University of Southampton

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Film

The Figure of the Refugee Adolescent in European Cinema 2009-2016

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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<u>Abstract</u>

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This thesis examines representations of the refugee adolescent in European cinema between 2009 and 2016, drawing upon migration in cinema, the phenomenological approach, film genre, adolescent studies, and theories about encounters with the Other. The thesis is based on three case studies, each from a different European country (France, Germany, Denmark) and different film genre (Melodrama, Comedy, and Documentary, respectively). Each chapter investigates the representation of the adolescent refugee, focusing on the dyad relationship with the European hosts that the refugees encountered upon arrival to the continent. Through this examination and taking into consideration other aspects – such as the social agenda towards refugees in the specific country, the use of genre conventions to convey and mediate the refugee story, and the transformative characteristics of adolescence – this study aims to provide an original reading of the encounter between the local European and the Other. According to the new perspective offered by this thesis, the two sides of the dyad should not be thought of as only different and distanced; rather, the two are also similar, able to form the meaningful connections that in turn generate a change in the lives of both. Unlike other media outlets and their representations of the refugee crisis, this thesis shows the power of cinema to bring the crisis into homes, daily lives, and internal domestic dynamics. By applying the phenomenological approach, the thematic analyses portray the processes that the films and characters evoke, strengthening the argument that cinema can create a new discourse within these meaningful relations; and the hope that this new type of discourse, one that outlines similarities rather than differences, can decrease the anxiety and fear that the Other evokes.

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Yael Gordon

Title of thesis: The Figure of the Refugee Adolescent in European Cinema, 2009-2016

I declare that this thesis 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. None of this work has been published before submission

Signature: .... Date:30.3.2021 ....

Acknowledgements

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my mother, Irit Gordon Rapaport, who gave me her blessing when I embarked on this journey, but unfortunately is not here with us to witness this special moment.

She taught me to be brave, curious and generous about the Other.

Her gaze, which is profoundly missed, was the inspiration for this thesis.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

On September 2nd, 2015, a photograph of Aylan Kurdi[1], a young Syrian child, lying face-down on a Turkish beach was viewed on social media platforms by more than 20 million people. The next day, the photograph was the central feature of the front pages of newspapers around the world (see Figures 1-3).

Figure 1: UK newspaper headlines, September 2015

Figure 2: French *Le Monde* front page, 2/9/2015

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[1] As used in virtually all contemporaneous news reports about the tragedy. Some later media reports presented a slightly different spelling of his first name; for the sake of clarity, I use the version of his name most associated with the events of 2nd September 2015.

Figure 3: Worldwide newspaper front pages, September 2015

The image brought much-needed attention to the Syrian civil war and the plight of its refugee victims. In the short term, this resulted in important and overdue increases in individual aid, as well as changes to refugee policy in many countries. This thesis explores whether the portrayal of the adolescent refugee in cinema has had a similarly transformative effect, impact and influence as Aylan's photograph.

Firstly, it is important to understand more profoundly the gravitas conveyed by this single image. When the photograph was published, the Syrian refugee crisis had been ongoing for more than four years. During that time, sources like the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights had been releasing regular updates on the steadily rising death toll, conservatively estimated at 250,000 at the time of the publication of Aylan's photograph. Clearly, across these four years, the statistics of a massive human catastrophe were available for people and governments to act on. But in reality, little response was evident. According to De-Andrés-del-Campo, Nos-Aldas, and García-Matilla, (2016, pp. 31-35) the photograph of the young boy acted as a triggering image. New behavioural data from information searches, as well as an increase in monetary donations to organisations such as the Swedish Red Cross, revealed that the iconic photograph had greater influence than the hundreds of thousands of 'statistical' lives already lost (Slovic, Västfjäll, Erlandsson, & Gregory, 2017, p. 641). People who had been unmoved by the relentlessly rising death toll in Syria appeared to care much more about the crisis after having seen Aylan's photograph. Research on the iconic representation of refugees confirms this, noting how the portrayal of an individual can attract more compassion than the depiction of masses (Bleiker et al., 2013, p. 399; Jenni & Loewenstein, 1997, p.236; Slovic, Västfjäll, Erlandsson, & Gregorya, 2017, p.641). Perhaps even more importantly, there was also a shift in public discourse, from the use of the increasingly pejorative term 'migrant' towards the sympathetic and empathetic noun 'refugee'. For at least

some time thereafter, Aylan's photograph also had some influence on the refugee policy of a number of countries, including the of the United Kingdom. Within days of the publication of the photograph, the then Prime Minister David Cameron promised to accept an additional 20,000 Syrian refugees into the UK, citing a 'moral responsibility' to the people living in camps in neighbouring countries (Binder & Jaworsky, 2018, pp. 5-7).

Aylan's photograph was endowed with considerable polysemy. It evoked the concept of immigration: the refugee, immigration policies, tragedy, vulnerability and infancy. It also contained three image treatments, incorporating document, art and sentiment (De-Andrés-del-Campo et al., 2016, pp. 31-35). It was a turning point for the semantic approach vital for the process of social change. This involves a transformation in the manner of representing, understanding, analysing, thinking about, and reacting to problems. Aylan's image was transformative because it contained a new discourse. It quickly aroused solidarity on an issue that was not new; it wielded the power to break a rigid stereotype of war refugees packed into fields, where the mass of the population destroys the individual story of each person. It framed the depicted situation as humanitarian, whilst the depiction of masses had rooted the framing in the realm of security concerns (Binder & Jaworsky, 2018, pp. 5-7). Aylan's image gave the refugees back their names; it told a story of a life cut short, generating projection and identification (De-Andrés-del-Campo et al., 2016, pp. 31-35).

As stated above, it is on this potential of transformative power that my thesis will focus. I will specifically investigate the refugee as portrayed in cinema, analysing whether this art form can spark social or political change. Does cinema offer an alternative version of the refugee to that which is portrayed in other media and news outlets? A refugee with a story, a past and a potential future, who is human and deserving. A refugee who is not a danger to society, but a human being with one's own story.

In order to investigate this direction of thought, my thesis will analyse three films, belonging to different cinematic genres, from different European countries. Each chapter will examine a single film as a case study: *Welcome* by Philippe Lioret (Drama, France, 2009), *Welcome to the Hartmanns* by Simon Verhoeven (Comedy, Germany, 2016), and *Dreaming of Denmark* (Documentary, Denmark, 2015) by Michael Graversen. Specifically, my thesis will focus on the relationship between the refugee adolescent and the European host whom the adolescent encounters upon their arrival. My discussion will place the dyadic relationship between the two at the centre of the investigation, considering this unique bond and its distinctive characteristics. I will argue that there are two key consequences from this relationship. First, the refugee

adolescent triggers a change in the life of their host, and the European host changes some aspects of their behaviour, perceptions and thoughts too. Second, the bond reveals what the European host has missed in their life. To help demonstrate these two points, my analysis will focus on questions about the essence of the relationship between the refugee adolescent and the local European host. My research questions include: In what ways does the refugee adolescent influence and trigger a change in the behaviour and life of the European host? What is so special and unique about the connection between the refugee adolescent and the European adult? What processes does the European host pass through over the course of the relationship with the refugee adolescent? And what kind of adolescent in cinema is the refugee character, and what distinguishes them from the 'adolescents in cinema' previously investigated in the existing scholarship?

Before analysing the wider political and cultural contexts, as well as the historical climate that the films met on their release, it is important to reflect upon the status and otherness of the refugee adolescent. In her book *Strange encounters: embodied others in post-coloniality*, Ahmed (2000, p. 18) challenges the assumption that the 'stranger' is just anybody we don't know. She proposes that the 'stranger' is a socially constructed entity, as somebody we already know. She argues that the fact that these two possibilities exist when we interact with someone different from us, with the very process of expelling or welcoming the one who is labelled as a 'stranger', is what produces the figure of the 'stranger' in the first place. Ahmed states:

> Through strange encounters, the figure of the 'stranger' is produced, not as that which we fail to recognise, but as that which we have already recognised as 'a stranger'. In the gesture of recognising the one that we do not know, the one that is different from 'us', we flesh out the beyond, and give it a face and form. (Ahmed 2000, p. 18)

Moreover, while the 'stranger danger' discourse works by treating the 'stranger' as the origin of danger, multicultural discourse operates by welcoming the 'stranger' as the origin of difference. All three case studies follow this rationale, the 'strangeness' of the refugee character serving as the opening point of all three films. However, they differ in terms of the type of journey that the characters go through, as will be further developed in each chapter.

From a psychological point of view, Kristeva and Roudiez (1991, p. 114) are concerned with the notion of the strangeness within the self; a person's deep sense of being, as distinct from their outside appearance and their conscious idea of self. They argue that the journey towards the 'stranger' becomes a form of self-discovery, in which the 'stranger' seeks to establish and define

the 'I'. This 'I' translates swiftly into a 'we'. The foreigner is in me, everyone is a foreigner, or in other words I am the stranger, and everyone is a stranger.

My thesis can be located somewhere in-between the two approaches, suggested by Ahmed and by Kristeva and Roudiez respectively. It follows Ahmed (2000, p. 18) insofar as it is true that there are differences between the local European host and the adolescent refugee; however, their encounters produce and reveal, as I argue, similarities, closeness and parallel psychological experiences on both sides of the dyadic relationships. As Kristeva and Roudiez (1991, p. 114) suggest, they are all 'Others' in some way. They are all in between, leaving one (internal or external) home, searching for their new home identity and a place to belong.

Thinking about refugee adolescents, their position can be understood as two-fold in terms of their 'Otherness': they are refugees in a new country, but also an adolescent in an adult's world. Hence, with this set-up, it is easy to perceive the differences between the refugee adolescent, arriving from a different world and different circumstances, as compared to the European host adults, living their lives securely in their homes. What my thesis provides is a different and novel perspective, one that searches for the parallels between both sides. Such parallelism, I argue, enables a process of identification between the refugee adolescent and the European adult host; a process based on a mutual sense of being emotional refugees, connected by similar emotional experiences and feelings. For example, they share the experience of feeling that the previous home, whether physical or internal, no longer suffices as a home. It is a sense of an unknown future, and the feeling that the sense of belonging has been shaken by the new future resting upon them. This psychological juncture provides the common ground within which the bond between the refugee adolescent and European host is formed. These bonds are what challenge the viewer's perception regarding 'us' versus 'them', familiar versus stranger, guest versus host. They portray a complex world in which human beings are all a bit of both. I suggest that this new landscape, replete with blurred boundaries, could foster psychological change in perceptions towards the 'Other'; starting at the viewer's level, but with the potential to challenge existing presumptions all the way up to the political sphere. However, in order to discuss this, it is important to fully understand the context that this research is placed within, by reviewing the political climate across Europe.

1.1   Historical context

My thesis explores films from France, Germany and Denmark, all released between 2009 and 2016. By focusing on films from this period, I can assess how each of the films helped to challenge opinions on refugees; and from this to spark action, both societal and political, towards addressing the 2015 refugee crisis that unfolded across Europe. It will help to distinguish, as a preliminary step, this event from earlier times and other crises in European history. This period not only occurred in an era of globalisation, but also coincided with a moment where the question of European borders began to take on a new significance. Many of the former political borders separating the states of the EU became little more than cultural borders, while older cultural borders – such as the one between Europe and non-Europe – took on more of a political character (Delanty, 2006 p. 185). It is this collision between more lenient and harsher borders, driven by xenophobia, that dominates the period from 2009 to 2016, and is also why my research focuses on this time period.

From 2010 onwards, Europe has confronted one of its most significant refugee crises. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated that more than 1,000,000 refugees arrived in Europe by sea between January and November 2015. This number included 241,000 children; the refugees were either escaping conflict in their own country or were in search of better economic prospects. The trend continued into 2016, when an estimated 358,923 migrants and refugees entered Europe by sea, over half of this number children under the age of 18. This is in addition to the worldwide estimate, according to UN figures, of 1.5 million displaced children around the world (International Organization for Migration, 2016; The UN Refugee Agency UNHCR, 2016).

The conflict in Syria between the government of Bashar el-Assad and various other forces, which started in the spring of 2011, has continued to cause displacement across the region. In a policy brief examining the problems posed to both state authorities and refugees, Guild, Costello, Garlick, and Moreno-Lax (2015 p. 6) argued that there had never been a time when the need for a unified European response to the arrival of refugee had been more urgent. In reality, however, the European Union was sharply divided in the way that its constituent countries responded to the crisis (Culik, 2015 p.3).

The refugee crisis exacerbated the economic, social and political consequences of Europe's inability to work together in an effective manner. The refugee influx happened at a time when Europe was dealing with the Greek economic crisis, as well as growing uncertainty

regarding the United Kingdom's continued membership in the Union, continuous tension with Russia, and threats from ISIS. On the domestic level, the hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers were providing the fuel for political movements that made xenophobia their main agenda (Heisbourg, 2015, p. 10). In the face of these high levels of xenophobia, which became a central factor in the European discourse one migration and national demographics, it was difficult for the European Union to orchestrate a united response. (Berghahn & Sternberg, 2010, p. 27).

However, xenophobia aside, the broader sense of loss of control experienced by countries posed a big threat. The European Union was no longer identified by prosperity and security. The rise in Europhobia, in the sense of a rejection of European belonging coupled with advocating the exit from the Union, and the fear of invasion, added to the existing fears created by social transformations wrought by forces of globalisation (Bertoncini & Koenig, 2015, p. 5) Amid the refugee crisis, much of Europe was caught between two opposing positions: compassionate pragmatism versus a fear of cultural, ethnic and religious difference. The apprehension of being overwhelmed by difference runs through much of the discourse surrounding the crisis. Across many historical and geographic contexts, the discursive framings of the causes of displacement have shaped the responses of nation states to displaced people. The discursive framing is derived from the terms and definitions used to describe the crisis in the media. The words 'migrant' and 'refugee' are intermittently conflated or distinguished in political, popular and media discourse. At times, the phrase 'migrant crisis' subtly delegitimised calls for protection, whereas the phrase 'refugee crisis' reinforced them (Holmes & Castaneda, 2016, p. 16). Cinema offered an alternative representation by portraying the refugee crisis in a different way, compared to the approach of aspects of the media and political spheres. This will be explored throughout my thesis.

Focusing on the countries relevant to my research, I will turn first to France. By September 2015, 6,700 asylum requests had been filed in France – a relatively low number in comparison to some other countries. The then French President François Hollande committed France to receiving 24,000 refugees, as part of an EU-wide plan that 'can and will' bring the crisis under control (Withnall, 2015). Such political, low-key actions reflected public opinion and representations of the crisis in the French media, as explored and demonstrated in Georgiou and Zaborowski's (2017, pp. 5-15) study. Comparing the media coverage of the refugee crisis in different European countries, they found that France was one of only three countries (along with the Czech Republic and the UK) where references to defensive measures (e.g., closing borders, tightening registration procedures, increasing police and army presence, etc.) were more prevalent than references to caring measures. In other words, France's political stance towards

refugees was not welcoming, to say the least. However, France's centrality in the crisis came about for other reasons. This was due to the location of the 'Jungle' refugee camp – a waystation refugees trying to enter the UK via the Channel Tunnel – in Calais. The Jungle was a key location in the European refugee crisis. In November 2015, there were an estimated 6,000 migrants living in the camp; a constant point of dispute between France and the UK, it received a deluge of media coverage. Both governments consistently labelled the transient population in Calais as 'illegal migrants'. The very description of the camp as 'The Jungle' presented an emblematic metaphor, capturing the 'opportunistic migrant' through a reductive lens which framed its human inhabitants as something closer to the animalistic. The intention was to allude to inhabitants of the camp as being inhuman rather than refugees – perhaps a way of avoiding responsibility for their care, or avoiding responsibility for processing their requests for asylum (Ibrahim & Howarth, 2018, pp. 11-12).

In Germany, the situation differed greatly. The country played an especially important and central role in responding to the crisis in 2015, occupying a critical political and rhetorical position within media narratives. Germany admitted more refugees than any other country in Europe; according to available data, Syrians in Germany number an estimated 600,000 (Heisbourg, 2015, p. 10). In terms of representation of the crisis in the German media, on the whole the press placed the most significant emphasis on action. Over 85% referenced humanitarian measures, the highest across the European sample. On the other hand, the emphasis on reasons for the mass migration was the lowest in the sample. Solidarity and responsibility were central themes in the language of the German press. German newspapers issued special editions in Arabic welcoming the refugees; published news stories showing Syrians handing out roses to their German hosts in thanks (Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017, p. 3).

The third country analysed in my thesis is Denmark. Denmark has been described as having some of the most aggressive anti-immigrant policies in Europe (European Parliament, 2019, p.6). In general, a radical contrast has been identified between the policies and the political debate about immigration in the country. Civic integration in Denmark goes hand in hand with civic selection. In practice, this means that only those people who fit the Danish egalitarian way of life, and those who present as having the potential to contribute to Danish society, should be allowed in (Bech et. al. 2017, p. 20). Denmark's selective immigration includes assessments of newcomers' ability to integrate – such as, for instance, testing people's proficiency in the Danish language and knowledge of local culture. Critical studies of Danish immigration policies have repeatedly described the Danish approach as promoting assimilation and as being anti-

multicultural (Jensen 2010, p. 187; Holtug 2013, pp. 207-208; Laegaard 2013; Borevi 2014, p. 712). According to Borevi (2014, p. 716), newcomers to the Danish welfare system are required to adjust to Danish values and traditions. Overall, a number of scholars have argued that Denmark is among the European countries with the most drastic civic integration policies, having adopted some of the strictest, most complex and demanding migration requirements (Borevi 2014, p. 716; Bech et al. 2017, p. 6).

After this review of the historical context of my research, I will now address the figure of the refugee adolescent, locating my research in the existing literature. For this purpose, I will analyse the refugee adolescent from two perspectives. Firstly, this involves an understanding of what it means to be a male adolescent; and secondly, what it means to be an adolescent in this context, focusing on similarities and differences compared to the refugee child in cinema.

1.2   Gendered refugees

The three case studies that constitute my thesis all analyse male adolescent refugees. The choice to explore only male protagonists was based on an investigation of the existing literature in the field of gendered mobilities and different gendered representations of refugees. This will be explored further and justified in this section.

According to Freedman, Kivilcim, and Baklacıoğlu (2017, p. 125), as the refugee crisis began to gain widespread political attention and media coverage in Europe, little attention was paid, at first, to the presence of women and children among those arriving on European shores. The principal images of these 'boat migrants' were of young men arriving in Italy or Greece. Representations in the media and political discourse were highly gendered. For men, and particularly for young men, there was a persistent representation of the threat that they posed to Europe – both at a regional and at an individual level. Women, on the other hand, were portrayed largely as vulnerable and in need of protection (Freedman et al. 2017, p. 137). As the crisis progressed, more and more women and children were among the numbers on the migrant boats, and some observers began to point to the particular vulnerabilities of these women (Freedman et al. 2017, p. 125). In *Representations of gendered mobility and the tragic border regime in the Mediterranean*, Friese (2017) argues that women have been invisible and female mobility a persistent blind spot in migration studies, as it has been considered a secondary phenomenon, a derivative of male migration. Female refugees are less associated with autonomous agency, less

visible in the public sphere, and not associated with the realm of the political; thus, the female hero cannot be but a vulnerable victim (Friese, 2017, pp. 542-549).

Writing about the representation of women in the media, Helms (2015) suggests that in general, women as women have scarcely featured in the coverage of the 2015 migration. When they are pictured, it is with children and in family groups, images intended to provoke empathy. Men have been much more prominent in the competing narratives of migration: as fathers by those advocating for the humane treatment of migrants, and as a swarm of threatening and dangerous figures by those arguing to keep them out of the EU. Women and children are thus more easily read as innocent – unimplicated in war or political processes, unable to influence their fate, and at the mercy of others (Helms, 2015). In *Gendered mobilities and vulnerabilities: refugee journeys to and in Europe*, Kofman (2019, p. 2168) argues that a male-dominated refugee population raises security fears, as they are assumed to want to sponsor the admission of other family members in the future, through the right to family reunification by those granted refugee status, thus leading to an increase in the refugee population (Kofman, 2019, p. 2168).

My choice to focus on male adolescents is based on the arguments covered by these scholars. The representation of male refugees might be more prominent than the representation of women refugees, in terms of the feelings and thoughts that this representation evokes in the viewer. The process that the viewer is required to go through while watching these films is more dramatic, meaningful and difficult than it would be with women refugees on the screen. Put differently: it might be easier to feel compassion for a caring mother or a lost female adolescent than for a 'potentially dangerous' male adolescent portrayed on the screen. It is this complex process of identification that my thesis is interested in, hence the decision to focus on films that depict male refugee adolescents. The decision to focus on films that depict male refugee adolescents. In the following sections of this chapter, I concentrate on building a clearer understanding of the figure of the adolescent. Firstly, I will focus on the overlap between the figure of the child in cinema and the figure of the refugee in cinema. Secondly, I will focus on the specific characteristics and unique qualities of the adolescent in cinema. Finally, I will locate and describe the processes that all three characters go through in the films.

1.3   The exploration of children refugees in cinema

As adolescence is located between childhood and adulthood, depictions of the refugee adolescent contain some characteristics of the representation of children in cinema – a fact that been researched in some detail over the years. The existing scholarship on the migrant child in cinema portrays a weak, innocent child: one who evokes parental feelings within adults, and hence emphasises the boundaries between them. Investigating the complex emotions of children themselves, Wilson (2005, p.331) suggests that 'innocence emerges as a dominant fantasy, in whose terms children have been variously represented as protected and desired.' This fantasy itself is responsible, at least in part, for the disempowerment of the child. Jenkins (1998, p.2) develops a profile of children as creative thinkers, who shape society even as it shapes them; Jenkins proposes that 'dominant conceptions of childhood as innocence presumes that children exist in a space beyond, above and outside the political.' In this respect, the perception of childhood innocence works further to establish the distinction between adults and children. Being innocent and vulnerable might evoke a parental connection from the viewer. Holland (2004, pp.143-144) studies the implications of images of children in the ways in which children themselves are treated. Writing about representations of childhood suffering, Holland states:

> Pictures of sorrowing children reinforce the defining characteristic of childhood - dependence and powerlessness. The boundaries between childhood and adulthood are reinforced as the images give rise to pleasurable emotions of tenderness and compassion, which satisfactorily confirm adult power. Holland (2004, p.144)

For Holland, the adult viewer's relationship with the child is represented on screen as parental, with regard to the protective stance that the viewer is forced to adopt. Adult-child boundaries are reinforced. The figure of the adolescent in my thesis follows this direction. Owing to their foreignness and to being misplaced without any stable concept of home or family, the three adolescent migrant protagonists that feature in my thesis are all in search of (amongst other things) protection and belongingness.

Offering an alternative approach regarding child-adult boundaries, Wilson (2005, p.331) notes that contemporary films seek to open up the range of childhood representations, strategically denying the distinction between adults and children and producing a wave of emotive responses, where adults suddenly feel like children. My discussion will extend this argument by showing how the relationship with the refugee adolescent blurs the distinction

between adult and child; removing the boundaries between them and creating a new mutual space for the relationship to happen on the screen.

With regard to the connection between children in cinema and representations of the nation, Donald, Wilson, and Wright argue 'that the idea of the child is without doubt a potent symbol for the nation state, for the ethno-national group' (2017, pp. 1-3), and for those who wish to either to defend or abjure national histories and collective memories alike. It provides a space to explore themes of belonging, encounter and experience, as well as agency and representation. In this context, the child can act as a fulcrum between national and local concerns, as well as wider, transnational identifications – all relevant to the adolescent refugees featured in this thesis.

My reading of the adolescent refugee in this thesis follows Hemelryk Donald's key arguments in her book *There's no place like home* (2018), which call for a different, more layered perception of the migrant child. According to Donald:

> [T]he expectation of migrant children to be both endlessly resilient and utterly flexible whilst retaining an aura of innocence and dependence, as well as finding the imaginative wherewithal to conform to the expectations of the place of arrival, is extreme'. (Hemelryk Donald, 2018, p. 26)

Hemelryk Donald (2018, pp. 71-72) goes on to note that:

> [T]he child migrant has many challenges: She must overcome the vulnerabilities of being young, foreign and often without adult assistance; She must have enough of an imagination to keep faith in the idea of a better future, whilst dealing with the long periods of travel, detention, camps and abuse whilst lacking the ordinary securities of 'normal childhood' such as home, school and community networks to rely on. Hemelryk Donald (2018, pp. 71-72)

In addition, they must learn how they might create a space of arrival and settlement within which they can belong, where they are at home (Hemelryk Donald, 2018, p.72). Once again, the adolescent protagonists in my thesis conform to this, as they are not innocent. Due to their life circumstances, they have all been required to enter adulthood faster than the 'normal' adolescent. This follows Hemelryk Donald's argument (2018, p. 79) that the trauma of displacement, accelerated entry into adult responsibilities, and the witnessing of extraordinary

human cruelty, all results in great damage to the young. She points out another relevant facet for the migrant child:

> The child migrant in the form of a displaced person or refugee is still walking across borders, or roaming camps, or drawing pictures of despair and hope, or trying to make a new life in new place with new people. He is also a powerful fantasy structure of escape and infantile freedom, devised by adult storytellers, or framed by documentarists, to embody and aestheticize wish fulfilment, accelerated motion, socio-political displacement and ontological transition – all conditions that generate adult desire, anxiety and fear. (Hemelryk Donald, 2018, p. 81)

In terms of 'Otherness', Lury (2005, p. 307) acknowledges that the child, childhood and children themselves all occupy a situation in which they are 'Others' to the supposedly rational, civilised 'grown up' that is the adult. One of the aspects that distinguishes children and adults is their gaze. Lury (2005, p.308) refers to the difference between seeing and showing. In 'seeing' there is an unregulated gaze, timeless and ahistorical. On the other hand, in 'showing' there is a directed, purposeful gaze that links cause to effect. According to Lury, seeing is what children do, whereas showing is what adults do for children. The adolescents explored in my thesis align with Lury's conclusions; I will argue that whilst it is true that the adolescent is located as the 'Other', the adult can also become the 'Other' for the adolescent too. Moreover, my thesis will explore and investigate both the adult and the adolescent gazes, seeing and showing, arguing that constructing a relationship with the refugee adolescent challenges the division between seeing (the child's gaze) and showing (the adult's gaze), demonstrating how they are interconnected and can both be influenced and changed.

1.4   Distinguishing between children and adolescents

While there are several similarities in the representation of children and of adolescents in cinema, there are also many differences and unique aspects. Rocha and Seminet (2012, pp. 11-18) propose that there are a few special aspects of the adolescent on screen, all of which are applicable to the characters analysed in my thesis. While children are associated with innocence, curiosity and partial dependence on adults, adolescents are often characterised by rebelliousness against adult rule, the loss of innocence, sexual awakening, and self-conscious behaviour (Rocha & Seminet, 2012, p. 11). Thus, the transition from adolescent to adult serves as a metonym for the

experiences of society as a whole (Rocha & Seminet, 2012, p. 17). Adolescents are more often cast to project the future, rather than to revisit the past, by introducing topics of emerging social importance (Rocha & Seminet, 2012, p. 24).

The adolescents featured in my thesis align with a specific group of migrant and refugee adolescents in cinema. According to Berghahn (2010, pp. 235-238), all diasporic youth films reflect the experience of growing up in a culture that is different from one's culture of origin. Diasporic youth, in the main, are underprivileged in one form or another. These commonalities lend diasporic youth films a transnational appeal. In his book, *Years of conflict: adolescence, political violence and displacement*, Hart (2008, p. 20) notes that for many adolescents, political violence and displacement creates a sudden and heavy burden of responsibility, extending far beyond that which would normally be vested in a person at this point in the life cycle.

1.5   Erik Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development

After locating the figure of the adolescent refugee within the existing literature of in children in cinema, adolescents in cinema, and adolescent refugees in cinema, I would now like to focus on their age. The three adolescent characters at the centre of my case studies are all at the same point in their lives, which is adolescence. For this purpose, I would like to introduce to the discussion Erikson's theory regarding principal psychological mission during this period, namely pursuing one's identity.

Erik Erikson's theory of the stages of psychosocial development is one of the most influential theories in the field of human development. Erikson claims that personality develops in a preset order across eight stages of psychosocial development from infancy to adulthood. At each stage, the person experiences a psychosocial crisis which may have a positive or a negative outcome on subsequent personality development. According to Erikson, successful completion of each stage results in a healthy personality and the achievement of basic qualities. Basic qualities are characteristic strengths which the ego can use to resolve subsequent crises. The stage that is relevant for our case studies is the fifth stage of the theory. This is the stage of identity versus role confusion, which occurs during adolescence, from about 12 to 18 years of age. During this stage, an adolescent is confronted with the task of developing a sense of self continuity. Identity formation results in the psychological potency of fidelity to society, as the individual wants to belong to a society and fit in. During this stage, adolescents search for a sense of self and personal

identity, through the intense search for anchoring ideals, beliefs and goals. During adolescence, the transition from childhood to adulthood is most crucial; identity achievement verses identity confusion is a major concern (Dunkel & Sefcek, 2009, p. 14; Žukauskienė, 2015, pp. 68-72).

According to Kroger,

[t]he question of what constitutes identity has been answered differently through different historical epochs, and through different theoretical and empirical approaches to understanding identity's form and functions. However, basic to all identity definitions is an attempt to understand the entity that, ideally, enables one to move with purpose and direction in life, and with a sense of internal coherence and continuity over time and place. While individual interests and capacities, wishes and desires draw individuals to particular contexts, those contexts, in turn, provide recognition (or not) of individual identity, and are critical to its further development. (2017, p. 2)

Erikson stressed the important interactions among biological, psychological and social forces for optimal personality development. He proposed a series of eight psychosocial tasks following an epigenetic principle over the course of the life span, such that the resolution of one task sets the foundation for all that is to follow.

For Erikson, identity formation entails finding a significant identity direction on a continuum between identity fulfilment and role confusion. The process of identity creation requires identity discovery and commitment; the combination of childhood identifications into a new structure related, to but different from, the total of its parts (Kroger, 2017, pp. 3-20).

1.6   Migration cinema in Europe

In this section, I will provide an overview of the existing literature in the field of migration in cinema, aiming to locate my research within it. Post-millennial Europe cannot be described or experienced as a coherent whole, but only as a site of constant negotiations over identity. The continent is no longer predominantly white and Christian, but rather a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious domain. Europe, as a geopolitical entity and ideological concept, has historically evolved through a process of absorbing, hybridising and assimilating different people from diverse ethnic, religious and national groups. However, European countries have tended to view migration as challenging and threatening to their territory, identity and ways of imagining

themselves and others (Loshitzky, 2006, p. 746; 2010, p. 15). The concept of a national identity, or even a European identity, is becoming ever more contested and fluid; a growing number of films have challenged the traditional understanding of national cinema and national identity (Berghahn & Sternberg, 2010, p. 18).

With regards to the discourse on immigrants and their representation in cinema, Loshitzky (2010, p. 5) has challenged the utopian notion of a post-national 'New Europe' by focusing on the waves of migrants and refugees, describing the four major phases it was shaped through. The first phase is the pre-9/11 period, mostly characterised by the criminalisation of asylum seekers and immigrants. The second phase commenced after 9/11, where the discourse on immigrants centred around the so-called 'War on Terror'. The third phase preceded the US invasion of Iraq, where discussions of disease, epidemics and plagues were prevalent. The fourth phase constitutes the time after 7 July 2005 London bombings, which prompted a new phase in the war against migration, with the focus of danger shifted from the borders to the centre, towards the threat from within. The period covered in my thesis could be identified as a fifth phase, focusing on the refugee crisis in Europe and the sense of the overflow of refugees at Europe's borders. During this period, the refugee crisis entered the homes, families and everyday lives of European citizens, exercising a direct and personal impact on them.

Loshitzky (2006, p. 745) discusses three evolving film genres concerning immigration that can be traced in diasporic and migrant cinema, each referring to a different stage in the migratory route from the homeland to the host country. The films in this study fit two of her suggested types. The first is 'The Journey of Hope', which portrays the hardship endured by refugees and migrants on their way to the Promised Land. My case studies *Welcome* and *Dreaming of Denmark* both belong to this type. The second type is 'In the Promised Land' films, which investigate the encounter with the host society in the receiving country, namely looking at the reception of the newcomer. *Welcome to the Hartmanns* exemplifies this trope. Regardless of the kind of dyad performed by the refugee adolescent and the European host on the screen, and regardless of the phase of the journey that the film portrays, what is common to all the films in my thesis is the encounter of the 'Other'. There is a large body of literature regarding the encounter with the 'Other'; here, I will present the theses of three key scholars views on this notion.

Loshitzky (2010, p. 9) posits that European cinema's preoccupation with issues of 'Otherness', much like the phenomenon of migration itself, is neither new nor exclusively contemporary. The use and abuse of archetypes of the 'Other' and the stranger were also at the centre of early classical European cinema. Loshitzky reiterates anthropologist Claude Levi-

16

Strauss's observations in *Tristes Tropiques* as the two pervasive methods of dealing with the presence of a stranger. The first possible solution is to 'eat the stranger up', so that symbolically the 'strangers are ingested into the national body and cease to exist as strangers.' This category reflects the approach in *Welcome to the Hartmanns*, as Germany is the most open and liberal country in Europe and has received the highest number of refugees into it. The second possible solution is to expel the 'stranger' from the realm or the world of living. This captures the attitude of both France and Denmark towards refugees, both representing countries oriented to expelling refugees rather than integrating them into their societies. The practices of regulating migrants express the symbolic dynamic of screening 'strangers' in Fortress Europe. This includes the political process through which Europe's major agents and factors aim to preserve, perpetuate, and retain what they view as the 'essence' of European culture and identity, which entitles its bearers to benefits and privileges not afforded to others.

1.7   Understanding the influence of spaces of liminality within the films

The films explored in this thesis are set in various locations, including refugee camps, public areas, borders and ports. Scholarship deals with liminal spaces in different ways and with varying definitions. Writing about the Cinema of Displacement, Ghosh & Sarkar, 1995, p. 111 argue that:

Films dealing with displacement seem to involve a remarkable amount of movement by the protagonist. The protagonist is always in search of a comfortable 'location'; in this respect, films about displacement are like films on travel, there is the constant traversing of space. This heightened sense of spatial activity in films about displacement is important to the politics of displacement, since the condition is one of 'un-belonging' or, at best, uncomfortable belonging. (Ghosh & Sarkar, 1995, p. 111).

In his book *States and strangers: refugees and displacements of statecraft*, Soguk (1999, p. 243) suggests that by belonging neither here nor there, refugees challenge the assumed link between nation, state and citizen. The refugee is constructed by nation state as a 'necessary other', a kind of constitutive outside. Not only does the refugee lack a home, a nation and citizenship; he is also 'lacking proper agency, proper voice, proper face' (Soguk, 1999, p. 243). By producing the refugee as someone marginal and lacking, the normalcy of the 'citizen/nation/state constellation' is also produced. In other words, while the figure of the refugee threatens the

nation state, it also stabilises it by being the 'constitutive outside' of the national order of things (Soguk, 1999, p. 51). In line with this, the adolescent refugees featured in this thesis both strengthen and shake the nation state, the 'Europeaness' of the hosts and the stability of the host country.

The in-betweenness of the adolescent refugees who constitute the core of my thesis is manifested through the temporality of the transition sites they pass through during their journey. In *What is a refugee camp*, Turner (2016, p. 142) argues that refugee camps are, by definition, temporary; they are never meant to remain where they are indeterminately. In practice, however, camps may become quasi-permanent. Refugees in camps thus find themselves in a doubly paradoxical situation. First, they cannot settle where they are because they are supposedly 'on the move', on their way home or somewhere else in the future. Second, they cannot remain 'on the move' as they possibly are not going anywhere, either now or in the near future. The result is that they experience living in a time pocket; time grinds to a halt inside the camp while normal activity continues outside the camp. Not only is this limbo that they live in a time pocket in relation to lives lived outside the camps; it is also a limbo with no promise of an ending. Although the characters of this thesis do not come from or go through a refugee camp, detention centre, or other transitional sites, I would argue that the same temporality and paradoxical situation is relevant and happening in the spaces they occupy.

Another thread of scholarship deals with perceiving the refugees as victims. By virtue of their perceived position as victims in history, refugees are cared for in terms of their security and their biological needs. But all the while, they are assumed to be without agency and are deprived of political rights by camp authorities (Agier 2011, p. 18; Lecadet 2016, p. 194). They are provided with shelter, food and health treatment, but they are expected not to make political demands. To be worthy of humanitarian assistance, the receiver must be purely human — that is someone without a past, without political will, without agency. This appeal to compassion, in other words, reduces the refugee to his wounded body — to biological life rather than political subjectivity. The picture painted so far is a rather bleak one, where the possibilities of making a life or of creating some kind of meaningful identity seem to be barred by the structures of the camp. However, Turner (2016, p. 143) suggests – an argument that this thesis builds upon – that the refugee camps are ambiguous places where life, on the one hand, is reduced to the bare, biological exigencies of temporary survival; but, on the other hand, offers the possibility of creating a new identity. Rather, in this space where old habits and structures no longer make much sense, new identity positions are made possible (Turner, 2016, pp. 143-144). All of the refugees in the films

explored in this thesis finish their journey (and film) in a different place, a different reality, a different identity to that with which they started.

Another aspect of liminality explored in the literature is specifically focused on space. In *The non-places of migrant cinema in Europe*, Ponzanesi (2012, p. 676) focuses on the use of 'non places' in post-colonial Europe. She addresses what Marc Auge described in his book *Non-places: Introduction to an anthropology of super modernity* (1995, p. 103), stating:

> If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, historical or concerned with identity will be a non-place. (Ponzanesi, 2012, p. 677)

However, for postcolonial migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, non-places are zones more of stasis than of transit, of entrapment more than consumption, and of exploitation more than resistance. The non-places of post-colonial and migrant cinema refer to the visual and ideological instability of the notion of Europe, as well as the creation of an alternative space. This is the location of transformation, a non-place becoming inhabited and belonging to an alternative, organic society, like the ones established by the post-colonial migrants (Ponzanesi, 2012, p.689). This thesis will deepen the investigation of the representation of these locations, emphasising the different cinematic representations they present on the screen.

