

The 'Transnational Regional' in Francophone Belgian Cinema

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Abstract

This thesis explores the films produced in the francophone Belgian region of Wallonia as a case study for the configuration of what will be termed a 'transnational regional' cinema. The first section of this dynamic is considered in relation to film and cultural policy, which problematizes the possible formation of a clearly delineated regional or 'national' cinema. This presupposes a reconfiguring of the transnational along the lines of the regional and the linguistic communities of Belgium, which, in essence, pertains to how production, distribution and exhibition mechanisms function within the devolved region of Wallonia. This section therefore focuses on film policy as well as a macro- and micro- economic analysis of the industry in order to consider the perceived imbalance between Belgian and French cinema. In the second half, the thesis develops a textual analysis of a series of case study films to consider how cultural film policy and francophone Belgian identity is imagined and then imaged on screen. The interplay between the transnational and the regional is then nuanced by the approaches to the 'transnational regional' aesthetic. This aesthetic includes the visualization of the rural and urban Walloon landscape in *Eldorado* (Bouli Lanners, 2008) and *Ultranova* (Lanners, 2006) and the 'marked' regional landscape in *Cages* (Olivier Masset-Depasse, 2006). The shift in location across the conterminous border with France due to the logic of film funding engenders the approach to the 'marked' regional space in Masset-Depasse's film. The final chapter tracks this aesthetic through to the works of the Dardenne brothers and in particular *Le gamin au vélo* (Dardenne brothers, 2011) in order to approach the construction of a peripheral spatial formation through corporeal movements. This therefore necessitates a consideration of how the Dardenne brothers' film chimes with waves of European filmmaking, thereby revealing a regional space that is conceptualized as de-centred.

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Abbreviations

CCA – Centre du cinéma et de l’audiovisuel [Belgium]

CNC – Centre national du cinéma [France]

CRRAV – Centre régional de ressources audiovisuels [Nord-Pas-de-Calais,
France]

GATT – General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

LMDFB – Le Moniteur du Film en Belgique

MPAA – Motion Picture Association of America

SOFICA – Société pour le financement de l’industrie cinématographique et
audiovisuelle

UNESCO – United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

VAF – Vlaams Audiovisuel Fonds

Introduction:

Locating the 'transnational regional' in Francophone Belgian cinema

La Belgique, appelée terre ouverte, est en réalité un immense champ de courants d'air dans lequel les produits étrangers peuvent se déverser sans aucune espèce de limitation. C'est la raison pour laquelle il est si difficile de créer chez nous une industrie nationale du cinéma, puisque l'aide à cette industrie ne doit pas seulement revenir à y investir de l'argent, mais aussi à créer pour elle un jardin protégé dans lequel les jeunes pourraient croître sans être immédiatement détruits par le rouleau compresseur étranger. Si l'accueil réservé aux films belges risque d'être systématiquement négatif, je crois qu'il faut l'attribuer en ordre principal à notre situation de colonisés (André Delvaux, in Pâquet, 1972:2).¹

This opening assertion made in the early 1970s by the prominent Belgian filmmaker André Delvaux that 'Belgium is an open territory' enhances the debate concerning the question of a 'national' cinema within the Belgian context, and provides an entry point into the concept of the 'transnational' and the relations of power that exist within the medium of cinema. According to Delvaux, the high levels of imported films are having a negative impact upon national film production in Belgium. The borders are in a process of erosion both economically and ideologically, and permit the free circulation of images, goods, people, capital, and information. Films are part of this system of exchange, as they are distributed beyond their national borders and thereby cross into other countries. The nation-state is not hermetically sealed and facilitates cross-border flows and synergies, and this problematizes the concept of a 'national' cinema.

It is, of course, necessary to acknowledge the historical, cultural and political period of Belgium from the early 1970s in which Delvaux is speaking.

¹ [Belgium, an open territory, is in reality an immense field of air currents in which foreign products can flow without any limits. This is the reason why it is so difficult for us to create a national cinema industry, since support for the industry must come not only from financial investment, but also from the creation of a protected garden in which the youth can grow without being immediately destroyed by the foreign bulldozer. If the reception of the Belgian films is at risk of being systematically negative, I believe that it is necessary to primarily attribute this to our colonized situation.]

The notion of 'cultural imperialism', as first conceptualized by Schiller (1969), recognized the increasing dissemination of US mass culture across the globe. In the context of the Belgian film industry, Guback (1969: 18) outlines that until 1960 the Belgian government had an agreement in place with the Motion Picture Export Association to limit the number of films imported from the USA. After 1960, the number of films imported from the USA was therefore unrestricted. This had a profound impact on the levels of Hollywood films consumed in the Belgian film market. In the case of Switzerland, Schaub (1998: 57) notes that Hollywood films accounted for 70% of the Swiss domestic market during the 1960s. Guback (1969: 19-20) further outlines concerns for smaller nations, such as Switzerland and Belgium, since their 'national' film production would not be able to compete against Hollywood films without protectionist policies in place. Mosley (2001: 105-106) claims that the Belgian film industry of the mid-1960s to the early 1970s conforms to Crofts' notion of a cultural form of production with 'state legislation overtly supporting production subsidy' alongside no state control of the distribution and exhibition sectors (Crofts, 1998: 390-391). Mosley's assertion - that there was an absence of state subsidy for the distribution and exhibition of Belgian films - further nuances the anxiety around the high volume of films from Hollywood and France in the Belgian film market at that time. In essence, the 'colonized situation', that Delvaux describes, arises precisely because Belgium is a small film industry with low levels of film production and with an internal distribution and exhibition market that is dominated by imports from France and Hollywood.

The aforementioned quote from Delvaux also pre-dates the *Directive Télévision sans Frontières 1989 (89/552/EEC)*, the Schengen agreement of 1995 and the creation of the Euro in 1999. All of these changes in the European Union have led to increased levels of exchange between European countries. Nevertheless, the sentiments attached to the 'colonized situation' whereby, in economic and cultural terms, Belgian cinema finds its box office dominated by foreign imports from France and Hollywood still hold true to a certain extent. Moreover, the perceived cultural influence of France in Belgium - and particularly in Wallonia - will be addressed later in this thesis with regard to how the francophone Belgian filmmakers, the Dardenne brothers, refer to the power relations that persist between France and Belgium.

In the quote that begins this thesis, Delvaux thus appeals for interventionist government initiatives to promote and protect the national film industry. His use of the metaphor of the 'protected garden' harbours an essentialized perception of Belgium as an idealized national cinema, thereby suggesting a tendency to paper over the cracks of difference within the nation-state. For example, Delvaux ignores the linguistic and regional divisions that exist between the inhabitants of the French-speaking regions of Wallonia and Brussels and the Flemish-speaking region of Flanders. However, during the 1960s, the film industry in Belgium was beginning to develop along regional and linguistic community lines. The Flemish community of Belgium put into place a decree in 1964 to support cultural production in the region, and this was followed by a similar decree in 1967 for the francophone Belgian community. As will be discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, the Belgian film industry has since been re-structured, but the cultural criteria of the 'Arrêté royal du 22 juin 1967' (1967) still remains relevant for selective aid. Another difference is the more recent phenomenon of tensions between immigrant communities and the host nation. In some cases, the presence of the immigrant populations emphasizes a connection with Belgium's colonial past in Africa. However, as in the case of the sizeable Moroccan immigrant community in Belgium, they are also determined by France's colonial legacy. The concept of 'Belgian cinema' is thus riven with issues of regional, ethnic, and linguistic divisions, thereby prohibiting the possibility of a unified national cinema.

Spaas (2000: 44) emphasizes the surface similarities that exist between the two francophone European nations of Switzerland and Belgium. The primary point of comparison is the multilingual nature of the countries, and the division of the countries into linguistic regions. The three linguistic regions are organized according to language, with the German speaking population being 64.9%, followed by the French 22.6% and the Italian 8.3% (SFSO, 2014). French is not the dominant language in either country, with 41% of the population in Belgium speaking French as their first language. The linguistically divided nature of both of these countries immediately presents a difficulty in conceptualizing the idea of a 'national cinema'.

The notion of a Swiss 'national' cinema has similarly been contested since the 1960s (Buache, 1974: 53; Tortajada, 2007: XV). Tortajada (2007:

XXXVI) utilizes Susan Hayward's (1993; 2005) approach to the concept of 'national cinema', and proposes that Swiss cinema is, in fact, plural. Hayward (2005: 6) forwards the notion of more than one 'national' cinema in the French context, since there are both mainstream and peripheral cinemas. Within this approach, Hayward posits one central form of cinema – 'the cinema' – that primarily asserts its position through canonization in mass media (*ibid*). Tortajada (2007: XXXVI) is therefore claiming that Swiss cinema does not have a standout 'mainstream' or dominant cinema, but there are instead a series of competing peripheral cinemas and low budget filmmaking from the different linguistic regions. Crofts' (1998: 389-391) earlier taxonomy of a 'national' cinema is arguably a more apposite way of approaching the issues of production in the cinemas of Belgium and Switzerland. This taxonomy (*ibid*) outlines that there is more than one concept of 'national' cinema, and this thesis will later consider the 'regional' and 'sub-state' section. The plurality of Swiss cinema occurs in the different production systems and film institutions across the linguistic regions. For example, film funding can be obtained through canton-based or city-based film institutions and through private companies (Tortajada, 2007: XXXII).

These approaches to a 'national' cinema are necessary to consider, as we will see similarities that arise in the context of Belgian cinema, particularly in the engagement with the various production bases at a 'national' and 'regional' level in the country. These linguistic divisions highlight the limitations of 'national cinema' as a conceptual term in the case of both Switzerland and Belgium. While the 'national' is not jettisoned, the notion of the 'regional' (applied both within and beyond the boundaries of the nation-state) comes to the fore as a means of better understanding cinema as an industrial art form in both these countries.

As this thesis will show, Belgian cinema is criss-crossed not only by foreign imports and influences, but also by internal regional differences. We are therefore witnessing the construction of a cinema predicated upon a paradox; the Belgian market is open for imports, but is severely restricted for 'national' products, due to the linguistic fragmentation of the domestic market. Marshall (2012: 38) argues that the film markets of both Belgium and Switzerland can be seen to function as an extension of the French market. For example, French

films had a 16.67% market share of the Swiss box office in 2012 (Swiss Films, 2013: 17). This circulation of French films is not confined to the francophone regions of Belgium, since these exhibition trends also occur in other European francophone film markets. Marshall's (2012: 38) reference to the Belgian and Swiss markets, in fact, shows to what extent Delvaux's perception (in Pâquet, 1972: 2) of high levels of films being distributed in the Belgian domestic market still holds true. Cucco's (2010) study of the exhibition trends in Swiss cinema provides a useful point of comparison for the Belgian box office. This study of the Swiss box office between 2002 and 2007 outlines high levels of Hollywood film consumption in the Italian canton, whereas the French-speaking canton showed a preference for European films (*ibid*: 165). However, there is a discernable absence of an audience for Swiss 'national' films. In 2012, the national market share for Belgian films in Belgium was 1.2%, and in Switzerland the share of Swiss films was 5.2% (Marché du Film, 2013: 36). When comparing this share to other cinemas of 'small' nations (Hjort and Petrie, 2007), the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands all recorded a more favourable national market share (16.3% in the Netherlands, Denmark 28.7%, Finland 28%, Sweden 24.1% and Norway 17.9%) (Marché du Film, 2013: 36-38). These box office statistics highlight some of the complexities in referring to a 'national' film market in countries that are linguistically divided.

On the basis of these statistics, the national market share for Belgium is the lowest of all these 'small' nations by a considerable margin. It is therefore possible to suggest that Belgian cinema appears to be in a state of "crisis" domestically – in terms of film attendances. This notion of "crisis" is perhaps engendered by perceptions of francophone Belgian films needing to 'stand out' – in the words of Philippe Reynaert in an interview for this thesis – due to the high levels of French films produced across the border and subsequently circulated in Belgium. The General Secretary for the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, Frédéric Delor, also claims that '(n)otre marché du cinéma est très perméable au cinéma français. Il n'y a pas de distinction entre cinéma belge et français' (Delor, in Biourge, 2014).² In this sense, there is a clear conflation between French films and francophone Belgian films in the domestic Belgian

² [(o)ur domestic (Belgian) film market is very permeable to films from France. There is no distinction between Belgian cinema and French cinema.]

market. France also produces a larger number of films per year, which introduces high levels of competition for ‘national’ Belgian films – in French – in their own domestic market. For example, in 2012, France produced 150 films regarded as ‘100% national’, whereas Belgium created only 6 films in the same period (Marché du Film, 2013b: 15). Delor (in Biourge, 2014) further notes that this is not the case for Flemish films due to the lack of competition from its linguistic neighbour, the Netherlands. The poor performance of ‘national’ films in the domestic market therefore necessitates an exploration of the impact of Hollywood and French films on the levels of spectatorship in Belgium. However, as Chapter Two will outline, this “crisis” is only connected to the domestic market, since francophone Belgian films are performing well in extra-territorial markets, particularly in France. There is also an emerging awareness of francophone Belgian films at international film festivals – particularly Cannes – and in French film criticism. For example, in 2008, the French film magazine, *Positif*, published a dossier on francophone Belgian cinema, which included an analysis of the films by the Dardenne brothers, Bouli Lanners, Joachim Lafosse, and Yolande Moreau. The Cinémathèque suisse (2012: 19-26) also organized an exhibition event dedicated to ‘le nouveau cinéma belge francophone’.³ This included the screening of films by Bouli Lanners, Olivier Masset-Depasse, Joachim Lafosse, Fabrice du Welz, and Sam Garbarski. It is also important to note the absence of critically acclaimed and internationally well-known auteurs – such as Chantal Akerman, the Dardenne brothers, and Jaco von Dormael – from this event. This clearly shows that francophone Belgian cinema is becoming increasingly diverse and that a number of francophone Belgian filmmakers are being afforded greater visibility on international ‘art house’ circuits. The recognition of Belgian films – either francophone or Flemish - in both film criticism and levels of film spectatorship in the domestic market do not appear to match the reception of these films in France and, to a lesser extent, in Switzerland.

³ [new francophone Belgian cinema]

The 'colonialism' of which Delvaux spoke is, furthermore, engendered by virtue of film production and exhibition within the given country.⁴ The use of the term 'colonized' in the opening quote by Delvaux alludes to the discernible presence of French and Hollywood films in the Belgian domestic market. These foreign films are thus perceived to prevent Belgian films, whether they may be Flemish or francophone, from receiving a notable level of film spectatorship in the domestic market. The Belgian population consumes the cinematic goods, whether they may originate from beyond or within the nation-state's borders. As a result, does the Belgian spectator claim ownership of films exhibited in the domestic market from the French and Hollywood canons? Or are 'national' products promoted by virtue of their difference to such imports? Delvaux presents a fear of the transnational influences supplanting the national industry, since such imported films may well be more accessible to, or more popular with, the Belgian spectator. As this thesis will argue, francophone Belgian cinema thus functions as a point of intersection, a meeting point of influences principally from France, although the presence and influences of Hollywood cannot be overlooked. This opening quotation by Delvaux clearly highlights the problems of using a 'national' paradigm in order to consider the cinematic output in Belgium, whether that may be through the triptych of production, distribution and exhibition, or through the aesthetic that is manifested on screen. The comparison to Switzerland highlights how the complexities of the 'national' cinema paradigm are not confined to Belgium.

Approaching the 'national' in the context of 'Belgian' cinema

In terms of film scholarship, we tend to categorize films by nation and by country. The new cinematic lexicon of 'world cinema', 'transnational cinema', and 'regional cinema', however, challenges and goes beyond the archaic and limited construct of the national. Prior to the 1980s, the early concept of national cinema was 'focused mainly on film texts produced within the territory,

⁴ The appropriation of such lexicon, comparing the flows of cinematic products and influences across national borders to the yoke of 'colonialism', is of course problematic. The use of this lexicon connotes questions of power and suggests the presence of a hierarchical order. Delvaux attributes the 'colonisé' label to the Belgian nation-state, a term that implies the subjugation of people, culture, and education within a cross-border relationship. Yet, the identity of Delvaux's 'colonizer' remains ambiguous.

sometimes seeing these (in a reflectionist manner) as expressions of putative national spirit' (Crofts, 1998: 386). The consideration of 'Belgian cinema', in this context, takes the form of a canonical approach, which harmonizes the film histories of (at least) two distinct regions: the French-speaking Brussels and Wallonia, and the Flemish region of Flanders. The disunity between the three regions prevents the existence of a Belgian film historiography, which simply claims 'a certain broad unity for a large group of films produced in a single nation' (Rosen, 2006: 21). This study of the 'national' frame is therefore a parochial consideration of film texts, since it focuses upon an historical survey of films that are regarded as achievements of the nation-state's cinema. The historiography functions as a means of organizing films by country, and this encompasses the cataloguing strategy of film archives, libraries, and institutions within the given nation-state. The methods of cataloguing and categorizing the extensive filmographies of the nation are one means of approaching a definition of a national cinema.

