic choice for the newly independent republic that needs to be united in its diversity. In this sense, *Wan Pipel* can be seen as an attempt to construct a Surinamese national identity. Even if the film was critically

acclaimed, the high production costs led to the bankruptcy of Pim de la Parra's film company. After this film, the director retreated to the Dutch Antilles where he shot *Odyssée d'amour* (1987), a film about the love affairs of a Dutch engineer on the island of Bonaire. In later years, Pim de la Parra returned to Suriname and founded the Surinamese Film Academy. He further made some lesser-known films in Suriname like *Het geheim van de Saramacca rivier* [The Secret of the Saramacca River] (2007) about the marital problems of a Dutch-Surinamese professor and his wife who returned to Suriname after having lived for many years in the Netherlands. Finally, one of the last films of Pim de la Parra is *Het laatste verlangen* [The Ultimate Desire] (2008), a pseudo-documentary about his work as a filmmaker and his affairs with women. As one of the most prolific Dutch film directors, Pim de la Parra received national recognition in the Netherlands for his complete oeuvre. Although he is mostly known in the Netherlands for his erotically explicit box-office hits, the films about his homeland Suriname can be considered as his most personal work as a postcolonial 'accented' filmmaker.

Apart from the personal films of Pim de la Parra, Suriname has also been the object of a more political thriller *Paramaribo Papers* (2002) by the Dutch director Ger Poppelaars. After its independence, Suriname has known periods of political unrest. In 1980, a military coup overthrew the Surinamese government and installed a dictatorship. In December 1982, thirteen citizens and journalists who had criticised the dictatorship were killed. *Paramaribo Papers* is based on these events. Aimed at Dutch audiences in the Netherlands, the depiction of Suriname as a country ridden with corruption, drugs trafficking and murders did not create a flattering image of the former Dutch colony and its inhabitants. The film focuses on a Dutch secret agent in search of a journalist who disappeared in Suriname. The agent discovers secret papers that prove the involvement of the Dutch government in the military coup in Suriname, resulting in the murder of opponents. Through a fictional story, this political thriller criticises the suspected support by the Dutch government of the military coup in Suriname. In this sense, the film claims that the Netherlands still exerted a neo-colonial control over the young Republic of Suriname despite its independence. Even if the film operates from a rather Eurocentric perspective, it is one of the few Dutch films that dedicated attention to the situation in postcolonial Suriname.

Besides Pim de la Parra, Felix de Rooy is another important postcolonial filmmaker in Dutch cinema. Born on Curaçao in 1952 of Surinamese parents, de Rooy is known as the foremost filmmaker of the Dutch Antilles. In his career as a filmmaker, he depicted the experience of blacks on different continents. After graduating as a filmmaker in New York, de Rooy migrated to the Netherlands. Working together with fellow Dutch Antillean writer and producer Norman de Palm, his first feature film was *Desirée (*1984), a tragic story of a troubled black woman in New York who burnt her baby believing that the child was the source of all evil happening to her. As the film was critically acclaimed, Felix de Rooy and Norman de Palm received Dutch subsidies to make *Almacita di Desolato* (1986), the first feature film in Papiamento, the local language of the Dutch Antilles. The film tells the tale of a priestess in Curaçao who after giving birth to the child of the devil is expelled from her village. Once the priestess overcomes the evil, the village and her daughter recover from the devil's spell. Another film shot in Curaçao by Felix de Rooy and Norman de Palm was *Ava & Gabriel* (1990), the story of the Dutch-Surinamese painter Gabriel who comes to Curaçao in 1948 to paint a mural in a church. He falls in love with the local girl Ava, even if she is engaged to a white police officer. Taking the girl as his model, he paints a negroid Virgin Mary, causing a stir on the island. When also the wife of the Dutch governor tries to seduce the painter, Gabriel becomes the victim of racism and controversies around his person. Winning several awards at small festivals, the filmmakers managed to introduce Curaçao to debates about Third World Cinema. Even if both Pim de la Parra and Felix de Rooy were 'accented' filmmakers in the Netherlands, they did not make any films about the experiences of postcolonial minorities in the Netherlands. For this reason, I only briefly mentioned their work and will not elaborate this further.

In the context of postcolonial migration to the Netherlands, it is worth noting that not all migrants from Suriname are of African descent. We already mentioned the Dutch-Jewish roots of Pim de la Parra, but Suriname also hosts a large group of East Indians, descendants of 19th century contract workers from India, referred to as Hindustani. Due to ethnic tensions around the time of the independence struggle, many Hindustani moved from Suriname to the Netherlands. I will briefly mention some films made about Hindustani migrants in the Netherlands. Thanks to the multicultural media policies in the Netherlands the Surinamese-Hindustani director Zaid Abdoelrahman created with the support of the Foundation Hindu Media (OHM)

the documentary *Als ik mijn ogen sluit zie ik Suriname* [When I Close My Eyes, I See Suriname] (2000), about the Surinamese Hindustani who came to the Netherlands around the time of the Surinamese independence. The documentary highlights the question whether or not these migrants want to return to Suriname. In another documentary, *Judai Biraha: afscheidslied* [Judai Biraha: a Farewell Song] (2003), the Dutch director Floris van Haarlem investigated the motivations of Hindustani to leave Suriname just before its independence in 1975.

Postcolonial Surinamese-Hindustani filmmakers mainly made some low-budget films about their own community in the Netherlands with the support of the Foundation Hindu Media. For example, Richi Chamman, another director of Surinamese-Hindustani origin, made several films about Hindustani migrants in the Netherlands. Chamman started his career with the short film *Sapney – De Droom* [Sapney – The Dream] (2005), a Bollywood-style musical film starring a young Hindustani boy in the Netherlands singing about his love for a Dutch girl. Chamman further made the short documentary *Jeuk* [Itch] (2006) about a young Hindustani boy in the Netherlands who dreams of a career as a Bollywood star to escape the reality of his skin disease. Finally, his first full-length documentary *Bollywood Blues* (2008) tells the story of a Hindustani girl in the Netherlands who rejects the traditional Hindustani traditions of her father. Most of these films were just broadcast by the Foundation Hindu Media to the own ethnic community in order to support the cultural development of this ethnic minority. As these films are just small local community projects that did not have any wider impact, I will not discuss them in more detail. Nevertheless, the existence of these films illustrates the importance of ethnic minority organisations to support 'accented' filmmakers. While the Foundation Hindu Media supported several films about Hindustani migrants in the Netherlands, there was no such organisation that structurally supported films about Surinamese migrants of African origin. Films about other postcolonial minorities like the Surinamese of African origin, the Antilleans or Indonesians have mainly been initiatives by individual directors. For this reason, some postcolonial minorities have remained less visible on the big screen than others.

5.5. From Invisible Minority to Radicalisation: the Dutch-Indonesians

Few Dutch films have been made about post-independence Indonesia and the migration of Indonesians to the Netherlands. Although thousands of people of Dutch, mixed-race and Indonesian origin migrated to the Netherlands after independence, they received little attention from the Dutch authorities. Only a couple of films have been dedicated to this first wave of postcolonial migrants in the Netherlands. Several of these films are problem-oriented social dramas in the tradition of the cinema of duty (Malik, 1996). An example is the film *Mijn Blauwen Hemel* [My Blue Heaven] (1990) by the Dutch-Indonesian director Ronald Beer. The film portrays the arrival of an Indonesian family in 1961 in a lower-class neighbourhood in the Dutch city of Rotterdam. When the Indonesians turn an old storage place into a successful Indonesian restaurant, the Dutch owner of a snack bar fears the competition from the newcomers. Moreover, after his son falls in love with the eldest daughter of the Indonesians, the tensions between the Dutch neighbours and the Indonesian family escalate into a violent clash during which racists set the Indonesian restaurant on fire. Despite the conflicts, the son of the Dutch snack bar owner and the pregnant daughter of the Indonesians decide to marry in the end. Even if Indonesians are nowadays seen as an ethnic minority that successfully and without a hitch assimilated into Dutch society, this film reveals that also the Dutch Indonesians have been confronted with several difficulties and racism when they first arrived in the Netherlands.

While little attention has been paid to the Dutch-Indonesians in the Netherlands, an ethnic subgroup no longer accepted this invisibility and put itself in the spotlight through violence. This tragic episode in Dutch postcolonial migration history is the story of the South-Moluccans, a mainly Christian minority group in the Muslim-dominated Indonesia. When the new Indonesian government envisioned a unitary state, the South-Moluccan islands declared in 1950 their independence. As this was not recognised by the Indonesian government, a civil war followed. Having fought on the side of the Dutch during the Indonesian National Revolution, Moluccan soldiers and their families were evacuated to the Netherlands. The Moluccans would temporarily stay in the Netherlands while the Dutch government promised to negotiate Moluccan independence from Indonesia. After being housed in poor rural

camps in the Netherlands for about 25 years, Moluccan exiles felt deceived because the Dutch government had not been able to grant them an independent state. In order to draw attention to their grievances, radicalised Moluccan militants engaged in violent actions and twice hijacked a train in the Netherlands during the 1970s. Dutch television broadcasters have produced two fiction films, *Wijster* (2008) and *De Punt* (2009), about the South-Moluccan train hijackings in the Netherlands.

The first train hijacking took place in 1975 near the Dutch village of Wijster. Based on this event, the Dutch director Paula van der Oest made the television film *Wijster* (2008). The film focuses on a Dutch journalist who happens to be on the train that is stopped by seven armed Moluccans. Although the hijackers first threaten to shoot him if their demands are not met, the journalist later functions as a middleman between the hijackers and the Dutch state. From a distance, the family of the journalist witnesses the twelve days of hostage crisis with three deadly victims until the hijackers surrender. Empathising with the fears of the white Dutch hostages, the film portrays the Moluccans one-dimensionally as aggressors without much explanation of their motives.