Auge's definition of non-places builds on Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopia (Ponzanesi, 2012, p. 677). Different from utopias, which are about an idea or an image that is not real but represents a perfected version of society, heterotopias do exist. They are 'sites with no real place... [with] a direct or inverted analogy with the real space of society' (Foucault and Miskowiec, 1986, p. 24). Foucault distinguished several types of heterotopia; but in general, a heterotopia is a space that organises otherness and difference and is also a means of escape from authoritarianism and repression. These are spaces of otherness, neither here nor there, that are simultaneously physical and mental (Foucault and Miskowiec, 1986, pp. 24- 26; Ponzanesi, 2012, p. 677).

In *Spatializing the refugee camp*, Ramadan (2013, pp. 74-75) notes that the refugee camp is more than just a humanitarian space of physical relief and welfare, more than a space of exception and intensified bio-political control. It is a space of exception, in which the host state's sovereign rule is at best partial and conditional; it is an assemblage of social, institutional and diasporic relations and practices; and it is a space of enduring liminality, circumscribed by a particular temporality that limits development and insists that refugees seek home elsewhere.

The spaces in this thesis are indeed more than a humanitarian space for their protagonists. They are a place of relatively safety from their past, a place where they meet other people from similar backgrounds. The spaces described in this thesis are, for the three protagonists, more than a humanitarian space. It is true that their new surroundings are fraught with uncertainty – and, occasionally, danger. But this contrasts with the bleak certainty of their departure point – spaces stripped of hope, places where personal agency counts for little. And so, spaces of refuge offer a glimmer of optimism – very little from the perspective of the interested local, but substantial and substantive from the perspective of the young migrant

In line with what Ghosh and Sarkar (1995, p. 109) argue in *The cinema of displacement*, the spaces occupied by the protagonists become a central feature in their acts of self-representation. In films representing displacement, the protagonists locate themselves in a curious double space. The space in the mise-en-scène – a room, a train station, a porch, for example – always evokes an 'other' space. These other places are not simply diegetic for realistic purposes. For instance, a sense of the street outside the window, or a hint of the house beyond the hill in the corner of a frame. Rather, the protagonist is defined by his or her relationship to this other place. He or she feels excluded from it, at the margins of it, or mentally 'in' the absent place, such that the place that he or she actually inhabits in the mise-en-scène is one of discomfort or some kind of cultural and social liminality.

In the same way, my thesis will look at the similarities rather than the differences between the European host and the adolescent refugee. The same goes for the locations themselves and this sense of 'evoked other space'. The commonality shared by the European hosts and the adolescent refugees is the need to belong: the will to be part of the place they inhabit, the need to feel that they belong to where they are located. This study will show how this dual belongingness, this 'other space' that is longed for is, in the case studies featured in this thesis, a common characteristic of both the refugee adolescent and the European host.

1.8   Theoretical framework and methodology

My methodology in this thesis consists of two subcategories of analysis. First, I will employ a phenomenological approach to investigating the experience of the viewers in the films: the process they are going through, and the change that the films may evoke in them. Secondly, I will use genre as an analytic tool to explore how the refugee story is told differently according to

generic conventions, and according to genre characteristics which will be further detailed later in this section.

First, I will start with the phenomenological approach. I will engage with the work of scholars including Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Crossley & Society, 1995; Dreyfus, 1996; Merleau-Ponty, 2004, 2005, 2013), Vivian Sobchack (1992), Laura Marks (Marks & Polan, 2000), and Jennifer Barker (2009). In *What is film phenomenology*, Ferencz-Flatz and Hanich (2016) review the history and evolution of film phenomenology, showing that the core of this approach concerns the nature of experience and the meaning of that experience. In a phenomenological approach to film, the emphasis rests on the viewer as the experiencing subject (Ferencz-Flatz & Hanich, 2016, p. 3). This thesis will argue that experience – physical, mental, and emotional – is a key factor in grasping the refugee crisis.

A few scholars have argued for the understanding of film as a unique experience. In her book, *The address of the eye*, Sobchack (1992) argues:

> …the cinema uses modes of embodied existence (seeing, hearing, physical and reflective movement) as the vehicle, the 'stuff', the substance of its language. It also uses the structures of direct experience (the 'centring' and bodily situating of existence in relation to the world of objects and others) as the basis for the structures of its language. Thus, as a symbolic form of human communication, the cinema is like no other. (Sobchack, 1992, p. 5)

Sobchack's later book *Carnal thoughts: embodiment and moving image culture (2004)* takes up the concept of synaesthesia and develops it further into a theory of synaesthetic (or cinesthetic) spectatorship. The argument that we do not only see and hear films but perceive them with our entire embodied sensorium – including our senses of touch, smell and taste – has left a strong mark on film studies and beyond (Ferencz-Flatz & Hanich, 2016, p. 31).

Before Sobchack, Ferencz-Flatz & Hanich had suggested, with regard to Marks, that she had been convinced that films could evoke other senses than merely those of seeing and hearing, and that in cinema all of the viewer's senses work together. According to them, Marks' explicit goal in her influential book *The skin of the film*, 'is to emphasise the tactile or haptic quality of the cinematic experience. She describes the viewer's relationship to the moving image as a continuum. It can be predominantly visual or primarily haptic' (Ferencz-Flatz and Hanich, 2016, p. 33). In addition, following both Sobchack and Marks, Jennifer Barker claims that in the act of viewing a film, the spectator's mind and body as well as vision and touch are always

interconnected. Barker shares the conviction that viewers and films are much more closely intertwined than previous models of spectatorship may have made us believe:

> Watching a film, we are certainly not in the film, but we are not entirely outside it, either. We exist and move and feel in that space of contact where our surfaces mingle and our musculatures entangle. (Barker 2009, p. 12)

As indicated above, Barker extends the notion of touch by penetrating the viewer's body even more deeply, discovering not only a tactile experience, but also a muscular and a visceral one. Skin, musculature, viscera:

> These terms are not used […] metaphorically, but are stretched beyond their literal, biological meaning to encompass their more phenomenological significance. (Barker 2009, pp. 20-21, quoted by Ferencz-Flatz & Hanich, 2016, p. 35)

My thesis will apply these notions of cinema, emphasising the power of the films to change, influence and challenge the viewer's perceptions. The tools for such investigation will be the tactile, sensorial and somatic experiences that the films use to articulate their stories and messages.

In order to explore the dual gazes of the refugee adolescent and of the European host, my thesis will rely on another phenomenological element, as Barker (2009) references Merleau Ponty, regarding the reversibility of the gazes:

> This reversibility of gazes and sensations evoked, was explained in tactile terms by Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of perception* by using the image of a person's one hand touching the other. When I touch one hand with the other, each hand plays the role of both the touching and the touched, but my experience of touching and being touched is not quite simultaneous. Either I feel one hand touching the other as an object, or I feel subjectively one hand being touched by the other, but I can't feel both at once… they each vacillate between the role of touching and touched, just as the self and other alternate between the role of seer and seen. This structure of reversibility does not collapse the distinction between the two hands or between self and other, nor is it simultaneous. It involves a shifting of attention and intentionality from one aspect of the encounter to another. (Barker, 2009, p. 19)

This analogy describes the mutual dependence between two sides of the encounter, they are both consistently 'touching and being touched'. They are dependent on one another. Barker

(2009, p. 19) argues that 'for Merleau-Ponty, this double sensation provoked by one hand touching the other is the archetype for subject-object relations in the world: irreducible from one to the other yet embedded in a constantly mutual experience.' Applying this analogy to my research, it is easy to see how the refugee adolescent is dependent on the European host. What my case studies will demonstrate is how and why the European host is also dependent on the adolescent refugee. In other words, my thesis will treat the refugee adolescent and the European host as those 'two hands', constantly touching and being touched by one another.

1.9   Genre

It is important to discuss genre as it is employed as part of the methodology in this thesis. As specific discussions on melodrama, comedy, and documentary will be further developed within the chapters, this section will review the characteristics of genre as a methodological tool for analysing the case studies in this thesis, and its relevance to the refugee story.

An important aspect of genre scholarship considers genres as a process. In his article *Questions of genre*, Neale (1990, p. 56) argues that genres are best understood as processes:

> These processes may, for sure, be dominated by repetition, but they are also marked fundamentally by difference, variation and change. The process-like nature of genres manifests itself as an interaction between three levels: the level of expectation, the level of the generic corpus, and the level of the 'rules' or 'norms' that govern both. Each new genre film constitutes an addition to an existing generic corpus and involves a selection from the repertoire of generic elements available at any one point in time. (Neale, 1990, p. 56)

The relevance of genre to my thesis is evident, as it addresses notions of similarity and difference. In *Genre*, Neale (1980, p. 48) suggests that genres are about repetition and difference, emphasising the centrality of difference in genre. According to Neale, a mere difference would not attract an audience. In line with this, in *An introduction to genre theory*, Chandler (1997, p. 6) notes that 'while writing within a genre involves making use of certain "given" conventions, every work within a genre also involves the invention of some new elements' (Chandler 1997, p. 6). In other words, a genre has a set of similar aspects; but a genre is also dynamic, in that it is continually evolving with new elements. This combination of characteristics is similar to what the discourse on the refugee story is based upon; a narrative that by definition is ever growing,

dynamic and changes, yet also deals with the continuous dialogue between 'different' and the 'familiar', and their effect on each other.

Altman (1999, p. 195) broadens the discussion about genres, discussing in *What can genres teach us about nations?* the multi-faceted nature of genres and their multi-layered functions. He pays close attention to their social roles:

> Genres are social devices that use semantics and syntax to assure simultaneous satisfaction on the part of multiple users with apparently contradictory purposes. That is, genres are regulatory schemes facilitating the integration of diverse factions into a single unified social fabric. As such, genres operate like nations and other complex communities. Perhaps genres can even teach us about nations (Altman, 1999, p. 195)

The discourse about genre and nations, in the context of this thesis, provides another perspective on the nations involved in this research. This is so in terms of how they function; how and if a nation can serve as a home for so many different parts within it. It revolves around questions of belonging, about how the familiar is facing the new additions to society or genre, and how differences are treated. In other words, how do veteran citizens, local citizens, European citizens, and 'new citizens' (the refugees) expand the existing borders of a genre or a society? How will they become part of the society/genre? How will the existing nations accept their new 'Others'? How will the process, like characteristics of genre, be evident in the nations discussed in this thesis?

Writing about how culture and genre have been understood together, and the cultural basis of genre, Miller (1995, p. 69) expands the discussion about genre with another aspect. She calls genre a 'cultural artefact', and by that sees it much as an anthropologist sees a material artefact from an ancient civilization. It is a product that has particular functions, that fits into a system of functions and other artefacts. As bearers of culture, artefacts literally incorporate knowledge – knowledge of aesthetics, economics, politics, religious beliefs and all the various dimensions of what we know as human culture (Miller, 1995, p. 69). Miller also conceptualises genre as a 'rhetorical means for mediating private intensions and social exigence; it motivates by connecting the private with the public, the singular with the recurrent' (Miller, 1995, p. 37). Here, again, genre is employed as a lens through which my thesis delves into the refugee story, on the public level, and the individual level within each country and the cultural conventions explored.

The final relevant aspect in the discussion about genre is its effect on audiences. In *Questions of genre*, Neale (1990, p. 45) suggests that genres contain the anticipations that the

audience bring with them to the cinema. These expectations help the audience to better understand the internal logic of the film:

> They offer a way of working out why particular events and actions are taking place, why the characters are dressed the way they are, why they look, speak and behave the way they do … these systems of expectation and hypothesis involve a knowledge of, indeed they partly embody, various regimes of verisimilitude, various systems of plausibility, motivation, justification and belief… It entails notions of propriety, of what is appropriate and therefore probable. Regimes of verisimilitude vary from genre to genre. As such these regimes entail rules, norms and law. (Neale, 1990 p. 46)

This familiarity of genres, and the fact that the audience knows what to expect, is especially meaningful in my thesis because it serves as a tool for softening the viewers' anxiety and sense of threat when they face a story about refugees. The fact that at least the genre is familiar and predictable might ease the process of dealing with the story told on the screen. Using genre as a category of analysis will enable a deep investigation of how the refugee story is mediated and transformed for the audience, and what different kinds of processes the different genres will trigger.

1.10   Chapter analysis outline

Each case study will be analysed through two major lenses. Firstly, my analysis will explore the political and cultural context of each film in its specific national setting, responses to its release, and the subsequent actions it evoked. Secondly, through textual analysis I will consider various cinematic tools, such as narrative, mise-en-scène, and framing, considering these in their generic function. Each chapter will also explore the cinematic mechanisms employed by the films employ to portray the connection between the European host and the refugee adolescent.

My main argument is that aside from the differences, the separated and distinguished sides, the refugee adolescent and the European host share similarities. Each chapter will engage with this argument from a unique perspective.

In my next chapter, I will investigate the film *Welcome*, beginning with its release and the responses it received in France. Winning the LUX Prize and being screened in both the French Parliament and the European Parliament, the film was influential in changing French law with

regards to aiding immigrants, and is a prime example of how cinema can serve as a political tool in shaping realities and policies. Methodologically, I will draw upon terms such as optic and haptic visuality (Marks & Polan, 2000, p. 162). I aim to explore the cinematic transitions between these two positions and representations, showing how the relationship between the European host and the adolescent refugee transforms the two. From a narrative perspective, my chapter will explore the dyadic relationship between its two main protagonists, Simon and Bilal. By analysing their bond, I aim to demonstrate how the development of the relationship places the viewers in a position of dual identification; they relate to both the host and the refugee, they are a little bit of both. It is the connection to both that challenges the viewer to reflect upon their perceptions of the refugee crisis.

The third chapter of this thesis will explore *Welcome to the Hartmanns*. By analysing Germany's open and liberal stance towards the refugee question, and the film's popularity as the most watched film in Germany in the year of its release, the chapter will explore the relationship between Diallo, the refugee character, and the rest of the Hartmann family. In particular, I will explore the nature of the changes that these relations trigger, and the absent parts of the hosts that are consequently revealed as the bond develops between them. From a methodological perspective, my analysis of *Welcome to the Hartmanns* will rely on the term 'cinematic shock', as coined by Hanich (2012, p. 590), to investigate how the comedy genre deals with the topic of the refugee crisis. Comedy strengthens the viewer, enabling them not to feel threatened by the refugee. The chapter will also show how comedy, the film's genre, provides Germany therapeutic relief from its traumatised past, enabling the country to look towards a new and different future.

Investigating the final film in this thesis, the documentary *Dreaming of Denmark* poses a more challenging analysis. The relations in this film are not only between the characters and the audience; this time, we have a triangle of relations, between the director, the film's subject, and the audience. The metaphorical distance between the viewer, the director, and the film's subject will be investigated through two lenses. From a phenomenological perspective, this mutual reality – this sense of sharing the same realm of events, of blurred boundaries between the realities on the screen and of the audience – makes it easier for the audience to identify and feel close to the events on the screen. But on the other hand, the analysis will rely on notions proposed by Ellis (2011, p. 20) concerning the viewer as a witness, and the moral responsibility that such witnessing evokes. The chapter will also reveal the contradiction between the compassionate stance of the humanitarian organisation featured in this film towards Wasi, the main protagonist, and the

official stance of the country towards refugees. This analysis will be supported by an interview I conducted with the director, Michael Graveresen.

In my conclusion, I will review an overall comparison and summary of the chapters, discussing the outcomes of the investigations of the films that constitute my thesis.

Chapter 2 - *Welcome*

2.1   Introduction

The European migrant, or refugee, crisis has affected and continues to affect the lives of countless people across Europe – dividing opinions, and a persistent topic for impassioned and emotive political debate. European cinema has been used as a platform to demonstrate the refugee experience, challenging existing perspectives and raising awareness of the crisis. The film *Welcome,* released in 2009, is a prime example of this function. This chapter will examine this film, pacing at the centre of its analysis the relationship between its two main characters, Simon and Bilal. Simon, a middle-aged swimming instructor, steps out of his comfort zone to help Bilal, a 17-year-old Kurdish boy from Iraq, who is trying to cross Le Manche, the English Channel, to reunite with his girlfriend, Mina, who lives in London. Simon teaches Bilal how to swim so that he can cross the channel, and the two forge an unlikely relationship. In my analysis of this relationship, I seek to demonstrate how the development of the bond, and thus the development of the film's two principal characters, positions the viewer for a dual identification: to relate with both the host and the refugee. It is this connection to both that challenges the viewer to reflect upon their perceptions of the refugee crisis.

Applying a phenomenological approach and drawing from the work of scholars such as Merleau-Ponty, Sobchack, Laura Marks, and Barker, I will conduct a textual analysis, taking into consideration a range of cinematic expositional tools and mechanisms such as narrative, mise-en-scene, and framing. In particular, I will focus on scenes in the film that highlight the progressions and development of the relationship between the two. From the direct interactions between them, parallels can be drawn between Simon and Bilal in scenes where they are alone and scenes where each character internalises behaviours of the absent other, in what could be described as a missing representation. Through this, I will show how Simon and Bilal's relationship influences and changes Simon: his behaviours, perceptions, and feelings.

To begin, it is important to understand the climate into which *Welcome* was released. The refugee crisis, depicted in the film through Bilal's story, was and remains a problem faced by Europe in its entirety, affecting countries on almost every possible level: the economic, political, psychological, and cultural. It is not only important to analyse the content and narrative of the film itself, but also the political and cultural atmosphere in France at the time of its release, and the wide range of reactions evoked as a result. I will review the production process of the film, as

well as the importance of France's history in shaping its attitude towards refugees. This will then lead into a discussion of reactions to the film's release, including the award of the LUX Prize and the significance of this given the political climate and status of immigration in France in 2009. This contextual external analysis is important for when I move on to my textual analysis, where I will deliberate on how the film harnessed Simon and Bilal's relationship as the pivotal factor influence a change in Simon—and also demonstrate how it challenges the viewer to change themselves.

2.2   Production and Box Office numbers

In interviews following the release of the film, director Phillipe Lioret spoke about the working and creative process behind *Welcome*. The main theme that emerged from these interviews was the importance he set on keeping the film as authentic as possible, whilst also taking advantage of the apparatus of cinematic storytelling. Lioret explained that he wanted viewers to explore the refugee theme by experiencing the real-life feelings and experiences of this population. Cinemagoers, generally, know very little about the problems of undocumented refugees—and thus, of the potential it this narrative possesses to change their lives if they are confronted with the reality of the issue. Lioret claimed that audiences are drawn to the love story; but after watching *Welcome,* they also think about the real situation faced by refugees. '*Welcome* is made of two love stories, but with complications because the two love stories crash against the walls of this strange and illogical world order. Without these two love stories I wouldn't have had a movie but a documentary about immigrants' (Lioret, 2009).

In terms of character development, Lioret stated that the film only really started after he decided on who to frame as the main character. Bilal is a combination of two real people: a 17-year-old man whom Lioret met, an Afghan who wanted to join his girlfriend in London, and a second, whom Lioret had only heard about, reputed to have swum across the English Channel from France to the United Kingdom. Nobody knows whether this person succeeded, and the film is dedicated to him. To strengthen the film's realism, and to bring it as close as possible to the lives of real people, Lioret cast a non-professional actor (Firat Ayverdi) in the role of Bilal. Following the same idea, Mina (played by Firat's real-life sister, Derya Ayverdi) and the young Kurds whom Bilal meets in Calais were also non-professional actors, who the director cast whilst searching for an actor to play Bilal. As for the location of the film, Lioret emphasised the importance of setting the film in the actual location of the events portrayed. According to him, 'When you shoot in real places, you tell the story better: the streets of Calais, the gigantic Trans-

Channel port, Blériot Beach and its nonstop ferries coming and going, all these atmospheres give the film its truthful nature' (Lioret, 2010a).

Welcome made an impressive showing at the French box office, with a gross of $9,903,224 in the year 2009. The 43rd highest grossing film in France that year, it notably outperformed other films in its genre, and indeed many commercial films that enjoyed a wider theatrical release (IMDB Box Office Mojo, 2011). The film was also an international critical success. It premiered in the Panorama section of the 2009 Berlinale, winning the 'Audience Award' and the 'Europa Cinema Label' (Cineuropa, 2009), and was screened in many countries around the world, including the USA, Taiwan, South Korea, Canada, Colombia, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Israel (UNIFRANCE, 2017).

2.3   France's understanding of its own history, and reactions towards refugees in the country in 2009

To truly understand French public opinion towards refugees at the time of *Welcome's* release, it is essential to review France's history, and more importantly the way France remembers its past. In contemporary French history, two major eras have shaped the cultural and social memory of French citizens: the Vichy regime (1940-1944), and the Algerian War (1954-1963). The notion of 'Vichy syndrome' is recognised as an expression of an anguished post-war France, a country striving to somehow reconcile itself with its history. Vichy, in that sense, has become a metaphor for French collaboration with the Nazi genocide. 'Vichy syndrome' has been discussed extensively by the historian Henry Rousso, portraying a post-war retrospective fixation with the Vichy years. Focusing on moral issues as much as historical ones, the Vichy syndrome thesis claims that the French looked back upon the war years with a perspective of guilt and shame. According to Rousso:

> The Vichy syndrome consists of a diverse set of symptoms whereby the trauma of the Occupation, and particularly the trauma resulting from internal divisions within France, reveals itself in the political, cultural and social life…. Since the end of the war, the trauma has been perpetuated and at times exacerbated. The French had been obsessed with the memory of Vichy and the Occupation (Rousso & Goldhammer, 1991, p. 272).

Writing about France's engagement with its history, Boswell argues that:

[T]he turning point came in 1995, when President Jacques Chirac formally acknowledged France's responsibility for aspects of the Holocaust. For the first time, the head of the French state accepted the nation's culpability for the deportation of Jews. Chirac spoke of an 'irreparable act', a 'collective fault' and acknowledged that the 'French people, the French state assisted the criminal madness of the occupier'. Chirac's 1995 speech gave a long overdue official stamp of approval to the Republic's acceptance of responsibility for acts committed by the Vichy regime. Inspired by President Chirac's official apology, various French groups and institutions publicly addressed their pasts, accepting responsibility for the peculiar roles that their predecessors had played in fostering wartime anti-Semitism. Reflecting upon this in hindsight, this trend for apology became a historical moment, in which French society engaged with its past in a novel way. (Boswell 2008, pp. 237-238)

However, over the last decade it is the Algerian War and not the Vichy regime that has been referred to as the 'dark years', hence becoming the focus of the debate concerning how France needs to confront its past. The Algerian case has resonance today because victims and perpetrators, be they of Algerian or European origin, sometimes live side by side on French soil. The question of French responsibility for the atrocities committed in Algeria has crucial implications for a generation of French citizens of Algerian heritage, just as it is of critical importance regarding France's relations with its former colonies. Apologizing for Vichy paved the way, broadly, socially, and politically, for an apologetic engagement with France's colonial past. However, no official public apology for French acts committed during the Algerian War has ever been made. Such an apology would not take French society by surprise, as did Chirac's apology; a 2001 survey reported that 56 percent of French citizens were in favour of an official apology. A consensus has grown that an apology would improve Franco-Algerian relations, and will enhance the integration of Maghrebi immigrants and their offspring in contemporary French society (Boswell, 2008, pp. 240-242; Fette, 2008, pp. 82-83).

This spirit did not last long. Divisions in French public opinion were laid bare during the (successful) 2007 presidential run of the right-leaning Nicolas Sarkozy. Sarkozy's campaign transformed France's past. During his (successful) 2007 presidential campaign, Nicolas Sarkozy transformed France's past into a key issue, repeatedly challenging the apologetic engagement with France's history and asking citizens instead to acknowledge the good that had come out of French colonialism.

Sarkozy first declared his position on the immigration agenda in an infamous interview with *Le Journal du Dimanche* in February 2006, stating: 'We no longer want an immigration that is

inflicted (on us), but an immigration that is chosen. This is the founding principle of the new immigration policy I advocate.' Following Sarkozy's election in May 2007, immigration restrictions became a headlining staple of his political platform, stirring debate and controversy amongst French citizens. Nevertheless, the criticism did not seem to concern President Sarkozy. His campaign mantra of 'chosen immigration' – that is, immigration based upon marketable skills beneficial to the French economy – served as the foundation for his tough policies. During his election campaign, Sarkozy proposed several key pillars with regard to immigration reform, one being an initiative to promote and defend the culture and values of the French Republic by asking immigrants to learn French before arriving in France, stressing the non-negotiable nature of French values such as *la laïcité* (French secularism) and gender equality. *Welcome* makes explicit reference to one of these controversial immigration laws, L622-1 – one of a number of increasingly stringent measures adopted in France under Sarkozy's presidency. The law referenced is a norm included in the 2009 Finance Law, offering a reward of up to €5,000 for information leading to the identification of people assisting immigrants, a sum increased to €5,500 in 2011. Conversely, offering assistance to illegal immigrants was designated a criminal offence, with a penalty of up to five years' imprisonment and a €30,000 fine. The ironic title of the film – evident in the 'Welcome' doormat outside home of Simon's racist neighbour – symbolises the conditional nature of French hospitality. Only certain figures will be welcomed across the threshold of France's borders (Marthaler, 2008, pp. 390-394).

Placing *Welcome*'s release in a wider historical scale and context, the film was released in a social and political atmosphere that called for a social pride in being French; to own 'Frenchness' and not to apologize for it. Given this atmosphere, reactions towards the 'other', the refugee who is not French and who does not belong there, veered towards the extreme. The distinction between 'us' and 'them' was stronger than ever. Anxiety over the 'other', the sense that French identity might be in danger, was at the heart of the political climate in France at the time of *Welcome*'s release. The film offers its viewers, French citizens or not, an alternative approach to the refugee crisis, showing a kind of citizenship that was missing at the time: a citizenship that breaks current political positioning, that is welcoming and willing to help those in need, offering an alternative to xenophobia.

2.4 The political climate in France in 2009, and legislative changes following the film's release

On its release, the grim realities depicted in Welcome sparked intense debate in France, at once provoking an irate response from sectors of the French government and garnering high praise from notable European cinematic institutions.

The lively socio-political debate surrounding the release of the film was encapsulated in a heated exchange of views between Lioret and Eric Besson, France's minister of the interior at the time, the latter expressing anger at the film's implicit comparison of the government with a darker era in French history.

In the film, the viewer starts to perceive these historical echoes when Bilal is first arrested: a number is inscribed on his hand. Echoes of the wartime period continue with Simon's denunciation by his neighbour for helping Bilal. The two scenes both evoke striking parallels with earlier, epochal, events in France's history. As a form of identification, the number on Bilal's hand recalls Nazi methods for identifying Jews; denunciations, of course, were a notorious practice employed by the Vichy regime. In a broad sense, Simon's prosecution for helping Bilal, as well as specific events such as the police's break-up of the food kitchen, suggest a France torn between the instincts of humanitarianism and human rights on one hand, and repressive policing and exclusionary attitudes on the other. Responding to the minister's comments, Lioret emphasized the fictional mode of the film: not to be considered a documentary reporting on the condition of migrants, but as a script based on thoroughly documented fact. Lioret reiterated his position in an interview with the *Voix du Nord* newspaper, in which he repeatedly drew parallels between the police raids and and arrest of migrants in Calais, and the experiences of Jews in occupied France in the 1940s. Besson slammed the filmmaker for this, saying that he found the comparisons 'unbearable'; responding in an open letter in Le Monde, Lioret replied that the film was, in fact, denouncing the 'repressive mechanisms' of the two periods, which, in his opinion, shared 'strange similarities' (Hird, 2009, Blum-Reid, 2016, p. 112).

The debate flared up again on the release of Welcome on DVD. In September 2009, the state sent police to break up 'the Jungle', an improvised migrant camp near Calais, in an attempt to demonstrate the hard line, it was taking on illegal migration. The announcement of the action coincided precisely with *Welcome*'s release on DVD; the film, again, became a key reference point for both the media and for the various NGOs that stepped in to support the migrants evicted from the camp shortly afterwards (Thomas, 2012, pp. 270-273)

Welcome created the conditions for political action. When the film was released, a proposition to amend the L622-1 law, led by Martine Aubrey, the then leader of the opposition French Socialist Party, was submitted to French Parliament by party member Daniel Goldberg. The prime objective of the amendment was to decriminalize the act of aiding illegal migrants. Backers of the proposal invited Lioret to assist them in their efforts; consequently, *Welcome* was screened in the National Assembly, the first time in the history of the French Parliament that a film was screened for its members. The goal was to provoke the same kind of positive reaction as that expressed by MEPs at the supranational level when they awarded the film the LUX Prize. In that sense, artistic works occupy an important place in the political sphere, as they can help sway public opinion and garner meaningful political support (Baschiera & Di Chiara, 2018, p. 237).

2.5   The LUX Prize

Despite its complex and heated response in France, the film was awarded the LUX Film Prize in 2009. Awarded since 2007 by the European Parliament, the films selected for the LUX Film Prize help to present different views on some of the most significant social and political issues of the day and, as such, to contribute to building a stronger European identity. Created by a supranational institution, the prize has an explicit political agenda and is meant to be awarded to films that are representative of not only the cultural output of European cinema, but also European shared values. These films help celebrate the universal reach of European values, and illustrate the diversity of European traditions, shedding light on the process of European integration (European Parliament LUX Prize, 2009; Fox et al., 2015, p. 131). The LUX Film Prize considers existing productions across the 28 EU member nations, in order to select the film that it deems is most deserving of being seen across the continent. Thus, it allows us to consider, through their choices, what kind of cinema is deemed representative of the Union. Unsurprisingly, the overall theme and setting dominating the majority of films shortlisted for LUX Prize can be characterised by the idea of margins, in a tension between regional issues and cross-border identities. The Europe that emerges from the LUX Prize finalists is not a well-established and solid entity, but a place in constant becoming, still adjusting and reflecting on ideas of nation and citizenship. The European Parliament's website has a short presentation of the shortlisted films across the history of the prize. Displayed below the cast and credits, a series of acronyms informs the reader of the Committees of the European Parliament actively working on the social and cultural issues arising from each selected film. As part of its wide influence in the political sphere,

and the multiple topics that the film confronts the viewer with, *Welcome* is considered pertinent to the work of five committees: Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Employment and Social Affairs and Culture and Education, Civil Liberties, and Justice and Home Affairs. Instead of awarding a direct grant, the Prize provides subtitles, in the 24 languages of the European Union, for the three films in competition. Following the award of the LUX Prize, the European Parliament hosted a free screening of the film in Scotland (Baschiera & Di Chiara, 2018, p. 246; The European Parliament, 2010).

In *Welcome to Europe! Linking the EU Parliament LUX Film Prize and the impact of migration films to the emergence of a European public sphere*, Amin (2015, p. 133) argues that cinema serves here as a platform for a meaningful discourse on immigration and asylum seeking in Europe; a discourse rendered accessible through the emotions that cinema evokes, an aspect often neglected by the media and in political discourse on the issue. By awarding *Welcome* the Lux Prize, the EU Parliament echoed the underlying message of the film: that the law defied basic human rights and humanitarian instincts, and distorted principles of good citizenship by threatening to punish those who exhibited a basic level of compassion towards others in need of immediate assistance. In other words, the EU Parliament backed the film's controversial view of illegal migration in France. Moreover, it had both recognized and exposed the issue of undocumented migrants, as more than just a French problem but a European one as well (Amin, 2015, pp. 138-140).

Writing in the mid-1980s, Vincendeau (1985, p. 339) proposes that by conveying the message that the refugees are not France's problem alone, the EU decentralized the uniqueness of French nationality in the film, in the same way as the use of multiple languages in the film. This was mainly demonstrated by exploring the multiple languages used in the film – English, French, Kurdish and Pashto. Since the early days of French cinema, language has been used to strengthen conceptions of national identity, what Vincendeau (1985, p. 340) calls 'the Frenchness of French cinema'. The film portrays multilingualism as emblematic of a contemporary world defined by immigration and globalisation; the use of several languages adds to the strong contemporary realism of the film. In other words, the film undermines the centrality of French identity in French film, a cultural label so often articulated through the presence of only the French language.

The film serves as a political tool, as almost a legal document, having been screened both in the French Parliament and in the EU Parliament, instigating changes to the law regarding citizens who aid undocumented migrants. On another level, the film shows to France the kind of Frenchness that is missing: the compassionate, tolerant and helping France, a country that is not

threatened by the 'other' and feels confident enough to be able to reach out to those in need. Just like Bilal's influence helps to change Simon, the film challenges its viewers to reflect themselves on the refugee crisis. It demonstrates cinema's power to create changes and reactions in the political field, to negotiate central themes in different ways compared to how they are negotiated via the media or politicians. The film also sheds light on what it is that France is missing and lacking, what France as a country and as a society needs. This dual effect, of creating change on one level and highlighting what is missing on the other, is the exact same mechanism that occurs on a narrative level in the film, in the relationship between Simon and Bilal, as I discuss in the later sections of this chapter. However, in this analysis it is important here to acknowledge the fact that *Welcome* was directed by a white European director, seeking to tell the story of an adolescent refugee. It is relevant to address questions regarding authenticity and ownership of the story that the viewer is exposed to at this point. Before moving on to the thematic analysis of the film, and its cinematic representation, I would like to explore this point further.

Welcome's intervention against the L622-1 law led to a wider discussion, which ultimately resulted in important amendments to the law as effected by Law 2012-1560, which excluded humanitarian acts from prosecution. Following significant media interest and mass protests, the National Assembly approved a new immigration law, annulling the 1991 article that made it a crime to help immigrants to enter or stay in France illegally; Law 2012-1560 was ratified in December 2012, promulgated to protect people with humanitarian interests from prosecution (Rings, 2016, p. 101).

2.6   Genre – Melodrama

For this analysis, it will be useful to review key scholars in the field of melodrama, and to show how the characteristics of this genre are evident in the film. This analysis will begin with Brooks' influential book *The melodramatic imagination* (1976), continuing all the way to more current literature and contemporary definitions of melodrama as a mode in the era of post-Modernism, exile, refugees and globalisation. I will focus on the main themes in melodrama, namely emotion, body and moral polarisation, and also will pay close attention to the viewer's reaction to melodrama. This will include the term *Global Melodrama* and how suffering is used in order to justify belongingness. Summarising this section, I will argue how the film took advantage

of the conventions of cinematic melodrama in order to mediate the refugee story for the audience.

According to Brooks (1976, p. 11), the connotations of the word 'Melodrama' include the indulgence of a strong emotionalism, moral polarization and schematizations, and extreme states of being, situations, and actions. This definition fits the film, as *Welcome* portrays the unusual life circumstances of Bilal and the extreme emotional position he finds himself in, as will be further developed throughout this section. According to Bayman (2014, p. 27), 'one may understand melodrama as a mode of excess, expressive emphasis, the conflict of grand moral absolutes, the popular form of the modern age, or simply as drama strengthened'. However, Bayman continues, 'it offers first of all an intense experience of emotion'. Whereas many forms of cinema do create emotion, it happens through action, violence, spectacle, musical performance, crime, sex and so on. In melodrama, according to Bayman, 'emotional expression is also the theme, the motor to the narrative and the principal spectacle' (Bayman, 2014, p. 27).

Building on this, the rhetorical breaking through of repression is closely linked to melodrama's central effort to locate and articulate the moral problems with which it is concerned. Ethical imperatives in the post-Sacred world have been sentimentalised, and have come to be identified with emotional states and psychic relationships, so that expressions of emotional and moral integers are indistinguishable (Brooks, 1976). The main point here is that the film cannot distinguish between moral choices and emotional ones. It is this bond of emotion and morality that lies at the core of the refugee story, as told by the film.

Simon and Bilal's characters follow another aspect, which Brooks (1976, pp. 35-36) describes as follows:

There is no 'psychology' in melodrama in this sense; The characters have no interior depth, there is no psychological conflict. It is delusive to seek an interior conflict… because melodrama exteriorize conflict and psychic structure. What we most retain from any consideration of melodramatic structures is the sense of fundamental bipolar contrast and clash, the world, according to melodrama is built on an irreducible Manichaeism, the conflict of good and evil as opposites not subject to compromise. Melodramatic dilemmas and choices are constructed on the either/or in its extreme form as all-or-nothing. (Brooks, 1976, pp. 35-36)

The 'sides' in the film are not Simon and Bilal, the local European white man and the lost teenage refugee. The external conflict is between Simon and Bilal against France. Simon and Bilal

are on the same side, and together they confront the French authorities as they try to help Bilal achieve his dream. Simon's choice to help Bilal, and to support him with his dream, is in line with what Brooks (1976, p. 36) argues about the way characters in melodrama tend to state, directly and explicitly, their moral judgments of the world. From the start, they launch into a vocabulary of psychological and moral abstractions, in order to characterise themselves and others. As will be detailed further within the chapter itself, Simon gets to a point where it becomes very clear for him in terms of how he should act, and he has no internal conflict or hesitation about what to do when it comes to Bilal.

Bayman (2014, p. 2) cites (Neale 1986), who argues that 'melodrama suggests fantasies of escape that the characters cannot achieve, redoubling pathos'. Bayman continues:

> Scenarios of entrapment and disruption make personal emotions the source of shelter and isolation, while the melodramatic style suggests – but cannot provide access to – a higher realm. The world is then melodramatic, in that forceful emotion governs it, emphasising the weakness that it carries (Bayman,2014, p. 2).

In our case, the film offers a higher realm for Bilal; one located in London and with his beloved. However, what the film does not offer, as Bayman argued, is access to this realm. Rather, the film emphasises Bilal's failure to achieve it. By lingering on the partial and human ability, this follows what Bayman (2014, pp. 52-53) argues: because melodrama shows people in positions not of power but of powerlessness, melodrama's decision to linger on pain and impotence means that it does not offer catharsis. In general, the film's plot and structure fits the melodramatic structure as described by Bayman (2014, p. 53). 'Melodramatic plot structure is not propelled by progressive mastery of internal contradictions, but rather by sudden cascades of uncontrollable events and then, by extension, of the emotional consequences' (Bayman, 2014, pp. 52-53).

I will now turn to a thematic review of the melodrama, focusing on a few central key themes that it draws upon: body, morality, and the viewer's response to melodrama.

2.7 Body

The location of meaning within the body is a central aspect of the melodramatic experience. Bodies speak truth: rather than enact a Cartesian separation of mind and body, melodrama's embodiments employ the body as symbol, as a dramatic device and as material

evidence (Bayman, 2014, p. 31). This perception of the body as an agent, as a tool and as a mechanism, is in line with the phenomenological approach, as will be detailed later in this chapter.