The creation of such a monograph forms a canon of films in which 'the number of works under discussion is relatively small and, in consequence, the significance of what is included in the canon and what is excluded, and on what terms, is of greater moment' (Morris, 1994: 29). Although Morris (1994) is discussing the cinematic output of Canada, the small scale of film production and the issues of inclusion and exclusion are equally applicable to the cinemas of Belgium and Switzerland. The national canon is therefore a framework, which renders the national catalogue of films more accessible and provides a useful starting point for the interrogation of a nation's cinema. The films defined as 'of greater moment' (*ibid*) necessitate an engagement with national film cultures. This refers to the filmmakers and the key movements and periods that are included in the given national cinema's history. For example, in her study of francophone Swiss cinema, Spaas (2000: 44-60) focuses only on the works of Alain Tanner and Claude Goretta, and highlights their role as two of the four key luminaries of 'new Swiss cinema'.

In terms of a national historiography of Belgian cinema, the Cinémathèque Royale has, to date, produced two trilingual encyclopaedic volumes (published in 1996 and in 1999) that map the national film production of Belgium. The initial publication of *Belgian Cinema, Le Cinéma belge, De*

Belgische Film (Thys, 1996) marked the centenary of cinema in the country, and encompasses a total of 1600 Belgian-financed films. It is, however, necessary to note the problem with the use of the term 'Belgian-financed', since it brings into question the issue of the co-production. The monograph, however, defines a film as a co-production when there is minimal Belgian financial contribution. The films included within the volumes are co-financed by a total of forty countries across the globe, but these films are naturalized as Belgian by virtue of their inclusion within the Cinémathèque Royale's publications. The use of the national label 'Belgian' is defined in this publication through the sources of financing and not necessarily through how the film represents the country on screen. This is equally applicable to the process of canonization of Swiss 'national' films in Switzerland. The publication, *Histoire du cinéma Suisse 1966-2000* (Dumont and Tortajada, 2007) unites 1200 films that meet broad selection criteria. These include majority Swiss film funding, a director with Swiss nationality or who has resided in the country or a film that was shot in Switzerland (*ibid*: XVI).

The monographs, *Belgian Cinema*, *Le Cinéma belge*, *De Belgische Film* (Thys, 1996; 1999), are organized chronologically, mapping the history of Belgian cinema from its beginnings to the present day. This methodology, however, approaches the nation as given and ossified. The nation is not a contested ground. The primary approach, in relation to the historiography of national cinemas, concerns 'a temptation to investigate national identity in terms of a kind of national imaginary readable in a group of texts' (Rosen, 2006: 24). The national imaginary suggests the existence of a collective consciousness and national belonging, which, in this case, is updated across a group of films over time. The historiography offered by the Cinémathèque Royale utilizes the national cinema paradigm as a means of organizing the country's film history. However, this approach is problematic due to Belgium's internal linguistic and regional divisions, which have led to a bifurcation and fragmentation of the cultural industries and practices in the country.

This approach to the 'national' cinema concept presupposes a consideration of the discourse of nationalism. The oft-cited source of Benedict Anderson and the 'imagined political community' (Anderson, 1991) is an important piece to introduce at this point, since the shared ideals of history,

culture and traditions are not physically mapped within the geo-political border of nations, but are rather formed within the collective national and societal consciousness. Benedict Anderson's 'imagined political community' is viewed as abstract, since 'the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (Anderson, 1991:6). The conditions of this nascent national identity are dependent upon a shared language and a shared literacy. According to Anderson (1991: 44-45), print capitalism or media is fundamental in terms of shaping a national identity, since it forges a sense of national communion and national imaginary through the news and current affairs that are disseminated within a given space. The reproduction of national narratives on such a calendrical basis suggests that 'nationhood...is not merely established, it must be maintained; its definition, therefore, will inevitably shift over time' (Williams, 2002: 3). Nationalism is thus fragile and fluid, and requires a stream of reproduction on a regular basis in order to create national elements that are relevant to the people in the contemporary period.

In contrast to Anderson, philosopher and social anthropologist, Ernst Gellner's (1983) approach to the concepts of nation and nationalism focuses, however, primarily upon the State, since he connects industrialization and social organization to the nation. In essence, Gellner (1983) suggests that the nation is engendered by virtue of modernization and industrialization. The concept of modernization, that Gellner proposes, requires a centralized and standardized education system, which promotes a single language and a single culture to its citizens, and thereby attempts to modify or quash folk cultures (Gellner, 2006: 34-37). The cinematic medium, however, came into existence after the period of nation-building in the 19th century. Cinema, like a modern nation-state, was formed within a neo-liberalist capitalist and industrial economy. Whereas Anderson (1991) proposes that the media, and in particular print capitalism, informs national identity, Gellner suggests that a standardized education system within the confines of the nation informs national identity in a time of 'high' culture (Gellner, 2006: 35). Gellner's use of the term 'education' refers to a formal pedagogical experience that is imposed by the State in order to prepare its population for modern industrial society (*ibid*). The 'national'

values that connect a people to a given space are thus learned and enforced systemically.

The problematic insularities of a Belgian 'nation-state'

Reflecting on the above theories of nationalism and imagined communities, Belgium is an intriguing case study, since it highlights how the political geography of a country does not automatically correspond with its linguistic geography, and this has thereby resulted in the delineation of internal borders. Wallerstein reinforces this:

Is there a Belgian, a Dutch, a Luxembourg nation today? Most observers seem to think so. If there is, this is not because there came into existence first a Dutch state, a Belgian state, a Luxembourg state? A systematic look at the history of the modern world will show, I believe, that in almost every case statehood preceded nationhood, and not the other way around, despite widespread myth to the contrary (Wallerstein, 1991: 81).

Wallerstein is therefore suggesting that, in the case of Belgium, the State was formed first and preceded the formation of nationhood, highlighting the differences between the homogeneity of the State and the heterogeneity of the people. The political statehood and system was established prior to the cultural imperatives of the nation, which must be addressed and acknowledged.

The Belgian nation-state came into existence when the territory formerly known as the South Netherlands was granted independence from the Netherlands in 1830. However, the Low Countries have been subjected to a succession of imperialist rulers, such as Spain and Austria, prior to the French occupation of the South Netherlands region (Modern day Belgium).⁵ It also must be acknowledged that in the last century, Belgium has been invaded and occupied by Germany throughout the last two World Wars.

⁵ The grouping of the Low Countries constitutes Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, and includes the two francophone countries of Belgium and Luxembourg.

The initial imposition of the French language in the country occurred during the Spanish occupation, since the language was primarily utilized by the elite and thus became an administrative and bureaucratic necessity. However, the use of French has augmented over time, which 'se confirme durant le régime autrichien et est considérablement renforcée lors de la période française, qui impose notamment l'enseignement du français dans l'enseignement primaire' (Francard, 2010: 2).⁶ This suggests that the historical function of French and the requirement to adopt the language was due to bureaucratic necessity, rather than colonialism by France. This account also acknowledges an imposition of French on the bourgeois elites of the South Netherlands (*ibid*), which later coincided with the annexation of the nation to France in 1795. The act removed the veil of autonomy afforded to Belgium by Spain and Austria, and, as a consequence, became the first foreign domination of the country. Furthermore, the histories of Belgium and its regions are very much linked to the countries that encircle Belgium (Slocum-Bradley, 2008: 23). Until the 19th century, the regions of the current federal State were provinces within either the Netherlands or the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

The split from the Netherlands witnessed the creation of a French-speaking nation-state. The West Germanic language of Dutch was not recognized as an official language of the State. French was primarily used by the elite and for bureaucratic requirements. The process of learning the French language adhered to a modernizing process, in particular, for the Flemish people in order to facilitate social mobility (Howell, 2000: 133). This is the first site of tension between the education and the upbringing of the population. The State's imposition of the French language upon the people attempts to create a Belgian 'imagined community' and Belgian 'national' identity, whereas the people's upbringing in Flanders has enabled a generational influence and historical use of the Dutch language, and its evolution into Flemish. This therefore leads to the preservation of the language in the community's consciousness. The recognition of Flemish within Belgium was a progressive process, culminating in its official acceptance in education from 1930. The recognition of the country's bilingualism necessitates a reconfiguring of the

⁶ [was established during the Austrian rule and was considerably reinforced during the French period, which necessitated, in particular, the teaching of French in primary education]

national belonging to a regional level. The tension of diversity exists beneath the country's veneer, with the dividing line that spatially splits Belgium acknowledged in 1963.

Nevertheless, differentiation and disparities even exist between communities that are connected linguistically, thereby undermining an 'imagined community' based solely upon a shared linguistic affinity. The example of Brussels within the context of francophone Belgium is important to recognize, since it is a culturally intriguing and cosmopolitan space that serves as a multicultural melting pot. Brussels functions as the 'Europolis', the European centre, in addition to functioning as the meeting space of the Flemish and francophone cultures, which therefore hybridizes the region. This third hybrid region in Belgium produces a lack of a sense of community between Brussels and Wallonia, and even problematizes the coherence of a francophone Belgian identity. The city of Brussels becomes the centre, the centre of Europe, the centre of government, the centre of business, and the centre of power. Since the city of Brussels functions as the EU anchor, it is possible to discuss Brussels as a European city, and hence, as a symbolic site of a European identity.

As a consequence, the region of Wallonia has become increasingly peripheral and marginal due to its economic decline as it transitioned away from an agricultural heritage, through a period of de-industrialization to a post-industrial phase. Thomas (1990: 38-41) conceives this notion of Wallonia as an old industrial region that is peripheral in economic terms in relation to a core or centre along an economic axis between Brussels and Antwerp in Flanders. Wallonia is viewed as 'la fille déshéritée de l'état belge unitaire' (Quévit, 1982: 8),⁷ which therefore highlights the Walloon region's increasing marginalization in relation to Brussels and Flanders.

The disparities between the two francophone regions (Bruxelles-Capitale and Wallonia) are not restricted to the economic, cultural and social spheres, but can also be extended to matters of language. Cities function as crucial spaces of linguistic development, due to the presence of people from a multitude of different historical, cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds (Francard, 2010: 1). The use of the French language differs between Brussels

⁷ [the disinherited daughter of the unitary Belgian state]

and Wallonia. Both of these regions have a dialectal variation; a regional difference, and use a variety of French with defined contours, which in the case of Brussels pertains to its strong Flemish roots (*ibid*: 2-4). The 'national' identity of Belgium is therefore problematic to conceptualize in the singular form, since it is predicated upon a series of binary oppositions, such as the national and the regional, and the rural and the city (Mosley, 2001: 2), and the linguistic affinities to either the Netherlands in the case of Flanders and to France in the case of Brussels and Wallonia.

The existence of these social, cultural, and linguistic disparities between the regions undermines the possibility of a unified single State. This is mirrored in relation to the political actors and the recent period of political stasis. In terms of a history of the present, Belgium has recently transitioned through a period of political stasis from 2007-2011, which led to reforms in the electoral procedure and devolution of power and competences to the regions. As of 17th February 2011, Belgium set a new no-government record after a national election.⁸ The country continued to function without any hindrance or issue, despite the lack of an adequately evolved government. The political stasis of the country was due to the fact that the government was made up of political parties separated by language since the 1970s, and this consequently breeds sentiments of linguistic nationalism and affiliation. Belgium has been a federal State since 1993, and the country has been used as a clear example of an asymmetrical form of federalism since the greater devolution of competencies to the region from the federal State (Keating, 1999; Swenden, 2002). The asymmetrical federalism is predicated upon the linguistic and cultural divisions that are present between the two communities in Belgium. In the federated State, there are different political parties that have a majority position within the linguistic communities, but, at the same time, there are political parties that are broken up due to the linguistic boundaries (Swenden, 2002: 70-77). On a general level, the adoption of federalism permitted the dissolution of a centralized governing power and body, thereby allowing the regions and linguistic communities to increasingly self-govern. Belgian federalism operates through both the linguistic

⁸ According to Time magazine, published on the 21st February 2011, Belgium broke the record after lasting 249 days without a government being formed. This record was previously held by war-torn Iraq, during its period of upheaval and regime change (Cendrowicz, 2011).

communities and the three regions of Brussels, Flanders, and Wallonia. The delineation of competencies is as follows; the linguistic communities

have power over 'personal matters', that is, policy areas such as education, health services, and social work ... (t)here are also three regions that have power over issues of a more territorial nature such as economic development and transportation (Béland and Lecours, 2007: 409).

The government is also structured by two elected representatives for each position; one Flemish-speaking, one French-speaking. There is thus a bifurcation of the Belgian political system, predicated upon the linguistic division of the country. The new Belgian government was selected and sworn in on the 6th December 2011, which ended the political deadlock that had lasted a period of 541 days. The fallout of the political stasis led to the transference of competencies that account for about 17 billion Euros to the linguistic communities and to the regions (Stroobants, 2011). It also resulted in the sixth State reform conceived as 'a more efficient federal State and more autonomous entities' (Belgian Federal Government, 2013). This is designed to avoid further times of political uncertainty through a strengthening of the election procedure. The reform will not come into effect until January 2014 (*ibid*).

As Martel notes, Belgium is 'une nation artificielle' (Martel, 2010: 400),⁹ since it is a country that is under threat of dismemberment due to the differences that lie in its linguistic communities. The example of Belgium immediately exposes the fallacy that the creation of a nation-state is aligned with national unity. In this case, the nation-state, its national symbols, myths, cultures, and traditions are perceived as artificial and very much a creation of the Enlightenment period. Within this putative notion, the nation-state is a homogenous entity with people who are supposed to conform to the artificial construct of the nation. However, if the creation of the nation-state suggests a desire for a homogenous national imaginary, how does a nation-state predicated upon heterogeneity continue to exist? Is it therefore possible to speak of a 'national identity' in relation to the people of Belgium? The concept

⁹ [an artificial nation]

of federalization, to which Belgium adheres, further complicates the notion of the nation, since mutual intelligibility and communicative compatibility do not exist. Linguistic barriers are erected, which inhibit the possibility of linguistic harmony.

This exploration of cinema in the francophone regions of Belgium, and in particular Wallonia, demonstrates the artificiality of the nation, the nation-state, and national identity. However, the case study of Belgium reveals not only the artificiality of this nation, but of all nations. This is particularly apparent when considering the emergence of the “Europe of the Regions” slogan, which acknowledged the paradoxical pluricultural and homogenous nature of the continent. As Loughlin (1996: 150-152) notes, the “Europe of the Regions” mantra has its origins in the work of federalist writers Denis de Rougemont and Guy Héraud. Loughlin (*ibid*) outlines that the work of Héraud in particular further emphasized the ‘artificiality’ of the nation-state by drawing on examples of ethnic groups – such as the Walloons in Belgium. In this sense, the slogan clearly acknowledges the heterogeneous make-up of the countries that exist within Europe. As we will see in Chapter Three, Edgar Morin (1987: 150-151) adopts a similar position when discussing the growing sentiments of regionalism in Europe from the 1960s. The “Europe of the Regions” mantra also gained currency through conferences arranged by the German Länder in 1989 and it has since become a rather catchall phrase (Loughlin, 1996: 151). For her part, Moore (2008: 532) offers an updated position on the slogan and the role of the regions in the European Union. In this case, there is a ‘pragmatic’ approach to the region in the EU, which focuses upon the development of connections between corporate actors across Europe and the creation of EU funding schemes for local areas (*ibid*). This is not only the case in Belgium with Flanders and Wallonia, since it is also relevant to discussions on, for example, Scotland in the United Kingdom, and the Basque country and Catalonia in Spain. France is also beginning to acknowledge its regional diversity, with the increasing recognition of the regional languages and dialects that had been previously suppressed during the period of ‘internal colonialism’ (Williams, 2003). Using an example from French cinema, the strong performance of *Bienvenue Chez les Ch’tis/ Welcome to the Sticks* (Dany Boon, 2008) at the French box office shows the increasing recognition of regional difference within

the nation-state. The use of the picard-influenced accent in the film set in Nord-pas-de-Calais clearly points towards the regional diversity that exists within the concept of 'nation'.