Only one year after the film *Wijster* (2008), another Dutch director, Hanro Smitsman, made the film *De Punt* (2009) about the second train hijacking by Moluccans in 1977. While the hijackers had executed three hostages in 1975, the 1977 hijacking went differently. After 19 days of hostage crisis, the Dutch Special Forces Unit started shooting the train, killing six out of nine Moluccan hijackers and two hostages. Whereas the executions during the 1975 hijacking were traumatic for the Dutch population, the violent ending of the hijacking in 1977 affected the Moluccan community. This led to an alternative cinematic approach to these two historical events. Contrary to the first film *Wijster* (2008) that focused on the Dutch anxieties about the 1975 train hijacking, the second film *De Punt* (2009) highlights the perspective of the Moluccan militants on the 1977 train hijacking. In the frame of a television talk show with five participants thirty years after the event, the film reflects through flashbacks on the drama and more specifically on the death of the first female hijacker. Participants in the talk show are one of the surviving Moluccan hijackers, the father of the killed female hijacker, a former hostage, the then Dutch Minister of Justice and the soldier who shot the female hijacker. All five of them express their feelings. The surviving hijacker mourns the loss of his female companion who was also his lover, while her father holds the surviving hijacker

responsible for the death of his daughter. The former hostage represses her traumatic memories of the event. The Minister of Justice still defends his decision to forcefully end the hijacking, while the soldier refuses to be portrayed as the murderer of the unarmed female hijacker. More than the film *Wijster* (2008), the film *De Punt* (2009) offers a balanced view of the issue of guilt and points out that the responsibility for the dramatic event lies with more than one party.

Apart from the Moluccans, the majority of the Dutch Indonesians who came to the Netherlands in the postcolonial era largely remained an invisible minority group in the Dutch integration debates. Due to their cultural and socio-economic similarity to the native Dutch population, most of them quickly assimilated into the Dutch society as they already had Dutch names, a Dutch education and Dutch citizenship. Nevertheless, like other minorities, the Dutch Indonesians dealt with questions of identity and belonging in the Netherlands. Dutch Indonesian writers and artists have expressed these questions in their work. A foremost second-generation Dutch Indonesian writer and filmmaker is Marion Bloem. Born to Dutch Indonesian parents in the Netherlands in 1952, Bloem published several novels dealing with migration and the quest for a Dutch Indonesian identity, for example in her breakthrough novel *Geen Gewoon Indisch Meisje* [No Ordinary Indo Girl] (1983), investigating what makes her different from other Dutch people. Bloem also produced the documentary *Het land van mijn ouders* [The Land of My Parents] (1983), in which she explores her family history, the colonial past, Indonesian cultural traditions and the independence war. Based on a novel she wrote in 1999, she directed one decade later the fiction film *Ver van familie* [Far From Family] (2008). The film tells how an American Indonesian girl decides to travel after the death of her stepmother from the United States to the Netherlands to learn to know her Dutch Indonesian grandmother who has become seriously ill. While her family in the Netherlands does not really welcome her and keeps her away from her grandmother, the girl discovers various secrets about the death of her biological mother and the reason why her father left the Netherlands for the United States. With its attention for the cultural history and the transnational ties of a Dutch Indonesian family, director Marion Bloem was able to open up a contemporary space to express the cultural identity of Dutch Indonesians, a minority group that was made invisible in the early postcolonial decades in the Netherlands.

5.6. The Surinamese in Dutch Urban Ghettos

Films about the black Surinamese in the Netherlands are often set in deprived urban neighbourhoods. This association between racial segregation and urban spaces is an important feature shared by black cultures in Europe and America. As Paula Massood (2003) has argued, African American films, in particular blaxploitation films from the 1970s and hood films from the 1990s, have been increasingly identified as city films in the public imagination. Because of social, economic or legal pressures, minority groups have often been pushed to live in specific urban areas that are referred to as ghettos. Apart from the Jewish ghettos that have been present since centuries, also newly arrived immigrants are usually housed in the deprived outskirts of large cities. In his book *Arrival City* (2010), Doug Saunders describes how rural-urban migration has led to the clustering of migrants on the city outskirts where they struggle to establish a new life and to move up socially and economically. Spatial segregation in cities according to ethnic and racial lines is a phenomenon also observed in large European cities. With regards to the cinematic representation of the banlieues in Paris, for example, Will Higbee notes how a dichotomy between the centre and the margins of the city is constructed. Contrary to the romantic images of the city centre, most banlieue films offer 'a representation of the urban periphery as the site of socio-economic deprivation, characterised by degraded housing, high unemployment and delinquency' (Higbee, 2001, p. 199). This way, the banlieue films seem to perpetuate many of the negative stereotypes associated with the urban periphery. Nevertheless, the globalisation of urban cultural phenomena like hip-hop music, dance and graffiti has given a voice to minority youngsters in urban ghettos all over the world. In this context, ghetto-centred films made in the United States have also inspired filmmakers in the Netherlands to depict the daily lives of the Surinamese and other minorities on the outskirts of large Dutch cities.

Before and after the independence of Suriname, a massive number of Surinamese people migrated to the Netherlands escaping the political unrest and economic hardships in the country. To host the large number of Surinamese immigrants, the Dutch authorities directed them towards cheap social housing in high-rise buildings, for example, the Bijlmer neighbourhood on the outskirts of Amsterdam. This part of the city soon gained a bad reputation as a black ghetto with high poverty and crime rates. Beyond the negative image of the neighbourhood in the

mainstream media, some Dutch filmmakers have approached the area in a different way. An example of a film that tries to counter the stereotype of the Bijlmer neighbourhood as a male-dominated and crime-ridden ghetto is the romantic comedy *Madame Jeannette* (2004). From a feminist point of view, the Dutch director Paula van der Oest shows the strength of Surinamese women in the Bijlmer neighbourhood. The plot evolves around a Surinamese Hindustani woman and her Creole husband. When her man ends up in prison, the young woman has to sustain her family alone. Madame Jeanette, an old Surinamese lady practicing divination advises her to start a Surinamese food stall. The young woman follows this advice. As her business creates a lot of profit, she becomes more successful than her macho husband, which leads to a marital crisis when he is released from prison. Starring for the first time since *Wan Pipel* (1976) a mainly Surinamese cast, this feel-good movie plays with ethnic stereotypes and offers an alternative image of the otherwise negatively depicted 'Surinamese ghetto' in Amsterdam. Although the film was originally made for television, it was also theatrically released in local cinemas because of its popularity among the Surinamese in the Netherlands.

While the previous film uses humour to counter stereotypes, other films are influenced by the aesthetics of hip-hop culture and American hood films. Combining elements from hip-hop culture with the genre of the musical, the Dutch director Karin Junger made the first urban musical called *Bolletjes Blues* [Gangsta Blues] (2006). Through the use of Surinamese actors, hip-hop music and dance, the director aimed at attracting more migrant youngsters to the Dutch cinema on the request of the Netherlands Film Fund. The film tells the story of Spike, a young man of Surinamese origin living in Amsterdam who joins a criminal gang because he needs money. In order to buy presents for his Dutch girlfriend, Spike commits robberies and burglaries. Besides this, he gets involved in cocaine smuggling from Suriname to the Netherlands. As a courier swallowing cocaine pellets, Spike gets arrested and is imprisoned in a Surinamese jail. In order to find him, his Dutch girlfriend joins the gang and also travels as a drugs courier to Suriname. Singing in a choir that is performing in the prison, the girl manages to see her boyfriend again. While the film was commercially not so successful, it did receive a Golden Calf Award for its music. Although the musical is an unconventional genre to tell a story of drugs trafficking, the plot itself unfortunately reproduces negative stereotypes of black youngsters as petty criminals.

In the same vein, another urban film featuring hip-hop music is *Carmen van het Noorden* [Carmen of the North] (2009), an adaptation of the classic Carmen novel and opera set in a contemporary urban context by the Dutch director Jelle Nesna. With a rapper commenting on the events, the film tells how a Dutch police detective investigating a murder falls in love with Carmen, a seductive singer of Surinamese origin in Rotterdam. Because of her, the detective not only breaks up his relationship with his loyal girlfriend but also messes up his investigation. After helping Carmen's arrested brother to escape, the detective has to flee the country. When he learns that Carmen started a new affair, he attacks her. Although the central themes of the film are lust and jealousy, the affair of a white police officer with a black singer adds an interracial dimension to the plot that was not yet seen in other adaptations. While the film did not reach a wide audience, its music score won a Golden Calf Award on the Netherlands Film Festival. Like some of the previously mentioned films, this film again associates the Surinamese with criminality. The more the white detective gets involved in the black community, the more alienated he becomes from his normal Dutch life. In this sense, the film underlines the cultural Otherness of the Surinamese. In addition, the film also sexualises the Surinamese woman. This attention for Surinamese sexuality is a recurrent theme in several documentaries and other fiction films that I will discuss in the following sections.

5.7. The Black Surinamese and Sexuality

In her book *Race, Ethnicity and Sexuality*, Joane Nagel (2003) argues that sexuality plays an important role in the creation of ethnic boundaries. From a historical perspective, she highlights how European colonisers depicted Africans and indigenous people in the Americas as hypersexual savages. In *The Birth of Nation* (1915), for example, D.W. Griffith portrayed black males as sexually aggressive towards white women, who eventually were to be rescued by the Ku Klux Clan. The stereotype of untamed savages who cannot control their sexuality helped to justify the enslavement and exploitation of Africans by Europeans. Despite the abolishment of slavery and the emancipation of African-Americans, these stereotypes linger on in contemporary media products and affect black people worldwide. Not only black men but also black women have suffered from these stereotypes. As Norma Manatu notes: "The media's persistence in presenting black women in substandard roles of

the oversexed jezebel, the prostitute, the superwoman, and the aggressive, intimidating bitch has been frustrating to critics and black female audiences alike" (Manatu, 2003, p. 9). Both positive and negative stereotypes about the sexuality of the racially Other reinforce racial differences and sustain racial segregation.