Writing about global melodrama, and echoing Bayman, Marcantonio (2015, pp. 9-10) argues:

> Embodiment in melodrama is thus a concept that refers to how bodies are represented, both in what they do represent as well as what they fail to represent. And, given the demand placed on the body to signify, theatricality and melodrama have been intimately intertwined; hence, it should hardly seem surprising that gender and sexuality become central nodes of concern as well as contested categories for the melodramatic national imagination. This representational shift toward the body coincides with the move away from the body as an explicit site of the monarch's control and power and toward an internalized mode of social control. Bodies as displayed on screen demarcate visibility from invisibility, the knowable from the unknown, and, therefore, they signal modes of proper belonging in contrast to those forms of being that are marked as non-desirable, if not altogether disposable. (Marcantonio, 2015, pp. 9-10)

Applying Marcantonio's insight to *Welcome*, Lioret's choice to cast Bilal as a thin and skinny adolescent delivers a message in this context. The film almost asks the audience, is this really what you are so afraid of? This skinny, harmless body is what you are resisting and willing to harm?

One of the central reasons why melodramatic narratives are so often employed in figurations of the national imaginary is that they help to map, in ways that ultimately remain etched on the body, the inside and outside of belonging. The ways in which the body is marked by race, class and gender reflect the valence with which these characteristics are charged to signify within a particular cultural and political imaginary. And thus, melodramatic embodiment reveals how the representation of the body is an ideological tool employed in the service of an imagining community, with and through the body (Marcantonio, 2015, pp. 9-10). In *Welcome's* case, Bilal's harmless body reveals the depth and complexity of European xenophobia, placing a mirror before the audience. It challenges them to see through Bilal's body, his real measures, his real size. The film invites the viewer not to see the demon dangerous refugee portrayed in the news media, but instead a skinny adolescent with the naïve and romantic aspiration to reunite with his love.

2.8   Moral polarization

As previously mentioned, melodrama deals with moral polarisation, emphasising good versus evil as two opposite and distinctive sides.

Returning to Brooks' main definition, the film follows another characteristic of melodrama, namely victory over repression – or at least an ambition to overcome repression. According to Brooks (1976, p. 41), the whole expressive enterprise of the genre represents a victory over repression, which could simultaneously be social, psychological, historical and conventional. In the case of Bilal, he tries to overcome a multi-layered repression. Bilal runs away from his history and family; he overcomes violence and resistance from his peers at the border crossing; he convinces Simon to help him; and he tries to overcome the French obstacles to his efforts to get to London. The melodramatic utterance breaks through everything that constitutes the 'reality principle': all its censorships, accommodations, compromises. Desire cries out its language in identification with the full state of being (Brooks, 1976, pp. 27-36).

In *Global Melodrama*, Marcantonio argues that although the distinction between the virtuous and the villainous may be made clear to the spectator, global melodrama is not always self-evident within the world that a given text depicts (2015, pp. 11-17). He suggests that global melodrama updates the mode's tendency for manufacturing dichotomies in a world in which dichotomies fail, or fail to fully describe our social relations, and that this is a distinction that collapses, becomes confused, or disappears altogether (2015, p. 13). This 'confusion' of good and bad is also evident in *Welcome*. One might expect that the division between good and bad would be between Simon, the white European man, and Bilal, the 'dangerous' young refugee. Instead, Simon and Bilal are both on the same side, the good side; and they are both confronting France, the country that characterises the villainous side.

Another aspect of melodrama is the question of home and its renewed definition. Melodrama and melodramatic representations are most often associated with images of home, the family and the domestic sphere. This is one reason why melodrama is often conflated with 'the woman's film'. The dramas of home and family have always provided a mirror through which to understand the ideological underpinnings of particular national narratives. Yet, in globally minded melodramas, the figure of the home either becomes a hybrid concept, or is vacated altogether – a gesture that produces an abundance of 'homeless' characters (Marcantonio, 2015, p. 16). In *Welcome,* this is Bilal as he is searching for a physical home; but it is also Simon, in search of his new internal, emotional home.

2.9   The portrayal of the 'Other' and the motivation to help

While the film received accolades and recognition externally, it is important to take into consideration that Bilal's story is told from the perspective of a white European man, and not his own. Writing about 'the gift of welcome', Stehle and Weber (2020, p. 71), argue that 'Europe' has multiple conceptual functions in the film: as a giver, as identity, and as border regime. The notion of gift 'works' – that is, is only legitimate for the viewer – when the act of giving is embedded in the notion of European-ness and of Europe as the giver, and European-ness as the gift. (Stehle & Weber, 2020, p. 71)

Chapman has suggested that when a culture that emerges from the pro-filmic content is different to that of the filmmaker's culture, then a politics of difference – ethnicity, class – emerges from the production process, in a way that can either change or confirm a given personal consciousness (2009, p. 35). Investigating the relationship between Simon and Bilal, my analysis needs to bear in mind that fact that traditional representations of the 'other' in cinema have usually meant presenting the identities of other cultures in an oppositional role to the mainstream. In a similar vein Nicholas has observed that

> the 'Other' rarely functions as participant in and creator of a system of meanings, including a narrative structure of their own devising. Hierarchy and control still fall on the side of the dominant culture that has fabricated the image of the 'other' in the first place…. (Nicholas, 1991 p. 204)

Narrative structure can act as a constraint, for it has its own method, which is in fact an inhibiting factor: often the need for closure in the storyline tends to bring us back to the dominant role of the Western, white, middle-class male, relegating the minority 'other' to a subordinate role (Chapman, 2009, p. 35). However, this analysis, when considering Chapman's point, does not ignore the fact that the story is not told from the point of view of Bilal. On the contrary, my analysis will build upon this structure of the narrative, using it to strengthen my arguments. Replying to the scholars referenced above, I feel it is important to distinguish between hierarchy and meaning. The fact that Simon belongs to the dominant middle-class majority, and that Bilal does not, does not in itself imply anything about the Bilal's profound meaning to Simon. On the one hand, it is true that the film ends with Simon meeting Mina, the storyline returning us to the European figure. However, the Simon we meet at the end of the film is different to the Simon we

meet at the beginning of the film. Simon has been influenced and changed by the bond he shares with Bilal. Bilal gains his power and strength in the film not from his place in the social hierarchy, but through the story he brings with him to the film, by what he represents, by the changes he evokes both in Simon and in the viewer, and in the psychological processes that he triggers.

Another dimension of the relationship between the European and the migrant adolescent worth considering relates to the motivation to help the latter. Celik Rappas and Phillis (2020, p. 37) have investigated the European host figure, and what motivates Simon to help the refugee he encounters. According to them, films portraying encounters between the European and the refugee do not project spaces of equal dialogue and solidarity, where assumed racial and ethnic hierarchies between host and guest are challenged. In his first encounter with Bilal, Simon is reluctant to help. Eventually, the European citizen 'does the right thing'. The identity of the migrant 'Other' is represented as challenging the social, legal and economic wellbeing of the European subject, but not as challenging his notion of self. On the contrary, these encounters build a notion of a caring European. *Welcome*'s focus is on the European citizen 'who does the right thing' and thus finds a new side to himself, emerging out of the relationship feeling good about his actions; the migrants, however, are displaced once more to an unknown horizon (Celik Rappas & Phillis, 2020, pp. 37-38). Other than 'doing the right thing', other literature discusses the component of compassion that the European might feel towards the refugee. In *Refugees as Innocent Bodies, Directors as Political Activists: Humanitarianism and Compassion in European Cinema*, Celik-Rappas (2017, p. 83) proposes that being led by compassion might connote a sense of detachment, distance and hierarchy between the subject and the object of compassion. Compassion cannot by itself further a politics of equality. Rather, humanitarianism actually maintains inequality, in that it distinguishes between two populations: those who can feel and act on their compassion, and those who must be the subjects of it. The refugee who is portrayed as a victim, or as the body in need of humanitarian aid, serves the conscience as it safely advocates morality and compassion, posing no challenge to the established class and race hierarchies (Celik-Rappas, 2017, p. 88).

Finally, in *Unwelcome welcome – Being at home in an age of global migration*, Dahlberg (2013, p. 67) argues that it is not clear why Simon helps Bilal, suggesting that it may be out of passion or curiosity, or part of a strategy to win Marion back. In his article *The Stranger*, Simmel (1950, pp. 2-3) identified a special category of strangers, 'the stranger who moves on', in which the relationship between host and guest is the closest because of the temporality of the guest. This could explain another aspect of Simon and Bilal's close relationship. Simon knows that Bilal

will only be there for a limited amount of time, and therefore can allow himself to get closer to him.

However, when reflecting on the scholars reviewed, I argue that Simon's motivation is different. In the next section, I will build on my analysis of the relationship between Simon and Bilal in order to present this theory, whilst also shedding light on a new perspective regarding what motivates Simon in his relationship with Bilal.

2.10   Thematic analysis

In the next section, I will focus on the dyadic relationship between Simon and Bilal, considering them as two separate subjects forming the unique and meaningful connection through which the film tries to tell the refugee story. Making their relationship the focus of my investigation, I argue here that the relationship between Simon and Bilal is constructed through three different mechanisms of cinematic representation: direct interactions between them in their mutual scenes; drawing parallels between Simon and Bilal in scenes where they are on their own; and through their internalisation of each another, shown in scenes where the behaviour of one is influenced and driven by an internal representation of the other, in what could be seen as a missing representation. By interpreting their relationship using these cinematic mechanisms, I aim to reveal the similarities, rather than the differences, between these two characters. Parallelism, in turn, can foster the identification process of the viewer with both characters, through the realisation that both parts, the familiar and the stranger, overlap and exist within the viewer. These cinematic mechanisms are directed towards articulating the film's main message, that we are both the refugee and the host, the borders between these parts of our selves blurred and often disappearing. From this complex position of being 'both', the film seeks to change, or at least challenge, the opinion of the viewer regarding refugees and the French nation.

2.11   Simon and Bilal

In this section, I will explore the changes and progression in Simon and Bilal's relationship across the film. Through an analysis of key scenes, I will provide insight into their relationship,

showing how they change and mobilise on the scale of distance and proximity, becoming increasingly intimate and close.

Writing about contemporary French cinema and 'langue de passage', King (2018, pp. 42-45) argues that Simon and Bilal's relationship is only possible because they both speak English. Although the official language of the film is French, it is not actually the mother tongue of either character. Bilal's presence on French soil is temporary; he is just a 'type de passage', or someone passing through, lacking roots. As such, French for him is what is identified as 'langue de passage': a linguistic tool only relevant and useful for a finite period of time in this character's life. Bilal's experience on French soil is limited. French is not the language of his new home, nor one spoken in his country of origin, but rather a language of fleeting and conditional value. In order to communicate with each other, Simon and Bilal speak English, the language from the other side of the Channel, which becomes the lingua franca of their relationship. The essential model here is that of a linguistic space into which both 'host' and 'stranger' step as outsiders, with equally accented speech, neither having the advantage of control. This third language permits a relatively equal exchange between native and migrant, since neither is 'at home' or able to claim possession of the linguistic territory (King, 2018 pp. 42-45).

Writing about the linguistic threshold in the film, Smith (2013, p. 77) broadens the discussion, arguing the linguistic space of the 'threshold language' is accessible to both but owned by neither. To emphasise the differences between using the home language, we can see that Simon and Marion, on the verge of divorce, have little to say to each other (in French). As for Bilal, his with his fellow refugees, a fragile and fragmented community in transit, and with Mina and her brother in London, are in Kurdish. Bilal's English is more fluent than Simon's. In conversations with Simon and other immigrant characters such as his friend Zoran, Bilal acts as a translator. Bilal is the only character who acquires new language in the film, as he tries to communicate with Simon in French. Bilal's linguistic openness and flexibility positions him as the film's most progressive and best adapted character. He is most at home in the globalised, transitional universe that Simon initially tries to ignore, despite the universe having arrived at his very doorstep. This surprising and rare depiction of language ability – the non-French character's greater level of linguistic competence than the French character – paints a portrait of shifting power relations. The non-French character is more adapted to the globalised nature of contemporary Europe than the French one. By this gesture, the film rejects rigid hierarchies of language and power. The French language begins to lose its once unrivalled position of value as languages are learnt and lost, due to the complex nature of the linguistic landscape (Smith, 2013, p. 87; King 2018, p. 47)

The existing literature regarding the use of multilingualism in the film deals mainly with the fact Simon and Bilal communicate in English, a foreign language for both of them.

I would broaden this notion and follow Rosello (2001, p. 10) in *Postcolonial hospitality: the immigrant as guest.* Rosello argues that the act of stepping out of one's own language and into that of another, unlike the politics of using a mutually known and neutral lingua franca, opens each participant up to the possibility of change. As previously described, the two protagonists in *Welcome* communicate in English, which is indeed foreign to both of them. But I would add here, they are similar in their strangeness to it, and both are opened up to the changes that this relationship brings to each of them. Within this provisional relationship, they find sanctuary in one another even though – or maybe, exactly because – it is a temporary one.

Before delving into the scenes themselves, I would like to draw attention to the centrality of water in the film. According to Stehle and Weber (2020, p. 70), *Welcome* attaches the possibility of welcome to water – the water of the English Channel, and that of the swimming pool in which the protagonists spend much of their time. Both of these water spaces feature prominently in the film: the contained, turquoise water of the pool, and the endless, grey horizon and foamy waves of the English Channel. Water becomes a symbol of hope, life, death and liminality, as it gestures to the gifts of welcome denied, revoked, extended or regretted.

Their first encounter happens in the swimming pool. Bilal goes there to ask Simon to teach him how to swim. The scene opens with Simon shouting at Bilal to let go of the ropes. Simon is outside of the pool; Bilal is inside the pool, far away from Simon. Bilal does not give up. He follows Simon to his office and pays for two swimming lessons. Bilal insists on getting closer to Simon and the scene ends in Simon's office, the two sharing the same space, close to one another. Simon softens by the end of the scene and asks Bilal where he is from. We can look at this first encounter between them as a microcosm of their relationship. This shift from how the scene starts to how it ends, marks the general direction of their relationship, hinting to the viewer the tone of what is to come in the film.

The next interaction between Simon and Bilal occurs when Simon is driving and sees Bilal and Zoran walking on the street. He stops and offers to take them in his car to his house. This is an unusual thing for Simon to do, especially when reflecting on the scene preceding this. This is where Simon and Marion, leaving the supermarket, see two refugees trying to enter as a policeman attempts to stop them. Marion gets angry at the policeman as well as frustrated with Simon, asking him why he won't do anything about it. Simon replies, 'We can't get sucked into

this', at which point we understand something about Simon through Marion: he is indifferent about the refugees, afraid to become involved and used to avoiding the topic. Taking Zoran and Bilal to his home reflects a first change in his behaviour, revealing an active side to Simon. This active side is truly triggered after he signs the documents ending his marriage; his domestic environment is beginning to change. Signing these documents shakes Simon's familiar ground; what used to be his home is not there anymore. This sense of foreignness and refuge puts him in a similar emotional position to Bilal. At this point, Simon identifies with Bilal's refuge and this identification motivates him to be active, and so he picks up Bilal and Zoran and takes them to his home. On arrival at Simon's home, the three sit in the living room and eat pizza. Being asked by Simon what he plans to do in London, Zoran answers that he will work in a supermarket; Bilal says that he wants to play football for Manchester United. The fact that Zoran is in these scenes highlights a few points. First, it shows that Simon's relationship with Bilal is not yet intimate, personal or unique. Bilal does not stand on his own here; rather he is part of the 'others', the refugees. This is also evident from a cinematic point of view. Simon is on the left side of the frame, with only half of his body shown. On the right side, we see Zoran and Bilal sitting on the sofa. This could symbolise Simon's lack of full engagement with the situation, still not fully present. Second, I would argue that Zoran's presence also gives hints about Bilal's character. Zoran is in the scene to highlight Bilal's past, how back home he was known as an excellent runner. He is also much more realistic than Bilal, and by this he emphasises Bilal's fantasies. For example, Zoran intends to find work in a supermarket, whereas Bilal wants to play football for Manchester United. In other words, Zoran represents reality and by underscores Bilal's fantasies, the fact he is a dreamer.

Their subsequent interaction also shows an increase in Simon's level of engagement with Bilal. After Simon attends the police station, he returns to the swimming pool to teach a class of elderly white women. Bilal waves at him from the pool, and Simon stops the class to go to his office to collect his bag, signalling Bilal to follow. They are then shown together at the sea.

Figure 4: Simon at the beach

In the figure above, we see Simon in the forefront of the shot. He is speaking on the phone to Marion, who tries to warn him not to get into trouble by helping Bilal and Zoran. Behind him, Bilal emerges from the sea. The camera then changes its perspective, Bilal now in the foreground of the shot and Simon located further away in the distance, looking much smaller (see Figure 2).

Figure 5:Simon walks toward Bilal

Simon walks quickly towards Bilal until they are both the same size within the frame (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Simon and Bilal shared frame

The scene takes place at the exact mid-point of the film; the camera's positioning expresses a deeper level of connection between Simon and Bilal. They are now equals, with Simon initiating the move towards Bilal. Simon arrives in Bilal's fantasy territory, the sea. Simon leaves his comfort zone, his protected swimming pool, drawn by Bilal and his fantasy. This closeness continues as Simon and Bilal return and sit in Simon's car, and Simon realises that Bilal wants to go to England because of love.

After growing close to Bilal over the course of the preceding shared scenes, the next interaction between them demonstrates how Simon withdraws slightly, showing signs of feeling threatened and scared. As Zoran had told Simon earlier in the film, in their homeland Bilal was known as the runner. When Bilal sits with Simon in his house, Simon suggests that he 'forget about the runner, and become a swimmer'; in other words, to change his identity, to give up his past and future and stay in the present. This is an act of invitation to be close to Simon, to stay with him. A minute later, Simon discovers that one of his medals is missing and accuses Bilal of stealing it. Bilal, insulted, runs away. Simon goes after him and apologises, and then they return together to Simon's flat. This scene represents the complexity of Simon's perspective. He wants Bilal close to him; but at the same time, he is threatened by Bilal and by his Otherness.

The transformational process that Simon undergoes in the film can be explained by the term *phenomenological reduction*. Parry (2010, p. 196) has built on Merleau-Ponty's argument that a film highlights how the perceiver is tied to a fixed spot at any given moment, which both shapes and limits what can be seen. For Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology is an attempt to describe an experience without reference to any of the systems that might usually be employed to understand it. This is the effect of phenomenological reduction; a bracketing out of frameworks for understanding, resulting in new ways of experiencing the world (Parry, 2010, pp. 196, 203). The shifting scene, in terms of Simon's perception of Bilal, would be the one where they are both

on the beach, with Simon teaching Bilal how to swim. For the first time in the film, Simon is out of his comfort zone, in front of nature and the sea. The physical transition from the indoor swimming pool to the sea reflects the internal process that Simon is experiencing. There, in nature, he is reassessing what he knows about Bilal, and transforms his knowledge into an emotional experience, into a deeper sense of who Bilal is.

From this point in the film, Simon's behaviour towards Bilal could be described as paternal. One example of this is when Mina calls Bilal, crying, to tell him that her father is setting her up with his cousin, and to ask Bilal what she should do. At this point, Bilal is being treated as a grown up; someone is asking him for his advice. But this is the only such occurrence in the film. Bilal tells her that he will come. Simon, sitting in front of him, suggests that he speak with Mina's father. This suggestion could be seen as encapsulating Simon's feeling or desire to be a father figure to Bilal. Later in the film, Simon gives Bilal a ring he found on his sofa, a ring that Marion had lost. This ring, according to Simon, is a family heirloom, which he was now giving to Bilal. This too is a parental act, or a symbolic act of 'adopting' Bilal, treating him as family, as his son, as his continuity. This deeper understanding of who Bilal is and what he means to Simon further develops in other aspects as well, as I will present in my analysis of the next set of cinematic mechanisms.

Simon and Bilal's relationship develops across the film not only through mutual scenes, but also through the separate development of their characters, drawing parallels between them. Writing about the changes that the journey might create in the domestic sphere of its characters, Ceuterick (2014, p. 80) concludes that the film tells the stories of two separate parallel journeys: *Welcome* is about Bilal's impossible journey, and is also about Simon's refashioning of the domestic, about his attempt to welcome this 'other' home.

Simon and Bilal, separately, are described as not wanted, rejected, lonely; as in a state of transition between a past which is falling apart and an unknown future, a new home that they are in search of. They both feel that they don't belong to the place they came from. In the case of Bilal, this is evident when we see that he is not fully part of his refugee milieu. They make fun of him when they realise that he wants to get to England; they blame him for their arrest by border control guards, because he choked on the plastic bag covering his face whilst hiding in a truck, drawing attention to them. Bilal, as a refugee, is not wanted in France; but is also rejected by Mina's father, who does not approve of the relationship with his daughter. For Simon, we understand that he is going through a divorce from his wife Marion, and that he too is lonely and

rejected. By helping Bilal, Simon is acting against the French law that forbids this, and thus his sense of belonging to France is also tested within the film.

This parallel between Simon and Bilal is also evident at the level of the mise-en-scene that portrays both characters. We see Bilal standing in line, waiting for food being given out by charity volunteers. The shot is dark, both in terms of light and in terms of mood it portrays: he stands outside in the cold weather, surrounded by other refugees. After this, we see Simon standing in line in the supermarket, waiting to buy food. This time the scene is bright, the supermarket lit and the queues long. While certain aspects of the scenes differ slightly, they mirror and reference each another, once again connecting Simon and Bilal.

In a later example in the film, Bilal is being held at a detention centre, after being found by a guard in the water. He is looking out of the window. At the same time, Simon too is in a police station, in his own cell, arrested after being accused of helping Bilal. He too is looking outside through the bars. In both cases, it is the French law that has put them behind bars. Finally, perhaps the scene that best portrays the parallels the two is the one where Simon finds Mina's address on his floor. He realises that Bilal left without it, without knowing his ultimate destination. This sense of 'no destination' is something they share, something they can both relate to and that connects them to one another.

Simon's growing interest in Bilal makes it possible for the spectator to view Bilal as an individual rather than as a faceless and nameless migrant. For many spectators, Simon functions as a lens which makes visible and comprehensible the situation of refugees in France and Europe. I would argue here that the film invites the spectator to take part in the building process of Simon and Bilal's relationship. Phenomenologically, through observing Simon and Bilal, the viewer produces an understanding of them and takes part in the construction of their relationship. This aspect is especially crucial in scenes which depict and describe Simon and Bilal separately. In these scenes, it is the viewer's gaze which holds their relationship together. By watching the film, the viewer becomes invested in the characters, giving meaning to their relationship. It is the viewer who holds both characters: the viewer encapsulates both Simon and Bilal, both the familiar and the Other, both the adult and the adolescent.

This invitation for the viewer to become a part of their relationship, the sense of blurred boundaries between the viewer and the film and the deepening relationship between Simon and Bilal is interesting. It brings to mind the transition between what Marks and Polan (2000, p. 162) define as 'optical visuality'– meaning that the relationship between viewer (Simon) and image

(Bilal) tends to be one of mastery through which the viewer isolates and comprehends the objects of visions. This develops towards a 'haptic visuality', in which the eyes themselves function like organs of touch, describing relations of mutuality between viewer and image. In this kind of visuality, the viewer is more likely to lose themselves and their sense of proportion in the image. Moreover, 'haptic visuality' implies a tension between viewer and image. It is about making oneself vulnerable to the image, reversing the relationship of mastery that characterises optical viewing, and calling for a dynamic subjectivity between looker and image. In phenomenological terms, the haptic is a form of visuality that muddies intersubjective boundaries; it is the process that both the viewer and Simon are going through. By seeing the image of Bilal, searching for Simon's closeness and vice versa, the viewer and Simon are confronted, haptically touching and merging into the complexity of the refugee adolescent. The constant repetition of the body, the water and movements are ways for cinema to transfer and mediate the refugee adolescent experience to the viewer and to Simon. This experience is sensorial, somatic and internal, transmitted through the medium of film; it is an experience that verbal language alone cannot articulate.

2.12   Internalisation

This theme explores the ways in which both Simon and Bilal internalise one over the course of their relationship. The cinematic representation of this internalisation is evident through both absences of the physical presence from the cinematic frames, but also through a very strong emotional presence within scenes. This psychological presence motivates their behaviour, showing that both Simon and Bilal have internalised one other across the course of the film, and now have an internalised representation of the other.

We see this demonstrated in the scene where Simon and Marion finalise their divorce in front of a lawyer. During a conversation with Marion, Simon adopts Bilal's 'fantasies'. He tells her that Bilal swims well and that he will soon be ready to cross the channel, and that after that he plans to train other refugees similarly. Trying to impress Marion by showing that he cares about refugees, Simon internalizes the character of Bilal; this is evidently intended to show how strong Bilal's presence has become within Simon. Bilal, being a refugee, became an avatar for Simon's perceptions about refugees; Bilal turned the notion of refugee for Simon into that of someone with a story, a history and a future – a human being, in short. This takes us back to the case of

Aylan Kurdi, which has arguably done the same in terms of the representation of refugee children, by giving a name and a story to the notion of the refugee. Bilal's character is present within Simon, even though he is not physically in the scene.

Later in the film, we meet Simon in the pool, setting up the lane ropes. In contrast to the Simon and Bilal's first encounter, where the ropes were a clear indication of the separation between them, here they are still coiled and not yet in the swimming pool, signalling that the borders have been removed. Simon then jumps into the water. He is swimming like he taught Bilal, wearing the same small black swimsuit that Bilal wore. Simon is swimming from the right side of the frame to the left. The next shot is of Bilal in the sea. He is wearing Simon's wetsuit, and looks very small compared to the big dangerous sea. The sizes are also in contrast to one another: Simon looks big in the swimming pool, Bilal looks tiny in the sea. Bilal swims from the left side of the frame towards the right, creating the feeling that they are swimming towards one another, even though they are in separate spaces. This is a physical, sensorial and emotional identification, through which Simon reconnects with his past as a swimmer. Simon wants to feel what Bilal feels inside the pool; the touch of the water on his body, the smooth movement. It all brings him back to his past and to deeper layers within himself. Even though Simon and Bilal are swimming in separate shots, it feels like they are swimming together, the accompanying music helping to unite the shots and the swimmers within it, creating a sense of continuity. The smooth transition between the shots creates a feeling that there are no more borders between them, that they identify with each other and have assimilated the one into the other, hearing the same music in their mind, sharing and being echoed by the same tune in the background.

One of the peaks of their relationship, showing that Simon has maximised and 'completed' his internalisation or internal adoption of Bilal, occurs when Simon calls the coast guard to report that Bilal is missing. He tells them his name and then Bilal's name. When asked for Bilal's surname he provides his own, pretending to be Bilal's father. In this scene, Bilal is as close as he will ever get to Simon; however, Bilal is not physically there. The scene is shot on the beach, Simon standing diagonally between the shore and the sea, with his back to the sea facing the shore. If we look at this on a cinematic level, Simon is not looking at the sea when he makes this call to the coast guard. It is a medium close shot, and we can only see Simon's upper body. He turns his back to where Bilal might be, but stays safely on the shore. He does not direct his gaze towards the dangerous sea behind him, the sea that contains Bilal, that contains fantasies, dangers and needs. He is pretending to be a father whose son is missing, but the truth is that Bilal is not his son.

Through the relationship with Bilal, Simon reconnects to his paternal need of being a father; he is able to recognise what is missing in his life.

The misrepresentation of Bilal continues at the end of the film. Bilal's corpse is returned to France, but the viewer doesn't see it. The last image of Bilal in the film is of him in the middle of the sea, him against nature, the small vulnerable refugee searching for safe ground. When Bilal is buried, it is Simon we see on the screen. In the final scene of the film, when Simon and Mina meet in London, neither France nor the French language has any place: it is not present in any way, once again drawing from the theme of misrepresentation.

2.13   Homecoming

The film reaches Bilal's destination point in London, but without Bilal. The last segment of the film revolves around closing the open edges of the journeys, about returning home – whatever that home may mean. The policeman returns the missing medal, found with Zoran, to Simon; Bilal's corpse is returned to France; the ring is returned to Marion. At this point we realise that Simon has failed to save Bilal, after being drawn by the latter's fantasies and belief that he could swim across the channel. Simon goes to London to meet Mina, and sits in front of her in place of Bilal. Marion calls him, asking him to come back because the police is after him. Simon says that he has found her ring and that he is 'coming back'. The question regarding Simon is, 'coming back' to where? His marriage is over, Bilal is gone, and France is not a place he can identify with anymore. The question remains as to what kind of home there is for Simon, now that Bilal is gone.

The fact that Simon stays alone, without Bilal, follows the main direction of their relationship. Bilal confronts Simon with what it is that he does not have, a home to go back to. Bilal took with him the comfort that he had provided Simon; through the loss of Bilal, Simon now faces the emptiness and loneliness of his life. In a way, they have both abandoned each other. Simon did not really help Bilal, and by encouraging his dreams he led Bilal to his death; Bilal's abandonment is by leaving Simon and trying to reach his next destination. Again, we face another mutual aspect of this connection, its temporality and vulnerability, with a mutual ending on both sides.

2.14   Conclusion

Welcome is not about Bilal or about Simon; rather it is about their relationship. A relationship that occurs between two separate subjects who shape and are shaped by one another across the film. This is not just Bilal asking to learn to swim; the film raises questions about who Bilal and Simon are, what the subsequent relationship between the two constitutes, and about the experience the Bilal's request creates.

In *Sensation machine: Film, phenomenology and the training of the senses*, Stephens (2012, p. 533) suggests that cinema appeals to the senses that cannot be represented technically, specifically touch, smell and taste. Synesthesia, as well as haptic visuality, enable the viewer to experience cinema on a multi-sensory level. Rather than being absolutely separate, each of these qualities has an effective meaning, which establishes a correspondence between it and the qualities associated with the other senses. The viewer is transformed into what Sobchack called a 'cinesthetic subject': a product of cinema's problematisation of the mutual exclusivity of the categories' subjectivity and objectivity, inner and outer, I and the world. In other words, when considering both Simon's feelings for Bilal, and the viewers experience of Simon and Bilal's relationship, we can feel multiple experiences at the same time: closeness and distance, compassion and threat, identification and foreignness (Stephens, 2012, pp. 534-535). The relationship between Simon and Bilal goes beyond the visual and audio-visual. Simon not only sees Bilal, he *feels* him and his difficulties.

This follows what Merleau-Ponty notes about the differences between visual and tactile experiences:

> Vision, by virtue of being a distance sense, allows us to 'flatter' ourselves that we constitute the world; whereas tactile experience 'adheres to the surface of our body; we cannot unfold it before us and it never quite becomes an object. It is not I who touch, it is my body. (1992, p. 316)

 Senses that are closer to the body, like the sense of touch, are capable of storing powerful memories that are lost to the visual. Simon might feel he 'owns' Bilal when he first meets him in the swimming pool, asking for his guidance, at the beginning of the film. But when they share the sensorial touch of water, the wind, the cold weather, their connection and level of understanding and identification become far stronger. This lends itself to the sense of distance, and the differences between them begin to fade away, their similarities exceeding their differences. From

the viewer's perspective, this multisensory quality of perception, the involvement of all the senses in the audio-visual act of cinematic viewing, calls up a multisensory experience of the refugee story (Marks & Polan, 2000, p. 212). It is this multisensory experience and tactile relationship that blurs the boundaries between Simon and Bilal, establishing the basis for what I would argue is the main force that motivates Simon to help Bilal.

According to Higbee (2014), in inviting identification with Simon's situation, Lioret encourages the viewer to mourn the tragic loss of Bilal; but again, without directly challenging them to actually consider their own complicity in the functioning of Europe's asylum system, or to protest the treatment of illegal immigrants and how this contributed to Bilal's death (2014, pp. 36-37). My argument here is that it is Simon's identification with Bilal that motivates him to help. Both Simon and Bilal are in a state of emotional refuge; their past and previous homes are falling apart and they no longer don't belong there; their future is unknown. France is not their home: as Bilal is not welcome there, and Simon acts against the law, rejecting his nation's refugee policy. Hence, it is not the temporality of Bilal or the desire to do the right thing that drives their relationship, but instead the commonality they have between them. It is this that leads to the internalisation of each other's characteristics. I would argue here that not only does Simon not feel better with himself for helping Bilal; the relationship with Bilal confronts Simon with dormant aspects of his personality, and what he is missing in his life. Whilst inhabiting different life circumstances, the two still share a core similarity on an emotional level with respect to they are going through. Each, individually, experiences the emotions that a refugee would go through. Simon, by divorcing Marion, breaks his home and is thrown into an unknown future. Bilal, through being a refugee, has no home and belongs to nowhere and also faces an unknown future. It is through this identification process with Bilal that Simon is reconnected to the foreign parts of his personality, to those missing pieces that were absent for him. Being emotionally involved in a relationship with an adolescent refugee embodies the phenomenological notion presented by Leder (1990, p. 12), who points out that for Merleau-Ponty, being situated within a certain point of view necessarily involves not seeing that point of view itself. There will necessarily be aspects of perceptual objects, hidden sides, concealed depths, which elude one's gaze. The absence that haunts the perceived world is thus correlative with that of the perceiver. This absence is not simply a deficit, but is constitutive of the real. The things Bilal is missing correlate with what Simon sees in Bilal; a paternal relationship, home, belonging, and protection. Through his interactions with Bilal, Simon is confronted with these hidden sides and missing parts within himself.

It is important to note here that this identification has its price. Hiltunen (2019, p. 143), argues that there are two strategies emerge regarding the type of gaze or reaction that the refugee sufferer evokes. Specifically, Hiltunen references Chouliaraki's distinction between 'emotional and empathetic involvement, and reflexivity accompanied by moralization. While sympathetic identification with the sufferer is criticized for cultivating potentially selfish emotions, the more distanced way of looking is considered more altruistic and outward looking' (Hiltunen, 2019, p. 143). Similarly, Chouliaraki (2010, p. 114) argues with respect to representing the other, that it is important to find a compromise between two extremes: between presenting the other as someone like us, or as someone too different, too other to be reachable and identifiable. Unless the otherness of distant others is acknowledged, Western humanitarianism is in danger of turning into 'ironic spectatorship', where attention is focused on our own emotionality rather than on others and global justice. Clearly, Simon's gaze on Bilal was sympathetic and close; but such closeness prevented Simon from defending Bilal from the danger of the sea and his wish to cross the channel.

I would add here that the adolescent refugee connects us not to innocence and not necessarily to our inner child. The adolescent refugee, being foreign, being a stranger, being an adolescent surrounded by adults, being lonely, seeking protection, seeking a secure home and roots, makes us identify with him and thus connects us to what it is that we do not have ourselves. The character confronts us with what it is that is still missing, what it is that we ourselves are still in search for. The film portrays a strong, emotional, intimate, parental and paternal bond between Simon and Bilal. It shows how through the connection to Bilal, Simon changes his behaviour and perceptions, revealing a new side and new needs within himself, hidden prior to his establishing a bond with Bilal. At the same time, through the cinematic mechanism of missing representation, or the individual presence of Simon or Bilal in a scene, the film also conveys a message about this relationship. It is an absent relationship where there is always something missing, foreign, lacking. Putting it together, it seems that the adolescent refugee in the film, act in a similar way on both levels, the contextual and the textual. This creates a change on one hand; but also reveals what it is that is missing on the other.

Chapter 3 *- Welcome to the Hartmanns*

3.1   Introduction

In this chapter, I will explore the portrayal of the relationship between a refugee adolescent in Germany and his European hosts, as depicted in Simon Verhoeven's comedy *Welcome to the Hartmanns* (*Willkommen bei den Hartmanns, 2016).* The film is set in Munich, a city that played host to thousands of new, and welcomed, refugees that arrived there in September 2015. It tells the story of the Hartmann family: Angelika, a recently retired teacher, who decides to take in a refugee against the will of Richard, her sceptical husband. Soon afterwards, Diallo, a young Nigerian, moves into the Hartmann's home, and a whirlwind of complications ensue. The contrasting attitudes towards Diallo within the family echo and represent the two major stands that German society has broadly taken towards the refugee phenomenon. Angelika and Sophie, their daughter, welcome Diallo; Richard and Phillip, their son, are initially suspicious of him. These events have a profound impact on the lives of the entire family, putting Angelika and Richard's marriage – and Diallo's chances of integration – to the test. It is this relationship, between Diallo and the Hartmann family, that sits at the centre of this analysis.

As alluded to above, the film plays with Germany's two contrasting attitudes towards refugees: willingness to help, and the complexity of xenophobic feelings towards the newcomers. Since the summer of 2015, Germany has been a target country for flows of refugees seeking sanctuary. In total, Germany has admitted more than one million people seeking protection, most of them from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, making it a significant host country. This inflow of foreigners has since dominated Germany's political, cultural and social debate completely, causing heightened debate and disagreement with regard to the ways of dealing with this influx (Engler, 2016; UNHCR, 2019, p. 10). Despite chaos depicted in the film, the family recovers its stability, confidence and peace, and a new family structure emerges by the film's end (DW.COM, 2016; European Film Awards, 2017).

The first part of this chapter explores the film's production process, with specific reference to the deep and multifaceted participation of director Simon Verhoeven and his family. This section also deals with the different cinematic familial occupations, especially with regards to the German identity of the director, his father, director Michael Verhoeven, and his grandfather, Paul Verhoeven. Following this, the chapter analyses Germany's historical context at the time of the film's production and release, including political, societal and media perceptions of the

refugee crisis. Through this, I seek to demonstrate a parallelism between the process that Germany as a country went through at the time of the migrant crisis, and the process that the Hartmann family goes through in the film, exploring the factors that shape these attitudes, historically and sociologically. In addition, I aim to locate the film within the history of German film, arguing that the film does not align itself with any specific definition within the scope of German film history.

Another crucial perspective of this analysis is the film's genre, namely comedy. I challenge the phrase 'refugee comedy' adopted by critics of the film (*DW.COM*, 2016; Pulver,2016; Roxborough, 2016). Instead, I argue that this is not a comic film about refugees, but rather a story about a German family seeking a new beginning, a new way to leave its past behind. In order to achieve this change, the family takes in Diallo, who triggers this process. The Hartmann family serve as a metaphor for German society and the desire to create a better future, trying to repair the country's history. The film adopts the generic conventions of comedy to articulate these messages. Therefore, I will pay close attention to the characteristics of humour as manifested in the film, and its functions. The film takes advantage of its comic genre to apply elements of humour; as Meyer (2000, p. 316) has correctly argued, humour can simultaneously unite and divide those experiencing it. For Lorenz, laughter 'produces simultaneously a strong fellow-feeling among participants and joint aggressiveness against outsiders… laughter forms a bond and simultaneously draws a line' (Lorenz, 1963, p. 253). Humour can also serve as an instrument for releasing tensions and breaking up encrusted fixations about the way in which we perceive ourselves and others, as Göktürk outlines in her study on the use of comedy in depictions of migrants and migration in German cinema (Göktürk, 2004, p. 103). These perspectives, along with a more specific focus on German comedy (Horak, 2019), will be explored in order to shape a better understanding of why *Welcome to the Hartmanns* was made as a comedy.