From this premise, the concept of the 'transnational regional' has the potential to refer to cultural production in the context of Belgium and other countries across Europe. In the context of the film industry, Bergfelder (2005: 315-316) outlines the tensions between the national and the supra-national interests when approaching the notion of European cinema, since there is a requirement to negotiate between cultural and national specificity at the same time as acknowledging the larger 'European' supra-national community. Moreover, Bergfelder takes into account the development of a European production base from the mid-1980s through to the current incarnations of the MEDIA and EURIMAGES programmes (*ibid*). In this sense, there is a clear preference for a greater integration of the production bases at a supra-national level. However, it is also necessary to consider the development of regional film institutions since the 1990s that favour the funding of culturally-specific filmmaking. The funding of culturally and regionally specific films through regional, national and transnational methods can equally be applied to the film industries of the Scandinavian countries through what Elkington and Nestingen (2005) term 'Transnational Nordic Cinema'. This approach, in fact, begins to epitomize how the 'transnational' and the 'regional' concepts can work together through the exchanges in finance, crew and films across the national borders of Denmark, Sweden and Norway. In essence, the conception of the 'transnational regional' acknowledges that although the 'national' is still relevant, transnational connections within Europe and local and regional cultures must be recognized at the same time.

To return to the case of Belgium, the country is composed of a triptych of regions, Wallonia, Brussels and Flanders, with the space of Brussels functioning as a point of intersection between the two other divergent regions. Homi Bhabha discusses the 'impossible unity of the nation' (Bhabha, 1990: 1) and draws upon the mythology of the Janus face, which highlights the doubling of language, culture and identity within a given nation. The Janus mythology is a very apt means of describing Belgium with its two distinct faces, one Germanic and one Latin (Davay, 1967: 30). These two faces have been fused

together to create the now federalized State. The Walloon socialist politician and cultural critic Jules Destrée (1863-1936) highlighted these two divergent regions in a letter to King Albert I in 1912:

Sire...allow me to tell you the truth, the enormous and horrifying truth: there are no Belgians. You are reigning over two different peoples. In Belgium there are Walloons and there are Flemings: There are no Belgians (Destrée, cited in Trumbour, 2002: 211).¹⁰

The recurring rhetoric of 'Il n'y a pas de Belges' suggests the impossible unity of the nation, and furthermore the impossibility to talk in terms of Belgian nationalism. The letter is an indication that dynastic allegiance in Belgium is not functioning to bring together and harmonize the 'national' grouping of the Belgian population. The only possibilities available are therefore to discuss either Walloon nationalism or Flemish nationalism, with the increasing popularity of the latter movement amongst the younger generation of Flanders. This generation is increasingly tied to a Flemish identity rather than a Belgian national identity, resulting in the recent period of political stasis. Within Martel's (2010) survey of culture in Belgium, the interviews with Belgian citizens cement this perception of a fragmented country:

Entre Flamands et francophones, ce n'est pas la guerre, c'est pire que la guerre...On a deux cultures et deux télévisions nationales, mais ce qui est plus grave désormais, c'est qu'on a également deux opinions publiques. Les gens ne se parlent plus (Martel, 2010:400).¹¹

The francophone and Walloon populations are no longer united within their country. It is impossible for the two distinct entities to show solidarity, highlighting the 'non-existent' or 'artificial' nature of Belgium. Within Belgium, it is possible to recognize the boundaries between Walloon, Bruxellois, Flemish,

¹¹ [Between the Flemish and the francophones, it is not a war, it is worse than a war...We have two cultures and two state television broadcasters, but what is more serious from now on, is that we also have two public opinions. The people no longer talk].

and minority German cultures, in addition to the immigrant populations that have settled in the country pre- and post-Second World War.

In the inter-war period (of the First and Second World Wars), immigration to Belgium largely originated from Italy and Poland (Phalet and Swyngedouw, 2003: 774). This immigration was attributed to a labour shortage in the coal industry (Bousetta et al., 1999: 5). In the 1960s, a search to fill the gaps in the labour market saw Belgium look towards 'other Southern European countries - not only Italy but also Spain, Portugal and Greece - and non-European countries, mainly Morocco and Turkey' (Phalet and Swyngedouw, 2003: 774). In this period, often referred to as the 'golden sixties', the largest number of labour immigrants (or 'guest workers') came from Morocco, and settled within major cities, and in particular Brussels (Bousetta et al., 1999:8). On this basis, the majority of immigration to Belgium does not come from the country's former colonies, unlike other European nations such as France. The various cultural, social, and linguistic divisions have thus contributed to a fragmented Belgian 'national' identity, forming (at least) two cultures, two national television channels, two public opinions (Martel, 2000: 400), and, to take this trend even further, two 'national' cinemas.

Within and beyond the 'national': the concept of the 'transnational regional'

Born out of dissatisfaction with the notion of the national, a prevailing trend in contemporary film scholarship favours either the transcending of the nation-state, or a fragmenting of the nation-state onto a regional level. The quote from Delvaux that opened this thesis presents an image of francophone Belgian cinema as jockeying for supremacy within the domestic market against the popularity of imported films primarily from France and Hollywood, thereby creating major and minor modes (in terms of the national film production seen as inferior to imported films) within the 'national' cinema framework.

It is perhaps helpful at this point to evoke Higbee and Lim's (2010: 10) concept of 'critical transnationalism', which recognizes the dynamic and often imbalanced relationship between the national and the transnational. The danger of the term 'transnational' is that it retains the possibility of being over-used to a

point where its significance is lost, thereby rendering the term vacuous. Instead, one must consider how the term has critical purchase and be conscious of its limitations; it is a question of perspective. The prefix 'trans' evokes a notion of moving across or beyond the borders of the nation, and hence transcends the set parameters of the nation and the State. In the cinematic context, the cross-border synergies in terms of finance and creative production teams, and cross-border flows of films problematize the national-centric readings that we have become accustomed to in film scholarship, and instead point towards a more 'transnational' approach. However, Ezra and Rowden state that 'from a transnational perspective, nationalism is instead a canny dialogical partner' (Ezra and Rowden, 2006: 4), and this therefore highlights the competing discourses between the national and the transnational. The national is literally embedded within the concept of the transnational, and therefore it is necessary to engage with the complex relationship that emerges between these 'dialogical partners'. Nevertheless, the Belgian 'national' project is fragmented into linguistic communities and regions, which therefore presupposes an engagement with a more devolved form of the 'national'.

Higson's (2011) account of English cinema foregrounds the transnationalism of the film industry in the country. In this context, the concept of the 'transnational' arises in the sectors of film finance and film institutions and in the textual nature of the films. This engagement with English and British cinema shows how complex the 'national' concept currently is, since, in this case, the concept is required to take into account local, national and international forces (Higson, 2011: 5). In this sense, Higson's 'English Cinema' is a mediation of transnational funding, distribution and exhibition of film projects that provide a representation of 'English-ness' or 'British-ness' (*ibid*). In their approach to 'critical transnationalism', Higbee and Lim (2010) also outline how the local, regional, national and the transnational are not mutually exclusive. For example, the filmmaking activities, financial arrangements and cultural policy formed at a local or regional level have the inherent ability to inform the image of the nation that is distributed beyond its national borders (*ibid*: 18). This work therefore highlights how it is important to consider the concept of the transnational at the same time as discussing film policy on a national and local level. In this thesis, contemporary francophone Belgian

cinema can be understood to have similar local-national-transnational relationships at a production level that can help to support films that provide a representation of the region of Wallonia.

The previous readings upon transnationalism engage with the concept primarily within the spheres of cinematic production, distribution and exhibition. However, the concept of the 'transnational' can also pertain to the aesthetic manifestation of the film. In her chapter 'On the plurality of cinematic transnationalism' (Hjort, 2009: 12-33), Hjort attempts to move beyond the typical acknowledgement of a film's transnational nature through funding, casting, thematic concerns, or languages spoken within a given film. The nine typologies '[link] the concept of transnationalism to different models of cinematic production, each motivated by specific concerns and designed to achieve particular effects' (*ibid*: 15). These typologies coalesce around the production requirements and funding for a film project first of all, with the connections between various institutions as predicated upon reciprocal incentivizing schemes, opportunistic practices, a response to a particular cinematic hegemony, a shared culture or shared artistic vision. These production-based links may then have a subsequent effect upon the textual nature of the film and the formation of an aesthetic that crosses boundaries and borders, thereby entering a transnational approach. The transnational nature of a film project can also be restricted into certain spheres, such as occurring primarily within the production context, which consequently leaves a film 'unmarked' from transnational funding. The transnational essence of some film productions is not discernibly evident on the surface, and is 'invisible' (*ibid*: 14) until extensive research is carried out into the production history of a given case study. In this sense, a film can be 'unmarked', since the transnational co-production does not inflect upon the textual creation.

Hjort suggests that one of the key strands in cinematic transnationalism is 'ensuring that certain economic realities associated with filmmaking do not eclipse the pursuit of aesthetic, artistic, social, and political values' (Hjort, 2009: 15). The logic of film funding therefore does not impinge upon or filter into the intended realization of a film project. However, in the case of some films, the transnational arrangements at the level of production percolate into the film,

thereby leaving a 'marked' transnationalism on the film. This may occur within the sectors of casting and the inclusion of a certain star, a variety of languages utilized, themes such as border crossing, the inclusion of characters from diasporic communities, the presence of a certain landscape, or the affinitive artistic influences. The traces of the requirements to attain film funding from a given source are embedded within the film and inhibit the viewing experience for the spectator. A fundamental question to ask at this point is to what extent does a film project intend to be transnational? Is the attaining of fiscal support for a film project to be created more important than the intended casting, languages, or spaces included within the film?

The 'marked' and 'unmarked' labels will primarily be considered in relation to the 'transnational regional' landscape that is included within *Cages* (Olivier Masset-Depasse, 2006), but there is also a consideration of the more 'invisible' nature of transnational elements on an aesthetic level. These are present in the American-inspired connections of *Eldorado* (Bouli Lanners, 2008). The films by Bouli Lanners and Masset-Depasse include landscapes that are intrinsically 'regional' in terms of the portrayal of Wallonia in Belgium or the Nord-pas-de-Calais area in France, but there are still connections present that open up these films to a consideration of these spaces as part of a transnational region.

The concept of the 'regional' can be approached in terms of two distinct strands (1) the 'transnational regional' cinema, which concerns the connections that exist beyond the national, and (2) the context of a regional cinema within a given national cinema. Belgium is embedded within a plenitude of both intra- and trans-national relationships that make this concept of the 'transnational regional' a particularly apposite way of exploring Belgian cinema.

The idea of the 'transnational regional' functions most obviously on two levels, both in relation to a francophone cinema, which broadly encompasses the cinemas of French-speaking nation-states across the globe, and in relation to Belgium as a member of a larger European cinema, or a New European cinema.¹² The second 'regional' strand concerns an internal approach and thus

¹² The term 'New Europe' is problematic, since it alludes to the homogenization of different European countries, and overlooks the ethnic, religious, and linguistic communities that exist below the surface. 'New Europe' pertains to a redrawing of the political map post-1989, and the subsequent accession of nation-states, formerly behind the Iron Curtain, to the European Union.

a bifurcating of the Belgian national framework into distinct cultural and linguistic entities, due to the regional differences that have been previously outlined.

Belgian film scholar Paul Davay discusses this divided Belgian film industry as 'inflexible provincialism':

The fact is that we still suffer from a...serious handicap, namely the division of a small country into two linguistic groups, with the consequence that each side struggles to produce its own regional films at low cost, purely for local consumption, and tries to ensure an adequate reception for them by desperately making every concession to the public (Davay, 1967: 52).

The 'provincialism' of Belgium's industry is predicated upon its linguistic diversity, which fragments the country into two distinct groupings: the francophone regions and the Flemish-speaking regions. The term 'provincial', however, pertains to an inherently backward and archaic perception of the regions, which is also present in the formation of the regional cinema industries. Davay is discussing the complexities of the Belgian film industry in a context that pre-dates the federalization of Belgium in 1993. In the federal State, the regions have been afforded greater competencies and now have representatives for bifurcated ministries. The regions and the linguistic communities currently have more political power and responsibilities. In this context, we are therefore less inclined to associate regional filmmaking with 'provincialism' due to the federal context and the subsequent development of regional film institutions. The regional spaces of Belgium are clearly delineated into areas that have a common shared history, culture, language, and maintain a lineage and origins that can be traced back over time. The failure of these separate identities to merge under the overarching 'national' umbrella has witnessed the development of competing 'national' cinemas. Davay's assertion espouses these significant regional disparities with an 'inward-looking' approach to the national film industry. Higson (2000b: 60-61) initially introduced the 'inward' approach - in the context of the 'national' cinema - as a way of considering how film can articulate the cultural heritage, traditions and sense of

collective identity of a given nation. Since there is a lack of academic works within the sphere of regional cinemas, it is necessary to draw upon literature within the field of national cinemas and espouse the categories of a national cinema, as theorized by Crofts (1998) and Higson (1989), to that of a regional cinema. As we will see later, Petrie's (2000a; 2000b) approach to a 'devolved cinema' can also provide a useful analytical framework for the consideration of a regional cinema. These categories concern cultural identity and cultural specificity, issues around censorship, funding, production, and the relationship between the local and the global.

The main element that reconciles and intersects both of these 'regional' strands, in the case of Belgium, concerns the role of language. Vincendeau highlights a linguistic blind-spot within the studies of national cinemas, arguing that

surely the most overt marker of national identity since the coming of sound, ... spoken language has nevertheless been startlingly absent from debates on national identity in the cinema – in stark contrast to work in the social sciences, where it is paramount (Vincendeau, 2011: 341).

Vincendeau thus considers language as forming a crucial element within the construction of national identity, and by extension national cinema. However, in the case of Belgium, language serves as an anti-national mechanism in a bilingual state, undermining the possibility of a national coherence by virtue of linguistic difference (regionalization) and serving to forge relations beyond the national borders (transnationalism).

In Belgium, the internal differences of language encourage solitary movements in favour of separation and of tripartite federalism. The Walloon nationalist movements demanded separation from the francophone region of Brussels and the Flemish-speaking Flanders, yet in the 1940s, there was strong wave of support for the region's cession to France (Howell, 2000: 149). The connection between the Walloon region and France is not a relationship that is necessarily perceived as equal and balanced in terms of cultural identity. The regional output is not singular and enclosed, but is rather a product of a changing film environment with increasing economic and political integration

('transnational regional') and with cultural influences that transcend the national borders. The region of Wallonia has additionally been subject to the pressures of a move towards adopting a standard and uniform version of the language, since 'French was spoken throughout Wallonia but principally in the form of the various French-related Walloon dialects extant since the fifth century' (Mosley, 2001: 18). This imposition of language removes the difference of the francophone Belgian language from the linguistic motherland of France, the difference is established instead through the location and setting of this cinema.

The opening discussion of this thesis highlights how Belgium appears irrevocably split along both linguistic and regional lines. However, Delvaux refers to '*our* colonized situation' (Delvaux, in Pâquet, 1972: 2 – emphasis added), which suggests the existence of a collective identity despite the influence of cultural imperialism from the USA and the existence of cultural influences from France. Delvaux's use of '*our*', in this sense, can be understood in relation to the literary concept of '*belgitude*', which gained prominence in the 1960s. In his chapter on Belgian cinema between 1960 and 1975, Mosley outlines how '*la belgitude*' arose in response to increasing recognition of Flemish culture and to a growing disaffection with the influence of France in Brussels (Mosley, 2001: 104). It was also a means of cohering three diverse French-speaking groups in Belgium – the Walloon population, the majority of the Bruxellois population and the French-speaking Flemish elites (*ibid*). The concept lost currency in the 1980s, and this can be considered alongside the rise of cultural policies that developed on a regional level in this period. As Chapter Three of this thesis will outline, the creation of the *Manifeste pour une culture wallon* in 1983 further emphasizes the need to decouple Wallonia from Brussels. This therefore requires a discussion of the francophone Belgian collective identity in the plural form. The notion of a collective francophone Belgian identity is therefore complex and multifaceted, since the identities arise only in the context of the local and the regional. In this case, it is therefore possible to conceptualize two or three collective identities that exist in Belgium. There is either the Bruxellois or Walloon identities (both of which remain under the auspices of *la francophonie*), and the Flemish community of Flanders.