Also in the Netherlands, the usual image of the black Surinamese portrayed in the Dutch media is not a very positive one. As said before, many Surinamese immigrants came to live in social housing projects at the outskirts of large cities, where unemployment, poverty and crime are rampant. In this setting, black Surinamese have often been associated not only with crime but also with issues of uncontrolled sexuality. While only a handful of Dutch documentary films have been made about the Surinamese in the Netherlands, it is striking that the topic of sexuality is so prominent.

In the documentary *Chickies, Babies and Wannabees* (1999), the Dutch director Karin Junger focused for example on the phenomenon of teenage pregnancies. In Amsterdam's South East district, the filmmaker followed two Surinamese teenage girls from the first months of their pregnancy until the babies were more than one year old. While the young fathers (the wannabees) remained absent, one girl ran away from home to a youth shelter that she eventually left to live alone with her baby. The other girl tried to combine school with bringing up her baby. Although the documentary could have put the girls in a bad light, the director rather sought an intimate insight into the lives of these girls in interaction with their boyfriends, families and social workers. Despite the empathy of the director, the choice to highlight the topic of teenage pregnancies and irresponsible fathers mainly confirmed prevailing stereotypes about the Surinamese.

Even a female filmmaker with a Surinamese background, Mildred Roethof, reproduced the age-old image of sexually untamed black people. Not surprisingly, her films were soon contested by the people she had portrayed this way. In her documentary *Sex Sells* (2008), Roethof investigated the sexual activities of minors in the Netherlands, dedicating much attention to the instrumental use of sex and other excesses. Highlighting topics like sex and crime, the director portrayed the young and vulnerable subjects of her TV documentaries often in a sensationalist way. The documentary led to heated debates and even the Dutch Minister of Youth and Family responded that youngsters had to be protected from loose sexual morals. After Surinamese youngsters from Amsterdam South East complained about the way they

were portrayed, however, the Dutch broadcaster KRO did no longer distribute the documentary online. Also in the TV documentary series *Rauw & Puur* [Raw & Pure] (2009-2010), Roethof followed Surinamese, Antillean and Moroccan street youth in Dutch cities, highlighting topics like violence, crime, drugs, smuggling, abuse of women, e.g. a 15-year-old girl that ended up in prostitution, etc. When the director depicted a street gang of four black girls as 'derailed gangsta girls', the four girls complained on television that the director stigmatised Surinamese youngsters by focusing only on the most negative and violent aspects of their lives. The contestation of Roethof's documentaries by the subjects she portrayed poses serious questions about the ethics of the documentary filmmaker. As the public broadcaster offered a platform for the negatively depicted street girls to speak back to the documentary filmmaker, the subjects were able to challenge the power of the filmmaker. In fiction films, however, filmmakers have even more power to depict their subjects according to their wishes and ideas. In the following section, I will discuss in detail the highly contested film *Alleen maar nette mensen* (2012) because of its raw and unpolished representation of race and sexuality.

Fig. 5.2 Left: Filmmaker M. Roethof talking to street girls in her documentary *Rauw & Puur.* Right: M. Roethof confronted with the upset girls in a talk show.

5.8. Race & Sexuality in *Alleen maar nette mensen* (2012)

When Thomas Wartenberg (1999) argued that unlikely couple films have the potential to be critical of dominant social norms, he recognised that this critical potential depends on how the narrative positions the issue and how it is received by the audience (p. 5). In the film *Sonny Boy* (2011), the unlikely relationship between a black Surinamese man and a white Dutch woman transgressed social norms in the prewar Netherlands of the 1930s-40s holding up a mirror to contemporary audiences

and making the Dutch aware of their history of colonialism and racism. A very different approach to the issue of interracial relationships can be found in the comedy *Alleen maar nette mensen* [Only Decent People] (2012) that was released one year later. In the first place, the narrative is set in the contemporary urban setting of multicultural Amsterdam. Secondly, the protagonists are now a young Dutch-Jewish man and a Dutch-Surinamese girl, who both grew up in the Netherlands. In this sense, both characters have an ethnic minority background but no experience of migration. Contrary to *Sonny Boy*, where the female perspective was central, *Only Decent People* explicitly starts from the male perspective of the Dutch-Jewish boy. Finally, in terms of genre conventions, comedy *Only Decent People* can be defined as a comedy with its main emphasis on humour. All these factors make *Only Decent People* a very different kind of unlikely couple film compared to *Sonny Boy*. In what follows, I will discuss in more detail *Only Decent People*. Despite its depiction of an unlikely couple, I argue that *Only Decent People* through its pervasive use of stereotypes rather confirms than questions racial and social divisions in Dutch society.

The film *Only Decent People* is based on an eponymous book published in 2008 by Robert Vuijsje, a then 38-year-old Dutch journalist of Jewish origin. Apart from publishing the biography of a painter, the book *Only Decent People* was his first novel. As Vuijsje himself is married to a Surinamese woman, many readers understood the novel about a young Dutch-Jewish man looking for a black woman as a semi-autobiographical novel. The author himself, however, underlined that the novel is fiction. Although the novel initially did not gain much attention, this changed when it was shortlisted for three important awards winning two of them. In 2009, *Only Decent People* won the Golden Book-Owl [Gouden Uil], a Belgian award by a professional jury for original Dutch language literature, and in 2010 the book won the Ink Monkey [Inktaap], an award by the Dutch language Union with a jury of students from the Netherlands, Flanders, Suriname and Curaçao. While only 4,000 copies of the book were sold in its first year of publication, after its nomination for the literary awards the book sold 110,000 copies. After the release of the film in 2012, the book even sold more than 200,000 copies. In their nomination report, the jury of the Golden Book-Owl lauded *Only Decent People* because of its humour but also because of its depiction of the social divisions in a multicultural society:

> *Only decent people* is a bold debut. Because it's a humorous book and the field of humour is one where many enter but where many more get lost. This is not the case of Vuijsje, who clearly, firmly and with a sense of telling dialogues portrays two worlds, the higher and the lower classes, the somewhat boring and bourgeois Amsterdam Old-South and the much more exciting Amsterdam Southeast. The story of David Samuels, a young man of Jewish origin who is often wrongly perceived as a Moroccan, is not only humorous but also shocking, merciless and tragic. His search for love, sex and intellectual black women seems chillingly authentic and causes worries about the extent to which people in the multicultural society live together or apart from each other."[24]

Despite the praise by the literary jury members, the book was not well received by some parts of the Surinamese community. In television shows and debates, women of Surinamese origin heavily protested against the book. In the popular television show *Pauw & Witteman*, the female Surinamese anthropologist Irma Accord accused the author of being racist and sexist. The sociocultural organisation Women Inc debated with the author about what they saw as an offensive representation of black women. In these discussions, the author replied the protesters that they failed to distinguish between fiction and reality. He argued that the offensive comments by fictional characters were not his own opinions but a literary way to characterise bigots and racists. In a comical style, the narrative is told from a male perspective with a fascination for black women as exotic sexual objects. Just because of its light-hearted style, however, the novel does not critically reflect about issues like racism.

[24] The original Dutch jury report can be found here: www.leesplein.be/assets/juryrapporten/uil-volw-2009.html

Fig. 5.3 Film poster Only Decent people and scene in which David sensually dances with Rowanda

The narrative evolves around David Samuels, a 21-year-old Dutch-Jewish boy from an upper-class neighbourhood in Amsterdam, where 'only decent people' live according to his mother. As he is told that he looks like a Moroccan, he questions his own identity and does not know whether he belongs to the Dutch or to an ethnic minority. Bored with his white Dutch girlfriend, David has sexual phantasies about black women. Frequenting wild Surinamese parties in Amsterdam South East, he hooks up with the voluptuous black Rowanda. As he hears black men bragging about promiscuity, David cheats on Rowanda with another girl. When she finds out, she throws David out of her life. As his personal issues impede him making a choice what to study in higher education, David's parents agree that he goes on holiday to Memphis, Tennessee. In fact, he wants to find there a 'black female intellectual'. At the university of Memphis, he meets Rosalynn, the smart black woman he was dreaming of. Soon, however, he finds her as boring as his Dutch girlfriend. Back in the Netherlands, he discovers that his Dutch girlfriend started a relationship with his best friend. Distressed by this and other facts, he feels no longer Dutch and wants to become a Moroccan. When he meets a Dutch-Moroccan girl, he starts dating her.

Shortly after the book was critically acclaimed and became a bestseller, the Dutch director Lodewijk Crijns decided to turn the book into a film. Born in 1970, the same year as the author Robert Vuijsje, Lodewijk Crijns graduated from the Netherlands Film and Television Academy in 1996 and subsequently made several films dealing with the multicultural society. His first film *Jezus was een Palestijn*

[Jesus was a Palestine] (1999) was a parody on religious fanatics set in the Amsterdam Bijlmer neighbourhood. His comical short film *Turkse Chick* [Turkish Chick] (2006) made fun of Islamic extremism and honour killings by depicting a Dutch skateboarder in love with a Turkish Muslim girl. Later, Crijns directed the television drama *Hitte/Harara* (2008), a road movie featuring a Dutch and a Dutch-Moroccan girl travelling to Morocco and smuggling a boy to the Netherlands. With the comedy *Only Decent People* (2012), the director thematically and stylistically continued his previous work on multiculturalism in the genre of the comedy. During the presentation of the film at the Netherlands Film Festival, director Lodewijk Crijns stated that he was enthusiastic about the book and immediately wanted to turn it into a film. It was the first time he made a book adaptation. As the book was very explicit and confrontational, the director decided to soften the characters in the film, to make the dialogues subtler and to leave out explicit pornographic scenes. To shorten the story, the director also left out the journey of the main character to Memphis. With financial support from the Dutch Film Fund, CoBo and the Abraham Tuschinski Fund, the film was produced by the film production company Topkapi films and the public broadcaster BNN that mainly targets young adults and teenage audiences.