Writing about representations of diasporic youth in European cinema, Berghahn (2010, p. 239) notes that contemporary diasporic films, targeting mainstream audiences, translate 'Otherness' into 'sameness', celebrating the pleasures of hybridity. Additionally, diasporic youth films in general reflect, essentially, the experience of growing up in a culture different from one's culture of origin. In general, diasporic youth as portrayed in such films are underprivileged in one form or another. These commonalities tend to give diasporic youth films a transnational appeal. With this in mind, and to further understand how Diallo's age is operationalised part of the transition and the processes that his presence triggers, this section will also reflect upon Erikson's

developmental theory, integrating psychological characteristics with the cinematic representation of Diallo in the film (Berghahn, 2010, pp. 239-240).

This is followed by a thematic analysis of the film, investigating the central themes through which character relationships are built, as well as the process that the viewer experiences during the film. I apply the phenomenological approach, drawing on the term 'cinematic shock', coined by Hanich (2012, p. 583) who portrayed this as the aesthetic experience that a viewer goes through, and how this experience strengthens them. By this, I wish to establish that the viewer's experience of the film catalyses a reduction of the threat that may have been directed towards refugees before watching the film. In line with this, I apply Hanich's (2010, p. 597) observations about the specific influences that collective viewing can have on the experience of the viewer, and how this is specifically relevant in the context of contemporary German history. I focus on how the refugee adolescent, Diallo, triggers a change in the lives of his hosts, the Hartmanns, revealing to them what it is that is missing, and helping them in more than one way to overcome this. These cinematic mechanisms, I argue, uncover the unique meaning of the interactions between the refugee adolescent and his German hosts. It reveals relationships that revolve around integration – both of Diallo within the Hartmann family and Germany, and on a deeper level the integration of each character with its own past and that of Germany as a country. The gap that Diallo fills not only operates on the narrative level, but also in a deeper sense, by reflecting the experiences a time of a family and country struggling to reconcile itself with its past. Diallo's entrance into their lives makes the past present, creating a bridge between the past and the future; by accepting him, they are actually accepting their own past.

Taking a phenomenological approach to identifying the themes of the film, keeping generic conventions in mind, I argue that Diallo, as an adolescent, holds a charged position of 'in-betweenness': childhood versus adulthood, Nigeria versus Germany, past versus future, inside the Hartmann family versus outside in German society. Diallo represents the transition that Germany is experiencing, from the previous social order and the perception of being 'German', to a new and integrated society. The power of comedy in creating a new social order, as postulated by Frye (2020, p. 166), is used here to create a hybrid Hartmann family, a new future for Diallo and, more broadly, a new Germany.

3.2 The film's production process and release

Welcome to the Hartmanns was a box office sensation in Germany, the country's most successful film in 2016 with domestic revenues that year totalling $28,006,968. It was awarded the German Film Award, LOLA, as well as the Jupiter Award for Best National Film. The film won nine prizes in festivals across Germany and around the world: Highest Grossing Film of the Year at the 2017 German Film Awards; Best Film and Production at the 2017 Bavarian Film Awards; Bambi Awards 2017; the German Comedy Awards 2017; and the Munich Film Festival 2017. It was also shown on the opening day of the 12th UNHCR Refugee Film Festival in Tokyo, in September 2017 (IMDB, 2017; IMDB Box Office Mojo, 2016; Katsuma, 2018; The Hollywood Reporter, 2016, p. 203).

Critical responses to the film were mixed. Whilst praising the film's intentions, Moritz von Uslar in the weekly *Die Zeit* bemoaned a lack of classic punchlines:

> Shouldn't material like this, which catches our society at its most vulnerable, nervous and insecure, have produced a film that is not just OK, but brilliant, wild, provocative and incorrect in the best sense of the word? (Oltermann, 2016)

Others have pointed out that the refugee character, supposedly the film's protagonist, is little more than a plot device deployed to resolve Germany's own domestic dramas. Discussing the use of comedy and its benefits in an interview, film director Simon Verhoeven told *The Hollywood Reporter* that 'I was trying to find a middle ground, something that's been lost in the whole refugee debate. And I wanted to loosen things up. Help people laugh about themselves. Laughter can be liberating' (Roxborourgh, 2016)

In another review, *Das Tagesspeigel*'s Christian Schröder claims that the film falls to the clichés of family comedy and is more focused on the midlife crisis of Richard, Angelika's husband, than on Diallo's story (Schröder, 2016).

Challenging these reviews, and taking these critiques one step forward, I argue that Diallo's character actually serves as a trigger, shining a light on the change that both the Hartmann family and German society at large are seeking. The representation of Diallo in the film – from the casting of Eric Kabongo to the development of his character across the film – does not offer any real insight into who Diallo really is. Instead, Diallo serves as a reflective mirror for German society, a society that wishes to leave its traumatic past behind so as to create a better future.

Welcome to the Hartmanns features some of Germany's biggest stars: Senta Berger and Heiner Lauterbach as Angelika and Richard; Palina Rojinski (Sophie) and Florian David Fitz (Phillip) as the Hartmann kids; and superstar Elyas M'Barek as Dr Tarek Berger. Alongside these box office stars, Verhoeven cast Belgian actor Eric Kabongo in the role of the Nigerian immigrant Diallo Makabouri. It is important to explore Verhoeven's casting choices, paying close attention to the two non-native German characters in the film: Tarek Berger (M'Barek) and Diallo Makabouri (Kabongo). Before starring in this film, Kabongo had featured in the 2015 Belgian documentary *What About Eric?* directed by Lennart Stuyck and Ruben Vermeersch. The documentary is described as telling the story of:

> The eccentric Eric Kabongo who wants to steer his life into a new direction and dreams of a music career. Eager to be accepted by the local community, he tries to make a name for himself as his alter ego: Krazy-E. However, his troubled past forms a dark cloud over his head. Will he be able to shake off his demons and live a normal life? *What about Eric* shows the inner world of a lost soul desperately looking for a place called home. (IMDB, 2019)

That Kabongo has appeared on screen, as himself and as a refugee, introduces a layer of complexity to his being cast in this role, and in a film that seeks to leverage the comedy genre in its depiction of refugee life in Germany. It certainly raises questions about Verhoeven's authorial intent. In casting Kabongo, Verhoeven seems to be signalling that the comedy narrative is more layered than would appear at first glance. Kabongo is not an "arbitrary" choice (insomuch as casting choices are never completely arbitrary), but rather a choice influenced by the fact that the actor has the story of refugee life embedded in him. This aside, there are other parallels between the Diallo character and Kabongo's life. There are some parallels between the Diallo character and Kabongo's life: they are both looking for a home, searching for ways to belong, want to have their voice heard and to overcome their past. By casting Kabongo as Diallo, Verhoeven provides a partial 'home' to Diallo, with some evident power relations; Kabongo is cast as a character much younger than the actor is in real life (Kabongo is 35 years old, Diallo is an adolescent). Also, Kabongo is not credited on the film's poster, even though we can see him sitting in the centre of the family photo that sets the scene. This omission will be analysed in the next section. This casting choice reveals a more complex vision of Verhoeven the director, trying to infantilise Kabongo into the role of Diallo by presenting him on the film's poster without mentioning his name. This could symbolise Diallo's functional presence has in the family: he is there as a 'refugee' and not as Eric Kabongo. The film might show Germany as an open society with liberal

perceptions about refugees, but this is not the whole picture. The bigger picture here, I argue, is that by representing Kabongo thus, Verhoeven uses his power – as the director of the film, or as a German citizen – to try and 'control' the ways in which Diallo will be integrated into the film. He does this in a way that shows that the refugee has to alter himself in order to be accepted by German society. One possibility is to do so in a way that is both comic and entreating; but also, in such a way so as not threaten the other German superstars in the film.

Following the success of *Welcome to the Hartmanns*, Kabongo featured in two other films, *Third Wedding* (*Troisièmes noces* 2018), directed by David Lambert, and *SAWA* (2019), directed by Adolf El Assal. In both films, Kabongo plays an outsider trying to fit into the society he is living in. In contrast to *Welcome to the Hartmanns*, he is credited on the posters of both films. His success in these two roles contributed to upward career trajectory – even though he plays the same type of character in both films, the outsider longing for his place.

The second non-German character in the film, Dr. Tarek Berger, is played by Austrian Tunisian actor Elyas M'Barek, born to a Tunisian father and an Austrian mother. M'Barek a multicultural success story, was subsequently cast by Verhoeven cast in a later production (Roxborough, 2016). M'Barek has acted in a number of TV series and films, including the leading role in *Suck Me Shakespeer* (*Fack ju Göhte*, 2013), seen by three million people in 17 days and the most successful German film of that year. The same year, he also played a supporting role in the adventure film *The Physician* (2013), a box-office hit in Germany. In *Welcome to the Hartmanns*, Verhoeven cast superstar M'Barek in the role of a successful surgeon; the one who made it, who succeeded in integrating into German society, and who eventually wins Sophie's heart. To emphasize the foreignness of Tarek, I argue that Verhoeven decided to portray the character as using his mother's maiden name – Berger – by this signalling that he 'is one of us', accepted and integrated into German society. Unlike Kabongo's anonymity, M'Barek's presence in the film is emphasized and serves as an audience puller.

An investigation of the casting process of the film, especially the non-German characters, suggests, in my opinion, that Verhoeven did not really challenge the existing order. Rather, he maintained the hierarchical gaps between Eric Kabongo and Elyas M'Barek by casting them to play Diallo and Tarek. in other words, the superstar plays the successful doctor, and the anonymous musician plays a much younger refugee trying to fit into German society, searching for a home. I will return to this point later, in the section discussing the history of German film history, elaborating on my point regarding the film's lack of critical voice, as well as the film's efforts to maintain the social order as it is.

Welcome to the Hartmanns was made within the complex reality of Germany's refugee crisis. In interviews following the film's release, director Simon Verhoeven addressed the intricacies of making such a comedy in this environment. Verhoeven never thought that his film would be as relevant and timely as it turned out to be, saying:

> I thought it was interesting to contrast an upper middle class family and all its problems with someone from a completely different cultural realm, someone facing totally different, indeed, much more serious problems…Back then I could never have dreamed that this point of departure, this nuclear family, would come to be understood as a kind of metaphor for Germany. (European Film Awards, 2017)

Verhoeven clarified that his film was not an attempt to solve the refugee question. In his view, the best comedies are based on very serious situations; the power of comedy lies in its ability to make these issues more accessible to the audience, to enable them to experience 'certain truths about difficult themes' (European Film Awards, 2017).

Regarding the social-political climate and context that the film became a part of, Verhoeven describes the atmosphere, in Germany and in Europe, as confused, uncertain and volatile – creating for him fertile ground for comedy. According to the director, people interpreted the film as a 'discussion on the screen…' in which '…a lot of people could find themselves within that discussion…The film does not have an opinion; it searches for solutions…' (European Film Awards, 2017, 2018).

The centrality of family is evident not only at the narrative level, but very much so in its production process. In particular, this is evident in the director's choice to insert biographic elements from his own family background into the Hartmann family. The similarities between the Verhoeven family and the Hartmann family start with Verhoeven casting his mother, Senta Berger, to play Angelika Hartmann. Richard Hartmann is a medical Doctor – as is Michael Verhoeven, besides being a director. The film was produced by Sentana, a family-owned production company owned by the director's parents. This is not the first time that Simon Verhoeven has worked with his family, having cast his brother Luca Verhoeven in a previous film, 2001's *100 Pro*.

The director is a member of a well-known family of actors. Paul Verhoeven, his grandfather, was a successful actor, director and screenwriter during the Nazi era and after the end of the Second World War. He directed and acted in more than fifty films and wrote more than 20 film scripts. He was the Artistic Director of the Residenz Theatre in Munich between 1945 and 1948. As a director,

he was noted for romantic comedies such as *Don't Forget Love* (*Vergiß die Liebe nicht*, 1953); he acted in *The Dance of Death* (*Paarungen*, 1967), a West German drama film directed by his son, Michael Verhoeven. He was also the screenwriter of *The Court Concert* (*Das Hofkonzert*, 1936), a German historical romantic comedy film directed by Douglas Sirk.

Michael Verhoeven, Simon's father, is an actor, director and writer, known for *The Nasty Girl* (*Das schreckliche Mädchen*, 1990), *My Mother's Courage* (1995) and *Sonntagskinder* (1980). Simon's mother, Senta Berger, is a film, stage and television actress, producer and author. She has received many award nominations for her acting in theatre, film and television, including three Bambi Awards. Finally, his brother, Luca Verhoeven, is an actor and producer, known for *As Green as It Gets (Grüner wird's nicht, sagte der Gärtner und flog Davon,*2018), and *100 Pro* (2001).

Michael Verhoeven's films from the mid-1960s onwards, whilst aesthetically conventional, often addressed significant social issues, typically about Germany's Nazi past (Bock and Bergfelder, 2009, p. 312). Between 1982 and 1995, Michael Verhoeven directed three films: *The White Rose* (1981), *The Nasty Girl* (1990), and *My Mother's Courage* (1995). All three films explored German society and its ambiguous relationship with the past, more perceptively than is commonly acknowledged. The trilogy reflects cultural shifts in German society over the last thirty years in a unique way, whilst simultaneously (albeit with differing success) attempting to engender these shifts. Verhoeven's films challenged German audiences to question the comfortable consensus that sought to 'draw a line under the past' (Paehler, 2010). In *The Unknown Soldier* (*Der unbekannte Soldat*, 2006), another influential film directed by Michael Verhoeven, he examined German national identity in relation to Nazism (Tsika, 2008, p. 65). In an interview following the release of this film, he was asked what he thought about comedies. He responded:

> I am a person who likes well-made comedies. But there are political comedies and there are apolitical comedies…. I don't really think there is a private sphere without a political situation attached to it, because we are all part of society, and the community is embedded in something larger. (Moeller, 2010, p. 10)

Michael Verhoeven's perspective on comedies is in line with the theoretical lenses through which I analyse *Welcome to the Hartmanns*. In other words, it is a politically charged film, representing a politically charged reality. This could be considered a significant influence on the development of the film*,* strengthening the familial occupation with German identity over the years.

The fact that there was such strong familial involvement in the development of the film means that it also creates a strong sense of German identity, as if it says to the audience: This is us, the Verhoevens, we are German. While *Welcome to the Hartmanns* does not pay much by way of *explicit* attention to Germany's history, its distinct sense of German identity could be interpreted as the film's way of dealing with what it means to be German. Writing about German history and its representations in post-war eras, Lukinbeal and Zimmermann (2008, p. 177) argued that the idea of homelessness and loss of roots, in geopolitical terms, has become part of the German people's identity. The fact that the Verhoeven family played such a central role in the production of the film, alongside the concept of roots, home, and family emphasised at the narrative level, is important. It could be perceived as a way of saying that German identity is strong and stable, and not vulnerable to uncontrolled change – not even by refugees entering German homes. Alternatively, it could be interpreted as an attempt to create a unique relationship with the audience, challenging them to accept this film, to accept this family, reversing the direction of acceptance. It is not just the Hartmann family who must learn how to accept Diallo; the film also encompasses a process in which the audience examines the Verhoeven family, or German identity, and is asked to accept it as it is. The strong – and unusual – presence of the Verhoeven family in the film creates a common ground for Diallo and the audience, as though are both exterior to the Verhoeven and Hartmann families. Throughout the film, Diallo crosses borders and enters the family, the audience following the characters as they each cross an internal border of accepting their own past. The next section of this chapter delves into Germany's refugee crisis, providing a wider perspective of the cultural and historical atmosphere at the time of the film's release.

3.3   Reflecting on Germany's relationship with the refugee crisis

The review of the refugee crisis in Germany is important for two main reasons. Firstly, I think that it is crucial to understand the wider societal atmosphere at the time of the film's release. Secondly, I will try to show draw parallels between the process that Germany has been going through with respect to the refugee crisis, and the process that the Hartmann family go through across the film. This parallelism shows again the tight identification between the Hartmann family and Germany – or in other words, the 'Germanness' of the film.

Asylum seeker numbers in Germany have risen steadily over the last several years. Since the summer of 2015, the influx has taken on hitherto unknown dimensions. In 2015, more than

one million people seeking sanctuary entered Germany (Engler, 2016, p. 1; International Organization for Migration, 2016; UNHCR, 2019). However, one must remember that the issue of immigration in German society is not new. After the Second World War, the discussion about immigration and national identity was crucial to the self-understanding of German society. Until very recently, the main political discourse on migration in Germany asserted that the country should not be an immigration target – a perspective linked closely to German's ideas of citizenship based on '*ius sanguinis*' (the right of blood), that is dependent upon descent and not on '*ius solis*' (the right of the soil). In other words, citizenship was not anchored to birth in a particular territory and participation in the political body. The dominant perspective was that immigration posed a problem for German society (Sökefeld, 2017, pp. 73-74). Over the years, perceptions about migration have changed in German society. Nowadays, they have moved away from the imperative of integration, which framed migration and migrants as problematic for the rest of society, and towards a perspective which monitors the capability of institutions and society at large to open up to immigration and migrants (Hamann and Karakayali, 2016, p. 70).

With this shift, German Chancellor Angela Merkel introduced her 'open door policy', in the process becoming a key figure in driving a strong, welcoming, stance towards refugees. In 2015, Merkel borrowed the phrase, '*Wir schaffen das*' – a play on 'yes we can', from US President Barack Obama's 2008 campaign – to drive her open-door policy of allowing up to one million refugees into Germany. The full sentence she used was '*Wir haben so vieles geschafft – wir schaffen das*', translated in the German media as 'We have managed so many things – we will also manage this situation'. This phrase has often been understood as a discursive signifier that Germany's historic unease about migration and transnational plurality should come under critical review. It appears that the conditions and rhetoric of the crisis have led to a more open-minded revision of what it means to be German (Holzberg, Kolbe, and Zaborowski, 2018, p. 538). Merkel's unilateral gesture was anticipated as a prompt for other states to follow Germany's example; a catalyst for a cascade of European solidarity and burden-sharing, despite mounting resistance from the UK and CEE governments. In terms of the film, the Hartmann family were not an accepting family at first. When Angelika brings up the idea of taking in a refugee, Richard even compares her to Angela Merkel, saying 'the fact that she is doing it does not mean we have to do it as well'. Angelika in the film opens the family's doors to the refugees, inviting them to blend into her home – just as Merkel, in real life, opened up the country's doors for refugees to blend into German society.

Germany's legislature also made changes to how Germany accepted refugees; the Bundestag approved Asylum Package (I), enacted in November 2015. Although state and communal governments are legally responsible for accommodation, meals and medical costs, the Bundestag doubled its contribution for this, to €2 billion. After three months of coalition and internal wrangling, the Bundestag adopted Asylum Package (II), rolling back more 'welcoming measures' (Mushaben, 2017, p. 521). In terms of the Hartmann family, it is not the rules per se that underscore the 'welcoming measures', but rather the adjustments to household routine in order to accommodate the new guest. These include labelling objects with their names in German so that Diallo could learn the language, organising the room for Diallo, and preventing xenophobic voices from the outside world penetrating the family unit. I will return to this point later in the chapter.

In general, Germany was doing everything it could to show the world its openness and commitment to solving the refugee crisis. From its beginning, the film describes Diallo as a deserving refugee, and this theme focuses on how the Hartmann family perceive itself when helping Diallo, declaring their status in 'having a refugee'. Germany is portrayed as open, accepting and compassionate (as Diallo's application for refugee status was approved after the court heard his story). The Hartmann family identify completely with Germany: they are proud to be part of the country and to own that identity. This narcissistic desire to announce their status is achieved both by 'showing off' with Diallo, and by glorifying Germany and what it means to be German. Their need to announce it at various occasions shows their desire to be perceived as liberal, open Germans. This tension follows Bauder's dialectical approach to the refugee crisis, in which he argues that 'the way a national community imagines its identity plays a key role in its immigration policies. Through immigration policy, a nation selects who will be permitted to become a member (who will be "one of us")' (Bauder 2016, p. 67) – and who will be expelled. At the same time, immigration shapes who we are. In other words, the fact that the Hartmann family live in Germany, a country that opened its borders to over one million refugees, makes them want to 'have a refugee'. At the same time, the fact that they welcomed a refugee into their family strengthens their acceptance of their German identity in return.

When Diallo arrives at the Hartmann home, they greet him with a big sign outside their house, then sit down to dinner, trying hard to showcase how open and liberal they are. They keep repeating how great and liberal and accepting Germany is, how everyone is allowed to be whoever they want to be in Germany. In another scene, Angelika takes Diallo to the bakery, introducing him to everyone by saying, 'This is Diallo, our refugee'. Later, Richard confronts Dr.

Berger in the hospital and says in front of everyone, 'I have a refugee at home'. The level of identification between the family and Germany is also evident in a scene towards the end of the film, when Tarek tells Sophie that Richard is bullying him, and Sophie replies, 'my Dad is going through a crisis, a bit like this country… I don't know where all of this is going'.

Another way in which the film reflects 'what it means to be German' is demonstrated by the Hartmann's reaction to anti-immigrant and racist opinions. These voices are located outside the family, in the outside world: a neighbor who tells Angelika that Diallo is a terrorist, which Angelika dismisses before apologizing to Diallo; the plastic surgeon who warns Richard not to let Diallo go near Sophie, because refugees have uncontrollable sex drives, which Richard dismisses; the news on the television reporting that refugees have been arrested following terrorist activity; a demonstration outside their home. The Hartmann family does not allow such influences or xenophobic stances to become part of the family or to influence how they treat Diallo. The film is persistent in its will to show us that Diallo is a 'good refugee', and that the Hartmann's are 'good Germans'.

Having said that, the attitudes of German citizens towards the refugee crisis were not at all homogenous, and indeed were affected by external events elsewhere on the continent. In his review on the background to the refugee crisis and the challenges it posed for Germany, Engler (2016, p. 5) notes that the discourse around refugees shifted between 2015 and March 2016. In terms of public opinion, the responses to the challenges of receiving refugees varied, and can be viewed as ambivalent. This ambivalence is evident in the film, manifesting in two ways. The first is in Richard and Phillip's evident discomfort with Angelika's decision to adopt a refugee. The second is through the character of the xenophobic neighbour who makes racist remarks about Diallo, and through the police search after reports of 'suspicious' activity in the Hartmann home. On the one hand, in the summer and autumn of 2015, German society was full of empathy for the cause of the refugees. During those first weeks, representations of 'welcoming' and hospitality dominating the discursive landscape. Data from 2015 shows that around 8 million Germans were, in some way, involved in activities to welcome the refugees, such as making donations. The atmosphere was established through the physical encounter of greeting arriving refugees at train stations all across Germany, as well as the distribution of images, stories and short videos about these events by the media. Also, an accelerative dynamic of institutions and organisations publicly declaring their support for the refugees contributed to the atmospheric change (Engler, 2016, pp. 5-7).

In *The volatility of the discourse on refugees in Germany*, Vollmer and Karakayali (2018, p. 125) suggest that opinions started to shift in November 2015 and the Paris terror attack, which

caused an uneasiness about the new arrivals in some sectors of German society. Terror swiftly spread as it was revealed that one of the terrorists involved in the outrages had recently arrived in Europe, disguised as a refugee. This resulted in a significant rise in the popularity of the anti-immigration Pegida movement, which staged regular demonstrations. There was also a rise in the public profile of the populist right-wing party, Alternative for Germany (AfD), which pounced on this as an opportunity to denounce Angela Merkel as responsible for the Paris terror attacks This shift in perception escalated further one month later, at the beginning of 2016, when hundreds of (allegedly) north African men sexually assaulted women in and around the main station of Cologne. According to reports, some of the men had arrived in Germany during the summer of 2015. In other words, the assaults were seemingly performed by the very group that had only months earlier been welcomed into the country, framed as deserving help (Vollmer and Karakayali, 2018, p. 130). Again, this further drove scepticism about the refugees amongst German citizens, with the 'welcoming' feeling fading into the background. With these two major events, the Paris terror attack and the assaults at Cologne's main station, it could be understood that the refugees had lost their 'deservingness'. The events heightened the German public's fear and panic, driving the political discourses of the past back in charge. Released in November 2016, the film caught the German audience at a moment after the attacks and in a more complex and ambivalent state with regard to the presence of refugees on German soil.

From an anthropological perspective, Sökefeld (2017, p. 80) discusses how the German politics of migration and asylum have been dominated by the idea that the acceptance of refugees depends on their representation as being 'deserving'. That is, to those who meet the narrow criteria for political asylum. Exploring representations of refugees in the German media in 2015, Holzberg et al. (2018, p. 535) finds that these representations are split between empathy invoking and threatening representations, alongside humanitarian or securitising narratives. These narratives are linked and are mutually reinforced through a logic of deservingness that, rather than considering the reasons for migration, focuses on the advantages and disadvantages that refugees are assumed to bring to the host country. While men are often positioned as 'bad' refugees who are only able to acquire respectability by manifesting their innocence, 'good' refugees seem to emerge mainly in the figures of women and children. Asylum, therefore, shifts from being a legal right to being framed in terms of deservingness – refugees need to show that they are worthy of becoming part of the German nation (Holzberg et al., 2018, p. 546). In the present case, Diallo's character is developed from the start as that of a good, deserving refugee. The film opens with Diallo looking at the camera and trying on a pair of glasses, taking them on and off. His companions, standing behind him, tell him to keep them on – he looks smarter with

glasses, they say. They then make fun of his untidy hair; in the next scene, we see him getting his hair cut. We then see Diallo cleaning the floor. One of his peers tells him that he doesn't have to work, but Diallo insists that he must. Productivity is framed in culturally essentialist terms, whereby refugees must testify against their 'backwardness' in order to earn inclusion in the German nation (Holzberg et al., 2018, p. 542). In this short sequence, Diallo expresses central German values, and thus is portrayed as a good, deserving refugee: hardworking and good-hearted.

However, in *Distant suffering*, Boltanski (1999, p. 37) argues that our empathy towards strangers depends not on their deservingness alone, but also on a specific type of reaction on the side of the recipients of the help. When German citizens provide hospitality, it is implicitly expected and required that refugees respond with gratitude. It is quite clear that such a philanthropic relationship is highly precarious, since it depends entirely on the constant repetition of an asymmetric pattern, in which refugees need to act according to the needs and emotional investment of the providers of help. Once the representation of refugees as deserving is damaged, the whole procedure runs the risk of being reversed. In other words, if the German public who welcomed the refugees received, in their perspective, terror and violence, then in return the refugees will lose the German public's empathy (Vollmer and Karakayali, 2018, p. 133). In the case of the Hartmann family, this notion of loss of deservingness is treated in an opposite direction, with the Hartmann family turning against the xenophobic voices in the film. The xenophobic neighbour; the German police who follow Diallo, surreally, with drones; the racist comments that Richard's friend makes about Diallo: all these influences stay outside the Hartmann family and do not enter the internal discourse surrounding Diallo. It is their xenophobic behaviour that makes them unworthy of empathy, and they are thus banned from entering the family. When it comes to Diallo, not only is he portrayed as the deserving good refugee, but he also gives back to the Hartmanns by bringing Angelika and Richard close again, finding Sophie a partner, and by helping Phillip and Batsi – therefore justifying the family's efforts and acceptance. Diallo does not lose the deservingness of empathy but rather strengthens it throughout the film, through mechanisms of comedy such as humanising the Other, as will be explored in detail later on.

In real life, these events, and hence their implications for public opinion, were also expressed in the political field. In *Open arms behind barred doors: Fear, hypocrisy and policy schizophrenia in the European migration crisis*, Greenhill (2016, p. 325) argues that Merkel faced a difficult atmosphere in the 2017 German elections. German public opinion was still split but

increasingly hostile towards migration and refugees, and Merkel faced challenges for the control of regional parliaments in three states. Supporters conceded that Merkel's policy had been a mistake. These elections were widely viewed as a test of the controversial policy, especially because migration had become the key political issue of the campaign – despite the fact that the crisis was only indirectly related to regional state problems. Voters punished Merkel's Christian Democratic Party in all three states – it lost control of two of the three – while the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany made noteworthy gains (Greenhill, 2016, p. 326). These perspectives show us that time plays a significant role in shaping Germany's welcoming stance towards refugees: both in terms of its moral obligation with regards to the Nazi regime, and in terms of the refugees' response to this help. As we will see, centrality of time is also evident in the film itself. The next section will review the history of German film, trying to locate *Welcome to the Hartmanns* within the contextual frame necessary for further analysis.

3.4   Locating the film within German cinema

This section is a historical review of the history of German film, a history inevitably interwoven with the traumatic past of the country, locating the film within its contextual cultural era. In 'From New German cinema to the post Wall cinema of consensus', Rentschler (2000, p. 260) argues that 'no other cinema has lent itself so consistently and productively to investigations into the relations between film and nationhood'. In Germany, dealing with contemporary reality often means confronting the Nazi past, either obliquely or directly; a history that many have preferred to forget but, which has so clearly influenced the present (Knight, 2004, p. 5). The ways in which films relate to the nation's past, and whether they provide a critical voice or not, serves as a distinctive tool between the eras of German film history, each era confronting this question differently. Exploring the New German Cinema, the New German Comedy, and the Cinema of Consensus, I will argue that *Welcome to the Hartmanns* does not 'fit' any of the categories, and actually embodies mixed elements from all of them.

The New German Cinema of the 1970s and early 1980s reflected the idealism of the time. Political issues relating to the student movement, anti-war protests, feminism and gay liberation were featured in the films of the era, and marked the return to specifically German issues and concerns, in particular the country's engagement – or rather, lack of – with its Nazi past (Bock & Bergfelder, 2009, p. 565). As described by Rentschler (2000, p. 263), films were generally issue- or author-orientated. Whereas the author-oriented films relied on the self-expression and personal

vision of the filmmaker, the issue film dealt with the social problems highlighted previously. Films did not just tell stories: rather, they investigated the past, in the hope of refining memories. New German Cinema was highly diverse in terms of cinematic styles, genre and forms, although some commonalities can be identified in terms of the topics and themes that dominated the era. Many stories revolved around the tension between the characters' desire for belonging and a deep need of independence, often finding expression in their desperate or violent opposition to family, community and the state (Hake, 2013, p. 191; Knight, 2004, p. 31). It was a challenging and unsettling cinema, taken seriously abroad because it was spurned at home. Many of these films were viewed by the German public as self-indulgent and indifferent to the audiences' desires (Rentschler, 2000, p. 266).

Reflecting on *Welcome to the Hartmanns*, the film partially aligns with this era's characteristics. It is replete with social relevance and deals with a political issue, engaging with Germany's past implicitly (as in scenes where Angelika brings it up regarding their xenophobic neighbour). In contrast to the tensions between belonging and independence typical of New German Cinema narratives, the film's narrative does not describe a conflictual situation, but rather the on-going efforts to integrate Diallo into the German society.

Moving on to the 1980s, Hake (2013, p. 128) notes that most historical overviews characterise the 1980s as a period of artistic decline, the death of Fassbinder in 1982 marking the end of New German Cinema as a formally innovative and politically provocative cinema. This decade is characterised by synergies between film and television, enabling film makers to find more possibilities for reaching larger audiences, even for films with difficult subject matters. Under these conditions, the return to generic conventions, especially those of melodrama, even opened up the history of the Third Reich to more detailed investigation, specifically with regard to the possibility of individual resistance and the involvement of ordinary Germans in anti-Semitic atrocities. The central role of film and television in this process of remembering became extremely clear in the success of the retelling of the Holocaust as family melodrama in the eponymous American television series. It sparked intense public debates in 1979; renewed interest in Germany's Nazi past during the 1980s cannot be separated from the historical debate about the nature of National Socialism and the significance of the Holocaust.

Before continuing this review of the history of German film, I will first describe the miniseries *Holocaust,* and its impact on public debate as well as German discourse on the country's past. As described in Dreisbach's *Transatlantic broadcasts: Holocaust in America and West Germany* (2009, p. 76), NBC produced a five-part nine-and-a-half-hour miniseries telling the story of the

Weiss family, attempting to narrate their story through the eyes of two families: the bourgeois, German-Jewish Weiss family, and the ethnically German Dorf family, whose patriarch was a leading member of the SS and an architect of the 'Final Solution'. The miniseries bought their stories into the intimate setting of the viewer's home. In January 1979, the miniseries was broadcast to an audience of 20 million, roughly one-third the population of West Germany. The broadcast received extensive media coverage, sparked increased public interest about the Holocaust, and preceded a political debate about the statute of limitations for war crimes, which threatened to end all trials of Nazi war criminals at the end of 1979.

A much clearer connection can be made between the broadcast of *Holocaust* and the following era of increased historical awareness in West German politics. Drawing from the lessons of *Holocaust*, West German politicians in the early 1980s – and in particular Chancellor Helmut Kohl, a historian by training – began a campaign to directly address issues of German identity in a post-Holocaust nation. Rather than suppressing the collective memory of its National Socialist past, Kohl began a process of creating a 'post-conventional' German national identity, based around public acts of remembrance. The media controversy and public response to *Holocaust* allowed for the kind of political discourse that Kohl would go on to popularise in the 1980s and in to the 1990s. Even if *Holocaust* did not succeed in affecting legislation directly, the miniseries catalysed changes to West Germany's political atmosphere (Dreisbach, 2009, pp. 93-94).

In other words, the miniseries made it possible, and legitimate, to talk about the Holocaust and public responsibility, and created a discussion that could link Germany's past and present. Films about the Third Reich followed two basic models: studies of significant historical figures and events, and more generic investigations into the fascism of everyday lives. The second type of film about the Third Reich concentrated on average characters, typical situations and ordinary lives. Those stories provided alternative points of view from which to confront the complexities of history beyond the dichotomies of guilt and innocence – and in doing so, to reconsider questions of agency and responsibility (Hake, 2013, p. 103).

Welcome to the Hartmanns, I argue here, reaffirms the need to talk about refugees, making it legitimate, indeed necessary to laugh about the Germans, as a consequence opening up the discussion about the country's responsibility and actions in the refugee crisis. The film makes it possible to examine the refugee topic in the domestic sphere, bringing it inside the German family, inside ordinary people's lives and daily routines. By inserting the refugee into the German family, and by applying the conventions of the comic genre, the film humanises the refugee and creates a space to negotiate German responsibility and identity.

Bock and Bergfelder (2009, p. 102) note that the trend towards greater commercial orientation, which began in the 1980s, continued in the 1990s as many German filmmakers conceived themselves less as auteurs with a particular political vision or aesthetic sensibility, and more as industry professionals. German cinema of this era was characterised by a wave of domestic comedies. These new self-styled comedies reflected a decided break with the counter cinema of the Autorenkino (auteur) era of the 1960s and 1970s. This breakthrough of comedies would have never happened without the investment of the major American production studios (Warner, UIP, Columbia, Buena Vista and Fox). Other than being thematically different, these films also utilised the narrative constructs of the dominant cinema. The rise of comedy in the 1990s contributed to the rebirth of narrative within cinema, and resulted in the rehabilitation of the story in German cinema: these films sharing a common structure-causality, linear narrative including closure, and a happy ending, a structure that *Welcome to the Hartmanns* is based on too (Rentschler, 2000, p. 269).

Writing about the German Comedy, Horak (2019, p. 39), in an analysis of narratives in German film history, suggests that 'the very term German comedy seemed for many years as oxymoron' (Horak 2019, p. 39).

. German humourlessness, he stated, was perceived as a national characteristic. This is in spite of the fact that the German film industry has produced thousands of comedies,. Horak (2019, p. 39) underscores what Elsaesser and Wedel (1999) had earlier noted – that German comedies are 'the bread and butter of the German film industry', regardless of the period. German comedies have the status as a linchpin of the country's film industry's economy, with its popularity in the mass medium making it particularly susceptible to investigation by the ruling class. Given its institutional basis, then, together with the particular circumstances of twentieth-century German history, film comedy has acted as a barometer indicating the winds of political change (Horak, 2019, p. 39). This notion applies to *Welcome to the Hartmanns* as well: being released in the midst of the refugee crisis and the open-door policy, the film serves as a platform for parsing political attitudes towards refugees.

Moreover, whilst academic engagement with German film comedy was initially hindered by a bias against the genre, as well as the belief that conformist discourses dominated the genre, recent research presents a more diverse picture. German comedy has come to be seen as marked by discontinuities, whose grounds are sought in a turbulent political history that erased a vibrant cultural phenomenon: Germany's Jewish heritage. Only through symbolic reunification with this

tradition has German comedy been able to move forward towards the creation of a revived German film comedy tradition (Horak, 2019, pp. 39-40).

Connecting the 1990s to the new millennium, the most notable development since the late 1990s has been the growing visibility of films made by, and about, members of migrant and transnational communities. This reflects a growing awareness among filmmakers of the many foreigners who live in Germany. The shift in the representation of Germany's various 'others' has contributed to the discourses of legitimisation necessitated by the growing pressure on traditional definitions of national identity in an increasingly multi-ethnic, multicultural world (Hake, 2013, p. 217).

The next chapter in German film history was the Cinema of Consensus. Analysing the German cinema of the late 1980s and 1990s, Rentschler (2000, p. 264) notes that:

> The most prominent directors of the post-wall era aim to please, which is to say that they consciously solicit a new German consensus. In this sense, the cinema they champion is one with a decidedly affirmative calling.