The inception of *la francophonie* is linked to French imperial expansion, particularly into areas of Africa and Asia, since 'the coining of the word in 1880

coincides with the height of nineteenth-century colonialism, while the development of the notion coincides with the process of decolonization' (Parker, 2003: 91). Murphy extends this notion to essentially a 'euphemism' for colonialism (Murphy, 2002: 166). The use of the notion, *la francophonie*, has evolved over time and incorporated new understandings. As Murphy notes, *la francophonie* can be used 'to describe a linguistic or cultural reality, while simultaneously veiling political, economic and military realities' and it 'can equally be seen in its current usage as a means of describing the worldwide "family" of French speakers, complete with its very own francophone institutions' (*ibid*). In essence, *la francophonie* can be viewed as a vestige of imperialism due to the colonial history of the enforcing of the French language and French cultural values onto other populations, particularly in Africa and Asia. This remaining trace of French colonialism has not necessarily withered away, since scholars have argued that *la francophonie* has the ability to function as a form of neo-colonialism, and has a political project beneath its façade, in particular in relation to former French colonies in Africa (Murphy, 2002: 166-168; Parker, 2003: 97-98).

It is also possible to suggest that there is a collective or shared experience of oppression that unites the Belgians – particularly the francophone Belgian population – regardless of any other cultural or political difference. The prominent contemporary Belgian filmmakers, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, further perpetuate this notion of the spectre of colonialism between the two countries of France and Belgium. Luc Dardenne recites the Belgian proverb:

En Belgique, il y a un vieux complexe par rapport à la France. Nous avons une fameuse expression qui dit «Mille ans dessous France» - mille ans de souffrance (Luc Dardenne, in Benoliel and Toubiana, 1999:53).¹³

The homophonic elements of this proverb 'de souffrance' [suffering] and 'dessous France' [under French rule or influence] suggests the existence of a pernicious relationship between the two nation-states, rooted in history. The use

¹³ [In Belgium, there is an old complex in reference to France. We have an (in)famous expression that states 'A thousand years under France' – a thousand years of suffering.]

of the term 'dessous' [which translates as 'under' or 'beneath'], however, is problematic, since it carries with it colonialist connotations and suggests a sentiment of French superiority. The francophone Belgian culture(s) – both Bruxellois and Walloon - are hence viewed as inferior, and are subjected to the yoke of French oppression, domination, and exploitation. The spectre of colonialism is not rooted within colonial history, but these connotations instead emphasize a prefigured relationship between these two countries. This is, of course, a more prescriptive view and a longstanding perception of the historical relationship between France and Belgium. There is hence a requirement to provide a discursive history and acknowledge the periods of foreign rule, occupation, and oppression upon Belgium. The prescriptive history is not driven by politics, but is an alternative perception of historical events that have become internalized within the francophone Belgian collective identity. The collective or shared experience of oppression from France is a rather limiting view of the discursive history of successive subjugation, and this therefore must be taken into account when analysing 'national' narratives, literatures and cinemas.

The influence of 'soft power'

Within the realm of political science, Joseph Nye developed two streams of exerting influence upon another nation-state in the form of 'hard power' and 'soft power'. The dimensions of 'hard power' concern political or military intervention, or economic might of one given nation-state, which is in turn imposed upon another (Nye, 1990: 154-166). Soft power, on the other hand, pertains to an influx of cultural products or the extension of an external source's traditions and values into a given nation (*ibid*: 166-168). Film is particularly susceptible to this 'soft power' concept, since the universal images produced by a given nation-state can be used in order to promote a positive façade of the country. In this sense, a nation-state is perceived to be 'attractive' to another, without the use of 'hard power'. 'Soft power' is thus an alternative means of co-opting and influencing the civic societies of another nation. This mode of power is not, however, generated by governments, but is instead created and maintained by civic societies. Nye suggests that 'soft power' depends more than hard power upon the existence of willing interpreters and receivers' (Nye,

2004: 16). It is only the population of a given national space that is able to exhibit the culture and the values of the nation (as interpreters) to people beyond the national confines (receivers).

Martel (2010) argues that it is this 'soft power' that is most effective in the current era, where the nation becomes yet another local market that is exploited commercially. This allows nation-states that produce vast quantities of cultural commodities, such as the United States and France, to expand beyond their borders, in an act that Delvaux recognizes as a contemporary form of 'colonialism' (Pâquet, 1972: 2). In the context of Belgium, the cultural products of Hollywood and of France exert 'soft power', since they are able to dominate the cinema and television screens of the country. Delvaux's reference to possible power relations between France and Belgium emphasizes the paradoxical position that the French elites have adopted in relation to US cultural imperialism. Delvaux is speaking in 1972 about the requirement for Belgium to try to protect the 'national' Belgian film industry against the influx of films from both France and the USA. As Chapter Two will outline, French films had the largest percentage share of the Belgian box office during this period. However, since 1986 and the GATT negotiations of the Uruguay Round, the French elites have fought to prevent an uncontrolled flow of American films and audiovisual programming from entering the French market. In this case, the French elites are, ironically, adopting a strong stance against film imports from the USA, but they do not take into account the extent to which French films have a substantial presence in film markets outside of France, such as in Belgium and Switzerland.

In the publication, *The Francophone film: A Struggle for Identity*, Spaas (2000) highlights the significance of the cinema medium in this transition from 'hard power' to 'soft power'. The extension of the colonial legacy has become synonymous with the francophone ideal, since 'cinema became the main cultural instrument to safeguard France's hold over the former colonies: colonialization [sic] of the territories was replaced by that of the screens' (Spaas, 2000: 3). Francophone cinema, in this context, represents a version of 'soft power' connections between French-speaking countries. Such colonialist connotations are not applicable to the Belgian model. In relation to francophone literature, Corcoran highlights 'the anxieties that minority cultures feel when

they live in the cultural shadow of a powerful neighbour' (Corcoran, 2007: 22). Corcoran is speaking of the francophone literatures of Belgium, Switzerland, and Luxembourg, all of which share geo-political borders with the linguistic motherland of France. Corcoran is therefore referring to the francophone regions of Belgium as 'minor' in relation to France. In the cinematic context, this translates into a sense of inferiority in relation to France. It is the 'proximité immédiate de l'importante production française, avec ses traditions, son savoir-faire, ses auteurs, ses vedettes, son équipement technique' (Davay, in Pâquet, 1972:13),¹⁴ which has instilled the pervading sense of inferiority into Belgian 'national' cinema. It is important to acknowledge that Davay's assertion predates the Schengen agreement of 1995, which led to the opening of borders across the European Union. The agreement encouraged the free movement of people between EU states – including France and Belgium. This therefore must be taken into consideration when analyzing the movement of production crews, technicians, and filmmakers between the two countries. Belgian cinema cannot compete economically, in terms of film output, production, and exhibition figures with France, which is one of the cultural and artistic powerhouses of cinema across the globe.

The possible conception of a Belgian 'national' identity is problematized by the ideal of a French universal identity, or a francophone identity. The notion of a universal French identity carries with it sentiments of superiority of the French language and culture, which were imposed upon local languages and cultures across the globe during the epoch of colonial expansion (Aldrich, 1996: 227-288). In 1970, the ACCT (Agence de la coopération culturelle et technique) was created in order to provide a cultural and technical support network to former French colonies and those nation-states that maintain an historical interaction with France. This organization, renamed *Agence de la Francophonie*, has, as of 2013, fifty-seven member-states and governments, with an additional twenty countries as observers (francophonie.org, 2013). Within this international network, the francophone Belgian community has a membership, and this therefore necessitates an engagement with issues

¹⁴ [immediate proximity of the significant French production system, with its traditions, its know-how, its auteurs, its stars, and its technical equipment]

concerning the impact of French language and culture upon the regional cultures of Wallonia and Brussels.

The concept of *la francophonie* allows France to exert its influence, power and strength beyond the nation-state's borders, and continues the existence of a universal French identity. This perception of a universal identity recalls the infamous rhetoric of Charles de Gaulle, who in 1967 addressed the Canadian citizens of Quebec as 'nous Français, que nous soyons du Canada ou bien de la France' [we French, whether we are from Canada or from France] (Spaas, 2000: 1). This triumphant display of nationalistic fervour assimilated two distinct identities on separate continents into one, an overarching single French identity. The rhetoric marks a development of the concept of *la francophonie* as it moves towards a more political standpoint. The political imperative unites the people from disparate nations across the globe into a sense of collective belonging through their shared language and values. De Gaulle's rhetoric suggested the existence of a collective unity and shared identity between French and francophone speakers.

The 'universality' of French identity is attributed to the dissemination of the French language, since Parker suggests that 'the formation of national identities is achieved through the notion of sharing a common estate, a common language foremost among the components of that inheritance' (Parker, 2003: 95). By sustaining the use of French in the countries with a membership to *la francophonie*, a relationship and connection to France is maintained. However, Hargreaves notes that 'while the champions of *francophonie* never tire of exalting the "universal" vocation of the French language, their efforts are entirely predicated upon the affirmation of difference' (Hargreaves, 1999: 49). In essence, the 'universality' of the French language and culture in countries associated with *la francophonie* is paradoxical, since the French language and the engagement with French culture serve only to emphasize their own linguistic and cultural particularities in relation to France. The concept of *la francophonie* itself excludes the linguistic motherland of France, and this further exacerbates debates concerning the existence of a French 'centre' and a francophone 'periphery' (Murphy, 2002: 173).

In terms of a literary model, francophone literature excludes the sovereign State of France, instead 'referring to all literature written in French

except that produced in France itself' (Forsdick and Murphy, 2003:3). This exclusionary action isolates the francophone cultures from France, which proliferates a pervading sense of superiority in relation to French and post-colonial francophone literature. Jack asserts that 'to describe a literary text as "francophone" is to distinguish it from a "French" text and therefore emphasized a certain difference' (Jack, 1996:17). There is a clear delineation between French and francophone works, with the 'francophone' label an assertion of alterity from the canon of French literature. In essence, francophone literature pertains to the 'periphery' in terms of an assumed relationship with a 'centre' (French literature) (Murphy, 2002: 185; Marshall, 2009: 9-10). However, there are complications to referring to a clear difference between French and francophone literatures, since it opens up the question as to where diasporic authors of literary works in the French language in France can be situated. Murphy writes how some of these diasporic French authors of African origin, such as Azouz Begag and Mehdi Charef, have been excluded from the French literary canon, and have subsequently been labelled 'francophone' (Murphy, 2002: 173). French and francophone cinema can thus be considered equally as adjunctive; they are both connected through the use of a common standard language, but are separated by geographical and cultural borders in the same way as the literary model.

In terms of approaching French-language Belgian literature, the aforementioned relationship between a 'centre' (French literature) and a 'periphery' (francophone literature) becomes increasingly blurred. French language Belgian literature is not simply categorized as 'different' from French literature, since it is possible for some Belgian authors to be included within the French canon of literary works. Murphy outlines that 'currently, major Belgian and Swiss authors are simply co-opted into French literature while "minor" writers from these countries are considered mere "regional" authors' (Murphy, 2002: 173-174). This therefore suggests a possible assimilation of Belgian authors into French literature on the sole basis of literary merit and recognition. Jack also notes the dyadic nature of Belgian literature in the French language, by proposing that

Belgian writers tend to look beyond their own country both for a literary tradition into which to be grafted and for an audience; or their identity tends to be defined not in terms of their status as Belgians, but rather in their opposition and refusal of French assimilation (Jack, 1996:25).

The distinctions between the two types of French-language Belgian authors are predicated upon one group searching for increased levels of visibility and greater recognition within a canon of works, and those authors who are attempting to assert their own sense of difference and proffer a sense of self-affirmation that prohibits an inclusion within French literature. It is at this point where the concept of the 'transnational regional' becomes increasingly relevant, since the authors of cultural texts within the Belgian context are recognizing both similarity and difference to texts in France.

In terms of cinema, the distinctions are even more complex due to the high levels of financial support required, the casting of actors and technicians, and the finding of locations, which all problematize the national label that can be placed upon a film project. Moreover, the model for francophone Belgian authors cannot be neatly mapped onto francophone Belgian filmmakers with a clear distinction between filmmakers that can be subsumed into a French cinematic canon or a 'regional' Belgian framework, since the notions of similarity and difference between France and the francophone regions of Belgium are both embedded within the film projects. This issue around francophone Belgian authors and filmmakers consequently opens up questions concerning the 'transnational' and the 'regional', and how they can function alongside one another.

Towards a 'transnational regional' identity

As was noted earlier, Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991: 6) is an abstract concept that extends beyond small communities, in which communion can be forged. The notion of 'community' is, however, flawed within the conceptualization of regions in Belgium, as the term is frequently used to refer to the linguistic regions of Belgium.

Communities, in the francophone Belgian lexicon, translate to a group identity predicated upon language and perpetuate the existence of a multiplicity of identities that lie beneath it. The Chairperson of the CCA, Henry Ingberg, describes the community as a 'laboratoire de l'identité': it can refer to their area of residence, their region (Wallonia or Brussels), their linguistic community, the federal State (Belgium), Europe, and to *la francophonie* (Ingberg, 1997). Mosley also concurs with the perception of internal francophone Belgian differences, by noting that

though the majority of the inhabitants of Brussels and Wallonia share French as their mother tongue, therefore also sharing a degree of ethnolinguistic identity, these regions are quite far apart in their demographic composition (metropolitan versus standard urban-rural) in their respective self-images (Mosley, 2001: 2).

The francophone Belgian 'imagined community' therefore amalgamates linguistic allegiance with regional, national, and supra-national discourses.

In federal Belgium, identities perceived as intrinsically Bruxellois or Walloon are not clearly defined and delineated, but instead form an internal composite identity (Ingberg, 1997). This issue also persists between the identities of French-speaking or francophone regions of Belgium and those of France, which are equally not as clearly distinguishable in an autonomous capacity and have thus manifested a 'culture of self-doubt' (Mathijis, 2004: 4) in the regions of Belgium. For example, in 1978 the filmmaker, Benoît Lamy, stated that

la culture wallonne est en perte...En Wallonie, il n'y a aucune conscience de groupe; on est sous le modèle culturel français, ce qui fait qu'on revient à une culture qui nous est extérieure (Lamy, cited in Sojcher, 1999b: 354).¹⁵

¹⁵ [Walloon culture is in decline...In Wallonia, there is no group consciousness; we are under the French cultural model, which takes us back to a culture that is exterior to us.]

This assertion further serves to reinforce the notions of the Belgian inferiority complex, in relation to France and the 'culture of self-doubt' (Mathijis, 2004: 4), which is engendered by the sovereign State's subjugation until 1831 and the extant sentiments that the country has always been 'occupied' or 'colonized', whether that may be linguistically, culturally, or economically. A perceived 'colonizing' or 'occupation' of Belgian 'national' cinema pertains to a potential compromising of cultural specificity, locality, and cultural identity.

In *Quebec National Cinema* (2001) Bill Marshall suggests that the 'nation' and 'national' concepts are problematic, since they pertain to the conflicting and competing 'forces of homogeneity and heterogeneity, between the centripetal and the centrifugal' (Marshall, 2001: 3). There is 'no master hermeneutic of the "nation"' (*ibid*) that would consequently allow for a uniform interpretation of the 'national' cinema. The cultural specificities and identities that lie within the nation presupposes an approach that takes into account these differences and pluralities. Marshall makes this observation in the context of *Quebec Cinema*, but it is equally applicable to Belgium due to the linguistic divisions in the country. These conflicting forces pertain to 'a very mobile spiral' (*ibid*), which acknowledges to what extent the 'national' is consistently undermined by the presence of cultural, linguistic, and social differences. These differences (heterogeneity) are embedded within the nation at the same time as waves and flows of 'particles' and influences from beyond the national borders. The use of the 'particles' analogy is predicated upon Marshall's consideration of *Quebec National Cinema*, in which the author discusses the presence of 'bits, components, particles, and molecules' (Marshall, 2001: 11) in relation to the notion of the Québécois, since it is part of a larger and bigger structure. Marshall discusses this further in his subsequent work on the French Atlantic, in which these 'particles' are 'associated with French language, culture and narratives' (Marshall, 2009: 5). The 'particles' pertain to flows and movements between France and Quebec as part of the latter's 'becoming' and process of 'being made'. It acknowledges the multiplicity that exists beneath the nation. The reference to 'particles' is therefore an important notion when considering the transnational, since it implies the presence of external influences within national context. By instead altering this notion to the region, the region can be involved in these flows but at a level both above and below the nation-state.

The region can be seen to have economic, linguistic, social and political connections beyond its internal borders and boundaries.

Approaching the 'region'

The 'region' and the 'regional' are, on the other hand, under-theorized concepts in film studies, with a plethora of literature dedicated to the 'national' and the increasing currency of agglomerative terminology, such as the 'transnational' and the 'global'.¹⁶ As previously outlined, the 'region' can refer to not only an internal approach to a local civic society within the nation-state, but it also refers to an outward transnational relationship beyond the borders of the region and the nation-state. This level of transnationalism can be manifested in terms of cultural, historical and linguistic connections with (and proximity to) France, its status as part of Europe, and also the internal influence and presence of Hollywood in the case of cinema. The 'national cinema' concept does not take into account the significance of the devolved region at a subnational level, which has had a growing influence upon the fiscal and the aesthetic form of films in Europe, and in particular in the federal State of Belgium.