To cast actors faithful to the ethnic background of their characters, the director had to look beyond conventional acting agencies. For the leading role of David Samuels in the film, Géza Weisz was cast. Like his character, Weisz is of Dutch-Jewish origin and grew up in a privileged setting in Amsterdam as the son of film director Frans Weisz and a psychotherapist. Although he had some acting experience in other films, it was his first major role in feature length film. By contrast, Imanuelle Grives, the Dutch-Surinamese actress who played the role of Rowenda, had only limited acting experience and had only featured in a supporting role as black prostitute in another film. While the young actors were fairly unknown, for the roles of David's upper-class parents established Dutch actors like Jeroen Krabbé and Annet Malherbe were hired. By casting actors of various ethnic backgrounds, the director aimed to contribute to the realism of the film. In this sense, the young actors were encouraged to use the street language they knew from reality. For the soundtrack, black music R&B and hip-hop played an important role. Spatially, the film is shot in various districts of Amsterdam. On the one hand, there is the wealthy Amsterdam

'Old South' neighbourhood, where 'only decent people' live, on the other had there is the black ghetto of Amsterdam South East, also known as the Bijlmer.

In terms of genre, the film can be described as a comedy of manners. In the first place, the film makes fun of manners and attitudes among various social classes, represented by stereotypical characters. Despite the stereotypical characters, the director did not want to fall into absurd scenes but aimed to create a realistic style. In the film's prospectus, Lodewijk Crijns explains his vision on the tension between realism and exaggerations:

> The film *Only Decent People* is a contemporary comedy of manners with a high level of realism. This realism is slightly augmented. The narrative is full of exaggerations. These exaggerations are created by the repetition of recognisable, credible situations, not by absurdity within a scene. My aim in accumulating credible, realistic situations that together lead to an exaggeration is to confront the viewer with our own parochialism. The viewers have to raise the following questions: Are our prejudices based on truth? Are they excessive? Or is the reality behind these prejudices much more extreme than we thought? [25]

To a great extent, the film narrative resembles the story in the novel. The narrative can be read as a coming-of-age story of a young man looking for his identity. Similar to the novel, the film narrative is told from the perspective of David. At the same time, the narrative also deals with his romantic relationships. In terms of romance, the film focuses on the question why a young man is attracted to girls who do not belong to his own social class, ethnic group or neighbourhood. Transgressing social norms about romantic relationships, the film can be seen as an 'unlikely couple' film. David's upper-class Dutch-Jewish parents disapprove of his relationship with the black lowly educated Rowanda. The film highlights not only the ethnic differences between the families of the black Surinamese Rowanda and the Dutch-Jewish David but also their socio-economic class difference. This is caricaturally highlighted in the scene in which the unlikely couple visits each other's families. Against the will of his parents, David had invited Rowanda to his mother's birthday party where very sophisticated snacks and champagne were offered in a luxury house with neoclassical furniture in Amsterdam Old South. As Rowenda felt ignored at the party, David obliges his upper-class parents to come over for dinner at Rowenda's apartment in the high-rise

[25] The film's prospectus and the original quote in Dutch can be found here: http://septemberfilm.nl/film/persmap/1341827192549_ef5838f74ed15b6f6bd59473e17a83f8.pdf

social housing tower blocks in Amsterdam South East. When the well-dressed parents arrive, they hand over an expensive bottle of wine to the Surinamese family. While Rowanda's younger brothers keep watching television, her sister offers a simple dish with rice and chicken to David's parents. As there are not enough chairs in the small apartment, David's parents have to sit with their plates on their lap in the couch with the loud noise of the television always present. After David's father accidently drops his plate on the floor, Rowanda says that she finds it great that David's parents came over and, subsequently, she starts French-kissing David in front of his flabbergasted parents. Back on their way home, David's shocked father underlines the class difference saying that the bottle of wine they offered was more expensive than the whole dinner itself. The idea that class differences are more an obstacle to the unlikely couple than racial differences is underlined when David's parents present him to a black girl in a suit called Rita, a university student doing an internship at David's father publishing house. Rita shows off her intellectual capacities discussing the political situation in Israel with David's parents and their academic friends. In response, David accuses Rita of denying her cultural origins and calls her a 'Bounty', slang for a black person who internalises white norms and values.

Fig. 5.4 David's parents having dinner at Rowanda's place (left) and David with a Surinamese friend looking at a black woman's buttocks (right)

Contrary to other unlikely couple films, however, the narrative is more about sexual desire than about love overcoming social and ethnic boundaries. As a matter of fact, David has sexual relationships with several women, engages in gangbangs and sex dates with black women through the Internet. He leaves his Dutch girlfriend in order to be with the Surinamese Rowanda, but he also cheats on Rowanda with other

black women as he believes it is a cultural tradition for men in the Surinamese community to be polygamous. When Rowanda finds out, however, she slaps him in the face and ends their relationship. At the same time, David discovers his long neglected Dutch girlfriend in bed with his best friend. When David is thrown out of his parental home because of his rebellious behaviour, he starts working in a Kentucky Fried Chicken fast food restaurant. There, he sees again Rita, the black university student who was at his parents' home[26]. This time, Rita is not wearing a grey suit but is dressed in sexy tight jeans with a visible thong and bare-necked with a golden chain indicating her real Surinamese name: Sherida. Contrary to her intellectual talk at David's parent's house, she now assertively speaks back to a guy who touches her bottom and gives him a punch in the face. Focused on her sexy body and brutal attitude, David instantly falls in love with her. After she leaves him her telephone number, the film ends with an epilogue of images in which we see how David and Rita are welcomed at David's parents' home with the whole family dancing to Surinamese music in the upper-class house.

Following the broken relationship with the lowly educated Rowanda, this happy ending shows how David's parents apparently approve of his relationship with a black girl doing higher education. Even if this unlikely couple film ends with the triumph of interracial love, the film does not resolve the issue of class differences. The relationship between the upper-class David from an intellectual family and the lowly educated Rowanda nevertheless failed. The resolution of the tension between the wish of David's parents to find him an educated girlfriend and David's longing for a sexually attractive 'black ghetto chick' is solved by the figure of Rita who is able to fulfil both expectations by changing her appearance in different contexts. The final scenes, however, suggest that Rita's 'true nature' is the stereotype of the sexually provocative and brutal black woman. As the film continuously associates black people with hypersexuality and violence, Rita indeed just seems to have kept up appearances when she dressed up in a suit and talked like an intellectual with David's parents. The conditional acceptance of Rita by the upper-class parents because she studies at the university is not critically questioned in the film. For this reason, the film seems to support the rather white hegemonic view that black people should be educated to be accepted by the dominant class. In this sense, the film

[26] It should be noted that this plot twist differs significantly from the novel. I could not find any information on the reasons why the film director preferred this plot twist.

does not really engage in a social criticism of Dutch society but rather confirms racial and class-based hierarchies.

Like the novel, the film draws to a great extent on stereotypes and prejudices about ethnic minorities and social classes in the Netherlands. As the director Lodewijk Crijns developed the film at a time that the novel was already heavily contested, he must have been aware of the protests by black women accusing the novel of racism and sexism. These protests, however, did not stop the director from exploiting the stereotypes described in the novel. Just like the author of the novel, the film director used the genre of the comedy as a justification for politically incorrect depictions of ethnic minorities. In response to the accusations of racism by black women, the director argued that the film makes fun of every social group in the Netherlands[27]. Not only the Surinamese but also the Jews, Moroccans and upper-class Dutch are the objects of mockery and derision. David, the main character, for example, makes fun of his father for being a Jew only to participate in the commemoration of Auschwitz. Adding insult to injury, David claims that the Dutch Jews are weak in comparison to the Israelis who would just have killed Hitler. Even if there are no Moroccans in the film, a running gag throughout the film is the recurring question if David is a Moroccan because of his dark appearance. The Surinamese brothers of Rowanda argue that Moroccans are wannabe blacks because they like hip-hop music and dress like Afro-Americans. In the same vein, the upper-class Dutch are ridiculed because they do not see the difference between a Jew and a Moroccan and consider all of them as 'allochthones'. Also the title of the film ironically refers to the condescending claim of David's mother that in her Dutch upper-class neighbourhood there are no Moroccans, Turks or blacks living but 'only decent people'. Nevertheless, the mockery about the Dutch upper-class, the Jews and the Moroccans is only a sideshow. The main focus of the film is on the sexuality of black women as seen through the eyes of David.

As Joane Nagel (2003) argues, sexuality plays an important role in the creation of racial and ethnic boundaries. The image of untamed, savage and hypersexual blacks has a long history going back to the era of slavery and colonialism. The evolutionary models of the 19th century saw the civilised European as the end point of human evolution while black people were considered as primitives

[27] Lodewijk Crijns, director's vision in the film's prospectus.

living close to nature with an inferior intellect and unable to control their sexual drives. In the 19th century, the idea that the West had to civilise primitive Africans was developed in order to justify the colonisation of Africa. Neither the author of the novel nor the film director seemed to be conscious that they reproduced these age-old colonial clichés. The image of black women in the film seen through the eyes of David strikingly corresponds to the way 19th century Europeans looked at Sarah Baartman, the so-called 'Hottentot Venus'. Due to her large buttocks, this South African woman was exhibited in freak shows in London and Paris during the early 1800s. Not only did she serve as entertainment for Europeans, her body was analysed by 19th century racist scientists who saw her anatomy as evidence for sexual primitivism and evolutionary theories equating the intelligence of black people with that of apes (Crais & Scully, 2009). Even if these racist ideas have been rejected by scientists two hundred years later, the popular Western imagination still reproduces images of hypersexual blacks with a low intelligence. Black feminists have widely discussed the continuing fascination in Western culture with the black female body. Deborah Willis and Clara Williams (2002), for example, documented photographs from the 19th century to the present displaying black women as exotic objects of scientific investigation, often partially or completely naked and devoid of identity, as well as blatantly pornographic images and pictures of black women made available to serve white society. Hypersexualised images of the black female body can still be observed in contemporary hip-hop music videos as well as in depictions of black stars like Grace Jones and others.