In their book *New directions in German cinema*, Cooke and Homewood argue that in the first decade of the new millennium, the notion of 'Cinema of Consensus' remained a key concept in the analysis of contemporary German film. This type of cinema, they argue, 'presented characters whose primary sense of person and place was rarely an overt function of their national identity, or directly impacted by Germany's difficult past' (2011, p. 3). In place of German tales of martyrdom and suffering, the New German Cinema of Consensus offers a tableaux of upwardly-mobile young professionals, who play with possibility and flirt with difference, living the present and worrying about their future, juggling careers, relationships and lifestyles. Films in this category lack oppositional energies and critical voices. This cinema stands in stark contrast to that of the previous generation, particularly films associated with the New German Cinema. According to Rentschler,

> The Cinema of Consensus consciously seeks ways of saying 'we' in its address to German audiences… As a result, it does not sell abroad because it is perceived as both too German and yet not German enough. It has stars familiar only to German audiences, and generic designs that are not readily exportable because they are done better and more effectively elsewhere … Although resolutely stylish, this cinema lacks a distinctive style; despite being professionally crafted, it is unabashedly conventional in its appearance and structure. (2000, p.275)

The level of adequacy of *Welcome to the Hartmanns* to this category is partial, and varies between the characters in the film. Whereas Richard and Angelika define much of their identities through their 'Germanness', Diallo's sense of identity is in some ways on 'hold' – he is waiting for his application for refugee status to be approved, or in other words for his 'Germanness' to be approved. As for the younger generation in the film, Sophie, Phillip, Tarek and Batsi do not directly deal with this aspect of their selves. Rather, they are much more worried about their careers, relationships and future. Finally, by not providing a critical voice, and by allowing the viewer to enjoy the experience rather than being unsettled, the film fits this category from this perspective as well.

The gap between New German Cinema and the Cinema of Consensus holds the contesting aspirations of creating images for a nation, and of speaking as a leading – and fortunate – voice of that nation. German filmmakers are moving ever further away from the avant-garde, rough-edged and self-reflexive sensibilities of the New German Cinema, producing straightforwardly melodramatic, identificatory narratives which follow international genre rules and resonate with international mainstream film audiences. Thus, in contradistinction to the failure of German films abroad in the 1990s, it would seem that today's filmmakers have at last found a way to be both German and international. Some contemporary German films have not lost the incendiary potential of New German Cinema, the ability to illuminate a darker world and to bring to light more proactive perspectives (Cooke & Homewood, 2011, p. 7; Rentschler, 2000, p. 274).

Investigating post-millennium cinema in Germany, Parkinson et al. (2010, p. 3) note that German cinema has gone through another transformation in cinematic conventions. The 'Cinema of Consensus' is no longer dominant; they argue that 'German cinema did not succeed in wholly exorcising difficult political issues and historical themes' (Parkinson et al. 2010, p. 4).

In line with this, many of today's German films are explored in political terms, and today's debates are the same ones that attended West German film of the 1960s-1980s, the core of the New German Cinema. The issues that were important then are important now as well.

As noted earlier, within the scope of the history of German film the Verhoeven family has an impressive presence. Simon Verhoeven's film falls in a hybrid category within the German film history landscape, presenting a mix of the characteristics of the different eras. The film does illuminate and foster the discussion about Germany's crucial issue of refugees and how this is affecting the renegotiation of German identity, taking into consideration the nation's past, by demonstrating some sensibilities of the New German Cinema. However, by not emphasising a

critical voice, it is also in line with the Cinema of Consensus and offers a 'therapeutic' solution for the refugee problem in Germany by reaffirming and strengthening the notion of what it means to be German.

3.5   Exploring the use of comedy and its conventions within the film

One of humour's main abilities is the power to humanise the Other. Writing about Islamophobia in the post 9/11 era, Shryock (2010, p. 195) argues that the ability of comedy to disclose the rock bottom of our identities as 'human' plays a significant role in showing the commonalities beneath the surface of 'difference'. In other words, humour usually stands for humanity; if someone has a sense of humour, then he is just like us, likeable (Shryock, 2010, p. 195). In line with this, Meyer (2000, p. 317) suggests that when an audience is highly sympathetic to and quite familiar with a topic of humour, they may experience an identification with the user of this humour. In other words, humour in this case serves to strengthen the commonality and shared meaning perceived between communicators. The fact that Diallo has a sense of humour, and is able to laugh both at himself and with his hosts, makes it easier for both the Hartmann family and the audience to connect to him, to find a common ground beneath all the differences, easing the tension and threat that this topic might otherwise hold.

Some research has focused on humour's ability to simultaneously diffuse and highlight cultural differences. Bevis (2013, pp. 11-12) describes the hybridity of comedy as an exhilarating release from social control, and as a source of transgressive pleasure. However, comedy can also confirm a cultural community's most fundamental beliefs and values, directing its scorn against the outsiders and nonconformists who threaten this basic order. In other words, comedy can highlight the differences and defuse them at the same time. Following this direction, Green and Linders (2016, p. 242) have written about the impact of comedy on racial and ethnic discourse. They note that ethnic comedy signals a more complex development of race relations, whereby racial humour can simultaneously serve as both a mechanism for greater racial understanding and reduced racial tension, as well as a means of increased racial awareness and political mobilisation (Green and Linders, 2016, pp. 242-243).

Welcome to the Hartmanns deals with integration, borders, us versus the other, Germans versus non-Germans. One of the tools used to convey such a discourse is the comic genre, due to its sociological attributes. In his book *Humour – a very short introduction*, Carroll (2014, p. 76)

describes humour as a 'source of social information about the norms that govern the cultures that we inhabit, the cultures that are us' (Carroll 2014, p. 76). When we laugh together, we are in effect acknowledging our membership in a community. This is a community bound together by the norms presumed by the humour at hand; we are also, simultaneously, celebrating that community when we assemble for merriment. Laughter serves as a signal to each and all of us that we are bound by shared assumptions. Humour is involved in the construction and the permanent reconstruction and maintenance of what we might call 'Us' – the 'Us' that abides by the pertinent norms. The 'Them' are those who deviate from the norms commemorated by the comic amusement in which the 'Us' participate. When Angelika dismisses the racist neighbour who comments about Diallo, the neighbour is represented as both amusing and grotesque; it is there that humour serves as a border between who is 'in' (Diallo is included in the family) and who is 'out' (the xenophobic neighbour is excluded from the family discourse).

The choice of the comic genre can be justified through exploring the history of German comedies, and what it means for Germany to produce such films. One such analysis can be found in Brockmann's (2000, p.37) *The politics of German comedy*, reviewing Dietrich Schwanitz's *Shylock Syndrome (1997)*. The latter text maps the changing relationship between German history and comedy; it links political history and a democratic regime to Germany's ability to develop its humour. Schwanitz accepts the idea that England, France and the United States represent the essentially 'normal' path toward democratic modernity, while Germany embodies an 'abnormal' failure to develop a democratic culture and politics. This failure ultimately resulted in the national disaster of the Hitler dictatorship. The political exceptionalism is accompanied by an artistic exceptionalism embodied in the fact that Germans, unlike their democratic counterparts in the West, were unable to develop their own successful version of comedy. According to Schwanitz, the citizens of a democracy have to learn to live with disagreements which, in a nondemocratic culture, would be settled by force. In order to live with such disagreements, people need humour. Humour is thus a prerequisite for the development of a democratic culture able to tolerate difference. Instead of marking a distinction between upper and lower classes, comedy marks the difference between normal and abnormal European nations (Brockmann, 2000, p. 35). In other words, a healthy democratic Germany is also a funny Germany, a country in which a 'refugee comedy' can become the most watched film of the year. The fact that this film is a comedy has more to do with how German citizens would like to see themselves —liberal, accepting and open – rather than how they see the refugee problem.

Writing about limits of comedy, Popović (2018, p. 597-598) argues that answering the question of what can and cannot be joked about is complicated. What complicates it more is the fact that comedy is, typically, very culture-specific. Jokes about other groups are understood in terms of defining ourselves in relation to others, constructing the 'us' and 'them', and in the creation of a sense of identity. To understand the subtleties of humour language is important, as is recognizing the cultural codes of the setting. In addition, the reception of comedy largely depends on shared cultural codes. This explains, in part why a film is more likely to be successful if it is produced locally. Having said that, 'success' here does not necessarily imply laughter or amusement (this is much more complex); it does imply, however, that the communication codes employed are familiar, and that the target viewer understands the intention of a joke.

In relation to the wider German film industry, Twark (2020, p. 264) notes that comedy is currently the most successful domestic film genre in Germany (Germany Movie Index 2020). Twenty-first century German film comedies, she continues, encompass a diverse range of topics and strategies of humour. But despite this diversity of topic and tone, very few film comedies produced in Germany have successfully engaged international audiences. This is partly due to language and cultural barriers. However, many contemporary German comedies only work if they are engaged with as products of the country's history over the course of the twentieth century. Even for films made in the last two decades, the discourses that constitute major German-language comedy films tend to be firmly rooted in historical events. That said, the German comedy film industry has taken a creative approach to introducing the contemporary alongside the historical perspective. The key here lies in introducing tropes with a global relevance, even as they respond primarily to German sensibilities. They tell universal stories of displacement, identity (re)construction and prejudice, even as they reference historical figures and events —the Second World War and the refugee crisis, Goethe and Angela Merkel.

Building on Twark's observations, I would like to highlight the tension between the globality of the topic at the core of Welcome to the Hartmanns – the refugee crisis – and the domesticity of the film. The relatively narrow vision of the film's creators creates a barrier limiting the potential influence of the film, through its emphasis on the 'Germanness' of the story of the Hartmanns and Diallo. This is a German film, telling a German story, aimed at a German audience; it seeks to give them with another perspective on their reality, albeit by underscoring global aspects of German culture and society.

Considering transcultural film comedies (a description that *Welcome to the Hartmanns* matches) Twark (2020, p. 269-272) observes that these are often 'culture clash comedies'. In other words,

in their depictions of people from two or more cultures interacting in their daily lives, these comedies expose the (at times amusing) incongruities between the divergent worldviews and customs – but also, such films tease out the commonalities and fears that the two groups share, along with a desire for belonging to family or home. In our case, examples of this 'culture clash' can be seen when Diallo expresses his surprise that Sophie is not yet married with children; and when Angelika tells him about a nightmare she had, of terrorists attacking her hometown, and Diallo replies sadly that her nightmare is his reality.

Welcome to the Hartmanns is intended as a exploration profound issues in contemporary Germany. By satirically depicting the attitudes of wealthy autochthonous Germans towards refugees who do not conform to their rules of etiquette and politically correctness, the film prompts deeper thought about identity construction.

As Cameron (2015, p. 286) suggests in *Can poverty be funny? The serious use of humour as a strategy of public engagement for global justice*, humour's ability to attract public interest might serve as another explanation for the choice of genre, as perhaps a more practical and commercial one. Current research strongly suggests that humour can work as a 'hook' to attract initial public interest in serious issues, and to provoke critical questioning and public discussion. In addition to seeking pleasure from entertainment consumption, individuals, at times, also use entertainment as a means of contemplating human poignancies and meaningful life questions (Cameron, 2015, p. 286). To conclude, humour provides a productive platform to raise the topic of refugees, to evoke the audience's empathy, to neutralise the threat of the Other. It is a platform to let the Other in, openly – but at the same time to keep German identity strong and stable, and to create the sense of responsibility and generosity, as will be discussed later on. The next section will delve into the charged position of Diallo as an adolescent refugee, transitioning between childhood and adulthood, and the complex position that Diallo holds in his journey from being a refugee to becoming German.

3.6   Thematic analysis

In the following section, I analyse the role and implications of Diallo's relationship with the Hartmann family. The main issue that the film evolves around is integration. Besides the explicit efforts the Hartmanns to integrate Diallo into their family and German society, I would argue that

there is another level of integration which the film seeks to reveal. This is the integration of each character with its own past, and from this the ability to move forward to the next step in their lives.

In his book *Film comedy*, King (2002, p. 7) argues that comedy tends to involve departures of a particular kind, from what are considered as the 'normal' routines of life of the social group in question. In order to be marked as comic, the events represented, or the mode of representation, tend to be different in characteristic ways from what would usually be expected in the non-comic world. Paying close attention to the relationship between Diallo and the Hartmann family, a relationship that by definition serves as a departure from the Hartmann's routine, I aim to highlight the unique representations and reveal the several cinematic mechanisms of comic portrayals through which the film seeks to tell the story of refugees arriving in Germany. It is evident, from the publicity materials for *Welcome to the Hartmanns,* as to what the viewer can expect from the film, something that King (2002, p. 12) also explores. One feels a welcoming atmosphere, as indicated by the film's name and publicity poster (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: *Welcome to the Hartmanns* poster

We can see Diallo sitting in the centre of the frame, the centre of the family, seated between the two parents, Angelika and Richard, as if he is their son. He is external to the family

by appearance, but at the same time is positioned as central to the family. By contrast, Diallo's character is not named on the poster, which gives the feeling that he is ignored or does not exist.

It is also noteworthy that Tarek and Diallo, the two characters that are external to the nuclear family, are of (visually) different ethnic origins to the other principals in the film. Writing about Turkish German Comedy as 'Transnational Intervention', Bower (2011) argues that 'Ethno-cultural comedy does not actively dismantle cultural and ethnic stereotypes, but instead uses magnification to fix the audience's gaze on their absurdity ' (2011, p.1). Drawing on this observation, I would argue that the visual differences between the Hartmanns and Diallo and Tarek emphasize the inherent differences between the family members and those who are expected to be accepted into the family. This difference is not talked about in the film – literally – yet it provides evidence to the viewer, through the visuality and physical differences that it represents.

Going back to the poster, the physical position and posture of each character gives hints about their initial relationship with Diallo: Angelika's comfortable body language, Richard's objections to Diallo, Sophie's focus on Tarek, and Phillip's preoccupation with his phone. This poster is important in terms of the feelings and experience it evokes in the audience, who are likely to see the poster before seeing the film. Following Vaage (2006, p. 27), writing about analytic philosophy and phenomenology, the physical feelings that the spectator experiences whilst watching the characters might inform their understanding of them productively and independently of the narrative. In other words, the audience might experience recognition of the character's bodily state, just from how the Hartmanns and Diallo are positioned in the poster – even before the audience understands the situation the character is in, or even before the film starts. The poster is important in terms of what it portrays to future viewers, and helps to prime the audience with the knowledge that they are about to watch a comedy (King, 2002, p. 12).

Before analysing the themes that I have identified in the film, I would like to first turn attention to the specific, unique experiences that the audience of the comic genre go through whilst watching the film. This is both from the perspective of the genre characteristics, and from the somatic-bodily phenomenological experiences that viewers experience in a film theatre, highlighting the amount of investment that the viewer has in the film and its outcomes.

Exploring the comic genre, Horton and Rapf (2015, p. 4) argue that comedy is one of the most important ways in which a culture talks to itself about itself. They suggest that comedy implies a special relationship with and to its audience. Whether directly or indirectly, comedy

through the ages has delighted in breaking down the 'fourth wall' so that the actors can see and communicate with the audience. By breaking this 'fourth wall', *Welcome to the Hartmanns* is able to access a complex issue, the refugee crisis, and connects it to its audience.

The thematic analysis is based on a phenomenological perspective that Hanich (2010, 2012) presents in his articles *Cinematic shocks: recognition, aesthetic experience, and phenomenology,* and *Collective viewing*. Hanich (2010, 2012) explores the term 'cinematic shock', which can be defined as somatic responses, such as laughter, weeping and screaming, to films. He suggests that cinematic shock enables the viewer to experience an aesthetic recognition of two kinds. First is aesthetic experience as the individual self: due to the strong, affective lived-body experience, brought about by the encounter with the aesthetic object, the recipient feels both self-affirmed and self-aware in his own self embodied existence. Second is aesthetic experience: a collective recognition of accord, in which the recipient experiences confirmation as part of a group responding equally – in accordance – to an aesthetic object. The aesthetic object is perceived in common and in accordance, thus creating a bond.

I will now briefly explain Hanich's main arguments, in order to apply them to my thematic analysis in the following section. Let us start with the definition of 'cinematic shock', which Hanich (2012, p. 583) describes as:

> the kind of startling 'Boo' effect describes the concurrence of an aesthetic strategy designed to create a shocking phenomenological experience with shocked viewers who experience precisely the phenomenological experience aimed at by the aesthetic strategy: Shock – just as with lust or pain, cannot exist without someone to experience it. (Hanich, 2012, p. 583)

Cinematic shock unsettles the relationship between the viewer and the film. Often initiated by a 'shock-cut', the cinematic shock abruptly 'cuts' our deep and tacit merger with the onscreen world, thus ending the hitherto deep immersion. Our otherwise backgrounded bodies enter the foreground of awareness, or is at least felt more strongly. Like an epiphany, the absent body literally comes to mind and is felt as a tangible presence. It is an unsettling effect; the viewer is dislocated. Leaving his 'inner centre', he is able to reflect on himself from an eccentric position. Many viewers experience the foregrounding of the body as both self-affirmative and pleasurable. The cinematic shock is self-affirmative because it enables a heightened experience of presence. I feel, therefore I am. I recognise myself because I feel myself affected.

According to Hanich (2010, 2012), in cinema three aspects merge into a single whole: the individual film experience of the 'transcendental' subject; the lived-body experience of the 'corporeal' subject affected by viewing surroundings; and the social spectatorial experience of the 'collective' subject. However, not all aspects weigh in equally. The film experience dominates, whereas the body and the cinema have been pushed to the phenomenal background. The distribution of attention is not static; at various points throughout the film, it comes to motion and shifts its emphasis. The body, as well as the rest of the audience might become foregrounded and claim our attention, while the film loses centre stage position. In moments of strong shocks, the lived body stands out and briefly relegates the film to the periphery of consciousness. I thus gain self-awareness, an awareness of myself as an embodied viewer. In other words, I am not recognised by an 'Other', but do recognise myself as an embodied being. The film takes most of the viewer's attention for the majority of the time, but in times of laughter or jokes, this attention is transferred to internal division changes, and the viewer becomes more aware of himself as an embodied being, as well as aware of his surroundings.

Most importantly, during an aesthetic experience we adopt a certain stance towards the world, an aesthetic attitude. Aesthetic experience is an active, voluntary encounter with an object that only becomes an aesthetic through the attention we give it. The audience who came to see the film about the Hartmanns came there of their own will, willing to be opened and vulnerable to what it might 'do' to them. This principle applies for the internal narrative of the film as well. The Hartmanns were active and again voluntarily decided to take in a refugee, accepting the change it might bring and the implications it will carry for them. Without their active gaze on Diallo, he would not have existed for us, as the audience.

Another aspect that characterises the aesthetic experience is the safe ontological distance that it presupposes. This is because the movie theatre's 'here' and the filmic world is 'there' are of different existential orders. It provides us with a form of relative safety, hence we are free to watch and listen; it also allows other aspects to come into view, such as our lived-body experience. It is easier and safer to see another family on the screen taking in a refugee than it is to actually decide to take in a refugee. This distance allows the viewer to see beyond personal anxieties such as a fear of the 'other', because the experience unfolding on the screen does not directly affect his own life. Moreover, I would argue that this distance serves as a tool to neutralise the threat – or at least to make a move such as taking in or welcoming a refugee to be seen as more accessible and possible.

In *Collective viewing,* Hanich (2010, p. 2) investigates the influences of watching films with others, arguing that we then enter a social relationship that fundamentally changes our experience of the film. The physicality of the laughter can change the degree of awareness of our relationship to other audience members. The theme of Diallo as a unifying force will be further developed later on in this chapter.

Going back to the opening sequence and the ways in which Diallo is portrayed as a 'good refugee', the scene with the glasses holds another message, that is from Diallo to the film's viewers. It is as if he is telling us, 'I want you to accept me, I want to look like I deserve it, that I am like you'; but also, 'beware, because I am watching you as well'. Writing about identity politics in comedies, Göktürk (2004, p. 121) argues that immigrants can become performers rather than remaining pawns in someone else's game. The rules of play can be reconfigured. It is at this point that the ethnographic gaze can be turned around, that supposedly settled non-immigrants can be mocked and unsettled, and themselves be incorporated into somebody else's game. By watching these unexpected interactions, the audience too is incorporated into the culture of performance. Immigrant comedies, at their best, can train viewers in not taking themselves too seriously. Through strategies of ethnic role-play, distancing and disguise, and mocking social conventions, they have the power to destabilise discourses and iconographies of power. While the scene is not a funny or shocking moment in itself, I would argue that it shifts the attention of the viewer from the screen to himself, and we encounter him with what Diallo's gaze might make him feel. In other words, Diallo wants the viewer to feel watched, just as Diallo himself feels. This invitation blurs the boundaries between the film and the audience; in a way, the film tries to communicate with the audience, seeking to create closeness with Diallo and his 'Otherness'. A closeness that once might have threatened the audience, it is here where the ontological distance protects the viewer. More of Diallo's point of view and gaze will be explored shortly, but this scene implicitly hints to us what is about to come: the triple gaze between Diallo, the German hosts (the Hartmanns), and the audience. In the next scene, we see the film's title, *Welcome to the Hartmanns*. This could be seen as a dialog between Diallo and the name of the film, and from this point the film creates an accepting atmosphere.

As discussed already, the film explores a number of transitions: the adolescence characteristics of transition, the 'in-betweenness' described earlier, and the comic genre facets used to create a new social order – this last to be reviewed shortly. The cinematic mechanisms I have identified in the film represent and elevate the stages of these transitions. Firstly, by pointing to what it is that is wrong (Diallo as truth detector); secondly, by filling these voids (Diallo

as solution); thirdly, by creating something new (Diallo as unifying force); and finally, by accepting the past (time as another family member). This continuum of themes describes the social and psychological transition between the past and future, between a closed society and an open one, between inclusion and exclusion – all aspects of adolescence. With each theme, I will apply the phenomenological terms of the Cinematic Shock, and by that integrate the journey on screen with the viewer's experience throughout the film.

3.7   Diallo as truth detector

In line with the opening sequence and the focus on Diallo's gaze, Diallo's first role in the family is to see the truth, to recognize the situation, to understand what it is that is missing, and to be able to say it out loud directly to the family members in front of him. Throughout the film, Diallo confronts each character with their own 'truth'. He tells Richard that he is an old man; he takes away Angelika's alcohol, telling her to be nicer to her husband and highlighting Richard's needs by telling her how lonely Richard is; when Sophie moves back in with her parents, Diallo urges her to find love and to make children.

Being this 'truth detector', Diallo brings to mind the child in the fairytale *The Emperor's New Clothes* who sees the truth and has the courage to challenge authority. *The Emperor's New Clothes* contains an underlying fantasy about our cultural desire to unmask duplicity and self-deception and to speak the truth, no matter how painful or humiliating it may be to those in authority – or perhaps *especially* because it will be painful and humiliating (Andersen, 2007). In other words, Diallo's courage in telling the truth, and the fact that he holds the truth in those examples, gives him power and strengthens his character. See figure 8: here we see Diallo confronting Richard about his age, and wondering why Sophie is still childless

Figure 8: Diallo with Richard and Sophie

Having said that, the fact that Diallo's gaze is so naïve and straightforward can also be interpreted as another way of infantilising him, giving him characteristics of a child. This again emphasizes the gap between Kabongo's age (35) and that of his character.

Another way to analyse Diallo's gaze can be found in Shryock (2010, p. 204). Considering Islamophobia in the post 9/11 era, Shryock argues that both fear and laughter are reactions to 'Otherness'. In both cases, there is a breakdown of the social consensus, the shared vision. The majority knows only its own view of the world, and from its vantage point of view the minority may look funny. However, the minority has access to two visions: the majority vision, which it is obliged to cultivate in order to 'fit in'; and its own particular view. The group with the double vision, the minority, is more likely to see incongruities between the two worldviews, and so finds more to laugh at. Diallo, as a minority, as an outsider and as a younger person with childish characteristics, has two points of view. He can see the majority's point of view, how the Hartmanns live their lives and what it is that they are missing, and he can see his own minority point of view. This dual perspective, his 'Otherness' and exteriority to the family, enables him to identify and speak to the Hartmanns about their blind spots (Shryock, 2010, p. 205). It is Diallo's gaze that sees the truth, and by that he strengthens his character, overcoming the differences and easing his 'Otherness' – both to the Hartmanns and to the audience.

Applying Hanich's Cinematic Shock effect, when the audience laugh from this directness, the viewer becomes more aware of himself; he is able to adopt a critical voice towards the Hartmanns, as well as identify with Diallo's gaze towards the Hartmann's (and perhaps even his own) blind spots. Once the viewer's attention is interrupted by laughter, they clear the space for

Diallo's view of the world and allow him to own the truth. In this way, the figure of Diallo introduces a critical and sceptical voice to the German family.

3.8　　Diallo as the solution to filling the void

Diallo's entrance into the family highlights the deficiencies of its internal relationships. Diallo fills the void at the heart of the family. Even though he is not a child by age, he is a child in terms of his function in the family, in terms of the treatment he receives and the parental care he gets. After he is taken in by Richard and Angelika, Angelika starts to teach him German, puts notes around the house with names of items and their meanings. Angelika can love and nurture him in ways she is no longer able with her husband or children. At this point in the film, Diallo serves as a stand-in child for her, an outlet for Angelika to 'give'. From the cinematic point of view, there are several scenes constructed in a way that keeps Richard outside the Angelika-Diallo dyad. In one scene, Angelika and Diallo look at a photo album together. Angelika shows Diallo a picture of her mother, and Diallo returning the sentiment by proffering a picture of his own mother. At this point, Richard enters the living room, saying that he won't be back for dinner. Another example of this stand-in role emerges through Diallo fixes things in the house. Angelika is cross with Richard for not fixing the stacked door of the house; Diallo fixes the door. This can be analysed as a symbolic reference to Germany's open-door policy, signifying the change that the Hartmanns are going through: from a house that is closed to an open house, a welcoming house that includes Diallo in it. He fixes the door and plants flowers in the garden, whilst Richard is in the background reading the newspaper. In these two examples, we can see how Richard is framed as an outsider to the situation. He is not close to either his wife or Diallo, he is distanced and lonely whilst Diallo forms a close bond with Angelika. In line with this presence of Diallo between Richard and Angelika, Richard and Diallo share a bathroom, an intimacy that can reflect a parental relationship.

Sophie is able to form an unthreatening relationship with Diallo. She finds herself able to open up to him; they watch romantic comedies together, and he is like a surrogate brother to her. This is not to say that they behave like a couple. Instead, this is the first time, according to what Sophie says about her past with men, that she is able to form a positive relationship with a man – an experience which later helps in forming a relationship with Tarek.

Finally, Diallo grows closer to Batsi, Phillip's son. Phillip is very busy with his job and pays little attention to his son. Diallo fills this paternal gap. He joins Batsi and his friends in shooting a video, and they play together and spend time together. Diallo also attends Batsi's class, telling his story of migration and thus saving Batsi from failing the course. See figure 9

Figure 9: Diallo in front of Batsi's class

This action can also be interpreted as Batsi giving Diallo (and the viewers) an opportunity to tell his story: to be heard, to receive recognition and empathy. I will expand on this point shortly. I would argue here that the fact that Diallo tells his story to Batsi's classmates serves as a barrier to the film's audience. The film's audience is protected by another audience, the classmates who receive the story first. Adding this layer of protection serves to soften the threat in Diallo's story and his 'Otherness'. I believe that it is here where Hanich's notion of 'ontological distance' applies. The viewer is not confronted directly with these feelings of fear from change, or the complexity of introducing a new member to the family. The viewers are protected by the fact that these events take place on the screen, and are thus freer to listen to the story itself rather than to their own concerns and worries emanating from such a situation. Another example of softening the threat can be found in the scene where Angelika and Richard interview potential refugees to take in to their home. This scene is shaped, cinematically, through fast editing and joyful music. The viewer sees many refugee family structures: couples, siblings, and parents with their children. The Hartmann couple keep saying that they are looking to take in a single refugee, and by saying that they tell us about the void they are trying to fill – they are not looking for a whole family, rather one person who can fill the void of their empty nest. When they meet Diallo, one of the first things he says is that he has no family and that it is only him. When Richard asks him why he came to Germany, Diallo said that he loves Manuel Neuer, the popular German

footballer. Richard is surprised by the answer, but then Diallo says 'it's just a joke'. This is an example of using humour to lessen the threat and the tension created in such a situation. Also, by telling a joke, Diallo signals to his hosts – and to the audience – that he is as human as they are, which strengthens the ability of the Hartmann family and the audience to feel empathy and closeness to Diallo, rather than threat and foreignness. The viewer is able to see the whole picture, maybe even enjoy it, and see the complexity and the benefits of such an act, accepting Diallo's 'Otherness' without feeling threatened by it.

3.9   Diallo as a unifying force

According to King (2002, p. 68), comedy can result from a sense of things being out of place, mixed up, or not quite right in various ways. One set of examples can be found in films that derive much of their comedy from temporal, geographical, or other forms of displacement. We see this in *Welcome to the Hartmanns,* when Diallo's entrance into the family creates a change and triggers a reorganisation of its members. He reveals, through their opinions of him, the differences between the family members. However, this changes throughout the film into a unified welcoming, with the final part of the film describing how the order is back to normal and how relationships have been restored and fixed. In other words, the film moves from breaking the harmony of the Hartmann family into creating it anew, combining what King (2002, p. 8) presents as two different conceptions of comedy. Firstly, comedy in the sense of laughter, anarchy or disruption of harmony; and secondly comedy in the sense of a movement towards harmony, integration and the happy ending – conceptions that are often combined, as is the case in this film.

In *Anatomy of criticism: four essays*, Frye (2020, p. 286) argues that the theme of the comedy is the integration of society, which usually takes the form of incorporating a central character into it, Diallo in this case. In *Comedy, melodrama, and gender: theorizing the genres of laughter*, Karlyn (2008, p. 156) suggests that the specific variety of reconciliation offered by a romantic comedy can be linked to a broader dramatic tradition, that of the classical 'New Comedy'. This is characterised by scenarios in which society is led to a new form of integration through the union of younger couples. The idealistic opportunities of a new social order lie in the couple's triumph over the obstacles separating them, and in a child or new life implicit in their union (Karlyn, 2008, pp. 156-158). In our case, the film ends with a very symbolic scene, in which we see Diallo with his running group, starting to talk to a girl he likes as they run together. We

also see a number of other couples bought together in the film. Angelika and Richard get a new start; Sophie and Tarek develop a relationship; and Diallo starts a relationship with his running friend. It is this scene that represents something deeper than the characters themselves. This reconciliation at the individual level implies the reconciliation of broader thematic issues. The implication is that social differences of class and power are fundamentally less important factors, that can be stripped away to reveal an essential shared humanity beneath. These romantic couplings and unifications symbolise the new direction Germany is heading in, a society in which there is a place for everyone. This society emerges at the conclusion of the comedy, representing a kind of moral norm, or a pragmatically free society (Karlyn, 2008, pp. 156-158).

The final part of the film (prior to the running group scene described above) starts when we see that Diallo's application has been denied, and the family uniting to help him. For the first time in the film, Angelika stays with Richard near his hospital bed, and by that she chooses Richard over Diallo and stays loyal to him. Philip returns home for Diallo's hearing, after Batsi calls him asking for help. By the time Phillip arrives at the courtroom, Batsi has shown the judge the video of Diallo telling his story at Batsi's school, and his application is approved. At the end of the film, the scene before the final running scene described above, we see the family together. Richard and Angelika, Sophie and Tarek, Phillip and Batsi and Diallo. All are reunited, happy and hopeful, enjoying a barbeque in the backyard of the house. See figure 10

Figure 10: The Hartmanns and Diallo - Barbeque scene

This party brings us back to Frye (p. 163), and the argument that the appearance of this new society is frequently signalled by some kind of party or festive ritual at the end of a play. This party at the end of the film reveals another aspect of the power of 'festivals' to defuse cultural

and hierarchical barriers between its members. Writing about comedy, King (2002, p. 64) refers to Mikhail Bakhtin's influential study of European popular folk culture in the Middle Ages. The world of the Middle Ages, Bakhtin suggested, was hierarchical, based on strict ideas of order and rank. In certain privileged moments of carnival and festival, however, the usual hierarchies and restrictions were suspended. All that was usually fixed and established was open to change, renewal and a constant state of becoming. The high could be rendered low and the low high. A world turned comically upside down and inside out. The tendency of comedy is to include as many people as possible in its final society. The blocking characters are more often than not reconciled and converted, rather than simply repudiated. This might explain why we don't see all the other opponents to Diallo that we had met through the film. It is in this space, of the festival, that the film celebrates the reconciliation, performing the erasure of the hierarchies between the Hartmanns and Diallo, between Germans and refugees, representing the essence of the integration and the creation of the new social order.

Parallel to the reunification happening on the screen, the viewer at this point experiences what Hanich (2010, 2012) describes as an aesthetic experience, a collective recognition of accord. This is when the recipient experiences confirmation as part of a group responding equally – in accordance – to an aesthetic object and to what he has argued regarding the uniqueness of a collective viewing. The aesthetic object is perceived in common and in accordance, thus creating a bond. Once we view a film with others, we inevitably enter a social relationship that profoundly changes our experience of the film. Strong emotions as well as their concomitant expressive reactions, can influence the mode in which viewers experience their relationship to each other. The viewers intentionally experience something together and similarly, not individually or in silos separated from each other, and it is here that the 'We-connection' described earlier applies. When I laugh, I am distanced from my engagement with the film itself. It is as though the film has distanced me, destroying my immersion in the world. This often results in an increased awareness of my presence in the movie theatre. Enabled by the particular spatial, social and technological qualities of the movie theatre, the collective emotions are accountable for the development of something that was non-existent before the beginning of the film: a shared 'We-connection' among largely anonymous strangers. This bond, this sense of integration with the other viewers, is parallel to the creation process of the new society emerging on the screen in front of the viewer's eyes.

3.10　Time as another family member

Analysing the German 'Culture of Welcome', Conrad and Aðalsteinsdóttir (2017, p. 2) argue that social constructivist and Habermasian perspectives emphasise ideational factors, which offer important insights. This is because they draw attention to the normative role of concepts such as *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, coming-to-terms with and taking responsibility for the crimes committed under National Socialism. According to them, this concept was clearly one of the leitmotifs of the foreign policy of the Bonn and Berlin Republics – both in relation to Germany's role in European integration and the wider world. Later in the article, Conrad and Aðalsteinsdóttir (2017, p. 10) review sociologist Wolf Lepenie's claims about German perceptions of time and past events, leaning on Nietzsche's statement highlighting the 'typical German' preoccupation with the past. This, they argue underlies the Merkel government's approach to the refugee crisis, in that it is an approach that looks to the future in an attempt to correct the mistakes of the past – but in doing so loses sight of the present. Applying this insight to the film, I argue that the film serves as a healing tool, enabling enables Germans to envision a new beginning; a new chapter in their history, the complete opposite of their Nazi past. In other words, a future that is welcoming to refugees and a society that makes efforts to integrate them into it. On a political level, this preoccupation with the past is considered highly problematic, precisely because the sense of moral obligation drawn from historical memory has a clear tendency to both downplay the risks associated with mass immigration into the country, and to demand similar policy choices of other EU member states (Conrad & Aðalsteinsdóttir, 2017, p. 10). This theme will be further developed in the thematic analysis section, as this time perception is a key factor in the film and its meaning.

Diallo's entrance into the family happens at a point in time when each family member is just about to begin a new chapter of life. Richard and Angelika are about to retire; Phillip is about to move to Shanghai; Sophie needs to grow up. It is not only Diallo waiting for his application to be approved. The entire family is in suspension, caught between different phases in their lives. Cinematically, the film deals with each character's past in different ways. Richard does not want to accept that he is getting old and refuses to let go of the past. Angelika gives away old clothes, letting go of old things. Sophie gives away old dolls, and the relationship between Tarek and Sophie is based on the fact they have known each since childhood. As they get closer, their conversations shift between memories and the present. Another example of how the past is present in the film can be seen in the scene where, responding to her racist neighbour who suggests that Diallo is a terrorist, Angelika turns to Diallo and says:

> In Germany religion is like an opinion… you can have more than one. You can never tell
> someone what they should believe… that would be fascism and we had enough of that.

This could be seen as an implicit reference to Germany's problematic past, or another way of showing how this past is still present in the minds of German citizens.

Before discussing the German perception of time, I would like to draw attention to Diallo's past, emphasising that his family history is the only story that gets to be told directly and fully. This happens when Batsi introduces Diallo to his class, his audience for his story about his parents and siblings, all of whom he lost to Boko Haram terrorists. Additionally, the name of the terror organisation, Boko Haram, is usually translated as 'Western education is forbidden'. This, and the fact the director chose to locate Diallo's story inside a classroom, shows again the difference between enlightened Germany and Diallo's past.

By revealing Diallo's past, the audience gets an opportunity to experience what Landsberg (2004, p.12) coins in her book, *Prosthetic memory: the transformation of American remembrance in the age of mass culture,* as 'Prosthetic Memory'. 'Prosthetic Memory' emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, in an experiential site such as a film, theatre or a museum theatre. According to Landsberg: 'In this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself into a larger history. The person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative, but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past events – albeit one which he or she did not live through' (Landsberg, p. 12). This resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape that person's subjectivity and politics. In other words, the audience is confronted with Diallo's past, and although it is most likely they have not lived through that past, it has an effect on the audience, their subjectivity, and how they perceive Diallo and refugees in general. Moreover, Hanich's argument about collective viewing is relevant once again, in the argument that collective viewing can evoke the mutual sense of guilt or responsibility that might not have been experienced fully if the viewer was on his own (Hanich, 2010 p. 10). In other words, hearing Diallo's past can evoke a sense of responsibility towards refugees, in the light of the German past, within the viewer. Obviously, Germans are not the only audience for this film; but the very strong identification of the Hartmann family with Germany throughout the film makes one think about Germany's history even without being German oneself. Such collective viewing and the mutual experiences that the audience go through strengthens this sense of accountability, responsibility and good citizenship in creating an open and liberal society.

In *Beyond good and evil: prelude to a philosophy of the future*, Nietzsche (2015, p. 240) argues that the German perception of time was that 'they belong to the day before yesterday and the day after tomorrow — but they still have no today' (Nietzsche, 2015, p. 240). Entering the Hartmann's lives, Diallo sheds light on this German perception of time, in which the present is missing, revealing more gaps in the family's lives. Diallo's presence in the lives of the Hartmanns fulfils two types of voids. The void in their family, in which he steps in as if he was another child of theirs, with examples given in the previous theme; and a void in time perception, which is evident in each character's life.