In his taxonomy of a 'national' cinema, Crofts argues that the 'political, economic, and cultural regimes of different nation-states license some seven varieties of national cinema' (Crofts, 2002: 27). However, this paradigm is rather ambiguous, since there is a level of overlap between the different parameters. It is therefore possible for a given national cinema to be placed into more than one category. Crofts (2002: 38) categorizes the regional, the ethnic and the sub-state together as an alternative to the dominant national prism. The regional is considered as outside state provision: as an often underfunded and peripheral cinema (*ibid*).

For his part, Petrie offers a particularly apposite way of discussing 'regional' issues in the context of 'New Scottish Cinema' (Petrie, 2000a; Petrie, 2000b). Against the backdrop of Scottish devolution, Petrie outlines how Scottish culture has been rejuvenated through 'a growing sense of cultural self-

¹⁶ See Higson (1989), Crofts (1998) and Hayward (2000) for their approaches to the 'national' cinematic framework, and Ezra and Rowden (2006), Hjort (2005; 2009) and Higbee and Lim (2010) for their discussions on transnational cinema.

determination', with cinema and film being able 'to play an important role at the heart of a revitalized national culture' (Petrie, 2000b: 224). In essence, the devolution of political power has also led to devolution of the film industry in Great Britain (*ibid*: 191). The subsequent development of local film funds and institutions helped to foster a sense of regional identity in a diverse and distinct range of films produced in Scotland (*ibid*: 172-175). This example therefore shows the gradual de-centralization of film finance as it turns towards local and regional settings. There is a diversification of film production, and this is developing within the context of the regions. Nevertheless, Petrie attaches the label of 'devolved cinema' to this film production in Scotland, since it is still necessary to account for the wider 'national' context. This arises in the form of the use of public funding systems, the circulation of filmmakers and the distribution of films on exhibition circuits (Petrie, 2000a: 154-157; Petrie, 2000b: 185-186). It is therefore not possible to decouple the Scottish film industry completely from Britain, and London in particular. The 'national' British context remains relevant, and the notion of the 'national' cannot be jettisoned when reading a film along the lines of the 'regional'.

There are initial points of similarity between considerations of Scotland and Wallonia with regard to the wider political context of the changing political situation in the nation-states of the United Kingdom and Belgium. For example, Keating uses both of these countries as examples of an asymmetrical government (Keating, 1999). In this thesis, the approach to the concept of a 'regional cinema' will similarly consider the industrial, institutional and representational elements of filmmaking. Petrie's (2000a; 2000b) discussion of a 'devolved cinema' can be equally applied to the current film production of Belgium, and in particular the francophone Belgian region of Wallonia. For example, since the federalization of Belgium in 1993, there has been a de-centralization of film finance in the form of the Centre du Cinéma et de l'Audiovisuel (CCA) for the francophone regions of Belgium and the Vlaams Audiovisueel Fonds (VAF) in Flanders. Moreover, since 2001, there has been an emergence of regional film institutions, such as Wallimage in Wallonia. The subsequent result is an increase in diverse and distinct films that are produced in a 'regional' context. Petrie's use of the term 'devolution', with regard to Scotland, is certainly a profitable way of approaching both the film institutions of

Wallonia and the film output from the region. This exploration also retains the 'national' context, since it is difficult to decouple Brussels and Wallonia when considering public funding systems (Chapter One) and exhibition statistics (Chapter Two).

The flow of financial 'particles' (to once again employ the Deleuzian terminology used by Marshall [2001]) from France and the increased State support of regional institutions in francophone Belgium have helped to establish a regional creative film industry in Wallonia. The vagaries of the regional economy do not inhibit the production of films in Wallonia, but themes of economic hardship, poverty and unemployment still remain at the core of Walloon cinema. These Walloon films can be seen as an articulation of the economic difficulties and uncertainties in the region.

Regional specificity concerns the language, characters, attitudes, gestures, location and landscape within a film. It is also necessary to strongly consider the role of the landscape as a regional identifier and as a geographical marker. However, Mette Hjort (2000: 108) outlines that the mere inclusion of these elements does not necessarily constitute a 'theme of the nation' or in this sense 'a theme of the region'; the regional asperity is instead refined by how the elements are referenced and represented on screen.

Anssi Paasi outlines that the key features at the centre of a regional narrative and identity are:

ideas on nature, landscape, the built environment, culture/ ethnicity, dialects, economic success/recession, periphery/centre relations, marginalization, stereotypical images of a people/ community, both of "us" and "them", actual/invented histories, utopias and diverging arguments on the identification of people (Paasi, 2003: 447).

This is a rather broad definition of a regional sense of identity, but they are all significant components when engaging with the narratives of a cinema produced within a specific region and location. The Walloon landscape is scarred by its industrial tradition that has since waned. The antecedent media of painting and photography were inspired by the prosperous industrial landscape of the region and perpetuate the image of Wallonia as an industrial powerhouse

(Rochet, 2011: 22).¹⁷ As will be argued in Chapters Four, Five and Six, Walloon cinema continues this long tradition, but instead focuses on a ravaged, de-industrialized landscape. In the face of an increasingly globalized and 'connected' world, there is a return to a local articulation, which involves a local civic society and a community identity. There is thus a re-connection with the nation and a new approach to the Belgian State as a federalized entity, by re-imagining the regional identities and portraying a local image of the region.

By engaging with the regional specificities, a film documents and provides a record of the region. The film becomes a reference point, recording the history of a space and the cultural and regional peculiarities: in other words, its difference. The region functions as a repository of cultural specificities that are indigenous to the delineated space. Sojcher outlines two central themes to a Walloon 'regional' film: industrial decline and/or a historical consideration (Sojcher, 1999c: 198). The films created in the Walloon regions in the period from 1988-1996 engendered this position, in which the Dardenne brothers' *La promesse/ The promise* (Dardenne brothers, 1996) was included within such an interpretation of the Walloon screen image. The contemporary image of Wallonia that is presented on the screen is thus one of a region in post-industrial economic and social decline. A compilation of conference papers entitled *Cinéma et crise[s] économique[s]* (Roekens and Tixhon, 2011) continues the analysis of Wallonia as a region in recession and economic crisis in contemporary Walloon cinema.

The 'regional' filmmaker must maintain a strong regional identity that permeates the film, but this does come not only from the films themselves and the locations that they choose to identify themselves with, but it also extends to what occurs behind the camera. The location that the filmmaker chooses to identify him/herself with and where the filmmaker chooses to work is fundamental to gauging whether we are watching a regional film. In order to approach this conception of the 'regional' alongside the 'transnational', subsequent chapters will offer a close focus upon the works of the Dardenne

¹⁷ Bénédicte Rochet suggests that the two key areas that have been engaged with by photographers and painters in the period of industrialization in the Walloon region concern the Liégeois and Borinage provinces. The prominent painter that Rochet introduces is Pierre Paulus (1881-1959) and in particular his artwork *Le Mineur et la Hiercheuse/ The Miner and the Hiercheuse [worker who pulls the coal wagons]*, and in terms of photography, the work of Roger Anthoine adheres to this trend (Rochet, 2011: 22).

brothers, Bouli Lanners and Olivier Masset-Depasse, who have alternate approaches to the Walloon space. The main strands of the 'transnational regional' within the selected case studies by these filmmakers are outlined later in the rationale.

Reading a Belgian cinema

Within Anglophone film literature, the Belgian film industry and the concept of a Belgian 'national' cinema have been largely overlooked. The most prominent work, *Split Screen* (2001) by Philip Mosley, proffers a fixed and insurmountable binary between two fractions of Belgian film culture up to 1996. The notion of the 'Split Screen' emphasizes a distinct fissure that underlines difference between a French-speaking and Flemish-language cinema that co-exists within the country. In this sense, the divide is aligned with language as the primary cultural actant, since the author notes that 'a split "screen" between French- and Dutch- language cultures largely determines the evolution of Belgian cinema' (Mosley, 2001: 2). Within the context of this work, Belgian film culture is bifurcated into two linguistically determined cinemas. The publication is more of a historical mapping of the shifting patterns within Belgian cinema, from the coming of sound to the inception of 'New Europe'. There is thus a tracking of the gradual fragmentation of the cinema systems and the film industry within the country along the lines of the linguistic communities. The revival of a Belgian cinema pertains more to an engagement with the regional developments that were encouraged through the writings of cultural manifestos, such as the Walloon manifesto of 1983. The consideration of filmmakers such as Jean-Jacques Andrien, Thierry Michel, and the Dardenne brothers references the Walloon sensibilities that emerge in their works from the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s in the case of the Dardenne brothers. However, the particularities of the Walloon region are not overtly considered within this analysis beyond the conception of a declining steel industry and the loss of proletarian stratifications. The final chapter of 'Belgian cinema and New Europe' points towards the rise in the number of co-productions and the difficulty to conceive a Belgian cinema within a 'national' cinema framework due to European-wide schemes, such as EURIMAGES and the MEDIA programmes during the late 1980s and 1990s.

The 'Split Screen' notion is restrictive in its consideration of a Belgian film culture, since the capital region of Brussels complicates the conception of two clearly linguistically-defined regions. In essence, there are three regions that exist beneath the Belgian national façade, with fiscal and aesthetic connections internally and extra-territorially. Moreover, Mosley's engagement with Belgian 'national' cinema is largely rooted within the post-war period to the early 1990s, since when new fiscal schemes, on a regional, national and transnational level, have been continued alongside, of course, a wave of new films from the country and from the linguistic communities.

The consideration of Belgian cinema in French-language academic literature is, perhaps unsurprisingly, more extensive, with one of the earliest examples being *Cinéma de Belgique* (Davay, 1973). This monograph maps the historical trajectory of cinema in Belgium from its pre-history to the late 1960s. Each chapter considers a certain period through the prism of the filmmakers, thereby providing little information beyond a biographical account and a short engagement with their works. No distinctions are made between the origins of each filmmaker, in terms of their linguistic or cultural background. Each wave of filmmakers is considered in relation to the epoch in which the works emerged, at the same time as providing a short account of the filmmakers' themes and styles. This posits a sense of coherence between the waves of filmmakers from the country of Belgium, and overlooks the culturally-specific distinctions that may arise from their linguistically diverse films.

However, Paul Thomas' *Un siècle de cinéma belge* (1995) tracks this periodic development of Belgian cinema into sub-sections that point towards the flashpoints of filmmaking within the Belgian regions of Flanders and Wallonia. It is thus possible to see flashpoints for the emergence of a Flemish film culture in the immediate post-war period before the growing development of a film culture in Wallonia in the late 1970s and 1980s.

This gradual acknowledgement of the plurality of Belgian cinema is addressed in *Une Encyclopédie des cinémas de Belgique* (Jungblutt, Leboutte and Païni, 1990). The title posits a certain plural nature of cinema in Belgium through its recognition of "des cinémas", but the publication does not explicitly recognize these differences along the lines of the linguistic communities or regions. The composition of the plurality of cinemas in Belgium is categorized

according to broad generalizations of the different methods of filmmaking, such as documentary films, ethnographic films, films on art, and magic realism.

The Walloon frame of reference remains limited within these tracings across the history of Belgian 'national' cinema. Belmans (1974) considers the Walloon dimension of Belgian cinema in the publication *Cinéma de Wallonie*, and places particular emphasis upon the gradual delineation of regional borders and the increase in regional appellations afforded to film productions. The monograph defines Walloon cinema quite straightforwardly as consisting of films that are filmed in Wallonia or by filmmakers of Walloon origin (Belmans, 1974: 3). In the current state of cinema in the region of Wallonia, this definition problematically includes film projects that have been de-localized and attracted to the region for fiscal reasons, but it also allows for the inclusion of works by Walloon filmmakers that are filmed beyond the borders of Wallonia and even Belgium. This therefore typifies the issues embedded within the debates around 'national cinema' and to an extent 'regional cinema', which are engaged with in this thesis.

The earliest films that Belmans regards as Walloon, such as *Misère au Borinage/ Poverty in Borinage* (Henri Storck and Joris Ivens, 1933), were by the pioneers of cinema in Belgium, Henri Storck and Charles Dekeukeliere (Belmans, 1974: 5-8) despite their Flemish origins. Henri Storck created around eighty films across his career, filmed in both Flemish and French across the three regions of Belgium. His inclusion within such a consideration of Walloon cinema highlights the complexities and the problematic insularities of cinema in Belgium. The overarching label of a 'Belgian' filmmaker obscures the regional and linguistic community-based differences that lie beneath the national façade. This publication therefore tracks the creation of films within the confines of Wallonia and by filmmakers born within the region to the mid-1970s. However, it does not provide a clear distinction for the creation of a Walloon cinematic work due to its broad inclusion of filmmakers from Brussels, Flanders, and Germany (in the case of Paul Meyer) to the ethnographic filmmaking of Luc de Heusch in the Belgian Congo. What it does though is highlight the wealth of filmmaking talent that has emerged from the region of Wallonia, and provides a background for the historical images of Wallonia in film. In terms of reading a Belgian 'national' cinema and a devolved regional cinema in Belgium, there is

considerable overlap between the two in relation to cinematic history in the country. Due to the movement of these filmmakers between the Belgian regions, it was possible to attribute a 'Belgian' national label upon their works, since they were not deeply embedded within one Belgian region or linguistic community.

The three-volume French-language publication *La kermesse heroïque du cinéma belge* (Sojcher, 1999) also outlines the complexities of a Belgian film culture and domestic industry from its inception to 1996. Each publication is arranged according to periods of time, such as 1896-1965, 1965-1988, 1988-1996, which therefore includes significant crossover of the topics under consideration. This includes the engagement with a Walloon film culture and 'regional cinema', which occurs sporadically within the second and third volumes due to their focus upon specific historical periods. The three volumes also combine the industrial and aesthetic dimensions of the film industry in the country, despite the limitations of the exhibition figures that are restricted to spectatorship levels in Brussels as opposed to the whole country.

The engagement with the industrial nature of the Belgian film industry explores the funding mechanisms that were in place at the time of writing. The author predicts the development of regional film institutions and a tax shelter initiative. Sojcher outlines the invisibility of a Walloon regional screen culture due to the lack of regional film funds in Wallonia (Sojcher, 1999c: 152). At the time, the francophone region of Wallonia did not have the same technical abilities as the capital region of Brussels, which had a stronger infrastructure (*ibid*). It is thus significant to note that, within this thesis, the trends outlined by Sojcher have reversed in terms of the fiscal power and technical capabilities being based in Wallonia as opposed to Brussels since the inception of the Walloon regional film fund. The dynamic nature of the film industry thus emerges between the trends - outlined by Sojcher - between 1988 and 1996 and the current state of the funding procedures since 2001.

The second volume outlines the creation of a Walloon cinema as a cinema in the shadow of the linguistic neighbour of France, with the films by Jean-Jacques Andrien emphasizing 'an identity in peril' (Sojcher, 1999b: 354-355). This chimes with the English-language work, *The Cinema of the Low Countries* (Mathijis, 2004), which engages with examples of films from small

nation contexts in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Mathijis suggests that the Low Countries' cultures encompass a sense of uncertainty and self-doubt (Mathijis, 2004: 4). This is born out of veritable cultural connections between the countries in terms of linguistic affiliations, an overlapping of cultural markets in terms of film exhibition and dissemination of literature, and co-production agreements. When approaching the notion of the 'transnational' and the connections between Belgium and France for example, it is thus necessary to be conscious of these problematic power relations between different nations, in particular in relation to finance and funding mechanisms, which of course carry with them political implications and imbalances of power.

As previously discussed in this Introduction, in *The Francophone film: A Struggle for Identity*, Spaas (2000: 7-43) acknowledges the problematic insularities in Belgium and the difficulty of discussing the notion of a Belgian 'national' identity in a brief survey of francophone Belgian films. The analysis is arranged according to each filmmaker, including the problematic inclusions of Charles Dekeukeleire, Henri Storck, and André Delvaux (since it occludes a significant portion of their body of films), and the filmmakers Jean-Jacques Andrien, Chantal Akerman, Jaco Von Dormael, and the Dardenne brothers. However, the monograph does not differentiate between the complications in the notion of a francophone Belgian cinema, since the engagement with the filmmakers is arranged alphabetically, thereby conflating the underlying differences in regional location and setting of the films. This survey does, however, underline the 'multifaceted nature of identity' (Spaas, 2000: 43) within the francophone regions of Belgium. Although Spaas does not explicitly address the internal variation that exists beneath the notion of a francophone Belgian identity and cinema, she does recognize the impact of immigration to the country and to the francophone regions. Spaas notes that Belgium has become a more transient space, which is 'an amalgam of peoples who bear the marks of postcolonial relocation, the Jewish diaspora, and general post-war mobility: it is a mosaic of different groups of people, for whom Belgium is a place rather than a nation' (*ibid*: 8). This neatly sums up Spaas' conception of a francophone Belgian identity, which is predicated upon a struggle due to a discernible sense of cultural uncertainty in a bilingual and fragmented national arena.