Through a socio-political gaze, we can read the body as a corporeal text in terms of dominance and subordination. David's sexual obsession with black women focuses on their buttocks as his main point of interest. From the start of the film, the camera follows David's gaze zooming in on the buttocks of a black woman passing by. In an explicit scene where he has difficulties making love with his white girlfriend, he sees on television images of a black woman in a leopard skin shaking her buttocks and gets turned on. Not only his gaze but also his discourse reproduces the 19th century racist evolutionary theories. In a conversation where David explains that he is looking for black women, he states: 'The darker she is, the closer she is to nature!'. This statement illustrates his evolutionary and essentialist thinking that black people are purer and less corrupted by modern civilisation. In white supremacist constructions, the African female body represents the animal side of humanity (Story,

2010). The history of slavery and colonial power relations, however, is largely ignored in the film. Only in one scene, the mother of Rowanda reminds David that it is unfair that the Jews received financial compensation for the Holocaust while black people did not receive any compensation for the slavery, which according to her was far worse. Other black characters in the film, however, are uncritically depicted in the stereotypical way David imagines black people. The Surinamese girls almost invariably wear a deep neckline with a golden chain engraved with their name. The camera often zooms in on their voluminous breasts and buttocks. For the role of the carnal Rowanda, the actress even had to gain 33 pounds to fit the image of the fat-bottomed black woman. Quite provocatively, Rowanda always puts her mobile phone between her big breasts. Also the bling-bling of hip-hop culture is exaggeratedly shown as the black girls ostentatiously wear golden chains and other ornamented accessories. When she first meets David, Rowanda even shows her double golden tooth cap with her name engraved. Obviously, these exaggerations and stock characters fit the genre of the comedy but the question is to what extent humour can justify racist depictions.

Besides these essentialist and racist depictions of black people, the film also shows a masculine gaze on black women as sexual objects. In the words of Laura Mulvey (1975), the film from David's perspective is both voyeuristic and fetishistic. The spectator is put in a male subject position where women are objects to be looked at and their blackness is the fetish the protagonist is obsessed with. The objectification and sexualisation of women is inescapable in this film. Besides the voyeuristic gaze on black women passing by, the protagonist also actively participates in sexual activities. In the beginning, he joins Kabula parties in the ghetto where the Surinamese engage in an erotic dance imitating intercourse. His interest in Rowanda is mainly based on sexual attraction. At the same time, the racial aspect associating blacks with primitivism is present in the scene in which David has loud and raw sex with Rowanda. Furthermore, he arranges a paid sex date with a black woman through the Internet. With a male friend, he takes part in a threesome with a black teenage girl in a garage box with her baby in the background. Finally, he gets into a gangbang with a black girl, although eventually she refuses him because 'she does not do Moroccans'. These images suggest that paid sex is a common practice among black women in the Bijlmer ghetto and objectifies them as commodities.

In terms of commercial success, the film *Only Decent People* became a box-office hit in the Netherlands. With 323,521 admissions, it was the third most visited Dutch film of 2012. If we take into account the general context of Dutch cinema, it is important to note that *Only Decent People* is one of the few film featuring Surinamese characters in leading roles to reach such a wide audience. The controversies about the novel and the film obviously created extra publicity. The critical reception, however, was more mixed. Some reviewers applauded the film for its 'realistic take on multicultural society beyond politically correct thinking that only speaks in positive terms about minorities' (Marbe, 2012). Others hoped that the filmmakers would have learnt from the protest against the novel but perceived that the film turned the racism and sexism of the book into a visual spectacle (Gario, 2012a). Like the novel some years before, the film sparked heated debates and was accused of racism and sexism portraying black women as sexually uninhibited, violent and uncivilised. The black activist Quincy Gario accused film director Lodewijk Crijns of not knowing the black Bijlmer neighbourhood and creating a very negative and prejudiced image of the area. In addition, he lamented that there are so few non-white filmmakers in the Netherlands. According to him, a film about the Bijlmer neighbourhood would have been less racist and sexist if non-white filmmakers had made it (Gario, 2012b). According to film scholar Peter Verstraten (2016), the mixed reception of the film is indicative of its ambiguity as the film does not offer a particular vision or political stance:

> Since Crijns' *Alleen maar nette mensen* refrains from offering a coherent guide on how to read the film, it is possible to regard the film as subversive: David becomes a victim of his own naïve projections about black culture. But it is as easy, if not much easier, to read the film as an affirmation of ethnic stereotypes, for *Alleen maar nette mensen* does little more than putting a comic frame around them.' (Verstraten, 2016, pp. 91-92).

While the film director invoked the genre of the comedy as a way to legitimise his use of stereotypes and exaggerations, the realism of the film creates confusion between reality and fiction. Although the film could be read as a parody on dominant white images of black people, the film does not encourage the spectator to question the stereotypical images. According to Peter Verstraten, the genre of the comedy can lead to different interpretations:

> [A] carnivalesque comedy always has the effect of both affirming and undermining stereotypes, but this comes with an important proviso. Comic exaggerations can also be misused as a carte blanche for stereotypes. Whether the subversive force really blots out the 'damaging' reproductions of clichés depends upon the viewer's willingness to regard them as excessive, but there is always the risk that the spectators see the stock images as uncannily close to the assumptions they already hold. The risk is higher the more the represented group is unfamiliar to the viewer. And in such case, when the evidently excessive nature is not recognized as such, the representations can be counterproductive. (Verstraten, 2016, pp. 91-92)

Apart from this much-debated film, some other lesser-known films have offered alternative depictions of interracial relationships in the Netherlands. Contrary to the raw and provocative approach in *Only Decent People*, these other films rather look for the communalities between Dutch and Surinamese people. The following films do not deal with romantic relationships but rather with unlikely friendships. A film about the friendship between an elderly Dutch woman and a young black Surinamese man is *Monte Carlo* (2001) by director Norbert ter Hall. Echoing the Academy Award-winning *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989), this road movie follows the wealthy Dutch lady who has a young black car mechanic driving her to the seaside resort Monte Carlo. During the first part of the journey, the black driver has to endure all the complaints and prejudices of the grumpy old lady. After several misadventures, however, the two opposite characters learn to mutually appreciate and respect each other. Rather than emphasising the Surinamese origins of the black actor, the film portrays how two individuals who differ in age, class and racial background can overcome their differences. After only two weeks in the film theatres, the film was broadcasted on Dutch television but never reached a wide audience. As a feel-good movie, the film illustrates an optimistic and rather naïve belief in the multicultural society in the early 2000s.

Another feel-good movie for a much younger audience is the family film *Mijn opa de bankrover* [My Grandpa, the Bank Robber] *(*2011), directed by Ineke Houtman. The film depicts the unlikely friendship between a young black girl and an elderly white man. A Dutch-Surinamese girl does not get along with her Dutch mother in the Netherlands and wants to learn more about her Surinamese father who died

long time ago. When she hears that her grandmother in Suriname is still alive, the girl wants to travel to Suriname. After asking her demented Dutch grandfather if he wants to join her, he is enthusiastic because he wants to escape the retirement home. As he is allowed to withdraw only a small amount of money from his bank account, the young girl encourages him to rob the bank in order to access his own savings. While the grandfather gets arrested, the girl manages to take the money. As the event is attributed to dementia, the old man is soon released. The girl learns how her father died in a car accident while her mother was driving. With the approval of her mother, the girl and her grandfather travel together to Suriname where they meet the girl's grandmother. Targeting a young audience, the film thrives on the comical situations caused by the demented grandfather. This innocent family film does not engage in the Othering of the Dutch-Surinamese girl but portrays her as a full member of the Dutch family. The examples of the last two films illustrate that there are alternative ways to portray interracial relationships without falling into the reproduction of racial stereotypes and the use of sexuality. Even if these films seem innocent and naive, their normalisation and inclusion of racially different characters might be a better antidote to the dominant discourses of Otherness than the exoticism and sexualisation in *Only Decent People* that tap into centuries-old prejudices.

5.9. Conclusion

As a small nation, it is hard to imagine that the Netherlands once had a large colonial empire. In contemporary debates about ethnic minorities, this colonial past is often obliterated. Focusing on the Moroccans and Turks in the Netherlands, the previous chapters dealt mainly contemporary issues of integration in the Netherlands. Whereas Dutch colonialism has long been silenced in the collective memory, films dealing with postcolonial migrants confront the nation with its colonial history on its own territory. The Dutch involvement in the slave trade and the exploitation of colonial subjects has long been downplayed in public debates as the Dutch imagined themselves as a tolerant and progressive nation. By consequence, in the history of Dutch national cinema few films have paid attention to the overseas colonies in Indonesia, the Dutch Antilles and Suriname. Moreover, the handful of Dutch films dealing with the colonies have often been characterised by Eurocentrism, a fictitious sense of natural superiority of Europeans over non-western cultures and people. This

Eurocentrism is most evident in the films shot during the colonial era. Many of these films present the Dutch colonisers as heroes while the colony just serves as an exotic background. In the wake of the decolonisation process after World War II, however, some filmmakers started to make films critical of the colonial exploitation. Beyond the exoticism of previous colonial films, these filmmakers highlighted the social struggle of the local population in the former Dutch colonies. In the postcolonial era, 'accented' filmmakers from Suriname and the Antilles like Pim de la Parra and Felix De Rooy sought to create a new cultural identity for their homelands in their films.

The arrival of postcolonial migrants from Suriname, the Antilles and Indonesia in the Netherlands brought the colonial legacy into the heart of Dutch society. In the context of debates about the multicultural society, Dutch filmmakers started to dedicate attention to these dark pages of Dutch national history. While the Dutch-Indonesians remained for a long time a largely invisible minority group in the Netherlands, two recent films remembered the dramatic train hijackings in the 1970s by a radicalised South-Moluccan subgroup that felt ignored by the Dutch government. It is probably no coincidence that these historical events became the object of cinema at a time that the radicalisation among Muslim youngsters is a hot issue. Films about other sensitive issues like the slavery in Suriname and the Antilles were only produced as late as in 2013, at the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery. While many of the films dealing with the colonial past have been historical dramas, other films approached the multicultural society from a more contemporary perspective. In documentary films as well as in fictional films, however, the black Surinamese and Antilleans in the Netherlands are often associated with poverty, violence and sexual excesses in contemporary urban ghettos. I argue that these contemporary images reproduce old colonial stereotypes.