In line with this, one aspect of the integration of Diallo into German society is through unifying his time perception with Germany's time perception. Writing about the existence of a spatio-temporal regime of knowledge management in Germany, and in Europe as a whole, El-Tayeb (2013, p. 308) argues that certain populations configure as displaced and anachronistic. These populations are perceived as being in transit, coming from elsewhere, momentarily here but without any roots in their so-called host nation. The temporal suspension of racialized communities, being here but not really belonging, also produces an 'out-of-placeness' feeling. According to El-Tayeb:

> Due to their precarious position within Europe, communities of colour are defined through an excess of movement while simultaneously experiencing an extreme lack of it. Their discursive framing as eternal migrants, permanently stuck in a temporary condition, justifies and produces the material conditions of their exclusion, while preventing the acquisition of rights associated with long-term presence, since their discursive framing does not place them within the space or time of the nation. (2013, p. 308)

Racialized populations within Europe are thus positioned within a spatial and temporal paradox, permanently frozen in the moment of arrival; the further away the actual moment or movement of migration, the stronger the paradox, i.e., the 'queerness' of their presence in space and time. Diallo waits for his approval to stay in Germany; until then he does not really share time or space with the Hartmanns, rather he is exterior to it. It is only when he receives this approval that he is integrated within the time perception of the Hartmanns and Germany. The notion of time progressing in a linear fashion is tied to a spatial ordering of the world that places Europe at the centre of a 'universal time and place', conceiving the rest of the world only in relation to this centre. Travel and travel narratives are key in affirming this global mapping; leaving Europe meant leaving the present. Applying this perspective to Diallo, I would argue that Diallo's arrival to Europe and Germany and into the Hartmann's lives relived the present (El-Tayeb, pp. 308-310); by

creating a bridge between past and future, the film offers one integrated time perception, that is the German time perception which all the characters are a part of, as Diallo's past is not visualised on screen.

There are a few examples in the film that demonstrate how Diallo's presence serves as a connecting brick in this time continuum. Diallo tries to bring Sophie and Tarek together: he tells them separately that they are both too old to be single, and promises each that he has someone for them. Eventually the meeting between Sophie and Tarek happens when they bump into each other at the entrance to the refugee shelter, when Sophie goes there to donate old dolls and Tarek finishes his running group. In other words, even if not directly, the shelter, Diallo's temporal home and his transition point, serves as the turning point in their lives, and by that connects Sophie and Tarek between their mutual past as children and towards a romantic relationship they are beginning. Another example of filling the void in their time perception can be found during the final scene and the barbeque party in the Hartmann's garden. Richard, wearing the brown leather jacket he has owned since he was 25, and that was returned to him after Angelika donated it to the refugees, hugs Diallo warmly and tells him, 'Welcome to the Hartmanns'. This is important for two reasons. Firstly, Richard is reunited with his past by wearing this jacket and we can see that instead of fighting his age and the transference of time, he has accepted it. Secondly, Richard's hug contains the whole story of the film. If at the beginning of the film the family stood inside the house with a big sign welcoming Diallo, and Diallo was standing outside the big gate of the house, this close and intimate hug shows the journey that both Diallo and Richard (and the audience) have gone through. Diallo has moved from being an outsider of the family to becoming a part of them; Richard has moved from objecting to his wife's idea to take in a refugee to fondly hugging Diallo as a part of the family. The entrance of Diallo into their lives enables each character to create this present, or at the very least to see and accept the change they are facing. In a broader sense, the relationship between the refugee adolescent and the European host, in this case, enables German society to accept their own past and to make an effort to create a different future.

3.11   Conclusion

Welcome to the Hartmanns offers German society a therapeutic, healing tool, by developing the creation of a future that is different from the country's past. Throughout the film, Diallo, due to his age and life circumstances, is in search for his identity and belonging. Writing about humour

from a transnational perspective, Dunphy and Emig (2010, p. 22) review Bhabha's model of identities, in which he claimed that identities only emerge through the process of negation. According to this model, identity enters a relation with others and thus ceases to be a given, stable and monolithic. Instead, it becomes a process, a negotiation, a concept that is frequently suspended and even threatened (Dunphy and Emig, 2010 p. 22). All of the main characters in the film are going through such negotiation processes, Diallo is searching for a way to be accepted, to become part of the Hartmann family, to become German. The Hartmann family themselves are also negotiating their own 'Germanness', by taking Diallo into their family, opening themselves to the changes and influences that it brings with it.

Diallo's search for his identity, and his transition from adolescence to adulthood serves as an allegory, according to McCann (2018, p. 37) (who has written about youth in film) for the experiences of society as a whole as it moves through periods of readjustment towards uncertain futures. Often, the adolescent is cast as a 'hope for the future', providing an optimistic, utopian safety valve for the release of the pressure built up by previous generations and current social struggles. Diallo indeed holds a hope for a better future, a happier family and a more open German society.

From the perspective of the viewer, they experience themselves as strong and present, as an embodied being. From this strong position, and with the aid of the ontological distance between the cinema theatre and the events on screen, the viewer is protected from the threat posed by the 'Other'. It is this distance that serves as a tool to neutralise the danger or fear, and to enable an openness and liberal stand towards acceptance of foreignness into society. The collective viewing can also resonate a critical voice within the viewer, a collective responsibility towards the socio-political situation that unfolds before them on the screen.

To conclude, hybridity is evident in the cinematic, generic and psychological levels of the film. For example, the film does not fully fit in any specific German film history era, and thus is positioned as a hybrid form of film in that landscape. The humour in the film is itself also itself based on hybridity, as it plays on differences as well as similarities, as Dunphy and Emig (2010, p. 32) explore: the triple connection between Diallo, the Hartmanns and the audience. We also see how Diallo is in transition between childhood and adulthood, moving between being a refugee in Germany to becoming a German citizen. The viewer also experiences self-affirmation watching the film, as well as a need for the protection that their distance from the events on the screen provides. And finally, German society follows what Dunphy and Emig (2010, p.139) propose: that mix communities are inevitably torn between a wish to underline demarcation lines, and a need

to emphasize the potential for assimilation. Demarcation can be fostered by exoticising, fluidity of identity by rejecting the exotic. The German society is both accepting and struggling with regards to the refugees; it is the genre of comedy and humour, which in any case has a tendency either to underline or to debunk stereotypes, that serves as a highly effective tool for working through this dichotomy.

Similar to the case of Bilal in *Welcome*, Diallo's role is to create a change in the lives of his European hosts, by revealing to them what it is that they are missing. Having said that, there are some differences between the two characters. The first difference is the type of change they trigger. If Bilal was passive, mainly emphasising to Simon the dormant parental aspects of his personality, what is unique about the change that Diallo creates for the Hartmanns is that Diallo is active. He promotes solutions, he fixes things in the house, he brings Richard and Angelika back together, he tries to set up Sophie with Tarek, he helps Batsi. He makes every possible effort to bring together the Hartmann family members into a happy unit representing a new social order – tropes all typical of the comic genre. Another point in which these two relationships differ is the way in which they were created. The relationship between Diallo and the Hartmanns was created actively, willingly, with intent and not by coincidence, in contrast to that between Bilal and Simon, which came about by accident. In addition, a further difference between the French and German films can be found in the level of identification between the European hosts and their countries. In *Welcome*, Simon's help to Bilal was illegal, which he had to deny when confronted by the police. In the case of the Hartmanns and Germany, the identification between them is emphasised throughout in the film. As described, the film delivers a very strong sense of 'Germanness', underscored by the deep involvement of the Verhoeven family in the production and on a narrative level. The use of humour as a tool to strengthen the sense of community and belonging is also part of this stubborn message of 'this is who we are'. The next chapter will explore the relationship between an adolescent refugee and his European hosts in the documentary genre film, *Dreaming of Denmark,* directed by Michael Graversen in 2015.

Chapter 4 *- Dreaming of Denmark*

4.1   Introduction

In the final chapter of this thesis, I will analyse the documentary *Dreaming of Denmark,* with specific reference to the relationship between the principal protagonist, a refugee adolescent in Denmark, and his host – in this case the film's director, Michael Graversen (*Drømmen om Danmark, 2015)*. This chapter reveals a different kind of relationship between the refugee adolescent and his host, as compared to that depicted in the first two chapters of this thesis. In the first chapter, Bilal and Simon's relationship was based on mutual identification, with Bilal triggering dormant elements in Simon's personality. In the second chapter, Diallo's entrance into the Hartmann's lives and enabled a process of integration across several levels. The relationship in this chapter is more complex.

Dreaming of Denmark follows Wasiullah (Wasi), an unaccompanied refugee and minor from Afghanistan, over the course of three years. Wasi spends most of this time in a children's asylum centre in Copenhagen: hanging out with friends, cracking jokes, taking selfies and flirting with girls. Denmark becomes his home. However, when Wasi turns eighteen, his application for asylum is rejected and he is forced to leave the country. Fearing for his life in Afghanistan, Wasi flees to Italy, hoping to obtain the residence permit that will allow him to return to Denmark. Life in Italy is far from what he had expected, and he suffers a mental breakdown. The dream of returning to Denmark then becomes the driving force for Wasi's survival. Graversen follows Wasi for many years, and the relationship between them constitutes the core of the film – and this chapter.

This chapter analyses a documentary, contrasting with the two previous chapters in terms of genre. As a result, it explores different representational questions, compared to the melodrama and comedy explored earlier. It is also different in the way that the notion of 'home' is introduced into the film's narrative. If in the previous chapters this was very clear and structured – such as, for example, with Simon's and the Hartmann's homes – in this documentary home is rendered as a more fluid and abstract concept, as the host in this case is the film's director, Michael Graversen. This chapter will investigate the relationship between the filmmaker and his subject and analyse the change that Wasi triggers in Graversen's life.

Firstly, the chapter will explore the film's production process. Given that not much has been written about this documentary, I am drawing on insights gleaned from an interview which I conducted with Graversen to further understand and analyse the immediate context of the film. I will then review Denmark's refugee policy, in order to understand and accurately portray the climate in which the film was produced and released. Denmark has been described as the most unwelcoming country for refugees in Europe, with strict rules and regulations operating against anyone who is not a Danish citizen. The policy of assimilating refugees and immigrants into Danish culture has been extensively covered in the international media (Shaheen, 2020, p. 2; Delman, 2016; Bendixen, 2018; Abend, 2019). Graversen's film, on the other hand, reveals a different kind of Denmark – on a civic and humanitarian level, a welcoming and warm place. Finally, I will investigate the film's documentary genre, reviewing the history of Danish cinema and documentary films. Specifically, I will draw on the central and relevant literature about the conventions of documentary films, focusing on topics such as filmmaker-subject relations, the power of representation, and types of documentary. I will explore the uniqueness of the documentary viewer as a witness (Ellis, 2000). My analysis of *Dreaming of Denmark* focuses principally on the relationship between Graversen and Wasi, exploring key scenes.

4.2   The film's release and reviews

Established in 2003 and based in Copenhagen, CPH:DOX is an international film festival dedicated to documentary filmmaking. In less than a decade, CPH:DOX has emerged as one of the leading European festivals for documentary filmmaking. The fact that it was possible to establish this recurring event, and to turn it into both a local and international success, has without a doubt helped fuel interest in new Danish documentary cinema and filmmaking on a global basis. *Dreaming of Denmark* used this platform and premiered at CPH:DOX, where it was nominated for the F:ACT Award. It was subsequently broadcast on the primetime DR1 station in November 2015. It later toured international festivals, was featured on television and was nominated for (and won) a number of awards, including the Amnesty International Award at 2016 Giffoni International Film Festival in Italy (Hjort, Bondebjerg, and Redvall, 2014, p. 7).

Dreaming of Denmark was released at the peak of the European refugee crisis in Europe. As a result, Graversen was frequently invited to participate in interviews and debates in the Danish media, trying to promote the public discourse on refugees and advocate for the rights of unaccompanied minors. However, he also did more than participate in interviews about the film.

After the film was aired on DR1, Graversen conducted an online Facebook chat, during which he answered viewers' questions about the film and Wasi. Graversen also initiated a crowd-funding campaign, which raised 60,000 Danish Krone (equivalent to approximately £7,000). This money was sent to Wasi; he used it to get a driver's license, and to open a pizzeria in Italy with a friend, thus helping him ensure his own full-time employment.

This response from the general public to the film and to Wasi was starkly different to the political reaction – or lack of therein. This split in response is also reflected in the documentary itself. The Danish government had an unwelcoming attitude towards refugees, whereas the general populace and the humanitarian organisations portrayed in the film wanted to help this group of people.

On a national scale, I argue that the documentary emphasised the gap and differences between political and civic attitudes in the country. *Dreaming of Denmark* portrayed the humanitarian aspects of Danish citizens, and by this encouraged its audience to behave similarly. The film played an important role in showing the audience that there is an alternative to the Danish political agenda on refugees, forcing the viewer to reflect on how they felt on an individual level, rather than simply following the political, national agenda. To build on this train of thought, it is important to further understand Graversen, his background and his personal character.

Michael Graversen, born in 1980, is a Danish documentary filmmaker. He graduated with an MA in documentary filmmaking fron NFTS as a Documentary Director from the National Film and Television School in the United Kingdom. Besides his MA, Graversen also holds a BA in Film, Media and Psychology from Copenhagen University, and has worked with the national broadcaster DR in Denmark.

Michael directs documentaries often possessing an existential or socially relevant character, and over the years has won numerous awards, his films being selected for such festivals as IDFA and CPH:DOX.

In his first film, *Toxic Ground* (2006)*,* Graversen returns to his hometown of Grindsted, which he discovers is one of the most polluted areas in Denmark. He tries to find those responsible for the situation but is met with disbelief by the locals. Aired on DR2, the film generated a lot of debate, and was later selected for CPH:DOX. As a result of his film, a public meeting was held in Grindsted, and a bill was presented in the Danish parliament (Danish Film Institute, 2006). This is an example of the critical gaze that Graversen directs towards the place he came from – whether this is his hometown, or later his homeland.

In 2012, Graversen directed *The Last Night Shift*. This documentary was about women who keep lone, dying people company in their final hours. He has also worked on experimental and poetic films, such as *An Anxious Mind* (selected for the Australian Experimental Film Festival). This was about Graversen's own experience of being affected by childhood cancer. Finally, in 2013, Graversen directed the predecessor to *Dreaming of Denmark*, *No Man's Land*. This film was a portrait of a children's Asylum Centre in Denmark. It was selected for IDFA and more than 25 international festivals, winning prizes in Tehran, Hamburg and Belgrade. It received a five-star review from the Danish newspaper *Politiken*, and was broadcast on DR2. Graversen was the first filmmaker to document the lives of the unaccompanied minor refugees in Europe, and as a result was awarded the Salaam Film Prize in 2016 (Graversen, 2014).

This chapter focuses on Graversen's documentary. As in his earlier films, *Dreaming of Denmark* provides a critical gaze on his hometown and homeland. In this case, Graversen reveals the generosity and kindness of Danish humanitarian organisations. Both timely and relevant, his film reflects the current voice of Danish documentary cinema.

4.3   Dreaming of Denmark's production process

When asked about the production process of the film and what had drawn him to Wasi's story, Graversen described it in the following words:

> Basically, it was in 2012, where I got in contact with this children's society in Denmark through a friend who was working there, and he was telling me that there were teenagers and kids who are now fleeing on their own from a lot of countries like Afghanistan and later on Syria and so on. And that they were fleeing without their families… So, I was very curious at the beginning just to know, kind of who were these teenagers and how does this affect their lives and how are they different from other refugees. And then there was a long process for getting the access to the centre because it was at the time when there were not many unaccompanied minor refugees who came to Denmark, only a couple of hundreds came in each year and there wasn't any focus on them. But also because they were underage, there was a lot of restrictions with regard to how to present them also… I wasn't filming that much in the beginning, so it was like observing and kind of talking to them… it took really a long time to gain their trust, I ended up being in the centre for quite a long time and got really under the skin of everything. (Graversen, 2020)

After Graversen became 'part of the place', Wasi called him and said '…now I left my room and I'm at the Central Station, and I don't know what's going to happen with me.' At this point, Graversen started filming Wasi, joining him on his journey to Italy. In other words, the contact was initiated by Wasi, and the film is the outcome of these circumstances, initiating Graversen and Wasi's journey on mutual terms.

When considering responses to the release of the documentary, one review, in *Huffpost* in 2017, was particularly enthusiastic:

My favourite was Michael Graversen's *Dreaming of Denmark*, which directly puts you in the shoes of an Afghan teenager who, unable to get residency in Denmark and afraid to be deported, leaves Denmark with nothing on his back to find a new life in Italy. We see what the world looks like through a refugee's eyes: a cityscape at night glitters with coldness and lights. A police car swings by and tells Wasiullah to get to a shelter. A shelter tells him it's 'full'. We hear, along with this young man, a clerk say that his papers will take time, and that he will be obligated to spend the winter 'outside.' We are with him as he sleeps in the grass in a park. The most upsetting part of this documentary: the sense of hopelessness that builds up month after month, and our intimate experience of a young man who begins to mentally break down. (Huffpost, 2017)

Whilst *Dreaming of Denmark* has not been released on DVD, it was available to buy and stream online in multiple countries around the world via Autlook Sales and was available to watch in Denmark at Filmcentralen.

The next section delves into Denmark's refugee agenda, in order to provide the cultural and social context of the period in which the film was released.

4.4   Denmark's response to the refugee crisis

Despite its reputation for progressive politics, humanitarianism, and a generous welfare state, Denmark has some of the most aggressive anti-immigrant policies in Europe. A report published by the European Parliament in 2019 reviewed the influences of the refugee crisis on Denmark. The report claimed that although Denmark did not have as large an influx of refugees as other countries within the EU during 2014 and 2015 – as it neighbours Sweden and Germany, two

key primary destinations – the inflow of refugees into Denmark during that period did heavily affect the political agenda, the public debate, and the media. In terms of numbers, during 2014 Denmark received nearly 15,000 asylum seekers, almost twice the number received the previous year, as more people fled to Europe from the war in Syria. (European Parliament, 2019)

As Hagelund (2020) suggests in *After the refugee crisis: public discourse and policy change in Denmark, Norway and Sweden*, the political approach from the mid-2010s on has been characterised by the adoption by the mainstream political parties of the discourse taken for years by the right-wing Danish People's Party, which has consistently advocated for a stricter immigration policy. The Danish People's Party has long maintained a vital role in Denmark's Parliament, significantly influencing the contours of Danish immigration policy over the course of more than a decade. Both the immigration and integration policies remain at the top of the political agenda and wider public debate in Denmark (European Parliament, 2019; Hagelund, 2020).

Hedetoft (2006, p. 1) argued that 'Danish multiculturalism' should be considered an oxymoron. Denmark has moved from conditional tolerance in the 1970s and 1980s, through demanding of newcomers assimilation and financial self-sufficiency, into a polarised debate where exclusionary strategies and demands for integration on the conditions of the host country have assumed ever greater dominance. Since the 2010s, leading Danish politicians, from all agenda-setting parties, have repeatedly stressed that Denmark is not and does not intend to be a multicultural society; cultural diversity is officially frowned upon, as an alien, 'un-Danish' notion (Hedetoft, 2006, pp. 2-4).

After a centre-right government took power in 2015, the country cut assistance benefits for refugees by one-half. They also placed advertisements in a newspaper in Lebanon, where hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees had fled, to discourage them from seeking asylum in Denmark (Pace, 2016 p. 789). In January 2016, the Danish parliament approved the controversial 'Jewellery Bill', authorising immigration authorities to confiscate valuables from refugees in order to cover the cost of their accommodation (Bendixen, 2018). In light of such restrictions and rhetoric, the Danish government demanded that those who managed to secure refugee status for family-reunified members were obliged to abide by its integration policies. Specifically, they were expected to integrate into the labour force and learn the Danish language as soon as possible, thus proving their desire to become a part of Danish society.

In early 2017, the Danish government announced that it would re-impose border controls, to combat illegal immigration and smuggling. Denmark had succeeded in making the country an unattractive destination for refugees, sending out a strong message to its nation:

'Do not try to help refugees! These exclusionary practices of the Danish government are aimed at securing and governing the economic welfare and identity of its citizens.' (Pace, 2016, p. 782)

In December 2017, Denmark announced that it would no longer automatically accept its quota of refugees as previous agreed under a UN resettlement programme. The government, instead, announced its intention to unilaterally determine how many refugees it would allow to enter their country. These regulations demonstrated just how dramatically political opinion on the issue has changed in Denmark. Denmark was one of the first countries to sign up to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention; post-2015, Denmark's immigration minister, Inger Støjberg, played a major role in moving the country's immigration policy to the right. In March 2017, she commissioned a special cake to celebrate the country's 50th regulation against immigration. She was at the receiving end of a severe backlash after she took to Facebook to post a smiling photograph of herself with the cake, adorned with fruit, the Danish flag, and a prominent number '50' (Modhin, 2018).

In 2018, Denmark passed a law, called the 'ghetto deal'. This charged phrase was used in all seriousness to describe 25 residential areas across Denmark where a significant proportion of the inhabitants had an ethnic-minority background and/or were of low social status. The Danish prime minister, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, called these areas 'black spots on the map' and 'parallel societies', securing the support of a broad majority of the Danish parliament to 'abolish ghettoes by 2030' (Bendixen, 2018).

In her article about Syrian refugees in Denmark, Pace (2018, p. 782) argues that the Danish state's bordering practices – meaning the formal policies of rigidly applied tools and techniques directed to creating and reinforcing a homogenous citizenship – comprised of assimilation strategies vis-à-vis refugees. According to the International Organization for Migration, assimilation refers to the 'most extreme form of acculturation', whereby adoption of such policies will lead one group becoming socially indistinguishable from other members of the society. In other words, the adaptation of one ethnic or social group, usually a minority, to another. Assimilation involves the subsuming of language, traditions, values, morals and behaviour, and even fundamental vital interests. However, the traditional cultural practices of the

group are unlikely to be completely abandoned (The International Organization for Migration, 2019).

Meanwhile, attitudes in the wider Danish population towards immigrants have rapidly changed back and forth of late, a positive and welcoming atmosphere during the autumn of 2015 moving quite rapidly to a more negative attitude soon thereafter. Consequently, negative stereotypes of immigrants have become commonplace. Refugees are routinely branded as 'welfare scroungers', or as 'refugees of convenience' unfairly taking advantage of a system never intended to be for their benefit (Pace, 2018, p. 788).

Shaheen (2020, p. 5) exploring the citizenship status and perceptions of Syrian refugees in Denmark and reviewing the main concepts of citizenship in the Danish context, argues that while the concept of 'citizenship' in the English language covers various dimensions, the Danish language makes a distinction. Shaheen draws on the work of Mouritsen (2015, p.7) who has argued that *Borgerskab* means citizenship in terms of nationality, whereas *medborgerskab* means active citizenship. The latter term entered the Danish agenda in the 2000s, due to the worry that immigrants lacked knowledge of Danish democracy, community associations and parents' involvement in institutions. Today, the concept of *medborgerskab* revolves primarily around posing requirements to immigrants. One has to learn, demonstrate and master it, otherwise one remains an outsider. Immigrants or refugees can become active citizens (*medborgere*) upon signing the so-called 'Declaration on integration and active citizenship' in Danish society, and fulfilling its requirements. This declaration legitimises them to apply for permanent residency and to join the government integration program, which focuses on self-supportiveness and language proficiency (Shaheen, 2020, p. 5). However, refugees must acknowledge that they would no longer be entitled to a residence permit if conditions in their country of origin change and the need for protection is no longer present – hence, return is possible. In such circumstances, they can apply for financial support under the repatriation law. Also, the declaration includes an expectation of full assimilation for foreigners, as they should recognise that knowledge of the Danish language and Danish society is key to an active life in Denmark. This includes declaring their acceptance of a number of Danish cultural elements, such as equality between men and women, Danish law and democracy, and condemnation of terrorism, to name a few (Shaheen, 2020, pp. 6-8):

If they succeed in demonstrating this over many years, they will be rewarded with more citizenship rights. Thus, one can infer that in today's Denmark, citizenship is

increasingly about duties and obligations, which must be learned in order to become

deserving of rights and to be eligible for citizenship. (Shaheen, 2020, p. 8)

Juxtaposed with these strict immigration policies, *Dreaming of Denmar*k reveals a

different kind of Denmark. Through characters like Jonny from the Red Cross centre in

Copenhagen, who takes care of Wasi, the film shows the compassionate, welcoming and human

face of a civically minded and humanitarian Denmark. The film's title might sound like a paradox,

as the country's anti-immigrant agenda is anything but a dream. However, on watching the film it

becomes clear, I would argue, that what Wasi misses is a sense of community, friends and

familiarity. This will be further developed later in the chapter.

4.5   Locating the film within Danish cinema

In *Small nations, global cinema,* Hjort (2005, pp. 1-3) explores the relationship between

small Nordic countries and globalisation, starting with a history of Danish cinema. Hjort argues

that 'Danish cinema is not what it used to be. In the 1970s and 1980s, Denmark's small national

cinema produced about ten feature films a year. Every now and then, one of these films would

register as successful according to some criterion of success' (Hjort, 2005, p. 1). In other words,

'the Danish film industry once served as a virtually paradigmatic example of the failings and

challenges associated with the cinema of small nations' Hjort (2007, p. 24).

There is now considerable interest in the so-called New Danish Cinema and the underlying

'Danish model', and its apparent condition of possibility. Towards the end of the millennium and

in the wake of major cinematic breakthroughs such as Vinterberg's *The Celebration*, politicians

and policy makers begun to speak of Denmark as a 'Nation of Culture'. The implicit idea seemed

to be that nations can seek recognition beyond their borders through a variety of routes, with

culture – and especially film culture – being a likely candidate for Denmark's path to global

recognition (Hjort, 2007, p. 26).

When it comes to the documentary genre in Denmark, this form of filmmaking has often

played a role in developing public debate and democracy on social issues. Writing about

documentary and globalisation, Bondebjerg (2014b, pp. 199-221) focuses on Denmark, providing

a review of the recent key documentaries and their influences in the country. The first example

was the Danish documentary anthology film *Mit Danmark* (*My Denmark*, 2007). It is introduced as

a documentary response to the 2005 cartoon crisis in Denmark, where the publication of

drawings of the prophet Mohammed in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* incited attack on Denmark in a number of Arab countries. In the media, we find both a pragmatic portrait and the defence of a multicultural reality, alongside the problematisation of essentialism. The film was launched as an initiative to bring together Danish and Arab voices; Danish directors, working in collaboration with their subjects, created ten portraits of foreigners in Denmark. It is a story of different Danes living in the same reality but with different norms and lifestyles. It is something of a paradox that Denmark, with one of the lowest percentages in Europe of non-Western immigrants and foreigners in its general population, became the site of the cartoon crisis.

Bjondeberg (2014b, pp. 210-211) continues this line of enquiry by describing another innovative documentary strategy, presented in Eva Mulvad and Judith Lansade's portrait of Danish immigrants in Argentina, *Kolonien*/*The Colony* (2006). What the film showed was that Danes abroad, as expats, do exactly what foreigners in Denmark are criticised for doing, by continuing to live in their own little Danish 'ghetto' culture. In many ways, they behave more traditionally Danish than the Danes at home and are very slow to mix with and integrate into Argentinian culture.

According to Bjondeberg (2014b, p. 5), another influential documentary initiative was Danish public service broadcaster DR's 2007 production (in collaboration with The Danish Film Institute and the BBC) of *Why Democracy?*, the first in a series of global documentary projects, followed by its 2012 sequel, *Why Poverty*?

The documentary films were made by directors, producers and broadcasters from around the world. The films were broadcast simultaneously by more than 50 broadcasters in more than 180 countries on all continents, and were made available in many languages. Behind the production of the many documentaries, short films, and other media products launched through the two series was an international non-profit organisation, *Steps*, which had a Danish and an African branch. This project was in many ways an advanced example of the power of documentaries to set a global agenda, to create a broader, cosmopolitan public debate, and to combine old and new forms of technology and distribution in linking disconnected parts of a virtual, global public (Bondebjerg, 2014b, p. 5).

In *The Danish directors 3: dialogues on the New Danish Documentary Cinema*, Hjort, Bondebjerg, and Redvall (2014, p. 22) argue that Danish directors have taken their cameras to a significant number of countries around the world, at times documenting unfolding political realities with wider implications or on more personal life stories. This aligns with Graversen's work

as he follows Wasi to Italy to document his journey. The nature of the stories being told differs from those developed several decades ago. Danes now live their lives in a society that is increasingly multicultural, and with a growing awareness of the dynamics of various globalisations.

Hjort, Bondebjerg, and Redvall (2014, pp.22-23) also give examples of successes that have helped to transform shared understandings of what is possible in the domain of documentary filmmaking. These include Andres Ostergaard's *Gasolin* (2006) and Janus Metz's *Armadillo* (2010). *Gasolin* sold 250,000 tickets at the Danish box office; *Armadillo* sold 150,000 tickets, reaching a further one million viewers on television. The growing interest in documentaries amongst cinema goers no doubt reflects the enhanced overall quality of the films being made, as well as an increase in the number of films being produced. Yet, the figures reported by the cinemas have also been bolstered by the profile and success of a key festival initiative, CPH:DOX (as detailed earlier in the chapter), and by an equally significant initiative launched by the cinemas, DOXBIO. DOXBIO is a kind of national film club, devoted to documentary films, with six documentaries (both Danish and foreign) premiering in cinemas annually. DOXBIO has helped to bring documentary films into the cinemas and into areas other than the metropolitan greater Copenhagen area (Hjort et al., 2014).

4.6   **The documentary genre and its use in *Dreaming of Denmark***

The 2015 refugee crisis has influenced directly on ways in which the refugees' stories are told through the documentary genre. According to Cati (2019, p. 54), the proliferation of images recording the migrant crisis has not only fixed the representational boundaries of conflicts and traumatic experiences but has also created a conflict of representations – that is, a real clash between gaze regimes, with the hegemonic gaze on the one hand and a first-person regime on the other. It is undeniable that these points of view, while displaying an intrinsic difference, participate in turning migrants into a spectacle, in which the serial status of the image makes the migrant subject infinitely repeatable (Sossi 160). Though each image of a migrant subject should be approached as a single fragment within a wider representational network, it is impossible to avoid comparisons with other representations. In this sense, it is justifiable to state that '[t]he refugee crisis is a representational crisis' (Bennett 2018, p. 15).

Cati (2019, pp.54-55) continues and identifies two main approaches for the representation of the refugees: In television and newspaper reports, migrants frequently appear as stereotypical figures of otherness. In other words, they are often represented as a sheer mass of bodies, reflecting the continuous processes of subjectification and subjection carried out by the institutional devices of surveillance. The second approach relies on first-person narratives and testimonies, which give migrants the space to make their voices heard and to represent themselves – thereby enabling them to express and exercise their agency in the construction of their own images. Current representations sit between excessive visibility and attempts to avoid idealised or fictional forms, which construct the migrant in stereotypical terms as a victim or invader. In *Dreaming of Denmark*, Graversen chooses to focus on Wasi's story and combines their voices: the story is told by both Wasi and Graversen.

From a phenomenological point of view, Cati (2019, p.60) argues that the subjective filmic language compresses the (migrant) actor's standpoint into a mere act of presence, to which the viewer adheres in a transitory way. As Vivian Sobchack explains in her famous analysis of *Dark Passage* (Delmer Daves, 1947), the subjective camera aims 'to reduce a "person's" body to nothing but its immanence. […] That is, when the body is "grounded" in immanence (if not always visibility) by such attention to its materiality, the world visibly shrinks.'

In her essay on the 'Phenomenology of non-fictional experience'. Sobchack (1999, p.245) argues that it is our subjective relationship with the images on the screen that decides what kind of cinematic object we have in front of us. She suggests that the film is experienced through a spectrum or a scale spectatorial modes and that the viewer's location on this spectrum depends on 'what we have experienced and know of the life-world we inhabit'. In the case of documentary, even if the viewer according to Sobchack, has not experienced the same events he sees, it is the cultural and/or historical knowledge causes him to perceive the images as being part of a past or present reality that we only partially grasp; In other words, one of the reasons to watch documentary is to learn.

In the case of *Dreaming of Denmark*, the viewer sees and perceives the film according to the previous knowledge representations and experiences they might have with the mediation of the refugee crisis. The film, I argue, serves as another piece in the puzzle, to create and enrich the understanding of the crisis and the human experience of the refugee's experience.

In his book *Documentary: Witness and Self-Revelation*, Ellis argues:

Documentaries take us out of the lives we know, offering us other ways of living: sometimes strange, sometimes unwelcome, but always enlightening. They take us to places and situations that can enrage us or make us feel profoundly uncomfortable... Unlike fiction, documentary rests on the claim that it has reduced invention to a necessary minimum. Documentaries claim to show what already exists; we watch them because they can bring us into contact with aspects of our world that might otherwise escape our attention. (2011, pp. 98-99)

Documentaries can foster identification and empathy by showing us that people who may seem very different actually share with universal, human qualities with us, cultural and other differences notwithstanding. Trying to conceptualise the genre in the age of globalisation, Bondebjerg (2014a) argues that documentary film and television deals with reality in a more direct way than fictional narratives, which in turn brings reality to us with greater authenticity (Bondebjerg, 2014a). The issue of representation in documentary will be further developed later in this section.

Discussing similarities and differences between documentary cinema and fiction, Bill Nichols suggests that documentaries and fictions are similar:

Documentaries are fictions with plots, characters, situations and events like any other. They offer introductory lacks, challenges, or dilemmas; they build heightened tensions and dramatically rising conflicts, and they terminate with resolution and closure. Documentary offers access to a shared, historical construct. Instead of a world, we are offered access to the world. (Nichols, 1991, p. 107)

Scholars have long discussed the role of emotions and identification in documentary film. Writing about documentary and the global 'Other', Bondebjerg (2014a) argues that documentaries are narratives of reality; powerful human and emotional stories with characters with whom we can strongly identify or distance ourselves from. Narrative, story, emotion, character, aesthetic and style are just as important for documentary films as they are for fiction films; but some of the same techniques and forms are used for different purposes. In *The documentary: politics, emotion, culture*, Smaill (2009, p. 26) observes that affects, emotions and desire are very strong, and are a powerful and fundamental part of many types of documentaries. Similarly, in *Recording reality, desiring the real*, Cowie (2011, p. 87) notes that emotions and desire are a central concern, and that the documentary film serves as a link between knowledge and fascination of reality, and for the role of emotional identification.

Emotions in fiction films and in documentaries are of the same nature as real-life emotions, even though they can be managed and lived out in different forms and with a different intensity. We know that people laugh, cry, identify with, and live through the characters, stories or cases they are presented within a film. Different stories, different genres and different characters elicit feelings that resemble emotions in real life (Bondebjerg, 2014b, p. 47).

In his later writings, Nichols (2017, p. 5) considers the differences that he had identified between the fiction film and documentary. According to Nichols, because documentaries address the world in which we live rather than a world imagined by the filmmaker, they differ from various other genres (science fiction, horror, adventure, melodrama and so on) in significant ways. Documentary images present people and events that belong to the world we share, rather than invent characters and actions to tell a story that refers to our world allegorically. They are made with different assumptions; they involve a different relationship between filmmaker and subject; and they prompt different sorts of expectations from audiences (Nichols, 2017, p. 5).

Dreaming of Denmark adheres to the definitions of documentary discussed above. Graversen tries to reveal the nuances of Wasi's life to the audience; his struggles, his humanity, his loneliness. Graversen takes the viewer on a journey that is most likely

foreign and different to their own life circumstances. On the other hand, this is still a film, replete with all the cinematic aspects mentioned in the paragraph above (Nichols, 1991, p. 107). From a phenomenological perspective, the film offers the viewer a mediated experience. The film does not offer a new world, as it would if it were a fiction film. Rather, it offers the viewer access to the real world, leaving the viewer with a bigger gap to fill. This strengthens my argument because the viewer has to work harder to generate a moral stance with respect to what he sees. The film does not offer an escapism to a different world, but rather a difficult confrontation with our own world, with reality.

4.7   Types of Documentary

What characterises documentaries is their focus on time periods and movements. However, they do not all address the historical world in the same way, and hence do not adopt the same cinematic techniques. Each mode utilises a different combination of cinematic techniques. Considerable variations exist between each mode, based on how individual filmmakers input their mark, how much national emphases is placed, and what period tendencies affect it. Like other genres, documentaries go through phases and periods. In the 1970s and 1980s, documentaries frequently returned to the past, using archival film material and contemporary interviews to give a new perspective to past events or current issues. Nichols proposes six subgenres or modes of the documentary: expository, observational, poetic, participatory, reflexive and performative (Plantinga, 2005, pp. 105-106). In her book *New Documentary* (2006), Bruzzi addresses the issue of performative documentary. Her key argument is that 'documentaries are a negotiation between filmmaker and reality and, at heart, a performance' (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 186)

Bruzzi argues that the traditional orientation of documentary, to represent reality as faithfully as possible, is predicated upon the realist assumption that the production process must be disguised, as was the case with direct cinema. Running counter to this, she argues that the new wave of performative documentaries proposes an alternative idea of documentary 'truth', one that openly acknowledges the construction and artificiality of even the nonfiction film. Bruzzi (2006, p. 187) identifies two broad

categories of documentary that can be termed as performative: films that feature performative subjects and are, from a visual perspective, heavily stylised; and films that are inherently performative, and feature the presence of the filmmaker. *Dreaming of Denmark* belongs to the latter category. Many more of the emerging wave of documentaries take for granted the existence and inevitable presence of their filmmakers, directly demonstrating the inherent performativity of the nonfiction film. The overt intervention of the filmmaker definitively signals 'the death of documentary theory's idealisation if the unbiased film by asking, categorically and from within documentary itself: what else is a documentary but a dialogue between a filmmaker, a crew and a situation that, although in existence prior to their arrival, has irrevocably been changed by that arrival?' (Bruzzi, 2006, p.198)

In the present case, the production process (to be precise, the filmmaker's presence) is an active part of the film. It is not disguised or hidden; on the contrary, Graversen's voice is present from the start, and there is a constant dialogue between Graversen and Wasi. Toward the end of the film, Graversen comes out from behind his camera, to share the screen with Wasi (in the bumper car scene).

Graversen's explicit presence on screen (either vocally or visibly) deliver another strong message I argue- that this is not only the refugee's story, but it is the host's story as well. This is not something that happens only to other people, it arrives to the European shores in this case, and by that becomes a joint story of both sides. In this sense, the cinematic performative documentary mechanism, serves to call the viewer to see that this is not something that has nothing to do with him. On the contrary, the viewer has a responsibility (as will be discussed later) to what he is evident to on the screen.