The 'Transnational regional' rationale

The 'transnational regional' dynamic was initially developed by the author of this thesis through a paper given at the 'World Cinema Now' conference in September 2011. The paper primarily considered the reconfiguration of the 'national' sphere with regard to opposing and conflicting forces of the 'transnational' and 'regional', which exist at the basis of the Belgian case study. The 'transnational' and (less so) the 'regional' exist as approaches that have developed and evolved at different moments, and in light of certain flashpoints where one or the other takes precedence. In this sense, the 'transnational' and the 'regional' can function alongside one other at the same point in time, but the emphasis on the approach changes according to the area of the film that is focused upon, such as production, distribution and exhibition, the institutional dimension of cultural film policy, or the text-based nature of the film. This thesis will consequently focus upon four francophone Belgian films, which all provide exemplary case studies for all of the different components that function within this 'transnational regional' dynamic.

Chapter-by-chapter overview of the thesis

The broad structure of this thesis and the chapters that follow can be outlined in the following way. The first and second chapters serve to explore the methods of funding, distribution and exhibition of francophone Belgian films, thereby engaging with the dialogical partnership of the national and transnational (Ezra and Rowden, 2006: 4).

The first challenge to the existence of a 'national' cinema in the Belgian context constitutes an exploration of the internal funding mechanisms in Belgium, such as the delineation of funding mechanisms according to the linguistic community and the tax shelter initiative, which encourages investment from foreign sources for the production of 'Belgian' films. Higson presents the unstable nature of the 'national' paradigm as a fixed and contained entity, by questioning whether it is more appropriate to consider the national construct 'as confluence rather than essence, and understood in the context of the long-standing internationalism of cinema and the global scale of the markets'

(Higson, 2000: 206). On this basis, production, distribution and exhibition must therefore be considered as transnational. This is primarily due to the creation of co-production agreements between different countries and the distribution of films across national borders. The francophone Belgian films, it will be argued, are typically created through transnational arrangements; the coproduction mechanism and multilateral agreements, but they are also exploited beyond the national borders in terms of global distribution and exhibition. At this point, *Ultranova* (Bouli Lanners, 2005) and *Eldorado* (Bouli Lanners, 2008) will be utilized as case studies to elucidate the majority-minority Belgian-French co-production connections. The tripartite and multilateral funding approach is engaged with in relation to the Dardenne brothers' feature, *Le gamin au vélo* (Dardenne brothers, 2011). The use of these case studies highlights an approach that probes beyond the geographical and political boundaries that constitute the national arena in terms of cross-border synergies in film funding, and the internationalizing currents of foreign films on national screens.

The third chapter considers the evolution in film funding to the regions. This marks a shift that has heightened the significance of both devolved and enlarged funding relationships since 2001 in Belgium. The move from 'cultural exception' to 'cultural diversity' is mapped within this chapter, thereby engaging with the significance of 'diversity' within the national framework. It is necessary to note that 'cultural diversity' is not a direct synonym for the notion of 'cultural exception', since it pertains to the recognition of the local and the regional, but it also takes into account the possibility for multilateral operations and investment to the regional film institutions from extra-territorial sources. It is, in essence, a key component of the 'transnational regional' dynamic, which allows for the circulation of capital and technicians in the film industry, the presence of the Hollywood hegemony, and the creation of films within a local or regional environment. The development of the film institution in Belgium mirrors the regional delineation that exists below the national or federal veneer, and posits the possibility of re-imagining the films produced within this fiscal environment on a regional basis. The regional film fund (Wallimage) – created in 2001 – aspires to the notion of 'cultural diversity' in the francophone Belgian environment. This therefore necessitates a consideration of 'cultural diversity' when analyzing the regional film fund. The focus on cultural film policy through

the example of Wallimage enables an exploration of the confluence of capital between the French regions and Wallonia. This exists alongside the territorialization clauses that the regional film fund perpetuates in order to guarantee audiovisual expenditure in the region. This section will draw upon the previous four case studies to demonstrate the regional fiscal input into the film projects of Bouli Lanners and the Dardenne brothers. The case study of *Cages* (Masset-Depasse, 2006) will be utilized at this point in order to highlight the complexities of the regional funding to a film, which led to the de-localization of the project.

In Chapters Four, Five, and Six, the concept of the 'transnational regional' aesthetic in contemporary francophone Belgian cinema will be engaged with in relation to the textual nature of the four films at the heart of this thesis. The aesthetics therefore take into consideration the 'regional' and the 'transnational' elements that are brought together in francophone Belgian films. There is a crossover between transnational film finance and film funding from the regions, and this consequently requires a consideration of the textual nature of the films created through these 'transnational regional' arrangements. The chapters thus outline the requirements to film in the region of Wallonia, but they also highlight the transnational influences that are also imbued within a sense of 'cultural diversity'. The selection of the four Walloon films highlights the connections to 'cultural diversity', the territorialization clauses attached to the regional film funding, and the desire for Wallimage to transcend its 'monocultural' (Reynaert, 2006: 23) links to France. In this sense, this approach to the 'transnational regional' aesthetic takes into consideration the significance of the local and regional elements at the basis of the films, and the transnational network of influences that can be traced on these films from France, Italy, and Hollywood.

Paasi's (2003) conception of a 'regional identity' is formed at the heart of the 'region' in relation to the films produced within the given space in the selected case studies. However, it is also necessary to acknowledge the comparisons and influences that are engendered beyond the ontological vision of the regional space. In this sense, the transnational can be manifested within the 'region' and is addressed in a 'marked' or 'unmarked' manner – following Hjort's use of the terms in relation to the transnational (Hjort, 2009: 12-15).

In Chapter Four, the landscape exists as more than a setting within Bouli Lanners' films *Ultranova* and *Eldorado*, since it engages with the intrinsic Walloon space, but there is the existence of certain instances of 'unmarked' connections to France and to Hollywood. In Chapter Five, *Cages*, highlights the impossible 'transnational regional' shift in the film's production due to the source of funding. Alterations were consequently made to the film script and the film was subjected to a de-localization process from the Walloon region to the other side of the border in the Nord-pas-de-Calais region in France. This removal of the film from Wallonia forges a 'marked' transnationalism, and highlights the fraught complexities attached to regional film funding, which creates the impossible situation of the action being located in Wallonia due to the use of the French coastal landscape.

The sixth chapter considers the corporeal and spatial configuration of the Walloon space in *Le gamin au vélo* (Dardenne brothers, 2011). The centre-periphery relation that is one of the key components in the construction of a regional identity will be engaged with in order to map the spaces that are primarily forged through the character's marginalization. However, Luc Dardenne, in his journal, states that Jean-Pierre Dardenne 'a trouvé de bons décors qui sortiront le film de l'imagerie wallonne dans laquelle certains aimeraient nous enfermer' (L. Dardenne, 2008: 55).¹⁸ Both of these films are located within Wallonia and retain regional particularities, but they also express a desire to transcend the regional anchoring. The images of the region remain an important element to emphasize in relation to the Dardenne brothers' films, but it is perceived as a form of restriction that prevents the consideration of their films within a transnational and European context. This chapter will explore the configuration of the space and the style used to film the corporeal image, and this subsequently creates a connection with a fragment of the 'real' that can be seen in relation to Italian neo-realism and latterly so-called French New Realism.

¹⁸ [has found good decors that remove the film from a Walloon imagery in which certain people and critics would like to confine us]

Chapter One

Funding a 'national' cinema: Belgian film funding

Discussion of nationalism as an ideology has informed the theorizing of the concept of national cinema in Anglo-American film studies since the late 1980s (Crofts, 1998) (Hayward, 2005) (Higson, 2002) (Hjort and Mackenzie, 2000). Higson notes that the traditional concept of a 'national cinema' makes two assumptions that national identity and traditions are fixed and that the borders are effective (Higson, 2000b: 205). In essence, Higson, at this point, was beginning to underline the cross-border flows as a limitation to the 'national' model. The revising of Higson's initial 'national' framework (1989) begins to point towards the transnational, since he proposes that the concept 'may be a subtler means of describing cultural and economic formations that are rarely contained by national borders' (Higson, 2000b: 65). With regards to the economic formation, the 'national' cinema is not enclosed and insular, particularly in this chapter when we consider the flows of finance on a national level and on a transnational level, which also bring the subsequent flows of film personnel, attached to the finance, to the fore.

The (re-)conceptualization of the 'national cinema' debate (Crofts, 1998: 386-392) has developed from an initial consideration of a national historiography to discussions around the national through to the transnational (Ezra and Rowden, 2006; Hjort, 2009; Higbee and Lim, 2010). As we saw in the Introduction, Rosen's first approach to a national cinema concerns the historiography of the nation's film culture (Rosen, 2006: 18). Within this 'national' paradigm, the range of films produced is organized through the film finance and the narrative being rooted to a national territory. This is decided at a level of policy-making, and includes the organizations that are charged with the governance of the nation's film preservation, and the organizations that formulate selection criteria in order to choose film projects for funding.

Firstly, the film institution has a significant role in the financing of film projects on a national and regional level, and it sets out a series of criteria to which a film project must adhere in order to gain fiscal support. Although these film funding institutions outline key selection criteria and a 'cultural test for Belgian certification' (Marché du Film, 2013: 10) in the case of the Centre du

Cinéma et de l'Audiovisuel (CCA) in Belgium, these institutions also actively encourage both majority and minority co-productions. These co-production agreements are signed between countries, and therefore encourage the pooling of finance for a film project from foreign sources.

The second dimension of the film institution refers to a supra-national institution and the incentives formulated at that level. In the context of European national cinemas, for example, we might think of the existence of the MEDIA I and II programmes and the EURIMAGES production and distribution funding schemes. In relation to French 'national' cinema, Higbee states that 'the industry is not an institution in the traditional sense of the social, economic, political institutions that serve to construct and represent France as a nation' (Higbee, in Hayward, 2005: 40). These institutional dimensions to the film industry engage with both a supra-national and regional level to the funding and subsidizing of film productions. The regional level of film funding will be considered in greater detail in Chapter Three.

The inclusion of a 'cultural test' in the case of the francophone Belgian film institution (CCA) emphasizes the importance of adhering to criteria, such as the choice of language and the location of the film, in order to receive funding from the linguistic community. In the case of Belgian cinema, there is an institutionalization of film production, which is governed and administered largely around linguistic divisions. The film institutions in Belgium are arranged according to the linguistic communities, such as the Centre du cinéma et de l'audiovisuel (CCA) and Bruxellimage for francophone Belgian film production in Brussels in addition to Wallimage, based in Mons. In terms of Flemish film institutions, there is the Vlaams Audiovisueel Fonds (VAF) and Screen Flanders, which are also both located in Brussels.

The second development of the concept of a 'national cinema' is more text-based and contends with unequal exchanges and power dynamics that emerge within the contexts of production, distribution, exhibition and film consumption (Higson, 2000a: 205). The question of infrastructure is fundamental to consider in relation to nations that are economically, geographically, and in terms of population, small in size. Not all national cinemas are equal in terms of influence, in terms of their production levels and in terms of their strength on the international market.

The notion of a 'cinema of small nations', as theorized by Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie (2007), offers an alternative to the more homogenizing trends of the national. At the level of production, for example, there is an ambiguity between the idea of a small country that produces films and the idea of a country that produces a small number of films' (Hjort and Petrie, 2007: 3). Belgian 'national' cinema in fact qualifies on both counts as a 'small nation', since it is small geographically and in terms of population, as well as producing relatively small numbers of films each year. Between 2000 and 2009, the francophone regions of Belgium created on average only 2.5 'national' films per year. The term 'national', in this sense, pertains to 100% financial and creative investment and input from sources bound to the francophone regions of Belgium. Moreover, countries such as Australia, Canada, India and Mexico, all of which are not geographically small in size, can be considered 'small' due to their limited production of films and their history of subjugation (*ibid*). Hjort (2005: 29-30) references the Czech scholar Miroslav Hroch's work *The Social Preconditions of the National Revival in Europe* in order to nuance her conception of a 'small nation'. Hroch writes that '(w)e only designate as small nations those which are in subjugation to a ruling nation for such a long period that the relation of subjugation took on a structural character for both parties' (Hroch, 1985:9). This history of subjugation therefore places a country within the confines of a 'small nation' construct, irrespective of geographical size, population levels, or amount of GDP. It also nuances an approach predicated upon a pre-figured relationship between the countries, for example the linguistic, cultural, political and economic relations between former colonizer and colonized nations. Indeed such relations further inform the connections, and nuance a possible overlapping of cinematic systems and funding mechanisms between nations. As the Introduction to this thesis has already outlined, Belgium was not subjugated by French colonial rule, but there is a history of French domination in what is now the federal state of Belgium. Moreover, there are still linguistic and structural links between the two countries, and in particular the francophone regions of Belgium that are relevant today within respective national cinemas.

A further production dimension transcends this 'national' arena and pertains to Belgium's relationships and synergies with its linguistic European

neighbours, such as France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and, to a lesser extent, Luxembourg. There are also agreements in place with the dominant European cinematic powerhouses of Germany and Italy in particular, and a wider linguistic and francophone based relationship with Canada. It is necessary to consider the question of the co-production, because often in these smaller 'national' cinemas, many, if not the majority of films, are co-productions. The practice of international co-productions raises the question to which nation (or national cinema) these films actually belong. Thus in the case of Belgian cinema from 2000 to 2009, by incorporating international co-productions, the number of 'Belgian' films produced is artificially inflated from an average of 2.5 to 21.7 films produced per year.

The example of Belgian cinema reflects the contemporary trends in Europe more generally, especially since the 1990s, in which films are produced via funding from various European nations. This fact is greatly accentuated in the study of Belgium as a 'small nation', where film productions are rarely created with financial support from only the linguistic community. A film project is required to attract finance from 'national' mechanisms, such as the tax shelter, and through international agreements, such as co-productions.

The 'national' funding mechanisms of Belgian cinema

The 'national' cinema of Belgium has benefitted from co-production initiatives and cross-border synergies in order to exist and survive. Within this 'national' framework, it is necessary to create a dialogue with governmental film policies and film subsidies, which aim to provide funding to the nation's film industry. This section considers more than the descriptive nature of how governments, in this case the federalized government of Belgium, support the film industry, but also why they choose to do so.

Due to the aforementioned bifurcated nature of the media industries, there is an absence of contemporary statistics on a national level for the country of Belgium as a whole. There are two divergent institutions in Belgium, which are slowly beginning to harmonize, based on the primary linguistic divisions present in the federal state. There is the Centre du Cinéma et de l'Audiovisuel (CCA), which governs the audiovisual sectors in the francophone regions, and

the Vlaams Audiovisueel Fonds (VAF), which is rooted within the Flanders audiovisual sector. In order to produce nationally coherent figures and approach what constitutes a Belgian film industry, it is necessary to engage with the statistics and information published by both the CCA and the VAF. Both of these institutions are thus linguistic community-based, governing their respective linguistic areas with a degree of interaction.

In Belgium, it is possible to discern three core methods of subsidizing film products: (1) selective aid, (2) automatic aid, and (3) the tax shelter. Selective aid encompasses the selection of film projects by a committee, which provides financial contribution for development and production (a French-style *avance sur recettes* system). In other European countries, such as France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, regional funding strategies exist in addition to the national frameworks, which further supplement the industry. However, in the case of Belgium, selective aid is not a national or federal instrument, but is instead firmly rooted within the francophone regions, in the form of the CCA. This selective aid system is hence more culturally concerned than the more politically engaged automatic aid system.