In order to highlight how the colonial legacy continues to influence contemporary popular culture, I analysed in more detail two films that deal with interracial relationships. As examples of what Thomas Wartenberg (1999) has called 'unlikely couple films', the narratives of the historical drama *Sonny Boy* (2011) and the multicultural comedy *Only Decent People* (2012) both evolve around relationships that violate dominant social norms, be it in different historical contexts. In this sense, these unlikely couple films can be seen as forms of social criticism. I argue that the critical potential of these films, however, is limited. As a historical drama, *Sonny Boy* holds a mirror to Dutch society by drawing parallels between the

prewar Dutch racism and the persecution of the Jews by the Nazis. By focusing on the German occupation and attributing racism to the ignorance of Dutch people in the 1930s and 1940s, however, the film misses out the opportunity to make a more forceful critique of the structural mechanisms behind racism that are also relevant for the present. Fashioning the image of a small nation occupied by the Nazis, the film obscures the imperial power that the Netherlands exerted over its colonial subjects at the time. Nevertheless, at least the interracial love story in *Sonny Boy* challenges colonial stereotypes about Surinamese people by portraying the black protagonist as a calm and rational person. Where *Sonny Boy* tries to counter stereotypes, the comedy *Only Decent People* by contrast thrives on the exaggeration of prejudices and clichés. Even if it claims to be a politically incorrect film, *Only Decent People* confirms dominant discourses of Otherness reproducing the old colonial association of black people with uncontrolled sexuality. In this sense, I argue that the comedy is more entertainment than social criticism. To conclude, the discussed films make clear that colonial power relations continue to influence the representation of postcolonial minorities in Dutch popular culture today. While some filmmakers try to raise awareness about racism and discrimination, others simply persist in the reproduction of racial stereotypes under the banner of entertainment. The commercial success of films like *Only Decent People* can be understood as what Graham Huggan (2001) called 'the postcolonial exotic', the late-capitalist commodification of cultural difference, turning the racial and ethnic Other into a commodity for mass-market consumption. Even if the Netherlands is a small nation today, the representation of ethnic minorities in Dutch cinema still bears the traces of a (post)colonial Eurocentrism.

6. Conclusion: From a Small Nation to World Cinema

This thesis aimed to analyse how non-Western ethnic minorities have been represented in Dutch cinema during the last two decades. While the existing literature on migrant and diasporic cinema has mainly focused on migrant and diasporic films in large nations like the United Kingdom, Germany and France, the representation of ethnic minorities in the cinema of small nations has remained understudied. Small nations, however, are more vulnerable to the processes of globalisation and foreign influences. Because the film industries of small nations struggle to be economically viable in a global context, they rely heavily on state funding and tend to emphasise their national identity in order to compete with foreign films. For this reason, debates about national cinemas are highly relevant for small nations like the Netherlands. When it comes to the construction of a national cinema, Andrew Higson argued that "a process of inclusion and exclusion is enacted, a process whereby one thing is centralised, at the same time necessarily marginalising another" (Higson 1989, p. 44). In the case of the Netherlands, the Dutch film industry has predominantly remained a closed bastion of white Dutch film professionals with cultural criteria for public support that privilege films shot in the Netherlands by Dutch filmmakers with a Dutch cast. Nevertheless, the Dutch government has introduced since the 1970s elaborate multicultural media policies for ethnic minorities on public television. These multicultural policies helped some television and film professionals with an ethnic minority background to establish a career in the Dutch film industry.

In the previous chapters, I demonstrated how the growing presence of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands became represented in Dutch national cinema. Against the idea that a small national cinema necessarily represents a homogeneous national identity, I argue that the representation of Moroccan, Turkish, Surinamese and other ethnic minorities in Dutch films show that a national cinema can reflect the cultural diversity of the nation. The question is whether the concept of national cinema is still adequate to understand such films as the concept of national cinema might obscure the degree of cultural diversity within a nation. Alternatives like diasporic, accented or intercultural cinema, however, take the cultural origin of the filmmakers as a determining feature of their films. Against this culturalist reductionism, I argue that it

is analytically more helpful to understand national cinemas as the institutional context in which multicultural films are funded, produced and released. A focus on the institutional context of films reveals the power relationships between the national majority and ethnic minorities. For this reason, I have used the term 'ethnic minorities', not in an essentialist way but as a social process of boundary-making. This way, I aimed to underline the disadvantaged position of minority groups versus the majority population within a national context. By comparing different ethnic minorities within the same national context, I wanted to highlight differences and similarities in the cinematic representation of these groups. A socio-historical overview of films dealing with the Moroccan, Turkish and Surinamese minorities in the Netherlands showed a similar evolution from low-budget documentaries and social dramas with realist aesthetics to more entertainment oriented genres like comedies and thrillers. This indicates that Dutch film producers take these minority groups increasingly into account as an underserved market for the Dutch film industry.

The fact that ethnic minorities have become more visible in Dutch cinema is not necessarily an emancipatory evolution. In many recent films, the Moroccans, the Turks and the Surinamese are portrayed in rather stereotypical ways. The way ethnic minorities are portrayed in Dutch cinema depends to a great extent on the genre of the film in which they feature. A number of films I discussed like *Shouf Shouf Habibi!* (2004), *Gangsterboys* (2010) and *Only Decent People* (2012) are comedies making fun of cultural differences. Although such comedies have a potential to be subversive and to undermine prevailing stereotypes, often they also confirm dominant discourses and images. In *Shouf Shouf Habibi!,* the Moroccan protagonist is portrayed as an unemployed petty criminal with conservative Muslim parents. In *Gangsterboys,* the lead characters are wannabe gangsters while the older Turks are real and dangerous gangsters. Given the political discourses of anti-immigrant politicians who frequently associate migrants with criminality, it is doubtful whether the comical representation of Moroccans and Turks as criminals would help to undermine these dominant images. Because of the frequent use of social realism, spectators easily conflate the filmic narratives with social reality. In the same vein, the comedy *Only Decent People* (2012) reproduces the age-old association of black women with sex and prostitution, an image that has also been singled out in the sensationalist documentary *Sex Sells* (2008) by Mildred Roethof, which even elicited a response from a Dutch Minister who wanted to take action against the loose sexual

morals of Surinamese youngsters. Films focusing on crime and sex usually attract wide audiences. The fact that also numerous minority youngsters watch these films might lead to a 'double consciousness' by which minority groups look at themselves through the eyes of the dominant society. In order to counter the proliferation of ethnic and racial stereotypes, filmmakers should be aware of the power they have over their portrayed subjects and take responsibility for the social consequences of the images they shoot. Several Dutch filmmakers, however, consider their comedies merely as entertainment and deny any social responsibility.

While it has been argued that the participation of migrants and ethnic minorities in Dutch cinema would challenge the national identity of the Netherlands, most of the discussed films lack a strong socially critical perspective that would bust the myth of a homogeneous Dutch national identity and make the Dutch audience aware of the structural shortcomings of the Dutch assimilationist policies towards minorities. The self-fashioning of the Netherlands as a superior and tolerant society is not put into question. Many Dutch films still uphold the 'us' versus 'them' distinction and depict minorities as characters that do not comply with the norms and values of the majority Dutch population. In this sense, some comical depictions of ethnic minorities do not differ substantially from the racist scapegoating of minorities by far-right politicians. As Simon Critchley (2002) argues, much ethnic humour is 'not laughter at power, but the powerful laughing at the powerless' (p. 12).

While I argue that several multicultural comedies in the Netherlands confirm rather than undermine ethnocentric stereotypes, the question is whether other kinds of films would be more suited to represent ethnic minorities. Before the recent wave of multicultural comedies, ethnic minorities were mainly represented in the socio-realistic style of the so-called 'cinema of duty' with documentaries and social dramas focusing on the social deprivation and exclusion of minorities. Although these films pretend to offer a realistic view on the situation of minorities, they also reinforce a narrative that reifies minorities as eternal victims of the dominant society. Most films in the tradition of the cinema of duty, however, never reached wide audiences. Far more harmful are the many thrillers and crime films that depict ethnic minorities as ruthless criminals. In such crime films, ethnic minority actors are cast as criminals while the victims are usually Dutch. In order to restore the law, Dutch avengers will punish the ethnic criminals. These kinds of narratives nurture the fear of the Other which in times of terrorism unnecessarily aggravates anxieties and ethnic tensions.

Despite the large number of crime films, social dramas and comedies that just confirm prevalent stereotypes, there is a small number of Dutch films that portray ethnic minority characters in non-stereotypical ways. Films that I have called post-multicultural dramas like *Kicks* (Albert ter Heerdt, 2007) and *Coach* (Joram Lürsen, 2009) offer some social criticism of Dutch prejudices and xenophobia. Also transnational road movies like *Rabat* (Jim Taihuttu & Victor Ponten, 2011) and *Dunya & Desie* (Dana Nechushtan, 2008) tell coming-of-age stories in which Dutch-Moroccan characters are portrayed as normal young people that face the same challenges as their Dutch peers. These films highlight the individual agency of the ethnic minority characters and show that they are not determined by their cultural background. Further research could explore more in depth the critical potential of these films.