Addressing this performative element, Bruzzi claims:

> The performative documentary uses performance within a non-fiction context to draw attention to impossibilities of authentic documentary representation. The performative element within the framework of nonfiction is thereby an alienating, distancing device, not one which actively promotes identification and a straightforward response to a film's content (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 185)

This 'alienating effect' that she identifies is useful for this chapter's discussion about the relationship between the viewer and Wasi. It is a good point to bring into a discussion of Chouliaraki's claim in *The ironic spectator: solidarity in the age of post-Humanitarianism.* Chouliaraki (2013, pp. 48-49) analyses two strategies for ethical encounters between spectators and vulnerable protagonists: emotional and empathetic involvement, and reflexivity accompanied by moralisation. While sympathetic identification with a sufferer has been criticised for cultivating potentially selfish emotions like excitement or fascination or sentimentality, the more detached way of looking is considered more altruistic and outward looking (Chouliaraki, 2013, pp. 48-49).With respect to *Dreaming of Denmark*, I would argue that this is an ambiguous debate. On the one hand, it is true that the viewer is kept at a distance, as his viewing is mediated by Graversen and by the distance from the actual events. But on the other hand, while this distance does enable the viewer to maintain a reflective gaze on events as they unfold, it does not prevent them from being active: from doing something, from creating a change, from really crossing the barrier created by the screen. We can see something of this in the choice of some viewers to donate money to help Wasi, as noted in the previous section.

Dreaming of Denmark, I argue, belongs to the performative mode of documentary. Performative documentary stresses subjective aspects of a classically objective discourse – in our case, the personal story of a refugee, set within the wider context of the refugee crisis. This mode of documentary filmmaking emphasises the subjective or expressive aspects of the filmmaker's own involvement with a subject – in other words, Wasi and Graversen's relationship. This window-like quality of addressing the historical world around us yields to a variable mix of expressive, poetic and rhetorical aspects as new dominants. It strives to heighten the audience's responsiveness to this involvement, rejecting notions of objectivity in favour of evocation and affect. Films in this mode share a strong emphasis on what it feels like to inhabit the world in a specific way or as part of a specific subculture – here, to imagine the world as experienced by Wasi. Performative documentary gives priority to the affective dimensions between us and the text. It proposes a way of being-in-the-world as this world is itself brought into being through the very act of comprehension (Nichols, 1994, pp. 102-103).

4.8   Ethics between filmmaker and subject

One line of research that scholarship on the documentary genre pays close attention to is the charged relationship between the filmmaker and the subject. In the case of *Dreaming of Denmark*, it is important for us to consider the relationship between Graversen and Wasi.

Power structures and relationships are at the core of documentary filmmaking. Writing about documentary storytelling and the Middle East refugee crisis, Anishchenkova (2018, pp. 812-817) rejects the idea that documentary presents a more objective perspective. She argues that it provides a perspective that goes beyond the cinematic space, and which connects it with the 'real' reality of our world. According to Anishchenkova (2018, p. 813), 'much of the refugee-focused body of documentary production claims to present the most intimate reality of the victims' (Anishchenkova, 2018, p. 813).

She also claims that 'issues of authenticity, truths and ethics of representation are even more heightened in documentaries that choose to focus on refugees – a group that is defined by its vulnerability' ((Anishchenkova, 2018, p. 812).

As refugee documentaries receive praise, recognition and awards, the from confronts us with a highly problematic representational discourse. Developing the argument, Anishchenkova suggests that '[w]ithout much opposition, many Western filmmakers (and their audiences) continue to be charged with the self-righteous and self-congratulatory selective filming and viewing of refugees, thus participating in the further victimisation of their subjects through their neo-colonial gaze' (Anishchenkova, 2018, p. 813). She concludes her argument by stating that the the documentary-maker's gaze must be interrogated in order to draw attention to the process by which the social actor is transformed into the documentary subject. The objective of such analysis is to interrogate the power of representation: who is represented in the documentary, who represents them, and to what effect? (Anishchenkova, 2018, pp. 812-817).

Power relations, as an aspect of documentary filmmaking, it is often seen as a problem. Focusing on the representation of documentary participants, the relationship

between documentary-maker and participant is critiqued as one in which power resides entirely with the former. The successful careers of many documentary filmmakers have been built on the misfortune of others. What is meant by power in documentary is, almost exclusively, the documentary-maker's ability to manipulate and control the participant. Power is possessed by the documentary-maker by virtue of their access to the media, and is used to control the participant through the act of representation (Nichols, 2016, p. 157).

Nichols (1991, p. 69) draws attention to the power relations that exist between documentary-maker and participant, concluding that power manifests within traces of this complex relationship. The invisibility of the documentary-maker constitutes, for Nichols, evidence of his or her power over the participant. The participant is victimised, Nichols claimed, when they are used to further the documentary-maker's argument, placing them in a mise-en-scène that is not their own. It is a form of representation that has consequences for the participant:

When both filmmaker and social actor coexist within the historical world but only one has the authority to represent it, the other, who serves as subject of the film, experiences a displacement. (Nichols, 1991, p. 91)

In his work *The subject and power*, Foucault (1982) argued that the focus on power as domination obscures the way in which power flows through relationships. In spite of this focus on power, transformation of the individual to the social subject is the central theme of his research. Viewing his work in this way highlights its potential contribution to documentary studies, since documentary as a form of power or knowledge depends upon the transformation of the individual participant into the documentary subject.

Foucault called attention to the specific ways in which the actions of the filmmaker and the participant affect each other, as well as the ways in which each engages in acts of resistance. Foucault argued that individuals exist in multiple power relationships, in which the actions of individuals impact on the actions of others. He argues that power is best conceived of as:

…a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely, it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of acting' (Foucault, 1982, pp. 216-222)

Central to Foucault's account of power is a specific notion of freedom. It is therefore important for Foucault – indeed it is critical, given his focus on acts of resistance – that individuals are 'free' to respond to the actions of others. Foucault does not consider a documentary relationship in which the documentary maker had complete control over the participant to be a power relationship. Foucault emphasises that an important feature of power relationships is that the other "is recognised and maintained to the very end as a subject who acts" (Foucault, 1982, p. 789). Power can be exercised only insofar as individuals are free, since it is a mode of action on the actions of the other. In other words, the relationship between Graversen and Wasi contains a certain amount of freedom, of choice – and, on this basis, also power.

Another crucial aspect of the relationship between filmmaker and subject is the issue of trust. There have been attempts to define trust in relation to documentary. Exploring power and trust, Nash (2010, p. 31) suggests that all documentary is made possible through the establishment of a trust relationship between documentary-maker and participants. Trust is a response to the agency of others, a way of continuing to act in spite of our uncertainty about others' behaviour. Sztompka (1999, p. 23) defines trust as a 'policy for handling the freedom of other agents' (Sztompka, 1999, p. 23), that permits us to act by essentially 'betting' on the behaviour of others; acting as though their behaviour could be predicted accurately. Trust is an important foundation for documentary precisely because, as we have already discovered, both participant and documentary-maker are free agents acting on the actions of the other, within a web of power relations. The filmmaker makes the assumption that the participant will continue with the project, while the participant assumes that they are not being exploited. Trusting others with things that we value is an inherent part of co-operating with others. When we trust another with something of value, we risk its loss. Thinking about trust in the context of documentary, it becomes clear that both documentary-maker and participant entrust

something of great value to the other. The participant, on the other hand, trusts the filmmaker with their reputation, personal information, and relationships with family, friends and the community.

These perspectives of trust and power are important when considering *Dreaming of Denmark*. When Wasi trusts Graversen, he understands and decides as a free agent that their beliefs and feelings will be treated as sacred. Wasi relies on Graversen to act honestly and not to act deceptively. The relationship between documentary-maker and participant is contested, with each pursuing their own vision of the good in relation to the documentary project. Taking a Foucauldian perspective on power, conceiving it as a mode of action on the actions of others, the contest between documentary-maker and participant is foregrounded. Approaching power in this way draws attention to documentary as a discourse, and to the structures that shape the documentary film.

Applying these notions on Graversen and Wasi, I argue that their relationship, built on power and trust, is a discourse going back and forth between them. As I have argued in earlier sections, the film manifests as a mutual need, a mutual initiative established from the circumstance of Graversen's presence at the refugee centre, and of Wasi contacting Graversen when he was rejected by Denmark. They both need each other; they both want Wasi's story to be told. So, in some ways, they are both exposed to each other's power and influence.

Discussing a more relevant and specific type of relationship to our case is that of between a filmmaker who is not a refugee and a film subject who is. An example of this is *Becoming refugees: Exodus and contemporary mediations of the refugee crisis* by Bennett (2018). The article investigates the series *Exodus: Our Journey to Europe*, three one-hour films broadcast by the BBC in 2016, followed in 2017 by a further three episodes. This series, according to Bennett, was created as a response to the representational problem caused by the Syrian refugee crisis. (Bennett, 2018, p. 18)

Exodus has compassionate intention of humanizing its subjects, challenging the terrorizing stereotype of the refugee as dangerous criminal, religious extremist or workshy opportunist looking for handouts. Its strategy is to present these characters in their particularity and ordinariness, allowing them, to a degree, to tell their own stories.

In so doing, it demonstrates their proximity to the spectator rather than their foreignness, emphasizing the fact that, as Hassan, one of the series' subjects, explains, it is circumstances that they have in common, rather than any personal qualities: 'Anyone can become a refugee', he says. 'Anyone. It's not something that you choose; it's something that happens to you. And just like it happened to me, it could happen to you'. This line of thought, emphasizing the similarity, the commonality, the 'sameness' between the filmmaker and its subject, and to the viewer, follows the basic assumption of this thesis: researching and investigating the similarities, rather than the differences, between both sides of the encounter with the refugee. Here, as in *Exodus*, Graversen personalized the 'refugee' in the form of Wasi, a teenager with his own story. Using Hasan's notion in *Exodus*, the differences between Graversen and Wasi, are arbitrary; in a parallel world Graversen could be the refugee. According to Bennett (2018, p. 20):

> Becoming a refugee – inhabiting a foreign body – is a matter of contingency and the sudden removal of agency. Thus, *Exodus* effectively proposes that foreignness is not a matter of intrinsic difference or essential identity, but of dynamic relationality. It shows us that the process of becoming a refugee is the process of becoming foreign and, in turn, that foreignness is a condition of instability or aporia – it is a process characterized by physical movement as well as by alienation from social and cultural context. A foreign body is a body in transit. Bennett (2018, p. 20)

4.9   The viewer in documentary

In *Seeing things* (2000, pp. 6–38), John Ellis conceptualises the documentary viewer as a witness. Witnessing, for Ellis, is a distinct mode of perception: 'we cannot say we do not know' is its motto. In *Witnessing*, Peters (2009) argues that 'cameras and microphones are often presented as substitute eyes and ears for audiences who cannot witness for themselves. The media claims to provide testimonies for our inspection, thus making us witnesses of the way of the world' (2009, p.22). Peters continues: 'As a term of

art, witnessing outshines more colourless competitors, such as viewing, listening or consuming' (2009, p.23). Broadening his scope, Peters notes that to witness an event is to own it in some way to it. Following Peters, Ashuri and Pinchevski argue that 'witness' includes three points of a basic communication triangle: (1) 'the agent who bears witness', Graversen in our case; (2) 'the utterance or text itself', *Dreaming in Denmark*; and (3) 'the audience who witness' the viewer. In other words, Graversen was the witness to Wasi's journey; the film is Graversen's testimony; and the audience are the witnesses to this testimony (2009, p. 136).

In *Telling presences: Witnessing, mass media, and the imagined lives of strangers*, Frosh (2009, p. 49) broadens the discourse about documentary film as testimony, arguing that presence is not just told, it is also telling. This makes a difference since it anchors the discursive authority of the film as a source of testimony about an event, removed from its audience in space and time.
Frosh argues:

> 'Bearing Witness' is an act performed not by a witness but by a witnessing text. It is the witnessing text which creates presence at the event, and as a result produces experience out of discourse. 'Witnessing' is an expanded and generalised mode of receptivity to these witnessing texts by their addressees. (2009, p.60)

A witnessing text is one whose structure interacts with the audience to create not just an imaginative experience regarding the subject of its discourse (what it is like to be a refugee on the run, in our case), but also the conjecture that this text is a witnessing text: that the event described really happened, and that the text was designed to report it (Frosh, 2009, p.61).

Writing about the spectatorship of suffering, Chouliaraki (2006, p. 4) has considered the fundamental asymmetry in the relationship between the safety of the viewer and the suffering of the film subject, and the different kind of emotional responses that such an asymmetry might evoke (Chouliaraki, 2006, p. 4). Witnessing presupposes a discrepancy between the ignorance of one person and the knowledge of the other. Witnessing is also the discursive act of stating one's experience for the benefit of an audience not present at the event, but yet must make some kind of judgment about it. In

other words, a witness serves as the surrogate sense organs of the absent. A witness is the paradigm case of a medium, the means by which experience is supplied to others lacking access to the original. From a phenomenological perspective, this strengthens my argument. By comparing this to *Dreaming in Denmark,* the viewers get as close as they possibly can to Wasi through what Graversen has experienced. Graversen serves as a mediator, as an agent, as a gatekeeper to the viewer's experience; for the viewer, Graversen is like this surrogate organ.

According to Peters (2009, p. 26), 'to witness' has two faces: firstly, the passive one of *seeing,* and secondly the active one of *saying*. In passive witnessing, an accidental audience observes the events of the world. In active witnessing, one is a privileged possessor and producer of knowledge in an extraordinary setting. What one has seen authorises what one says. An active witness first must have been a passive one. Herein lies the fragility of witnessing, the difficult juncture between experience and discourse. This is similar to the process Graversen went through. From being a passive witness at the children's centre, to producing an active testimony that mediates his experiences to the viewer, creating a discourse around it.

Peters (2001, pp. 720-721) specifies three types of relationships to an event that render an individual an apt witness. First, presence at both the time and place of the event ('to be there'). Second, presence at the time, but not at the actual scene. Last, presence in space, but removed in time. The third type is relevant to our case. By watching the film, the viewer is given the opportunity to share the space with Wasi and Graversen, albeit removed from time.

Ellis (2009, p. 76) broadens the discourse on the relationship of the viewer to what he sees. He claims that seeing through the camera or hearing through microphones is a position of analysis; of trying to understand a representation rather than experiencing a person or event in front of you. Different reactions on the part of the viewer are appropriate. Importantly, though, action is not possible. It is impossible to offer help, or to console with a hug. However, this position of distanced observation opens up the possibility of a second element of witnessing. This is an assessment unencumbered by the feeling that an appropriate form of action is required, which is the necessary problem for

any bystander or participant. Instead, alongside an element of direct observation of fragments of an event, media witness implies the possibility of judgment. The portrayed events always already attest to something, acting as witnesses whose veracity should be assessed from the position of the viewer of the screen on which they appear (Ellis, 2009, pp. 76-77).

Building on this idea, in *Media and morality* Silverstone (2013, p. 21) argues that the media, as indeed other technologies, enable the stretching of action beyond the face-to-face, and consequently undermines the expectation of responsibility and reciprocity conventionally required by action and communication in face-to-face settings (Silverstone, 2013, p. 40). By being active and reflexive, we presume that the audience inevitably assumes a moral stance, '…if audiences refuse to take that responsibility, then they are morally culpable… and we are all audiences now…' (Silverstone 2002 p.774). In other words, the viewer in the audience has a moral responsibility to Wasi's situation, even though he does not have *actual* face-to face contact with him.

This asymmetry, or distance, between Wasi and the viewer is mediated, I argue, by the presence of Graversen himself. He is the meeting point of both sides, and it is his presence that softens the gap for the viewer, helping to see Wasi beyond his suffering. Graversen serves as a barrier to Wasi's otherness; Graversen is the one who deals with the difficulties in the relationship with Wasi and the threat that this might hold, as demonstrated in the scenes where Wasi acts aggressively, even showing hostility towards Graversen. This was all driven by the difficult mental situation confronting Wasi. However, more importantly, Graversen's position as an in-between grants the viewer safer access to Wasi. Graversen mediates Wasi's aggressiveness into an expression of suffering and humanity; hence, the latter is not perceived as dangerous by the viewer.

From a phenomenological perspective, I would like to apply Sobchack's notions on suffering, as presented in her book *Carnal Thoughts* (2004). She acknowledges passion as a form of suffering: 'Passion is defined as suffering; it is the state or capacity of being acted on and affected by external forces, usually adversely….' (Sobchack, 2004, p. 287). In the present case, this describes Wasi's suffering as depicted in the film. What is interesting here is the viewer's point of view. As argued earlier, the viewer has a certain

distance from Wasi – a distance achieved by the cinematic documentary convention of a performative medium, as noted earlier. The viewer sees and feels Wasi's suffer, and thus:

> It is this sense of passion as suffering the agency and power of external forces on our lived bodies that provides us the material foundation that primordially grounds the possibility of our ethical behaviour toward others and the world. The passion of suffering thus intimately engages us with our primordial, prereflective, and passive material *response-ability* – the general sense of which becomes reflectively and actively re-cognized in consciousness as that particular ethical concept we call *responsibility*…. it is this sense of passion that provides the material foundation of our *aesthetic* behaviour toward that world and others (Sobchack, 2004, p. 288-290)

In other words, and applying these notions to our film, the viewer is aware of Wasi's suffering and engages with it. This engagement shapes the aesthetic grounds for the viewer's sense of responsibility to Wasi. This 'responsibility' that Sobchack describes follows the role of the viewer as a witness, as coined by Ellis (2011). This point will be further developed later in the chapter.

4.10   Thematic analysis

Wasi and Graversen

The key theme that this analysis focuses on is the relationship between Wasi and Graversen, and the changes that Wasi's presence triggered in Graversen's life. With this documentary following Wasi's journey, I argue that the host in the film is Graversen, which makes the concept of home and host fluid and difficult to define. In order to broaden the analysis of their relationship and the concept of home in this context, I would like to employ Ahmed's (2000) notion of 'home' to analyse the relationship between Graversen and Wasi.

Ahmed (2000, p. 78) argues that the narrative of leaving 'home' produces too many 'homes'. In Wasi's case, this is evident through the multiplicity of languages, which manifests in Wasi not actually being able to establish any concept of home. Wasi himself

says to Graversen that he speaks a few languages, including Danish, Italian and English (he does not mention his mother tongue), but none of them fluently. Wasi's intent to be multilingual, yet not mentioning his mother tongue, truly reflects his story. He feels split and does not have a whole identity anywhere. What did serve as a home to Wasi was the film itself, and his relationship with Graversen, as the latter described:

> He was curious also to see what is happening and he wanted somebody to document his life. I think if you were in the same way, did not have a home, your identity taken away from you and you are basically a nobody, then having somebody who wants to make a film about you, you know it's part of this world survival instincts that you use if you feel you used to have a place in the world…. I think making a film about him may be the only way that shows that he actually belonged in this world. And maybe through the film he does belong somewhere. (Graversen, 2020)

> Ahmed (2000, p. 87), states:

> The movement between homes allows the concept of home to become a fetish: to be separated from the particular worldly space of living in a particular place, through the possibility of some memories and the impossibility of others. In such a narrative journey, then, the space that is most like home, which is most comfortable and familiar, is not the space of inhabitancies: I am here, but the very space which one inhabits is almost, but not quite, at home. In such a space, the subject has a destination, an itinerary, indeed a future – but by having such a destination, has not yet arrived. Ahmed (2000, p. 87)

Employing these notions to Wasi's journey, one understands that Wasi's destination is Denmark – a destination he is not able to return to throughout the film.

Home is somewhere, it is indeed elsewhere, but it is also where the subject is going. Home becomes the impossibility and the necessity of the subject's future – one never *gets* there, but is always *getting* there – rather than the past that binds the subject to a given place. In Wasi's case, his many homes along the way do not replace the real home, Denmark. It's much the opposite, actually; these many homes emphasise the

absence of a real home. This absence is filled by the film itself and through the presence of Graversen and his gaze on Wasi. It is the relationship between Wasi and Graversen that serves as a home for Wasi.

Ahmed also suggests that the home 'where one usually lives' becomes theorised as the lived experience of locality (Ahmed, 2000, p. 98). The immersion of the self in a locality is not simply about inhabiting an already constituted space. Rather, the locality intrudes itself into the senses. It defines what one smells, hears, touches, feels and remembers. The lived experience of being-at-home involves the enveloping of subjects in a space which is not simply outside of them. Being-at-home suggests that the subject and the space leak into each other, inhabit each other. This notion can be seen in the scenes showing Wasi with his friends Musa and Adissa. They are going to the beach together, enjoying the sun, wind and music that they dance and laugh to. This is the home that Wasi is longing for; this is what he fantasises about when he dreams of going back to Denmark. See figure 11

Figure 11: Wasi and his friends at the beach

We can think of the lived experience of being at home in terms of occupying a second skin, a skin which does not simply suppress the homely subject, but which allows the subject to be affected and to contact the world that is neither merely in the home or away from the home. The home, as skin, suggests that the edge between home and away is porous as well. Movement away is also movement within the constitution of home as

such (Ahmed, 2000 p. 99). In other words, even though Wasi does not belong or find any home, he is creating one throughout the film. Graversen and Wasi's journey and movements in the world, between countries and situations, are the building blocks of this home, of the film as a home for Wasi.

This home also experiences difficulties. After a year of waiting to hear from the Italian authorities, Wasi starts to feel desperate. He feels split between Denmark and Italy. He is angry at Graversen, even saying 'Fuck it all, you don't understand anything.' 14 months after arriving in Italy, Wasi mentally breaks down, his state evident through problems he experiences with his memory. Suddenly, he cannot recognise either Graversen or Musa – even when Graversen calls Wasi, and the former's photograph, identifying him, comes up on Wasi's phone. Also, Musa texts Wasi, who then says to the camera that he doesn't know who Musa is. This reveals the complexity of Denmark for Wasi. On the one hand, he wishes to go back there; but on the other, he feels rejected, that he does not belong there. These strong feelings, I argue, are projected onto Graversen and Musa. Wasi feels that Musa and Graversen, the former by now both a Danish citizen, have abandoned him. In other words, Denmark has forgotten about him, so he forgets about it and his friends too.

Their relationship changed and influenced both Wasi and Graversen's lives. The more Wasi moves away from his home in Denmark, the more the relationship with Graversen becomes 'home' for him. Their mutual journey enables Wasi to leave Denmark with Graversen – the latter representing Denmark, with all the complexities involved in this representation. The change that this relationship triggers in Graversen's perspective is evident in the crashing cars scene. See figure 12

Figure 12: Graversen and Wasi - Crashing cars scene

In this scene, we see Graversen in front of the camera for the first (and only) time in the film. Both Graversen and Wasi are in amusement park 'bumper' cars, crashing into each other. When I asked him why he chose to reveal himself at this point, Graversen replied:

> I think It symbolised something like both like me, and also on a bigger level because I think until that point the way the side of the film is more observational and it's more traditional ... And I became a part of the film, for me that is really important to show, that going from this relationship in the film, film-maker and subject, that was broken, and maybe I have to intervene on the human level, I think that scene is also something that shows that this is not just a professional relationship, you cannot deal with the subject, and not just keeping on that level, you have to engage yourself. I also wanted to say this is the way I think we should deal with refugees. That we should not just observe, and talk about this with the distance, we really have, so each and every one of us has to meet refugees, step in and kind of be, or try to be a part of this. Because it's our responsibility as human beings. This was going from all I have, like I don't have any opinion, I'm just a film maker, I'm representing what I see and all of this and then going as I got more and more involved in. I got more involved and I had to, you know, to say something and do something. (Graversen, 2020)

128

In other words, Graversen crossed the border and became part of the film. The film was no longer just Wasi's journey, but now was also the process of the director, moving from observing the refugee centre in Copenhagen to traveling with Wasi and slowly becoming an increasing part of the film, a part of the home that he had given Wasi. On a broader level, I argue here that their relationship was not a home just for Wasi, as Graversen described. Rather, it was an outlet for Graversen's humanitarian instincts, a space for processing his feelings towards Wasi and the refugee crisis. By actively putting himself in front of the camera, Graversen hopes to encourage the viewers to become part of the solution for the refugee crisis, rather than remaining just passive viewers.

The next scene in the film is the final moments. 17 months after his arrival in Italy, a decision is made, and Wasi goes to the police station to find out the result. As Wasi leaves the police station, he walks towards the camera, happy and smiling. See figure 13

Figure 13: Wasi leaving the police station in Italy

He tells Graversen that he has been given a five-year permit to stay in Italy. Graversen asks him whether he is going to go to Denmark. Wasi replies no, he is living in Italy now. We then see Wasi dancing with his other friends at the asylum centre. He needs to find a job in Italy, otherwise he will live on the streets (Graversen, later, helps him secure work with the money that the former raised for Wasi, as described earlier in the chapter). In the final conversation between them, Graversen asks Wasi '…what are your dreams?' Wasi replies that he '…wants to receive a permanent residency, to find a

job and a beautiful wife and to get married and have children.' The film ends with Wasi saying, controversially, that now he wants to live in Denmark and not Italy.

These two parts of the film, the crashing cars and the decision of the Italian authorities, I argue, are structured in a way that shows only a partial solution that the film provides for Wasi's situation. Although Graversen has given him a home, and although Italy has allowed Wasi to stay there for at least a few years, these are not the 'homes' that Wasi had been searching for.

4.11   Conclusion

In his book *Documentary: Witness and self-revelation*, Ellis (2011, p. 98) states:

We watch documentaries because they provide us with information and a way of knowing the lives of other people without meeting their acquaintance directly. We watch documentaries to see events up close, but simultaneously at a safe distance. We are able to watch the most intimate or outrageous actions of others without suffering any kind of threat to our own safety. (Ellis, 2011, p.98)

The mission to analyse the relationship between the refugee adolescent and the European host was, with this film, more complex for several reasons. First of all, there is a big difference between how Denmark dealt with Wasi – from sending him away, repeatedly rejecting him, and exporting him to another country, as if to say that he is not their problem to solve – to how Denmark's civilian and humanitarian responses engaged with Wasi. The film reveals a different kind of Denmark, with a more compassionate, welcoming and human stance towards refugees. Secondly, this is a film about a journey: about borders and trains, about refugee centres and police interviews. There is no defined home in this film. Graversen, I argue here, is the intermediate point between Wasi and the viewer. This follows what Ellis (2011, p. 5) argues about the history of documentary as a dynamic experience, as the documentary process involves two-way traffic. Filmmakers begin with events which they film and subsequently incorporate into a film text. The film's viewers engage from the opposite direction. They start with the film

and move towards an understanding of what the original events may have been. It is the film who hosts Wasi; but it is Graversen who is the home for both Wasi and the viewer.

In terms of Wasi, it is clear that their relationship served as a home for him, as somewhere for him to belong to, as has been broadly analysed. Graversen had another 'hosting' role, however, towards the audience. The film served as a surrogate for the viewer, a tool mediating Wasi's story for the benefit of the viewer – who could not be there physically but is now able to witness it, and hence has a moral responsibility (Peters, 2009 p. 25). The film provides a home where the country does not.

Chapter 5 - **Conclusion**

This thesis has examined the different ways that a relationship between a refugee adolescent and a European host was represented in three diverse films, with different genres and origins, released between 2009 and 2016.

The first case study explored the French melodrama *Welcome* and the relationship between its principal protagonists, Simon and Bilal. I identified four themes in the film: direct interactions between Simon and Bilal; the parallels between Simon and Bilal in the scenes where they are on their own; internalisation, or missing representation; and homecoming. Each theme served as a step or a phase in the overall process that the film goes through to transform the viewer. I argued that Simon's motivation for helping Bilal grew from a sense of identification on the emotional level. Although Simon is not a refugee, he does relate to Bilal's emotional aspects, given that his marriage had ended and he himself was a new unknown future. This situation provides suitable fertilising ground for Simon's identification with Bilal. By considering notions of optic and haptic visuality, I found that the perspective created in the film creates a sense of dual identification from the viewer. The viewer does not choose one side to identify with, or the one side that is the 'right side'. Rather, the viewer experiences a dual identification, in which both parts – the familiar and foreign, the local and the stranger – overlap and co-exist within the viewer simultaneously. The film and the analysis put this at the centre of the relationship, as such enabling a deeper and broader mediation of the refugee story. That said, it is necessary to remember that this form of identification, in general, comes at a price. Simon's gaze on Bilal is too close, preventing him from protecting Bilal from the danger faced by the latter. In other words, perhaps identification is not the ideal way to experience the refugee story, as it may limit the help that one can provide.

In the second case study, I analysed the German comedy *Welcome to the Harmtanns,* focusing on the assimilation process of Diallo, its principal character, within the Hartmann family and German society. I identified five themes in the film: integration, both of Diallo within the Hartmann family and within German society, as well as each character with

their own past; Diallo as a truth detector; Diallo as the solution to filling the voids in the family setting; Diallo as a unifying force; and time as another family member (in the sense of accepting the past). By applying Hanich's (2010) term 'cinematic shock', I demonstrated how the generic conventions of comedy enable the viewer to experience a stronger sense of self and presence. Applying another element of Hanich's notion of collective viewing was specifically relevant in the case of German society and its traumatic history, as this changes the experience of watching the film and could create a sense of moral responsibility. My key finding in this chapter was that of Diallo's role in bridging the gap between past and future. This is evident in his relationship with the family members, and in the processes that his presence triggers in each of their lives. On a broader level, Diallo's presence enables German society (in a metaphoric sense) to create a new Germany, and a new concept for German citizenship. My main argument here was that the film The film enables the viewer to see – or at the very least, to imagine – a different Germany, a Germany able to offer something that is different from its past by providing comic relief from its traumatic past; an alternative narrative for a different future, one constituted by open society who welcomes its others within it.

My final case study was the Danish documentary *Dreaming of Denmark*. The aim of my analysis here was more complex, as there was no specific home or defined host, but rather the mutual journey of Graversen and Wasi, filmmaker and subject. This film presented a different kind of Denmark, a more welcoming and open country from a humanitarian perspective; metaphorically, the film offers home where the country fails to do so. The main theme investigated here was the relationship between Graversen and Wasi. Graversen was a meeting point between the audience and Wasi. Graversen served as the viewer's surrogate for mediating Wasi's difficulties. Most importantly though, the film offers access to Wasi's world rather than a new world, thus leaving the viewer with a bigger gap to fill — hopefully moving them to action with regard to the refugee crisis.

Examining the themes analysed in each chapter reveal a process that the refugee adolescent evokes upon arrival in his encounter with the European host, applicable beyond genre or the origin country of the films considered in this thesis. The first phase of this relationship deals with seeing. By entering the European's host life, the adolescent refugee makes him (and the viewer) see something that he had not seen before. Simon

and Bilal reflect each other's loneliness; Diallo sees the truth about the Hartmanns; and the viewer sees and witnesses Wasi's difficulties. The second phase deals with notions of gap, void and missing representation. The refugee fills the gap in different ways in each of the chapters, but serves the same function of revealing – and later, filling – the void in the life of his host. Finally, the third and last phase revolves around elements of integration, either within the family or towards the viewer.

From a methodological perspective, the processes and experiences in each film can be situated on an imaginary evolutionary scale, in which the process strengthens as the chapters unfold. If in the French melodrama *Welcome* the process is of identification with the characters, then in the German comedy *Welcome to the Hartmanns* the process develops a much stronger connection, reaffirming the position in front of them. Finally, in the Danish documentary *Dreaming of Denmark*, the viewer is treated as a witness with a moral responsibility to what he sees on the screen. Every journey within each film is part of a bigger whole, as we face the 'Other'. Every chapter serves as a step towards a more active and involved viewer, and as a result increases the impact that cinema can have on the refugee crisis.

5.1   Politicisation of the refugee crisis

In *The mediatization and the politicization of the "Refugee Crisis" in Europe*, Krzyżanowski, Triandafyllidou, and Wodak (2018, pp. 2-3) challenge a variety of notions and sociopolitical concepts used in the discourse of the 'Refugee Crisis'. Immigration has become a highly politicised topic in recent years, especially in terms of the ideologisation of related debates but also by making politics the key locus for effectively dictating public views on immigration. The topic has indeed become frequently debated and strongly politicised.

Trying to explain the reasons for the ideologically charged discourse, Krzyżanowski, Triandafyllidou, and Wodak (2018, pp. 2-3) argue that:

The discourse is strongly ideologically charged and has been developed in media and political discourse mainly to legitimise the alleged urgency, including various "special measures", that were or were supposed to be taken in recent months and years. The politically charged discourse about the refugee crisis happens mainly due to the continuous merging of the – either distinct or blurred – categories of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants in their representation in the media. (Krzyżanowski et al., 2018, p. 3)

This observation echoes some of the points that I raised in my Introduction. Investigating media representations of the refugee crisis in France, I argued that it was one of only three countries where mentions of defensive measures (e.g. closing borders, tightening registration procedures, increasing police and army presence, etc.) were more prominent than references to caring measures (Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017, pp. 5-15). In Germany, media coverage of the crisis was centred around themes calling for pro-action, solidarity, responsibility and humanitarian aid (Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017, p. 3). For Denmark, the third country discussed in my thesis, it was described as the most anti-immigrant country in Europe, promoting assimilation and intrinsically anti-multicultural (Jensen 2010, p. 187). In other words, this process of politicisation is evident and has also occurred in the countries discussed in this research.

According to Krzyżanowski et al. :

Politicisation denotes the growing power of the state, and thereby of the political actors who, in the process of competing for power over the state system, tend to politicise matters and issues that are of general public concern. However, as discourses and politics on immigration in Europe and beyond have shown, politicisation has two vital and indeed very negative consequences. First, it creates an imbalance of power by shifting its majority to the political realm; and secondly, it contributes to the far-reaching ideologisation of public debates, as issues that become politicised must also be articulated in line with the ideologies that dominate the political realm. (Krzyżanowski et al., 2018, pp. 4-5)

In both cases, the refugees are not at the centre of the debate, nor their voices or needs. The focus is on how Europeans respond, and how European lives are threatened

and changed. In line with this centrality of Europe in the perception and interpretation of the crisis as a European crisis, Pai (2020) claimed in 'The refugee 'crisis' showed Europe's worst side to the world' that while tens of thousands were dying at sea trying to reach Europe, Europe was imagining itself to be the victim of a migrant or refugee 'crisis'. The concept of a 'crisis' caused by the passage of people into the European continent has always been entrenched in the Eurocentric way of interpreting noticing things (Pai, 2020b). The debate on refugees thus becomes mainly a political agenda. My argument here is that this crisis has (at least) two sides, and that the crisis does not 'belong' to the European hosts. It was not only Europe's crisis; politicising the crisis misses the core of the issue, which is the refugees themselves.

The films in this study were produced and created – and later explored in this thesis – by the temporal and historical context of the refugee crisis. The term 'crisis' is evident at every level – explored within the cinematic conventions, the way the story is told, the messages it conveys, and the various processes that the viewer goes through, as has been detailed throughout this thesis. It is almost as if the 'crisis' was another methodological tool, or theoretical lens, through which the films were seen.

5.2   Cinema and crisis

In *Beyond crisis talk: interrogating migration and crises in Europe*, Dines, Montagna, and Vacchelli (2018, pp. 440-441) discuss the connection between migration and crisis, trying to answer the question of how the crisis opened up but also foreclosed ways to frame, analyse and understand contemporary migration. They proposed that crisis did not simply describe a set of conjunctures, but was specifically understood to function as a dominant narrative device that, when invoked, produced a set of meanings that structured knowledge of social phenomena and, crucially, shaped policy decisions, governance structures, and also our own approach as academics, to studying the world (Dines et al., 2018, pp. 440-441).

With this in mind, we turn to the 2015 refugee crisis and how it has affected cinema. In *Contemporary European cinema: crisis narratives and narratives in crisis,*

Kaklamanidou and Corbalán (2018, p. 2) have explored post-2008 European cinema from an international perspective to determine how global crisis has influenced European film, both as an artefact (theme, characters, context) and as an industrial product (production methods, funding, EU involvement). Their research shared the temporal frame of my thesis and explored similar themes, but also offered a novel gaze on the films, as I will further develop shortly.

Kaklamanidou and Corbalán (2018, p. 65) suggest that the phenomenon of international migration is not only experienced as a crisis by those leaving their homes, or by the population of the host countries facing such unprecedented masses of newcomers. Rather, the phenomenon of large-scale international migration brings new challenges for European cinema too – a crisis of cinematic representation. This rift, between meaningful (political, journalistic, visual) representations on the one hand and concept-breaking encounters with otherness on the other, is symptomatic of the cognitive and conceptual crisis that international migration often entails. Arguably, such a cognitive crisis poses a challenge to contemporary European cinema; the task to produce images and narratives able to make sense of our perplexing times is no easy feat. How the issue of immigration has upset all sorts of people (for all sorts of reasons), thus polarising European societies, is another sign of this epistemic conundrum. One could argue that these strong emotions stem partly from people's loss of control. Not just loss of control over what happens to societies, but also the loss of control over the field of knowledge (Kaklamanidou & Corbalán, 2018, pp. 65-67).

To prove their argument, Kaklamanidou and Corbalán (2018, pp. 76-78) analyse *Terraferma* (2011, Italy, dir. Emanuele Crialese) and *Morgen* (2010, Romania, dir. Marian Crisan). They argue that most visible is the erasure of all images that could evoke xenophobia or that might play into the hands of populist right-wing ideologies – a notion that my thesis has challenged. The similarities include how none of the films feature single male migrants who belong to the 16–30-year-old age group, when men in general tend to be statistically more violent and/or prone to sexually predatory behaviour, as I discuss broadly in my Introduction in relation to gendered refugees. This narrative avoidance is discernible in many immigration films, including such critically acclaimed works as *La Promesse* (1996, USA, dir. Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne), *Le Havre*

(2011, Finland, dir. Aki Kaurismäki), *Illégal* (2010, USA, dir. Olivier Masset-Depasse), *Live and Become* (2005, France & Israel, dir. Radu Mihaileanu), or the documentary *Fire at Sea* (2016, Italy, dir. Gianfranco Rosi) (Kaklamanidou & Corbalán, 2018, pp. 76-78). However, my thesis challenges this perspective specifically through the films I have analysed. In all three films, I have focused on portraying exactly those who are considered to be the most threatening. The films in my thesis, I argue, are braver and more challenging as they portray *only* male refugees in their adolescent years. My choice to focus only on male refugees was made because of the charged complexity of this image, and the fears it might evoke in the viewer. It demands that the viewer go through a deeper and more meaningful process throughout the film, which enables cinema to be a more meaningful device of representation.

Another point made by Kaklamanidou and Corbalán (2018, p. 77) is that none of the migrant protagonists in the films that they research do anything that is at odds with European moral standards. They do not become irritated or angry when ill-treated, it would seem; they never even have bad days or foul moods. These extremities of characterisation clearly underline the extent to which these characters are trapped in the representational system of the sameness. They are not 'Others', but rather European fantasies of otherness.