Nevertheless, despite its federalization in 1995 and the effective cultural apartheid that has existed since the 1960s, the linguistic communities of Belgium have been beginning to supplement one another in terms of fiscal aid. In 2009, a (intra-) national partnership between the CCA and the VAF was formed. This is a co-production agreement that brings together the two divergent linguistic regions of Belgium, and it is the first official relationship between the Flemish and francophone linguistic communities. The formation of this cross-regional relationship permits a co-operative infrastructure to be established within Flemish cinema (bilan, 2010: 8). The formal agreement between the two institutions from the linguistic communities of Belgium in 2009 presupposed that 'the VAF would co-fund at least three Walloon feature films (fiction or animation) each year, and vice-versa' (Engelen and Vande Winkel, 2010: 55). The use of the linguistic community label in relation to the funding of the film project points towards a distancing of the films from a potential categorization as 'Belgian' or (intra-)national. The rigid selection criteria from the CCA and the VAF prevent the possibility of a project meeting the demands of both of the linguistic communities, as this chapter will later outline. The (intra-)

national partnership between the CCA and the VAF supports the creation of films not only within one linguistic community, but also the financial support for film projects across the Belgian federal entity.

The CCA was established in 1995, and exercises its expertise in the production, promotion and funding of the audiovisual sector. It is not State-governed, but is instead a subnational institution, which controls film production, distribution and exhibition processes throughout one linguistic community and two regions of the tripartite entity. The CCA manages a production fund of approximately 23.3M Euros, of which 12.8M Euros is supplied directly by the Communauté Française de Belgique (bilan, 2009: 8). This internal supply of funds constitutes 54.8% of the total amount, which therefore leaves 45.2% of the production fund provided by contributions external to the federal entity (*ibid*). This infrastructure is one that relies upon the percolation of finance from sources beyond Belgium's borders in order to support both a francophone, and to an extent Flemish, audiovisual industry.

The selective aid system, particularly in the case of francophone Belgium, is culturally orientated, and requires prospective projects to adhere to cultural criteria. This strand of subsidy system concerns the method of funding for films of 'national' character, and highlights to what extent the institutional interventions serve to nurture the film talent of the francophone Belgian linguistic community. It is the Member State's responsibility to draw up and define the cultural criteria, since 'each state must ensure that the content of the aided production is cultural according to verifiable national criteria' ('Cinema Communication concerning State aid for films and other audiovisual works', 2011). However, due to the federalization of the Belgian state, the cultural activities are defined on a subnational and linguistic community-based level.

Selective aid has been developed in each of the linguistic regions since the 1960s and was formalized with the 'Arrêté royal du 22 juin 1967 tendant à promouvoir la culture cinématographique' (1967). The cultural criteria of each individual film project are, however, addressed upon a case-by-case basis by the selection commission appointed by the CCA. The selection commission is typically composed of sixteen members who have three-year terms on the committee (Annuaire de l'audiovisuel, 2003: 480). On a more general level, selective aid granted to film productions is guided by the 'Arrêté royal du 22 juin

1967' (1967), which was revised and modified in 1976 and again in 1978 (Annuaire de l'audiovisuel, 2003: 493). This decree outlines a set of requirements that a film project must adhere to in order to be considered as a 'Belgian' film of French expression:

1. Language

The project and the film's screenplay must be written and articulated in the French language. For silent films, the film's subtitling, inter-titling and credits must be in French in order to qualify as a Belgian film of French expression.

2. There are no requirements regarding the national or regional identity, or the linguistic affiliation of the authors.

3. Requirements regarding the production companies: these companies must be of Belgian nationality; for example they are not controlled by foreign and external ownership and whose technical and commercial activities take place in Belgium.

4. In terms of location, the film must be shot in Belgium, but there are, however, exceptions regarding shooting in a foreign country if it is a necessary component of the screenplay.

5. In terms of staff, extras and hired workers must be of Belgian nationality or have a work permit to legally work in Belgium.

6. The laboratory and studio work must take place in Belgium, unless there are technical impediments and the expertise of foreign laboratories is required (Gyroy, 2000).¹⁹

The use of other languages in the film project is a key consideration as to whether a film can be considered as 'Belgian of French expression' (*ibid*). The original film is required to be in French, however the report outlines that it is possible to use other languages, as long as it comprises no more than a quarter of the film's total playing time and length. This therefore suggests that the role of language is fundamental as to whether a film can belong to a nation's

¹⁹ The list of requirements outlined are summarized from Gyroy, M. (2000) Making and Distributing Films in Europe, which considers the cultural criteria required for a film to qualify for selective aid in the French community of Belgium.

cinema. Language is thus considered problematic and can hinder the classification of a film. This requirement serves to reinforce the selection and use of language as a significant element to the formation of a 'national' or 'regional' cinema.

The VAF was formed six years later than its francophone counterpart in 2002, with the aim of developing a sustainable Flemish film industry. The Flemish government largely supports the community-based institution, by providing annual fiscal support totalling 12.5M Euros (Macnab, 2007). Moreover, television broadcasters (terrestrial, cable, and satellite) are not required to provide funding to the VAF.

The institution has three core objectives, which all aim 'to stimulate audio-visual creation, to centralize and organize the (inter-) national promotion of Flemish audio-visual creations and to organize and support training for young as well as experienced media professionals in Flanders' (Engelen and Vande Winkel, 2010: 53). In terms of feature films, there is a three-tier budgetary award system in place with selection criteria, which relates to the cultural particularities of the Flemish community and region. The first award concerns the funding of a sum of 750.000 Euros, but in order to achieve the second level award in the system (1M Euros) the film must exhibit 'une valeur particulière pour la communauté et l'identité culturelle flamande' ('Etude comparative des systèmes d'incitation fiscale à la localisation de la production audiovisuelle et cinématographique', 2011: 29).²⁰ There is therefore an overlap between the requirements for financial support and a broad definition of cultural value in the case of Flanders. The requirement for feature films to have a 'strong Flemish cultural heritage and Flemish cultural identity' (Marché du Film, 2013: 11) embedded within the project is not specified in detail by the VAF in their selection criteria. Nevertheless, it is possible to deduce that this reference to Flemish culture relates to the inclusion of Flemish or Dutch (as a Dutch language work can also qualify for this level of funding), the use of Flemish talent whether that may be either artistic or by virtue of casting, and the filming of the project in Flanders. The third level of this inverted pyramid budgetary system blends together the Flemish cultural and community imperatives with international finance. Should a film project encourage investment from an

²⁰ [a particular value for the (linguistic) community and Flemish cultural identity]

external source into the Flemish region, an additional 250.000 Euros will be provided by the VAF (totalling an overall figure of 1.25M Euros) ('Etude comparative des systèmes d'incitation fiscale à la localisation de la production audiovisuelle et cinématographique', 2011: 29). There is thus recognition that a transnational pooling of finance is important for the development of the film industry.

The VAF has a co-production agreement with the Netherlands, even prior to the formalization of the (intra-) national agreement with the francophone regions of Belgium. The co-production agreement between the VAF and the Dutch film fund/ Nederlands Fonds voor de Film was confirmed in 2008 (Harlow, 2008). However, it is acknowledged by the linguistic community-based film institution that there must be an emphasis upon the local and the community as a response to such flows of finance on both an intra- and international basis.

The automatic aid system is, on the other hand, the imposition of a form of tax, or levy, upon all cinema tickets, and does not take into consideration the nationality of a film. This automatic aid mechanism was formally granted on a national level by the *Ministère des Affaires économiques* until 1989 (Annuaire de l'audiovisuel, 2003: 492), but transitioned from a national to a regional level, based upon the linguistic community system, two years prior to the federalization of the nation-state in 1991 (Sojcher, 1999c: 222). The Belgian system mirrors that of the French automatic aid system, since the money raised is made available as a credit to producers to reinvest into local films. It is also administered by the francophone institution of the CCA, which further accentuates the percolating French influence in terms of how the finance is provided to film projects in Belgium. The automatic aid system enables the production of films in the federalized Belgian regions to benefit from the exhibition successes of domestic and imported films.

In the case of Belgium, automatic aid is not intended as an initial support framework for cultural products and films, but is instead acquired after the film's initial cinema release, and is awarded depending on the spectatorship attracted to the cinema screens. Should a film project not qualify for selective aid, and adhere to its criteria, the automatic economic aid mechanism then utilizes a

points system in order to define a film's nationality in legal terms and to ensure that the aid is being directed towards a cultural product. The points system is enforced according to the linguistic communities. In terms of automatic economic aid for the francophone Belgian community, the requirements are as follows:

A film must achieve 10 points out of 17 in the following list: - Belgian French-speaking director 3 points - Belgian French-speaking actor in a leading role 2 points - Belgian French-speaking producer 2 points - Belgian French-speaking scriptwriter 1 point - Belgian French-speaking composer of the music score 1 point - Belgian French-speaking director of photography 1 point - Belgian French-speaking sound engineer 1 point - Belgian French-speaking art director 1 point - Belgian French-speaking editor 1 point - Adaptation of a work of an author whose work is considered as belonging to Belgian literature of French expression 1 point (Gryory, 2000).

This points system is primarily focused upon the nationality of the creative team and the employment opportunities that have been afforded to francophone Belgian citizens. It is a mechanism concerned with the industrial and business-orientated practices of the cinema medium. The system is thus driven by political imperatives, rather than by cultural demands. The availability of these funds stimulates the audiovisual employment sector in the community and provides technicians of the francophone Belgian regions with a privileged job market.

The Tax Shelter System

Funding from outside the film industry and from foreign sources into Belgian cinema is actively encouraged. This finance enables a skilled workforce to thrive, in addition to visualizing the heterogeneity of the country, and adding to its cultural cachet. In an interview with the author of this thesis, Giles Daoust highlights the positive effects of the flow of foreign funds and projects to Belgium, and in particular to the francophone regions:

Les fonds et incentives profitent majoritairement aux films d'initiative

étrangère. Cela n'est pas à voir de manière négative, car cela fait vivre toute l'industrie technique et artistique belge (comédiens, techniciens, sociétés, post-production, etc.) (Daoust, 2012: Appendix H).²¹

The example of Belgian cinema emphasizes the value of supporting the local and 'national' production companies, film studios, and technicians, by enticing foreign production companies to invest in the Belgian cinematic infrastructure and to utilize the facilities and workforce available in the country. The automatic aid and tax shelter systems that are deeply embedded within the Belgian film industry are engendered by economic practicalities. The government is in turn providing 'invisible earnings' (Fisher, 1991: 3) to the film industry on a regional and national scale. But what are the advantages of investing in the country and using the Belgian systems for other nation-states? The Belgian Tax Shelter, established in 2003, is a key component to this evolution of film funding in Belgium, and is potentially attractive to investment from foreign companies and institutions.

Prior to the formation of the tax shelter, there had been no funds available for film productions at a national level since 1991. The mechanism functions as an additional means of funding from the federal State that transcends the traditional modes of governmental support. With the federalization of the country came the organization by linguistic community of the film industry and its film funding schemes. However, the tax shelter mechanism is a fiscal stimulus for all the federal regions of Belgium, designed to support the production and creation of Belgian audiovisual products, providing that these audiovisual works agree to the revised definition of the *Directive Télévision sans Frontières 1989 (89/552/EEC)*²² in accordance with approval from the Flemish, francophone or German-speaking communities of Belgium (Belgiumfilm.be, 2011). In essence, a film project must be considered

²¹ [The funds and incentives predominately profit foreign film projects. This is not to be regarded as negative, since it keeps the technical and artistic Belgian industry (actors, technicians, production houses, post-production facilities, etc.) alive'.]

²² This directive (originally conceived in 1984) intended to facilitate a competitive system and a liberalization of the media. It allowed the consumer a level of choice, provided by private companies, rather than public service broadcasters. It was a development away from a period of state control, in the form of public service broadcasting, as Western Europe entered a liberal era of new technologies; both cable and satellite transmission services (Pauwells, 2010). The green paper was influenced by the European commission and encouraged greater convergence between media industries in different European nations and nation-states.

'European' in order to benefit from the tax shelter incentives. However, the European Commission considers the tax shelter as a cultural aid, rather than an economic aid package (European Commission, 2002; Ingberg, 2007). The Bolkestein threat is thus attempting to suppress the tax systems in Europe, since this cultural aid, combined with the 'cultural exception' incentives that will be discussed in Chapter Two, creates unfair competition and discriminatory treatment in favour of European investors.

The relationship between tax and the cinema screen is, however, fraught with difficulties, since there are a number of discernible factors at play, which encourage the funding of the film industry through tax incentive schemes. The primary issue concerns the financial imperatives and benefits for the individual and the company involved. In this sense, there is greater emphasis placed upon the tax treatment, than upon the project engendered by the finance. In the UK and the US, 'tax rules permitted schemes whereby a taxpayer could secure relief for losses in excess of the amount of the investment put at risk' (Dodd, 1991: 6). That is to say that the main focus for investors is to contribute to the film industry in order to reduce the amount of tax paid upon annual earnings. The emphasis is placed upon the financial advantages gained from the investment, and not the film project's viability. The contemporary tax shelter mechanisms, in particular the systems adopted by France and Belgium, have developed away from this antiquated system, in which foreign film funding was attracted on a large scale and the management and selection of this added finance was viewed as inadequate.

The main objectives of the tax shelter system are to consolidate the audiovisual industry in Belgium and to encourage investment into the domestic film industry, by taking advantage of its tax exemptions. In this context, the fiscal investment pertains not only to finance percolating into the film industry from beyond the national borders, but also Belgian finance from sectors unrelated to the audiovisual industry. The private investment is then utilized to fund the Belgian audiovisual industry. Indeed, there must be incentives in order to encourage the private sector to part with their finance. The Belgian tax shelter has an important influence upon film production within the entire territory, by providing a 150% tax exemption on the amount invested by private companies (Taxshelter.be, 2011). In order to attain this form of tax credit, up to

a maximum of 750.000 Euros can be invested into the audiovisual sector (*ibid*).²³ The pre-requisites, which are attached to such an investment in the tax shelter, are primarily concerned with compliance to the conditions of expenditure in Belgium.

The tax shelter is regarded as important to Belgian film producers and thus to the film industry. Since July 2003, the approval group²⁴ has studied 749 requests for approval (bilan, 2010: 142).²⁵ The CCA bilan (*ibid*: 141) outlines that a total of 683 audiovisual projects have since been agreed, and 453 have been able to benefit from the tax shelter system. The tax shelter has therefore had a hugely significant impact upon the audiovisual sector in Belgium, and in particular upon the creation of feature films. The approval group is perceived as a 'mere formality' (Buron, 2003) when studying film project applications for tax shelter funding. The institution of the linguistic communities appoints the approval group.

According to Table 1.1, the number of feature film projects has gradually increased, and this has coincided with greater investment. Since its inception, the tax shelter has funded film projects from the domestic industry, and has attracted and financed productions from France in particular and other European nation-states. There has been a greater diversification of film funding. The mechanism has thus played a fundamental role in the formation of a dynamic Belgian film industry, increasing both the number of feature film projects produced and thereby improving the industry's visibility beyond the national frontiers.

²³ For example, should a company invest 100.000 Euros into the tax shelter; the company can therefore make a tax deduction of 51.000 Euros. The calculation is as follows: 100.000 x 150% = 150.000 (taxation base) x 34% (the tax figure exerted upon Belgian companies) = 51.000 Euros. In order to maximize the system, 750.000 Euros can be invested into the shelter, resulting in a tax deduction of 382.500 Euros. The calculation is as follows: 750.000 x 150% = 1.125.000 x 34% = 382.000 (Taxshelter.be, 2011).

²⁴ The film institutions of the linguistic communities appoint the approval group. The CCA does not outline who is on the approval group, but the specifications according to the section 'Qu'est-ce-que le groupe d'agrément?' is available:

http://www.audiovisuel.cfwb.be/index.php?id=avm_agrement

²⁵ The data provided by the CCA, and is correct as of the 2010 end of year report.

Table 1.1: Tax Shelter approved projects

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Feature film projects agreed</u>
2003/04	46
2005	41
2006	43
2007	68
2008	67
2009	83
2010	105
Total 2003-2010	453

Source: (bilan, 2010: 141)

The Belgian tax shelter mechanism mirrors the French tax credit system, the SOFICA (created in 1985), insofar as it functions as an intermediary between investment groups and the audiovisual industry. It creates a structure between investment (third party) vehicles and production companies, which function as intermediary systems between independent producers and private investment groups and investing co-operations.

In a summary of the Belgian tax shelter mechanism, Tesolin and Zylberberg (2009) outline three strands: (1) Independent producers, (2) Intermediary companies, and (3) Banking avenues. The first category of this system concerns the direct relationship between the producer or the filmmaker and the investing party.