As an alternative to the Eurocentric representations of the non-Western Other, postcolonial film scholars have argued that filmmakers with an ethnic minority background would be better suited to make films about ethnic minorities. As it is a small nation, film directors with an ethnic minority background are still rare in the Netherlands. In order to highlight the perspective of an ethnic minority filmmaker, I discussed the work of the Dutch-Turkish director Meral Uslu. In her documentary *The Children of My Father* (2005), she presented an intimate portrait of her adulterous father and his illegitimate children. Rather than attributing her father's behaviour to Turkish cultural traditions, the director made a film about family issues that is universally recognisable for spectators regardless of their cultural origin. Although such documentaries give a realistic and intimate view on the lives of the ethnic Other, the social impact of such low-budget personal documentaries is limited. Often, such 'accented' films are only displayed in art house film theatres or in late-night television slots without reaching wider audiences than highly educated people interested in the topic. In this sense, I doubt whether these low-budget films have the counterhegemonic potential to provide an alternative to the box-office hits that promulgate rampant stereotypes. In order to change stereotypical representation in society, I believe that filmmakers need larger budgets to promote films that can combine a high production value with a socially critical message.

In order to reimagine the Dutch national identity, historical dramas play an important role. As Smith (1986) has argued, the construction of a shared past is an important ingredient in the creation of a national identity. Contrary to the multicultural

films shot in contemporary settings, historical dramas usually require higher budgets because of the costumes, scenography and mis-en-scène. In recent years, the Dutch film industry has produced some films about the colonial past with budgets that exceed many times the usual budget of films dealing with ethnic minorities. After decades of silence on the Dutch involvement in the slave trade and colonial exploitation, two films were produced in 2013 to remember these dark times in Suriname and the Dutch Antilles. Even if several aspects of these films can be criticised, the fact that after so many years the slavery in the colonies is remembered in Dutch cinema is an important step towards the recognition of the injustice done to the ancestors of many Surinamese and Antillean migrants in the Netherlands. Another historical drama that reimagines the national history of the Netherlands is the film *Sonny Boy* (Maria Peters, 2011). While many Dutch films have remembered World War II, few films have included colonial subjects in this part of the Dutch national history. By remembering the fact that together with the Dutch resistance and the Jews also a Surinamese man became the victim of the Nazi atrocities, *Sonny Boy* creates a shared history that helps the Surinamese to feel involved in the many commemorations of World War II in the Netherlands.

While this thesis focused on Dutch cinema as a small national cinema, the transnational connections that are inherent in the process of international migration link the Netherlands to countries in the rest of the world. With a population that has its origins in countries as far as Morocco, Turkey, Suriname, the Dutch Antilles and Indonesia, Dutch cinema has the potential to explore stories that exceed the geographical boundaries of the nation. Rather than putting aside ethnic minority films as a distinct category in Dutch cinema, I argue that the cultural diversity of contemporary Dutch cinema contributes to what Berghahn and Sternberg (2010) call the World Cinema Turn in Europe. Bridging the boundaries between European cinema and Third World cinema, a European World Cinema shows how European nations are similar to and interconnected with other parts of the world beyond Hollywood. As Berghahn and Sternberg argue, “European cinema is well advised to jump on the World Cinema bandwagon, utilising the exotic appeal of the other to rebrand itself” (2010, p. 40). The question, however, rises to what extent a European World Cinema can be oppositional and liberationist in the original sense of Third Cinema as coined by Teshome Gabriel (1982). For the moment, I consider few films bridging European and Third World cinema as oppositional. Most films rather engage

in the capitalist commodification of cultural differences for the sake of entertainment. In order to create a truly cosmopolitan and socially critical European World Cinema, I believe national film industries, especially those of small nations, need to revise some cultural restrictions and commercial objectives and offer more opportunities and support to a new generation of filmmakers of diverse origins. Only if the institutional context is more favourable to ethnic minority film production, small nations will be able to imagine themselves as truly diverse societies.

Annex: Admissions and Viewing Figures[28]

Title	Release date	Director	Distributor	Box-office (€)	Admissions
Max Havelaar	09.09.1976	Fons Rademakers	CIC	?	727,257
Sonny Boy	27.01.2011	Maria Peters	AFD	3,270,528	421,000
Faja Lobbi	23.06.1960	Herman van der Horst	?	?	374,738
Het Schnitzelparadijs	08.09.2005	Martin Koolhoven	IF	2,416,284	341,914
Alleen Maar Nette Mensen	10.10.2012	Lodewijk Crijns	WBU	2,633,242	323,521
Shouf Shouf Habibi!	29.01.2004	Albert Ter Heerdt	IF	2,308,496	318,026
Alibi	14.02.2008	Johan Nijenhuis	IF	1,765,754	237,727
Valentino	21.03.2013	Remy van Heugten	AFB	1,556,524	196,160
Dunya & Desie	17.04.2008	Dana Nechushtan	IF	1,397,630	193,979
Hoe Duur Was De Suiker?	26.09.2013	Jean van de Velde	eOne	1,336,796	171,878
Mijn Opa De Bankrover	09.02.2011	Ineke Houtman	AFD	1,051,718	159,087
Wan Pipel	19.08.1976	Pim de la Parra	AF	?	150,000[29]
Oeroeg	10.06.1993	Hans Hylkema	UPI	777,192	145,072
'n Beetje Verliefd	14.12.2006	Martin Koolhoven	RCV	1,012,478	140,649
Gangsterboys	08.03.2010	Paul Ruven	EYE	1,093,251	140,067
Polleke	11.10.2003	Ineke Houtman	UPI	571,009	98,962
Doodslag	12.01.2012	Pieter Kuijpers	IF	600,782	79,649
Pizza Mafia	17.02.2011	Tim Oliehoek	BFD	519,226	68,780
Rabat	09.06.2011	Jim Taihattu - Victor Ponten	BFD	416,749	59,230
De President	15.09.2011	Erik de Bruyn	AFD	434,948	57,942
Kicks	01.03.2007	Albert Ter Heerdt	IF	390,523	55,684
Wolf	19.09.2013	Jim Taihattu	JF	378,443	49,984
Zombibi	16.02.2012	Martijn Smits & Erwin van den Eshof	AFD	326,749	41,695
Bolletjes Blues	23.03.2006	Karin Junger	BVI	141,532	19,248
In Het Huis Van Mijn Vader	04.12.1997	Fatima Jebli Ouazzani	CM	71,309	15,121
Tula: The Revolt	04.07.2013	Jeroen Leinders	AFB	97,455	12,912
Carmen van het Noorden	24.09.2009	Jelle Nesna	BFD	15,300	5,482
Cool!	16.09.2004	Theo Van Gogh	AFD	23,040	3,914
Amsterdam Global Village	10.10.1996	Johan van der Keuken	FM	18,014	3,009
Snackbar	05.04.2012	Meral Uslu	CD	7,699	1,656
Marokko Swingt	12.05.2005	Barbara Den Uyl	1MF	5,155	1,229
Papa's Song	28.10.1999	Sander Francken	CON	?	1,120
Monte Carlo	21.09.2001	Norbert ter Hall	AFD	5,152	1,072
Walhalla	08.06.1995	Eddy Terstall	CON	2,884	757
Het Surinaamse Legioen	13.05.2004	Hans Heijnen	TLP	3,762	549
De jongen die niet meer praatte	10.10.1996	Ben Sombogaart	HE	2,166	539
Ava & Gabriel	09.11.1990	Felix de Rooy	HE	357	97

Fig. 6.1 Available admissions of theatrically released films discussed in this thesis. Source: www.filmdistributeurs.nl/statistieken

[28] For many other films mentioned in this dissertation, it was not possible to find any data on admissions or viewing figures because these films were only released in very limited places or outside the commercial circuit. The figures here thus give only a partial insight in the most popular films.

[29] Estimated admissions. Source: http://www.cinema.nl/nff-2010/artikelen/6716334/de-enige-echte-surinaamse-film

Title	Date of Emission	Director	Broadcaster	Channel	Audience reach
De Punt	03.05.2009	Hanro Smitsman	EO	Ned2	802,000
Doodslag	15.05.2012	Pieter Kuijpers	Human	Ned3	719,000
Het Schnitzelparadijs	06.05.2006	Martin Koolhoven	NPS	Ned3	553,000
Roos & Rana	21.07.2001	Meral Uslu	KRO	Ned1	480,000
Walhallah	24.08.1995	Eddy Terstall	Veronica	Veronica	460,000
Hitte/Harara	05.06.2008	Lodewijk Crijns			441,000
'n Beetje Verliefd	20.05.2007	Martin Koolhoven	MAX	Ned2	369,000
Wijster	29.05.2008	Paula van der Oest	VARA	Ned3	299,000
Coach	12.04.2009	Joram Lürsen	VARA	Ned2	283,000
Staatsgevaarlijk	14.05.2005	Marcel Visbeen	NPS	Ned3	273,000
Paramaribo Papers	20.04.2002	Ger Poppelaars	VARA	Ned3	200,000
Boy Ecury	05.04.2003	Frans Weisz	VARA	Ned3	191,000
15:35 Spoor 1	19.04.2003	Tim Oliehoek & Marcel Hensema	BNN	Ned2	144,000
Offers	08.10.2005	Dana Nechushtan	VARA	Ned2	136,000
Madame Jeanette	26.09.2004	Paula van der Oest	NPS	Ned3	114,000
Bolletjes Blues	10.06.2006	Karin Junger	RVU	Ned3	107,000

Fig. 6.2 Available viewing figures of broadcast television films discussed in this thesis. Source: www.kijkonderzoek.nl; Epskamp & Wils (2007) http://www.filmdistributeurs.nl/statistieken/cijfers-filmstatistieken/24

Filmography

'n Beetje Verliefd [Happy Family]. Martin Koolhoven. The Netherlands, 2006.

06/05 [May 6th]. Theo van Gogh. The Netherlands, 2005.

15:35 Spoor 1 [15:35 Platform 1]. Tim Oliehoek & Marcel Hensema. The Netherlands, 2003.

24 uur bedreigd [24 hours Under Threat]. Frank Vellenga. The Netherlands, 2009.

Aan ons den arbeid [Work For Us]. Jeroen Van Bergeijk. The Netherlands, 2007.

Ahmed Aboutaleb, onze man uit Marokko [Ahmed Aboutaleb, Our Man From Morocco] Margo Smit & Joyce Boverhuis. The Netherlands, 2007.

Alibi. Johan Nijenhuis. The Netherlands, 2008.