In this respect, my thesis challenges Kaklamanidou and Corbalán's (2018) argument once again. This is done by showing that the refugees within the films have a voice, have an opinion, and express their dissatisfaction with the European countries that they find themselves in. Their voice is heard within the European context. They are not afraid to be angry at it (as Simon and Bilal – together – are angry at France, as well as how Wasi feels about Denmark) or laugh at it (as Diallo does with Germany), and by that they are not 'European fantasies of otherness'. Rather, they are the 'Other' who forms meaningful relations with their European hosts. They are separated from the Europeans, and equal to them; they have their own voice, and they are not afraid to use it.

5.3   Genre

In this thesis, genre plays a crucial role as an organizing and investigatory tool, a theoretical perspective through which I analysed the films according to their specific and unique generic conventions. Here, I would like to offer a broader look on the three films. All three case studies in this research fit into the coming-of-age genre. In *Coming-of-age genre – coming of Age in 'the Hood': The diasporic youth film and questions of genre*, Berghahn (2010, p. 239) argues that diasporic youth films essentially reflect the experience of growing up in a culture different from that of one's culture of origin. She describes these narratives as quests, depicting adolescents searching their cultural roots (see Berghahn 2006, Mazierska and Rascolari 2006). Bilal, Diallo and Wasi are all in search of a new identity – both as young adults and as citizens of the European country they wish to become a part of. According to Berghahn (2010, p. 241), coming-of-age films set in a multicultural milieu are unique in that they revolve around their protagonists' search for ethnic and cultural belonging, as is the case in this thesis.

But not all the protagonists discussed in this thesis share the same end to their journey. In fact, only Diallo achieves his goal, of becoming German and an integral part of the host Hartmann family. As for Bilal and Wasi, the end point is different. In both cases, their desire and will is told as an unfulfilled dream. Either by achieving the impossible feat of crossing the English tunnel by swimming (Bilal), or by declaring out loud that his dream is to go back to Denmark (as Wasi does throughout the film; a dream underscored by the film's title), these dreams do not come true, and the films do not have happy endings. I propose that this thesis shows a new type of coming-of-age subgenre, in which the refugee is denied growth and development, the mobilisation and transformative aspects that are crucial to the coming-of-age genre

5.4   What has happened in cinema since?

My thesis explored a specific point in time; summarising it enables a perspective on how things have changed since the beginning of the refugee crisis, and how cinema has been affected by the crisis. In this section, I will discuss in particular the emergence of a new cinematic genre. In their article, *Toward a Fifth Cinema*, Kaur and Grassilli (2019) identify a new cinema genre resulting from the refugee crisis, which they call the 'Fifth Cinema'. This encompasses a multifaceted spectrum of films made by, or with the active participation of, refugees. According to the authors, 'Fifth Cinema' represents a 'mobile, unstable, instantaneous, fragmented, displaced and hybrid bricolage' (Kaur & Grassilli, 2019, p. 8).

Connecting the Fifth Cinema to Cinemas One to Four, its type follows the revelation of Third Cinema as a collective force of the formerly colonised. The leading actors of Third Cinema sought to dismantle the Eurocentric premises and Hollywood commercialisation of international film. Diverging from the individualist auteur style of art-house cinema, or Second Cinema, their attack was mainly directed at the bourgeois, capitalist, racist and heteronormative agendas of First Cinema, epitomised by Hollywood's global monopoly (Kaur & Grassilli, 2019, p. 16).

Providing another perspective on the first three schools of cinemas, Barclay argues in *Celebrating Fourth Cinema* (2003, p. 7): 'First, Second and Third cinema are all Cinemas of the Modern Nation State. From the Indigenous place of standing, these are all invader Cinemas.'

Writing about Fourth Cinema, Khanna (1998, p. 26) defines it as a stage of decolonization in cinema, in which the birth of a nation is described from the perspective of the women participating in the moment of decolonization. Fourth Cinema aims to be more inclusive; to place itself outside the surrounding framework of hegemony, creating room for subalterns and women and thus overcoming Third Cinema's inability to represent the violence experienced by women in the process of decolonization. (Khanna, 1998, p. 26)

Fifth Cinema, by contrast, is less fixated on the virtues of land and indigeneity. It is, by definition, nomadic and deterritorialised. Fifth Cinema is displaced, branch-like, as borders are transgressed and new homes, bearings and identities are sought. Fifth Cinema is not hemmed in by specific settled nation-state ideologies; rather, it navigates a scattering of nation-state boundaries. It is a cinema of necessity, defined by an inherent precarity, memories, and by a restlessness in between homes imagined as elsewhere, past, present and future (Kaur & Grassilli, 2019, p. 20).

Fifth Cinema is also unique in its approach to representation of the political sphere. Hence Kaur and Grassilli identify it as a 'cinema of subversion' that proposes a discursive relation between art and activism, aesthetics and politics, to be defined variously by the practitioners involved and that compels social action. Emotionally and politically fraught, this is an emergency cinema; it gets unheard voices heard, powered by extraordinary talent and vision.

In this way, Fifth Cinema can serve as a platform for a louder, collective voice for refugee recognition. If we can begin to alter the public consensus on refugees, this will hopefully shape government and intergovernmental policy and practice (Kaur & Grassilli, 2019, p. 25).

A retrospective investigation of the refugee crisis from sociological and cinematic perspectives reveals that the discourse is divided. From the European perspective, the crisis was politicised between left- and right-wing agendas for internal political purposes. In *Bordered lives: how Europe fails refugees and migrants*, Pai (2018, pp.1-2) notes that the mainstream media in Europe uses terms such as 'refugee crisis' and 'migrant crisis' to inform the public about the situation of people without capital, fleeing conflicts, wars and degradation. These are the terms used to play the numbers game, planting the idea that 'Europe cannot cope' in the public mind. Ultimately, these are the terms through which the concept of 'us' and 'them' is maintained and strengthened. With powerful institutions in place, it has always been difficult to challenge the mainstream perception of migration, and to correct its narratives about refugees and migrants. In the past decade, the EU's austerity policies have contributed to growing discontent, a great deal of it misdirected against the 'outsiders' – in other words, refugees and migrants. While Donald Trump's

presidency and his regressive anti-immigrant, anti-refugee policies provoked global outrage, policies identical to his had already been propagated, debated and practiced across Europe. The same kind of state violence can be witnessed in the way that EU countries deal with refugees and migrants (Pai, 2018, p.6).

What my thesis offers is an alternative perspective on the terminology used in the refugee crisis discourse. My analysis of specific films reveals the power of cinema to generate a new gaze on the representation of refugees' representations. My thesis has explored new methodologies for searching for similarities; the common ground, the psychological ground that allows for dyadic relations to occur. By sharing the emotional experience of the 'emotional refugee', both sides discover that they are as different as they would have thought. This, in turn, is mediated to the viewer as a new and novel type of relationship, a new perspective and an alternative world where the dichotomic vision is challenged.

5.5   Future research and films made since 2016

Although my thesis provides substantial insight into the way in which the dyadic relationship between the adolescent refugee and his European host have been represented and the impact that it has had, this is still a relatively underrepresented area of study. Hence, there are several potential avenues that further research on this subject area could explore. This section will discuss potential research avenues and directions beyond the scope of my work.

One direction could be to expand research into German cinema, as two relevant films have been released since 2016. Germany was the most welcoming country for refugees in Europe, and the political and social drama in the country during the refugee crisis of 2015 has been turned into a feature film based on a bestselling book. The TV docudrama *The driven ones: Merkel and refugee policy: report from the halls of power (Die Getriebenen: Merkel und die Flüchtlingspolitik: Report aus dem Innern der Macht), directed by* Stephan Wagner aired on German television in April 2020.

Wagner's film co-opts powerful images from news broadcasts, ranging from clips of thousands of refugees, stranded, in front of Budapest's Keleti train station, to enthusiastic helpers along the route that many of the refugees decided to walk; welcoming committees in German train stations, together with footage from an angry anti-refugee rally in Heidenau, a small town near Dresden. The film also presents some fictional scenes, mainly involving the German chancellor and her husband (DW.COM, 2020). *The driven ones* offered a behind-the-scenes account of the 63 days of political intrigue and back-biting that changed modern Germany (Connolly, 2020).

The political perspective of the film made about Chancellor Merkel has strengthened the politicising process that the refugee crisis passed through, showing that it also happened in the countries that welcomed refugees. On the other hand, this film could help soften criticism of Merkel regarding her refugee policy, by revealing a more detailed picture of the behind-the-scenes events that informed her actions. In other words, the film could serve as a tool contextualising the belief that Chancellor Merkel's actions posed a threat to aspects of her country's way of living. Regardless of the motivations for the film, the fact that Germany has continued to deal with the refugee crisis, calling for an open discourse about this time in history, shows that the crisis has become an inseparable part of the country's narrative, and that Germans are doing their best to show how different they are now compared to their traumatic past.

In the meantime, another refugee comedy has been produced and released in Germany. The film *Visitation* (*Heimsuchung*, 2019), directed by Wolfgang Andrä, tells the story of three Germans who do not want to accept any refugees assigned to them other than their favourite refugee. However, the three rejected refugees act to thwart this plan (IMDB, 2021). As can be understood from the short description of the film, it seems this film explores unwelcoming, or at least ambivalent, attitudes toward the refugees. Broadening the scope of the current research on humour and the 'other', and the ways in which it has been used to deal with the crisis, it would be relevant to explore this film further, perhaps even comparing it to the analysis of *Welcome to the Hartmanns* that this thesis provides.

Broadening the scope of the current research will include other countries that were not investigated here but which were key players in the Europe refugee crisis. Additionally, expanding the current research could be done by exploring other forms of interactions between refugees of different ages, genders or family structures (not only male adolescents). One example for such a film is *The other side of hope* (directed by Aki Kaurismäki, Finland, 2017). The film tells the story of Khaled, a Syrian refugee who stows away on a freighter to Helsinki. Meanwhile, Wikström, a traveling salesman, wins big at the poker table and buys himself a restaurant with the proceeds. When the authorities turn down Khaled's application for asylum, he is forced into hiding until Wikström finds him sleeping in the backyard behind his restaurant. He offers Khaled a job and a roof over his head; for a while, they form an idealistic alliance with the restaurant's waitress, the chef and his dog (IMDB, 2021). Kaurismäki's minimalist style confronts the audience with different forms of communication with the foreigner, the Other, the guest in early 21st century Finnish society. Acts of providing refuge create situations of hope – shown as providing security and protection for the guest and foreigner – within a broader social landscape of danger and hostility. These hopes reflect on the understanding and treatment of the refugee as guest (Heide, 2019, p. 4).

Documentary also offers another potential direction for future research. The Italian documentary *Fire at Sea* (directed by Gianfranco Rosi, 2016), shot during the European migrant crisis on the Sicilian Island of Lampedusa, sets the migrants' hazardous Mediterranean crossing against a background of the ordinary life of the islanders. The central characters are a twelve-year-old boy from a local fishing family and a doctor who treats the migrants on their arrival. In his acceptance speech after winning the Golden Bear award at the Berlin Film Festival, Rosi stated that his aim was to heighten alertness of the migrant situation:.Rosi, a political documentary filmmaker, set out to subvert the narratives of distress, chaos, and victimhood which had dominated the public narrative of the refugee crisis, by foregrounding stories marginalised by mainstream media. Specifically, he spent 18 months on the small Sicilian island of Lampedusa during a period of frenzied media attention between 2015 and 2016, documenting the impact of the refugee crisis on residents, along with the experiences of refugees when they are rescued and brought ashore (Gemma 2017, p.1).

Another key player in the crisis was Greece. Greece's location made it central to the journey of the refugees travelling from the Middle East towards Europe. The documentary *4.1 Miles* (directed by Daphne Matziaraki, 2016), tells the story of local coast guard officials stationed off the Greek island of Lesbos, the target of the thousands of migrants who had braved the dangers of the Mediterranean to flee conflicts at home. The Coast Guard, used to patrolling the tranquil waters of a small island, found itself astounded by the task of saving hundreds from dying at sea. An analysis of this film could shed light on the situation in Greece, and the interactions between refugees and local authorities after their arrival. Finally, the Spanish documentary *Born in Syria* (directed by Hernán Zin, 2016) tells the story of children fleeing from an unimaginable horror in Syria to Europe. These further avenues for research have the potential to expand upon the insights this thesis has provided into the representation of adolescent refugees in European cinema, to be taken up by myself and other scholars.

My thesis opened with a description of a photograph of Aylan Kurdi, the three-year-old Syrian child who drowned in the Mediterranean, and its worldwide impact via the mass media. This photograph has been described as triggering image or transformative image; with this in mind, I embarked on the journey of exploring representations of the refugee adolescent in the cinematic sphere, and the potential cinema possessed for provoking change in other spheres. Whereas the responses to Kurdi's image evoked parental and protective responses from the world, these were nevertheless based on maintaining difference, and a distance, from the dead Syrian child on a beach. The crisis, through this image, is still something happening far away, not necessarily part of the domestic, day-to-day lives of Europeans. What my thesis has demonstrated is how cinema enables the refugee crisis to enter the lives and families and relationships of the Europeans: how it influences from the inside, how it is not something that exists only as a headline in a newspaper but rather an internal, psychological experience, and as such provides a closer encounter with the refugees in Europe. Cinema reveals, as I have argued across the thesis, the similarities, connections and reflections of both sides of the dyad, rather than the familiar dichotomic gaze.

Appendix A

The interview was conducted on May 5th, 2020 via Skype with *Dreaming of Denmark* director, Michael Graversen.

Yael Gordon: Hi nice to meet you, nice to see you. Thank you for your time .

Michael Graversen: Yeah of course. thank you for your interest in the film.

YG: Yes, yes, I am very interested in the film. Sorry for the technical delay, I thought you received the Zoom link I'm quite new in this am quite new in this.

MG: Yes, me too, I haven't used zoom that much.

YG: Yes, the whole Zoom world is just, you know.

How are you doing in these corona days?

MG: Good, I have two sons and we actually had a lot more time together so that's positive but I also. There is been some jobs that I have lost, and you know I had to direct the documentary series that was cancelled. But its ok because I've been quite busy so it's good to be forced to be, you know to take a break.

YG: Yes, to take it easy.

MG: Yes. But obviously a lot of people are struggling.

YG: Yes, especially in our field, I mean, I am more in the academy, but obviously T.V. and films are very much hurt as well by this situation.

MG: Exactly.

YG: Ok, so let me shortly interduce myself, and this all context of the interview, then we will get to the questions. I'm doing a PhD in Southampton university in England. And basically, I live in London with my partner and two-year-old girl, a toddler. But we ran away the minute the situation got worse and at the moment I'm in Tel-Aviv because we are all from Israel originally, so we came to here to be with our families. But the PHD, as PHD, continues. so basically, I have three chapters in my PHD, each chapter deals with a different film from different country and from different genre. So I have drama from

France, and a comedy from Germany, and I have your film as a documentary from Denmark. The whole idea is to explore the relationship between refugee adolescents that arrive to the European country whatever it is, and to see how it changes the life of the host or of the political debate or of the cinematic representations etc. I'm not going to bore you with all the details but I'm obviously investigating it in a various of questions along the chapters.

MG: Yeah.

YG: So that's the very general introduction to the context. Then I got to your film and watched it so many times obviously, and I'm sure I will again, so thank you again for sending me the link I couldn't watch this in any other way actually.

So if you can, tell me first of all what drawn you to that story? I mean, have seen a few interviews with you on your website and I know it's a question you've been asked so you don't have to give me the full answer, but just what drawn you to the story, because I know you had a contact with "Wassee" prior to the film or?...

- MG: Just one second because It's a bit noisy around here. Is that good? Ok I'm ready now. -

MG: So you what you were saying?

YG: So what drawn you to the story? What was the first thing that like hocked you to the story?

MG: Basically it was in 2012, where I kind of, I wouldn't say 'accidentally' but kind of it was unplanned. I got in contact with this children society (18:13) in Denmark through a friend who was working there and he was telling me that there is a teenagers and kids who are now fleeing on their own from a lot of countries like Afghanistan and later on Suria and so on. And that they were fleeing without their families, and I never thought that much about, you know, that concept. So I was very curious at the beginning just to know, kind of who are these teenagers and how does this effect their lives and how are they different from other refugees. And then there was a long process for getting the excess to the center because it was at the time there was not many unaccompanied

minor refugees who came to Denmark only a couple of hundreds came in each year and there wasn't any focus on them. But also because they were underage there was a lot of restrictions in regarding to how to present them also. You are not allowed to take pictures and put them on Facebook and stuff like that. And the center was managed by the red cross, so I had to do a lot of in this big organization and there is a lot of bureaucracy and I think I worked on this for several months and a lot of me changed and in the end I got to this meeting with the head of the children center. It was a small center, I think the only one in Denmark in that point, so it had like forty kids and only three girls, the rest was boys. They kind of allowed me to go to be part of the center. Then I came there, kind of not knowing much you know about the place and about the refugees and the kids and all of that and then I think three hours after I came, there was a lot of frustration some windows was smashed and it was kind of very chaotic place and that was because a lot of them they been waiting for several years at the place, and some have actually received the final rejection signed and it was those really a tense atmosphere and it was taking it on all of these people leaving there, and then I was connected to the center for eight months and I was kind of traveling back and forth staying I close by so I can be there all days. I wasn't filming that much in the beginning so it was like observing and kind of talking to them, because a lot of them they thought that, for example take the Afghan boys they don't know really what role I have in society and they thought I might be a spy to the government and they were really hesitate a lot of them they have parents issues, especially with authorities of grownups. So it took really a long time to gain their trust, I think some of them I never gained their trust..but... So I really had to spend a lot of time there and I did also night shifts and all of then they got curios with the camera. There was specially three boys "Basula" and then his two friends "Mosa" and "Addisa". Because they formed an unusual friendship, because usually the ethnic groups, they stick to themselves so the Somalis stick to Somalis, Afghanistan's to Afghanistan's and all of that, but they kind of formed a friendship also because "Basula" was not really part of this Afghan group of boys that was really a though crowd, and there was lot of hierarchy, and he was like an outsider. So he formed this friendship with "Mosa" and "Addisa", and they invited me to the beach and I shot a music video with them, and also in their rooms and all of that and they were more in especially "Addisa" was quite innocent I think "Basula" already in the center he had some problems, and they

were not really judging him and they kind of just welcomed him so he was staying at their place. So I ended up being in the center for quite a long time and got really under the skin of everything and got to know, there was a lot of frustration I guess, a lot, at one point I actually, after this I made my short documentary called "No Man's land" that was portrayed at the center basically and also of this psychological state of waiting and how it effects them and it kind of has it filming all around these three boys who are having their families rejections. And then after this, and after this was screened, I was traveling on the train with one of the boys, who called "Shafee", Afghan boy who told me, I think he trusted me more after… you know…seeing the film and all of this career that I have been since, and then he told me that he heard this rumor about, cause now he got his got the final rejection, and he was afraid to be sent back to Afghanistan. And so he said that, before he will turn eighteen, he is going to leave the country for Italy. And I then followed him to Italy and filmed him in Italy. But in one point he got so upset and angry with Denmark so we had to stop the filming. What actually that meant, because then sometime later "Basula" called me and said: "now I left my room and I'm at the central station, and I don't know what's going to happen with me". Then he decided eventually to go to the same place as "Shafee", so I already had a lot of contacts and also a lot of trust in the environment in Italy, but it was more tough because it was a lot of boys who also living in Italy and it was more_____ to… you know.. didn't get _____ (24:50) in Italy, living in the streets and selling crocs so it was really a more tough environment. But "Shaffee" vouched for me, so I kind of… you know…I think if I just went there and wanted to film them I could meet a lot of boys but all this kind of work from the beginning in 2012 led me to get excess to "Basula" and his story and also to filming it in the end, and so forth.

YG: Okay it sounds like a long journey. Personally I also volunteered in the red cross in London, I'm really familiar with all the concept of distrust and everything, because they look at you at first like you are some kind of alien coming to their territory, and it took my also a while to get to a normal conversations with them, without me having to explain them again what is that I'm doing there, etc. So I can really relate to what you were saying.

who would you describe "Wassee"? obviously I seen the film many times and I have my answer for that, but I'm curious to hear you're… I mean obviously you know him more than the film shows, so how would you describe his character?

MG: Of course, I think he is really complexed, in the sense that he is… he is quite vulnerable, he is defiantly was one of the boys who had the biggest mental issues in the center. He has some things in his past I think, that kind of… he was brought up in just outside of Jelala but north jelala (26:48) but without parents, and I don't really touch from that in the film because at that point I couldn't really malodate (26:55) it. But the information that I got, that he was also trusted them, and he told me he thinks… he was working, taking care of the animals, not really having any education, part from couple of months of grant school and then he was working with his uncle, and his uncle would treat him real bad, and like some children he had to sleep with the animals. Then at one point, his uncle got really violent towards him and it kind of escalated and he had to flee. There was also some issues, that he might have been together with a girl who kind of also might cause some problems. So he definitely had some issues and also I think in one point just like high peek, he was also evaluated by a psychiatrist, that they kind of speculated that he might have some signs of physical trauma actually also to his head because of his beating, but he never really got to the examination. But he is got a lot of…. You know, love in his package, and his mental state, especially his memory is really problematic, and sometimes he also in Denmark he got like blackouts. But having said that he is also quite strong, I think he is actually also in a few scenes in the film, he actually learns languages quite fast and really well, that's a lot of resources, I think. And I think a lot of the stuff in the center, thought of him is being like a really vulnerable boy how cannot take care of himself, but I think it kind of... also the film shows he also has a lot of strength and he also can defiantly take care of himself. He is also very much a teenager he is you know very much aware how he looks, and he really you know, wants a girlfriend and he is quite _____ (29:00) also, you see in the film that he loves, like in hair is always hanging on nice and also his beard and all of that. I think that's all a sign of him, of his survival. He has not given up on life, and that's kind of him. You can see that also in the way he takes care of himself. I think he also have a lot of issues that a lot of the other boys have like we talked about, with trust and I remember at one point we came to this characters that was going

to help him with his case, and he sat there for like an hour, and he went outside and said "wow, I'm not going to talk to them again, because I don't think I can trust them, they would defiantly give information". And what I can say maybe now, maybe that's need to be of the record. Because actually when he came back to Italy, he changed his name and his age again. But that did not really helped him actually. So he thought that sometimes he kind of you know navigate the system and all of this, but then a lot of the times he actually, you know ended up not helping himself in that process. And I think for him it was like a really… he really embarrassed the values we have in the west, although he really liked the freedom that we have. And he said he felt when he came to the Margen, that was you know, in the final destination in cold heigen (31:08) , he thought that he was landed on the moon, came to a different world, that you know, girls were shaking hands with him, and you know, they were not covered and everything was kind of new to him and exciting. I really think that he was also quite curious, and also really wants to explore like that kind of being a teenager in the west with all of this freedom. I think when he is in a situation waiting of uncertainty, he really kind of struggling, and its really stressful, and a lot of his traumas are resurfacing. But when he is on the run again, when he left Denmark, he was actually much stressed also. And he had hope again, and he could kind of act on things. When he started also dating some girls, like also in the film there was the _____(32:20) she was not the only one. But then he ended up in this situation again and that's really when he was kind of again in this waiting and his trauma just got worse. But I think he has this kind of two sides; the one that he is really a vulnerable kind of quite in some weeks damaged also mentally but also he has this really kind of strong survival side in him. It also really has to do with him want to explore, and to have a normal teenage life.

YG: Yes. There was a lot of literature about the relationship between a film maker and a subject. I mean it's a very complex relationship with ethical issues, trust issues, etc. So you followed him for a long time, a few years is a long time. Do you think your relationship evolved during that time? I mean obviously he trusted you more and more otherwise he wouldn't have gone to that, but does he changed? Do you think you have changes? How would you describe your relationship from that perspective?

MG: That's a really good question. I think it changed throughout. I mean in the beginning it was more our small kind of... I was less important to him at the center when I was doing the first film and all of this. And then, when he was leaving the center and he called me I think that was kind of both, he wanted something, he was curious also to see what is happening and he wanted somebody to document his life I think if you were in the same way did not have a home, your identity been taken away from you and you are basically a nobody, then having somebody, who wants to make a film about you, you know its part of this world survival instincts that you use if you feel you used to have a place in the world. I think because I was traveling with him to Italy, I think he really liked that I could feel that it kind of calmed him down. The fact that he was not alone I think really helped him because he was also scared, he doesn't show that much, but he would never admit it, but I really feel we kind of connected, really almost like kind of friendship in this situations, where I kind of really close to him and in the situation, but he also, he got in a condition in Italy that he was sleep outside and homeless, ah, I think he was live in a long time. I think it's kind, it made It more difficult for our relationship also because he was kind of you know, he needed help but in the same time he was not comfortable you know ask me for help. I remember actually that we are came to Italy, and something change at him, because all the other boys, I could see that they talking about me and all of the sodden he come and say to me ,you have to buy me some cigarettes. And he would never do this before and kind a ask me for this. And I could see he is not really feeling comfortable with that, ah, but I can also see it something he had to do for the boys.

YG: Yeah.

MG: You know, in order to have their respect, you know obviously I was only there to get something out of me and all of this, you know he had to come up with, are you there?

YG: Yeah I'm here, what is happening? I can see you.

MG: Hello?

YG: Yes,

MG: How much did you get?

YG: I got to the cigarettes part that he never have asked you to do that, but you understand that he needed to do that, to show for his friend.

Interviewee: Yeah he need to do this things and I think that ah, you can see like over all the more he was, they way he got, the more it also difficult to our relationship because, he felt more and more kind alone and nobody was helping him and because I was the person who kind of became closer to him in this period, and he also got really angry with me and I think, I had a psychologist also to consult and we talk all about, you know, that how I represent Denmark to him, so I was traveling back and forth there was also reason, same pac ks on every time that we met, he was really excited to see me and happy. Like for the first day or something he would be overly excited for all of that an then, it was like, and I was also representing all of the good things about Denmark and all of those things he would remember, and then he, he also kind of remembered that he got rejected so he returned and then he got angry and was kind of feeling rejected and all of this, and I think he has a lot of in his life, a lot of people, you know, leaving him and you know just going out of his life so every time I was leaving I think he was thinking it, I don't if I would see him again. So I think for me It was really difficult, and for me I don't know if was right or not right, but when he was living on the streets, he was asking me for money to pay for a room, and I was actually in a quit financial difficult place myself, I had in that point, I had my kind a lot of film myself, and also the first couple of travels, so I had a little bit hesitate, you know And then he got really you know, angry and then at some point I said ok I do it, and he said no no no no I can take care of myself I don't need your help, and then he got really proud, so I don't know sometime I feel like I wish I maybe just helped him. But in the same time it really difficult because I think also would "Shafee" when I filmed him I start helping him with money and it was one of the reasons I didn't work out with the film because then he started doing in the film for the wrong reasons, he started maybe behaving differently and all of that and I really didn't want that to be a part of my relationship and I couldn't really, in the end, I couldn't really helped him because what he really needed was a silen (40:40) and a passport and, and maybe this thing with a place, with the room or something that I maybe could have helped him. But other ways, there would be charges for the food and clothes all of these, so obviously when I was there you know we go and eat and I was pay for the food and all of that. So this is something that I

kind of speculated, but living with this in peace, but sometimes he could be really almost like a little child and he would ask me: "do you want to be my teacher ,do you want to? would you help me to learn the language?" and all of that. and then sometimes he would be like more you know tough guy, you know like I have everything on a control and you my guest now.

YG: Like a typical adolescent.

MG: Yes.

Interviewer: Kind of the mixture between being a child and pretending to be an adult. You are kind of like leading me to the next question and I hope it's not too sensitive in terms of financing of the film. I'll give you the background of the question - in the two other chapters it is very clear when the refugee arrives to a family or arrives to a home and enters the family life, enter the home where they character lives, etc. In your film I'm really struggling to define the host, I mean who hosts "Wassee" you know? Is it you, as the director? Is it Denmark? Is it Italy? Is it Cinema? Which is like to big, to big to say, but what kind of home is there in this film? And who is the guest here sort to speak? Is it you hosting "Wassee" in your film or are you the guest in Wassees' journey? From what perspective would you say it's more? Because obviously I agree that you represent Denmark for him, I also think "Mosa" represent Denmark for him, and why he kind of forgets both of you at some point, the same way Denmark forgot about him. I think you showed it really nice the parallel between how he feels about how he feels about Denmark and How Denmark feels about him, sort to speak. So one of the directions I thought about was maybe I don't know maybe have you helped Wassee in any other way, other then the film? But you kind of already answering this already I'm not asking you to repeat it, I'm just saying, is there any home in this film or it is just director following an interesting character in a very specific political times during the refugee crisis, you know? And I hope I made myself clear.

MG: Yes, I don't know if I can answer it kind of you know, like precise.

YG: Yes, of course.

MG: But I think you know there might not be a home for anybody, he is kind of living in between places. His character in between. Also I think its something you know really also affects him in the sense of the time he says: "who am I? Am I really Afghan member homeland? Am I Italian? I speak a little bit of these, or am I Danish?" And I think there is this point in his kind of situation its not really, as he doesn't belong anywhere. I think making a film about him the fact it may be the only way in kind of you know, show that he actually belonged in this world. And maybe through the film he is belong somewhere.

YG: You provided him some kind of routes throughout the film, provided him some sort of a ground or feels of belonginess by doing this film.

MG: Exactly, and I think for me there was a key moment where I think that also there was kind of home in our relationship especially when we went to Italy together, and also when He was having his Mental-memory issues when I was going there. Because at that point we had to really kind of start all over again, because I would go there with the camera at the beginning, actually I tried to contact him from Denmark but I couldn't so I just going there and then I got in contact with him but he was like kind of really on the phone "No please, I don't know who you are" and then eventually agreed to just meet with me, and we had to like start it all over. I had to send him pictures of who I looked like so he could find me and I was like thinking is he pretending? And how much from this is real? I don't know really if it's relevant but because he was really in a bad state. In the beginning he was talk about this that we know each other from this and this, and he would get really aggressive like almost a person with dementia who was like aggressive because he really can not remember. Then I just also told him to go a psychologist, I guess. He started saying "ok, well we don't know each other, well so my name is Michel, etc." and then I was just being with him for a long time all day long until he got tired and then I would bring the camera for my filming, and then he started to get curious into why I bring this camera? I kind slowly explaining, and then he was saying ok but why aren't you filming? And I would film a little bit and then he would get head hacks and we had to stop and I would not filming that much from that period, but it was kind of, you know, it was like, in all two steps forward it was one step back, but that freed me for doing a really good film because that felt maybe I could provide him some sort of home and that period,

and he really actually got better. And then at to the point when I went home, he was like in a really good state, you know he was not remembering everything, but then he called me saying now he was feeling better and also, he got this letter for his interview. So I think those moments of this really nice relationship, that something also made a home for him.

YG: Ok, It's fine. I mean you don't have to struggle more, you gave me a really good answer. Which leads me to the next question, I didn't plan it to be so structured, but it kind of like goes there naturally. You know, one of the reasons I chose Denmark before even getting into your specific film, is because of the very clear anti-immigrant rules and Denmark as a kind country, is not a very welcoming place obviously for refugees, and I think your film in a very sensitive and nice way portrays a different Denmark. Because of the humanitarian level, the civilian level or any other more human level of Denmark is different from what you see in the news or what you read on the political decisions. And to be honest when I saw the name of your film, the title "Dreaming of Denmark" I was kind of how does it fits with Denmark? But then I think you are showing something else, your showing a different face of Denmark, and my question is do you think your film has made an impact on the… I don't know if political level is too high… but like, on the social level or even political level, have you been showing this film in any specific context that might tell something else?

MG: Yes, I think it has some effect and it did not has some effect. I think it was screened in the national television, so it was on DR1, which is like BBC1. And all of the darks (50:10) are usually broadcast very late around the hour 02:00. So it really got because of the agency of the subject, and the topical nature of the film, he got a really good position. It was screened something like 09:30 on a Sunday evening, which meant it kind of that a lot of people who saw it and also loved it and also people who might not. And I think of they screened in two like really late that would mean that it was for certain kind of people, for a segment kind of people you know. But because it was screened and they watched, you know, different kind of people saw it also maybe people who are more against immigrants also. And what I can kind of found out that especially the ones who were more doubting and also leaning towards I don't think we should be welcoming

immigrants. They were actually be very much moved by my story, also because it was not told in a educatory way.

YG: Yeah it wasn't told as "you should do this and that".

MG: Yes, that's right. So I got a lot of feedback and I really like the ones to say that actually this is made a difference for me. When I would hear about refugees in the future, I will think about "Basil" and you know. And also there would be someone against, still be against the refugees and not welcoming them. But saying ok but maybe they not should be excepted (51:55) but especially take care of these, we cannot welcome everybody. So it kind of I think in that individual level it reached out and I had some impact on people but also after, I'm not able to tell you everything, there is also much,

YG: Yes, Of course.

MG: Because it was quite a different _____ (52:28) it also received quite a lot of press and we were to all the big newspapers. I was chatting online while the movie was screening but also afterwards, we made this crowd funding campaign. So we directed everybody there and I think we managed to raise about 60,000 denies, which is like a 7,000 pounds or something like that.

YG: Oh wow! Amazing! to go for them?

MG: Yes.

YG: Wow!

MG: So he was actually enough to use this money to get a drivers' license but also together with a friend who to rent this pizza place in Italy where he actually got a job.

YG: That's amazing.

MG: Yes, so a lot of these boys, because they ended up on the streets again, because they are the one who don't get work because really is they don't know much about well-fair in Italy as the same way there is in Denmark so that was kind of for him you, something concrete for him. And then he has been working quite a lot with the film and also educating for the rights of the unaccompanied. I've been kind of trying to speak on behalf

157

of the ones you know who have left them and do it legally on debate shows and radio and T.V. and also writing a letter for opinion pieces for the newspapers, and all of this. And I don't know how that has, you know, how you can measure if that had any effect, I don't know. But at least the Boys are heard in the public.

YG: Yeah.

MG: And I still doing this you know, and it kinds of provided me a platform now for example I was in Moria (54:34) at the camp there on the debate on the TV saying we should take some of the kids from there, and some of the parties in Denmark have raised that question in parliaments. So also, I've been going to the parliaments to advise to some parties on the situation for "Wassee" and a lot of the boys in his situation. Helping to write their political program regarding to this subject so I've been missing it quite a lot. But I don't know how to measure that if it actually has effected something in that sense.

YG: I think the fact that your voice is heard, that's quite enough. I mean that if something to filmed it give you, if you can say that or I mean so,

MG: So actually now we did the spoke, what's the English title? It would be a something like; "The book of the unaccompanied" which is ten stories unaccompanied. Mostly teenagers basically, I think from thirteen to eighteen. So together with me and another writer from _____ (56:10) who was the author. We collected this stories and also for some of the kids that I've known since 2012. And then we kind of, that was going pretty well and all of the sales from that book was going to help. Because in Denmark we have this low that says that _____ (56:40) and also got the rights to get the family here, they have to pay themselves so before I got to the states, In the last couple of years, the immigration low you know, try to pressure them so they have to pay for everything so get in the family out of Syria and getting them transfer to Denmark and all of that, obviously they don't have all of this money so he raise 25,000 pound to this, you know to help families. And that is also thing that came up from making this film.

YG: Yeah, so it has, a lot of impact in the public field so it's very moving actually. I do want to ask you one final question; the tour in the end of the film, there was that scene with

the crashing cars that you and "Wassee" are driving in cars like, it's you, there right? If I'm not mistaken, right?

MG: Yeah it is.

YG: I'm interesting in that because it's the first time in the film we see you. Up to this point we hear you, obviously your conversation's, I'm just curious about, tell me more about the scene and why did you choose that specific scene to show yourself? Or does it stands for something? Does it symbolize something?

MG: I think It symbolize something like both like me and also like in on a bigger level because I think until that point the way the side of the film is more observational and it's more traditional in that sense but when he really you know, was struggling and have these mental problems it kind of shift it. And I become a part of the film, for me that is ,really an important to show, , that also you know, going from this relationship in the film, film maker subject and all of this, it kind of , that was broken,

YG: Yeah,

MG: And maybe I have to intervene on the human level, I think that scene is also something that shows that we have like this, this is not just a professional relationship you know we have to, you cannot deal with the subject, and not just keeping on that level, you have to engage yourself. And when he was at his most low, you know, I think that make sense also in the film that after, also to tell that bit because I was so much part of it, at that point. So I also think, in the bigger level I think it was at that point, I also wanted to say this is the way I think we should do with refugees. that we should not just observe, you know, and talk about this with the distance, we really have so each and every one of us have to do, meet refugees, step in and kind of be, try to be a part of this. Because it's our responsibility as human beings. So that was also kind of my way to show that you can, you have to make a difference as a human being in this situation.

YG: Yeah, hopefully not on the road because of the crashing cars. But, no I'm kidding, I think it's a very original way to show that and it's very interesting to see because I think it shows that you went throw something a well, not just following "Wassee" or helping him here or that, but also it affected you obviously, so yeah I think it was very nice.

MG: Yeah, this was going from all I having, like I don't have any opinion, I'm just a film maker, I'm just, you know, representing what I see and all of this and then going as I got more and more involved in. I got more involve and I had to ,you know, to say something and do something.

YG: Yeah. Ok. So you have anything else to say that I didn't ask, that is important for you that I will know? Obviously, you can email me on any point whatever but I'm just asking if I missed something important.

MG: I don't know, I don't think so.

YG: Ok.

MG: And if so, that Something may pop up.

YG: Yes, so feel free to email me. I do need you to send me back the documents just for the university stuff because they need to see that you agreed for this interview... no harm was done to you in this interview, etc.

MG: No. No.

YG: I hope not, time will tell, ah so if you can just in the next few days send it back to me it will be great. Other than that I had a really good time and interesting conversation and I really do thank you for your time.

MG: When do you finish?

Interviewer: Ah, the million-dollar question! I will finish I a few months I guess so yeah, it is my final chapter so there is that, but in a few months, 3 to 4 months. You know, corona, life, toddler, a few things that interfere, but ah, but that's the plan so ah yeah, ok.

MG: I am looking for to reading it.

YG: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I will definitely send it to you once it's done. And thank you again for your time and I hope corona will go away soon and we all get our lives back.

MG: I really hope too, Thank you.

YG: Thank you, thanks a lot, bye.

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