Alleen Maar Nette Mensen [Only Decent People]. Lodewijk Crijns. The Netherlands, 2012.

Alles is Liefde [Love is All]. Joram Lürsen. The Netherlands, 2007.

Almacita di Desolato. Felix de Rooy. The Netherlands & Netherlands Antilles, 1986.

Amsterdam Global Village. Johan van der Keuken. The Netherlands, 1996.

Amsterdam. Ivo van Hove. The Netherlands, 2009.

Amsterdamned. Dick Maas. The Netherlands, 1988.

Antonia [Antonia's Line]. Maleen Gorris. The Netherlands, Belgium, UK & France. 1995.

Anubis en het pad der 7 zonden [Anubis & the Path of 7 Sins]. Dennis Bots. The Netherlands & Belgium, 2008.

Atlantic. Jan-Willem van Ewijk. The Netherlands, Germany, Morocco, France/Belgium, 2014.

Ava & Gabriel. Felix de Rooy. The Netherlands, France & The Netherlands Antilles, 1990.

Babel. Alejandro González Iñárritu. France, USA & Mexico, 2006.

Blue Movie. Pim de la Parra & Wim Verstappen. The Netherlands, 1971.

Bolletjes Blues [Gangsta Blues]. Karin Junger & Brigit Hillenius. The Netherlands, 2006.

Boy Ecury. Frans Weisz. The Netherlands, 2003.

Bro's Before Ho's. Steffen Haars & Flip Van der Kuil. The Netherlands, 2013.

Carmen van het Noorden [Carmen of the North]. Jelle Nesna. The Netherlands, 2009.

Chez Nous. Tim Oliehoek. The Netherlands, 2013.

Coach. Joram Lürsen. The Netherlands, 2009.

Cool! Theo Van Gogh. The Netherlands, 2004.

Costa! Johan Nijenhuis. The Netherlands, 2001.

Crash. Paul Haggis. Germany & USA, 2004.

Dag mijn klas, ik mis jullie allemaal [Hello My Class, I Miss You All]. Leonard Retel Helmrich. The Netherlands, 1988.

Dakira. Karim Traidia. The Netherlands, 2009.

De Gordel van smaragd [Tropic of Emerald]. Orlow Seunke. The Netherlands, Belgium, Indonesia, 1997.

De Jantjes [The Tars]. Jaap Spejijer. The Netherlands, 1934.

De jongen die niet meer praatte [The Boy Who Stopped Talking]. Ben Sombogaart. The Netherlands, 1996.

De Lift [The Elevator]. Dick Maas. The Netherlands, 1983.

De ongekroonde koning van Amsterdam-West [The Uncrowned King of Amsterdam West]. Nordin Lasfar. The Netherlands, 2009.

De President [The President]. Erik de Bruyn. The Netherlands, 2011.

De Punt. Hanro Smitsman. The Netherlands, 2009.

De toestand in Marokko [The Situation in Morocco]. Theo Uittenbogaard & Kefah Allush. The Netherlands, 1998.

Desirée. Felix de Rooy. The Netherlands, 1984.

Donnie Brasco. Mike Newell. USA, 1997.

Doodslag [Manslaughter]. Pieter Kuijpers. The Netherlands, 2012.

Driving Miss Daisy. Bruce Beresford. USA, 1989.

Dunya & Desie in Marokko [Dunya & Desie in Morocco]. Dana Nechushtan. The Netherlands & Belgium, 2008.

Flodder. Dick Maas. The Netherlands, 1986.

Flodder in Amerika. Dick Maas. The Netherlands, 1992.

Flodder 3. Dick Maas. The Netherlands, 1995.

Frank & Eva. Pim de la Parra & Wim Verstappen. The Netherlands, 1973.

Gangsterboys. Paul Ruven. The Netherlands, 2010.

Gekkenbriefje [Crazy Going]. Olga Madsen. The Netherlands, 1981.

Gooische Vrouwen [Viper's Nest]. Will Koopman. The Netherlands, 2011.

Het geheim van de Saramacca rivier [The Secret of the Saramacca River]. Pim de la Parra. Suriname, 2007.

Het laatste verlangen [The Ultimate Desire]. Pim de la Parra. The Netherlands, 2008.

Het land van mijn ouders [The Land of My Parents]. Marion Bloem. The Netherlands, 1983.

Het Schnitzelparadijs [Schnitzel Paradise]. Martin Koolhoven. The Netherlands, 2005.

Het Surinaamse Legioen [The Surinamese Legion]. Hans Heijnen. The Netherlands, 2004.

Het was weer zondig [It Was Sinful Again]. Fatima Jebli Ouazzani. The Netherlands, 2000.

Hier en daar een Marokkaan [Here and there a Moroccan]. Joost Tholens. The Netherlands, 1970.

Hitte/Harara. Lodewijk Crijns. The Netherlands, 2008.

Hoe Duur Was De Suiker? [The Price of Sugar]. Jean van de Velde. The Netherlands, Germany & South Africa, 2013.

Ik ben Mohammed [I'm Mohamed]. Roy Dames. The Netherlands, 2005.

Impasse. Sytske Kok. The Netherlands, 2005.

In het Belang van de Staat [In the Interests of the State]. Theo Van Gogh. The Netherlands, 1997.

In het huis van mijn vader [In my Father's House]. Fatima Jebli Ouazzani. The Netherlands, 1997.

Indonesia Calling. Joris Ivens. Australia, 1946.

Infiltrant [Infiltrator]. Shariff Korver. The Netherlands, 2014.

Julia's Geheim [Juliet's Secret]. Hans Hylkema. The Netherlands, 1987.

Karakter [Character]. Mike van Diem. The Netherlands & Belgium, 1997.

Kasba in de Polder. Martin Maat & Hans Hermans. The Netherlands, 2006.

Kicks. Albert Ter Heerdt. The Netherlands, 2007

Komt een vrouw bij de dokter [Stricken]. Reinout Oerlemans. The Netherlands, 2009.

L'Italien. Olivier Baroux. France, 2010.

Laptop. Kaushil Ganguly. India, 2012.

Madame Jeanette. Paula van der Oest. The Netherlands, 2004.

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Marokko swingt [Morocco Swings]. Barbara Den Uyl. The Netherlands, 2005.

Marrakech. Michiel van Jaarsveld. The Netherlands, 1996.

Max Havelaar. Fons Rademakers. The Netherlands & Indonesia, 1976.

Mijn blauwen hemel [My Blue Heaven]. Ronald Beer. The Netherlands, 1990.

Mijn Opa De Bankrover [My Grandpa, the Bank Robber]. Ineke Houtman. The Netherlands, 2011.

Mijn vader, de expat [My Father, the Expat]. Abdelkarim El-Fassi. The Netherlands, 2014.

Mocros. Roy Dames. The Netherlands, 2011.

Mohammed B. Gemankeerde martelaar [Mohammed B. Failed Martyr]. Bart Nijpels & Jos Slats. The Netherlands, 2005.

Mohammed. Chris Westendorp. The Netherlands, 2002.

Monte Carlo. Norbert ter Hall. The Netherlands, 2001.

Najib & Julia. Theo van Gogh. The Netherlands, 2002-2003.

New Kids Turbo. Steffen Haars & Flip Van der Kuil. The Netherlands, 2010.

Odyssée d'amour. Pim de la Parra. The Netherlands, 1987.

Oeroeg. Hans Hylkema. The Netherlands, Belgium & Indonesia, 1993.

Offers [Sacrified]. Dana Nechushtan. The Netherlands, 2005.

Panna! Nordin Lasfar. The Netherlands, 2007.

Papa's Song. Sander Francken. The Netherlands & Netherlands Antilles, 1999.

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Pizza Mafia. Tim Oliehoek. The Netherlands, 2011.

Plantage Tamarinde [The Tamarinde Plantation]. Michael Forlong. The Netherlands, 1964.

Polleke. Ineke Houtman. The Netherlands, 2003.

Rabat. Jim Taihattu & Victor Ponten. The Netherlands, 2011.

Raging Bull. Martin Scorsese. USA, 1980.

Respect. Claudia Tellegen. The Netherlands, 2004.

Roos & Rana. Meral Uslu. The Netherlands, 2001.

Rubber. Johan de Meester & Gerard Rutten. The Netherlands, 1936.

Shouf Shouf Habibi! [Hush Hush Baby!]. Albert Ter Heerdt. The Netherlands, 2004.

Snackbar. Meral Uslu. The Netherlands, 2012.

Sonny Boy. Maria Peters. The Netherlands, 2011.

Soof. Antoinette Beumer. The Netherlands, 2013.

Staatsgevaarlijk [Public Enemy]. Marcel Visbeen. The Netherlands, 2005.

Submission: Part 1. Theo van Gogh. The Netherlands, 2004.

Suikerfreule [Sugar Lady]. Haro van Peski. The Netherlands, 1935.

Tula, The Revolt. Jeroen Leinders. The Netherlands & Netherlands Antilles, 2013.

Turks Fruit [Turkish Delight]. Paul Verhoeven. The Netherlands, 1973.

Turkse Aarde, Hollandse Bodem [Turkish Earth, Dutch Soil]. Hans Hylkema. The Netherlands, 1982.

Turkse Chick [Turkish Chick]. Lodewijk Crijns. The Netherlands, 2006.

Twee levens in één hart [Two Lives in One Heart]. Marijn Poels. The Netherlands, 2014.

Undercover. Boris Pavel Conen. The Netherlands, 2015.

Valentino. Remy van Heugten. The Netherlands, 2013.

Van God Los [Godforsaken]. Pieter Kuijpers. The Netherlands, 2003.

Ver van familie [Far From Family]. Marion Bloem. The Netherlands, 2008.

Walhalla. Eddy Terstall. The Netherlands & Belgium, 1995.

Wan Pipel. Pim de la Parra. The Netherlands & Suriname, 1976.

Wijster. Paula van der Oest. The Netherlands, 2008.

Wolf. Jim Taihattu. The Netherlands, 2013.

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