The francophone Belgian producer of Ryva productions and the films *Folie privée/ Private Madness* (Joachim Lafosse, 2004) and *Elève libre/ Private lessons* (Joachim Lafosse, 2008), Erik Van Zuylen, reinforces his preference for this direct relationship. The direct partnership between the producer and the filmmaker ensures that the acquired finance is used only for the film project. This thus suggests that the use of intermediary companies to fund a film project can result in sums of film finance leaving the film industry. The structuring of the system in this way does not always reap positive results:

le Tax Shelter (disposition fédérale) est une excellente mesure. Il faut le renforcer en évitant toutefois les dérives de certains intermédiaires qui n'y voient qu'une opportunité de gains financiers, alors que l'argent récolté doit essentiellement servir au cinéma belge (Erik Van Zuylen, 2012: Appendix G).²⁶

Van Zuylen, in this case, is highlighting not just the pitfalls of the system, but also the necessity to increase the funding channels to the film sector. These pitfalls pertain to the early management issues within the tax shelter system. During this time, certain production companies and intermediaries charged substantial commissions to investors (Duculot, 2007: 51), which thus highlighted the extent to which some of the finance did not reach the intended aim of funding Belgian films directly.

A second possible issue emerged through the use of the tax shelter to fund European film projects. Duculot claims that 'il est aussi beaucoup reproché à certaines de ces sociétés d'attirer des projets européens supposés *bankable* pour séduire les investisseurs, plutôt que de soutenir la production réellement belge' (Duculot, 2007 : 51 – emphasis original).²⁷ In short, certain Belgian production companies functioned as the Belgian resident, so that European projects, with a supposedly better selling power to entice investors, could gain access to the Belgian tax shelter, which is at the expense of Belgian film projects developed in Belgium.

An example of this first strand of the tax shelter system is Invers Invest, which has strong links with four Belgian production companies: Les Films du Fleuve, La Parti Production, Entre Chien et Loup, and Versus production. The intermediary group, Invers Invest, functions as an assemblage of independent production companies with the objective of 'se regrouper afin de mutualiser leurs efforts commerciaux et administratifs et de lever plus de fonds' (Tesolin

²⁶ [The tax shelter (a federal system) is an excellent measure. It needs to be reinforced, whilst nevertheless avoiding certain misguided intermediaries, who only see in it [tax shelter] an opportunity for financial gain, whereas the collected money must be used to serve Belgian cinema directly.]

²⁷ [It is also very reproachable for certain production companies to attract European projects that are supposedly more bankable in order to seduce investors, rather than supporting truly Belgian film production.]

and Zylberberg, 2009: 6).²⁸ It is thus the role of this investment vehicle to convince potential investors to finance films produced by the affiliated independent production companies. This strand is thus a system that maintains a direct connection between producers, filmmakers and investors, but is, as Van Zuylen suggests, at present the weakest area for the production of tax shelter funded projects. There is a certain tendency to instead utilize intermediary companies and banking mechanisms, which are not directly implicated in the production of the film projects, but are more focused upon attracting finance.

The second strand of the tax shelter mechanism is closely connected to the first, and concerns the creation of intermediary companies. Tesolin and Zylberberg suggest that this dimension is predicated upon the companies' consideration of 'créativité et innovation d'abord, avec une dose de prise de risque, mais aussi une force de frappe commerciale, doublée de choix de films diversifiés au potentiel de rentabilité calculé' (Tesolin and Zylberberg, 2009: 7).²⁹ An example of this strand of the tax shelter system is Scope Invest, which primarily focuses upon the financing of co-productions, such as *Indigènes/ Days of Glory* (Rachid Bouchareb, 2006).

The film, *Indigènes*, is a French-Algerian-Moroccan-Belgian co-production by Rachid Bouchareb, a second-generation French-Algerian filmmaker. *Indigènes* recounts the hidden history of over 200.000 African troops sent to fight in Europe during World War II. It shows a re-claiming and remembering of a forgotten history, highlighting the contribution of African soldiers, which thus challenges the traditional Euro-centric presentation of the war. The film exhibits a journey for the African characters from the homeland to the colonial motherland of France, and thereby places Arab and black faces within the armies of the allies that liberated France. The subject matter is hence potentially polemically engaged, since the film reflects a broader examination of France's colonial past since the 1990s. Rosello outlines the myth surrounding a "private screening" of the film for the French President at the time, Jacques Chirac, which led to his wife, Bernadette Chirac, to persuade the President to

²⁸ [grouping together in order to amalgamate both their commercial and administrative efforts and in turn raise greater funds]

²⁹ [firstly creativity and innovation, with a dose of risk-taking but also with commercial force, doubled up with the choice of films categorized according to their estimated earning potential]

bring the pensions of the African war veterans to an equal level with their French counterparts (Rosello, 2011: 116). By the time of the film's release, Chirac had already confirmed the removal of the clause prior to the 11th Francophonie Summit in Bucharest in September 2006 (Thomas, 2011: 31). This therefore meant that 'when the spectators discovered the superimposed text about frozen pensions, the denunciation was obsolete' (Rosello, 2011: 115). In essence, for the spectator, the polemical issue of the film embedded in the final text has already resurfaced and been re-considered.

Mette Hjort (2009: 16-29) outlines nine typologies of transnationalism, which sees the concept as a scalar variable with both strong and weak elements. The fourth category of 'opportunistic transnationalism' (*ibid*: 19) moves beyond the idea of the formation of transnational relationships that arise due to economic exigencies, or due to linguistic or cultural mutual intelligibility. Instead, the category suggests that there are economic opportunities and financial incentives at play, which encourage the formation of transnational synergies. In the case of *Indigènes*, the synergy with Belgium is more ambiguous than the connections with France's former colonies Morocco and Algeria in view of the film project's subject matter. The relationship with Belgium pertains to what Hjort describes as 'unmarked' or 'invisible' transnationalism (Hjort, 2009: 12-13), since there is no discernible 'Belgian' marker of national identity embedded within the film project (for example none of the characters or location in the film are Belgian). The cultural and political affiliation is absent, and only the linguistic mutual intelligibility of French is present. The leading figures of the project are French filmmakers of North African descent. For example, both the director Rachid Bouchareb and in particular actor/producer Jamel Debbouze have a strong capital value in relation to the film, since they are well connected to funding sources on both sides of the Mediterranean. Bouchareb utilized his network of contacts in Algeria and Debbouze has high-level connections in Morocco. As a co-production, there was tension over which country can lay claim to ownership of the film, since '(i)n reality, the vast majority of the funding came from France and Morocco, with only minor contributions from Algeria and Belgium' (Hargreaves, 2007: 214). The majority-minority contribution in the project has been conflated within the national labels

attributed to the film at award ceremonies. For example, it was awarded the Best Original Screenplay accolade at the 2007 César as a French film, but was nominated for an Oscar (Best Foreign Film) as an Algerian film. Such national labels obscure the series of national origins of film funding, in turn exacerbating tensions between co-producing partners. The classification of *Indigènes* as an Algerian film 'stirred up resentment in Morocco, one of the film's two main co-sponsors, where it was felt that the film was being "stolen" by Algeria' (Rayane, cited in Hargreaves, 2007: 214). In another interview with the Moroccan newspaper *Le Matin* (Casablanca), one of the actors in the film, Roschdy Zem, suggested that the film was classified as an Algerian film at the Cannes film festival, since there was greater competition for French film slots at the festival (Merckx, 2006; Hargreaves, 2007: 214). The level of involvement does not always pertain to ownership, and the appropriation of national labels is often futile, since political interest and diplomatic reasons for such a classification often prevail. In this case, the Belgian contribution was present, albeit minor in terms of finance, but the Belgian markers were absent on a textual level, which hence problematizes its inclusion within a Belgian canon of works.

This approach to the tax shelter system has also been utilized by two of the francophone Belgian filmmakers that are focused on in later detail in this thesis. Bouli Lanners and the Dardenne brothers financed part of their films, such as *Ultranova* (2005) and *Le gamin au vélo* (2011) through intermediary vehicles. In the case of *Ultranova*, Scope Invest provided the tax shelter funds for the film, and it benefitted from between 300.000 to 500.000 Euros of extra finance, which represented nearly one third of the budget [from Belgium] (Mangez, 2008: 43). For Lanners' first feature film, the total budget was 2.008.822 Euros, of which 1.606.882 Euros (80%) came from Belgian fiscal sources ('*Ultranova* fiche technique', n.d.). The impact of the co-production fiscal support from France will be considered in the co-production section later in this chapter. The Dardenne brothers also received tax shelter finance through Scope Invest for their earlier film *L'enfant/ The child* (Dardenne brothers, 2005). *Le gamin au vélo* still utilized the tax shelter through a similar pattern of using an intermediary, but in this case Invers Invest (Invers Invest, 2013) and Casa Kafka Pictures, financed by Dexia bank, attracted the tax shelter funds. The

Dardenne brothers have thus shifted in their use of intermediary operators for the tax shelter across their films. Invers Invest and Casa Kafka Pictures through the tax shelter mechanism provided a reported level of finance totalling around 1.500.000 Euros (Reynders, 2011).³⁰ This figure provided by the tax shelter to the film project represents a substantial sum of fiscal support to a film with a total overall budget of 5.846.263 Euros (bilan, 2010: 32).

In 2012, the Dardenne brothers outlined a new evolution in their approach to obtaining fiscal support through the attachment of a new tax shelter arm of their production company Les Films du Fleuve, called Cinéfinance, for their next film project *Deux jours, Une nuit/ Two Days, One Night* (Dardenne brothers, 2014). Jean-Pierre Dardenne asserted that '(p)our nous, c'est le moyen de maîtriser davantage notre destin, d'avoir toujours plus d'autonomie dans notre travail...c'est une étape supplémentaire importante' (Dardenne brothers, in Carré, 2012: 10).³¹ The growth of the Cinéfinance operator with the joining of the Dardenne brothers enables the filmmakers to have greater control over the ways of funding their film projects, and allows for the filmmakers to develop direct links and contacts with investors (*ibid*). Cinéfinance is therefore an intriguing example of a synergy between art and commerce that is beginning to work in harmony. The Dardenne brothers are not required to utilize an intermediary production company in order to fund a project through the tax shelter, since there is now a direct link between investment and the filmmaker. It is this direct link that allows the auteur to function with a degree of artistic freedom. In effect, the auteurs are assuming the place of the production company, which is an exceptional case within francophone Belgian cinema and European cinema more generally.

The third dimension of the tax shelter system concerns the level of investment from the banking sector. It is, however, an area of Belgian cinema that has been affected by the economic crisis of 2008, which witnessed the

³⁰ The Minister of Finance, Didier Reynders, communicated this reported figure provided by the tax shelter about the film in question in a press release. Moreover, Bouli Lanners' second feature film *Eldorado* (2008) was funded through the tax shelter system by the same combination of Invers Invest and Casa Kafka Pictures.

³¹ [for us, it is a way of having more control over our destiny, to always have more autonomy in our work...it is an important extra step to make]

withdrawal of the ING bank in 2009. The tax shelter and cinematic activities branch of the bank 'supported almost 60 Belgian productions since the creation of the system in 2007' (Engelen, 2009). This level of fiscal input from ING has subsequently been lost to the film industry. The banking strand of the tax shelter regards the supplying of tax exemptions to the audiovisual industry as an investment with the expectation of a return. For example, 'le client d'ING n'investissait pas dans une œuvre, mais dans un produit TS' (Tesolin and Zylberberg, 2009: 6).³² This perception of the audiovisual sector as creating products again brings into question the industrial practices of the industry and the creation of films as a business. Within the Belgian system, the potential investor is afforded with a choice of what type of film products they wish to fund and support. Film projects can be proposed either directly, or through investment vehicles to a company that has opened up a tax shelter investment channel. The investor has a degree of power over which film projects should be further encouraged and supported, but their intentions and motives are obscured; are they driven by commercial or cultural gains? And to what extent do they expect a return from their investment?

Producer Patrick Quinet highlights the reality of this situation, since the intermediary companies and investors seek film projects that are 'guaranteed' or more likely to incur a return:

La réalité de ces intermédiaires; la demande des investisseurs, par rapport aux choix de films ou par rapport au return possible, à la sécurité de leur investissement, a fait que le choix s'est porté sur un certain type de films plus facilement vendable aux investisseurs (Cinergie, 2007: 20).³³

This 'sale' of film projects to the investors has negative implications for films by young directors and auteurist/ experimental filmmakers, since the investors are attracted to projects that are co-productions with star names. Instead, in 2009, the tax shelter's involvement was extended to the realm of the short film and

³² [the ING client was not investing in a work of art, but in a Tax Shelter product]

³³ [The reality of these intermediary companies; the investor's demand, in relation to the choice of films or a possible return and the security of their investment, has created a situation where this choice is directed towards a certain type of film that is easier to sell to the investors.]

films that are less than sixty minutes in length. It is a pre-requisite for such films to be exhibited in cinema theatres in order to attain this finance. Nevertheless, the main purpose of this extension was so as to benefit the emerging film talent, and function as a stepping-stone for young filmmakers, who are generally overlooked by the intermediary companies. Quinet is hence describing a broad situation, in which the commercial exigencies of investors and large enterprises based in Belgium become apparent in their cinematic investments. This pessimistic perception, however, is not always prevalent within the current tax shelter system. For example, the Belgian telecommunications giant Belgacom, in its business plan, intends to support 'a Belgian film portfolio to reduce risk in terms of credibility' (Sonck, 2006). In this instance, the investor chooses to support the domestic industry and 'Belgian' films. The language of the film project (either French or Flemish), at this point, does not come into consideration. Nevertheless, Belgacom is choosing to fund 'Belgian' film projects, as opposed to opting to invest in larger-scale co-productions, which, as will be later discussed, have a high earning potential both within and outside of the national arena.

Despite the withdrawal of ING (a Dutch bank) from the tax shelter stream in 2008, there have been other banks and investors that have filled the void. For example, in 2009, the Belgian bank Dexia launched an agreement with the intermediary of Casa Kafka Pictures, which is the cinematic investment vehicle for the RTBF television network ('Dexia enters Belgian tax shelter market', 2009: 1). The replacing of ING with Dexia was a positive evolution in the tax shelter investment in this year. This development, however, does not elucidate the issues suffered on a more general and global scale through the negative transformation in the economy in 2008. However, it is possible to suggest that the tax shelter can have a particular value for investors that increase at times of economic crisis; 'le produit se révèle être un placement particulièrement attractif dans une période où les taux d'intérêt sont faibles' (Lovens, 2010).³⁴ The producer for MI (Motion Investment) Group, Jeremy Burdek continues to note that 'un compte d'épargne assure un taux de base de 1%, nous offrons un

³⁴ [the product (referring to the "tax shelter") proves to be a particularly attractive investment in a period when the rates of interest are particularly weak]

rendement garanti quatre à cinq fois supérieur' (Burdek, in Lovens, 2010).³⁵ The managing director of the Fortis Film Fund Alex Verbeare also agrees with this notion, by proffering that '(e)ven in these difficult times the tax shelter remains attractive. Compared to other investments it offers a better return for the same risk profile' (Verbeare, in 'Belgium expects to raise €5.5 million in 2009', 2009: 3). In essence, the tax shelter is able to offer investors a reasonable return on investment within a period of economic crisis.

The second predominant banking stream to the Belgian tax shelter concerns the BNP Paribas Fortis film fund.³⁶ The funding strategy for this mechanism is rigid, and therefore selects projects 'à potentiel commercial élevé, des co-productions internationales réunissant des réalisateurs confirmés et des acteurs connus' (Tesolin and Zylberberg, 2009: 7).³⁷

One example of funding by this method is the film *Mister Nobody* (Jaco Von Dormael, 2009), which is cited as a multinational co-production with finance coming from Belgium, France, Germany, and Canada. The Belgian filmmaker Jaco Von Dormael fits the required category of an established director, due to the previous successes of *Toto le héros/ Toto the hero* (Jaco Von Dormael, 1991) and *le huitième jour/ The Eighth day* (Jaco Von Dormael, 1996). Although it attracted European box offices admissions of only 220.000 (Sojcher, 1999c: 230), Von Dormael's first feature film, *Toto le héros*, garnered recognition and accolades at the Berlin, Locarno, and Edinburgh international film festivals. Using box offices admissions as an indicator, *Le huitième jour* was a 'success', since the film recorded 5.275.077 spectators from its release in 1996 to 2010 (EAO, 2011). The highest level of spectatorship for this film was in France, with a total of 3.589.218 admissions, and the second largest spectatorship was from Belgium, with a sum of 745.471 admissions (bilan, 2010: 192). Both of these films were able to elevate Von Dormael's status to that of an established Belgian filmmaker, with possible box office returns and critical recognition. This

³⁵ [a savings account provides a base interest rate of 1%, (whereas) we offer a guaranteed return four or five times better]

³⁶ The bank BNP Paribas is owned 75% by the French bank BNP Paribas and 25% by the Belgian Federal government (BNPParibas.com, 2013).

³⁷ [with considerable commercial potential, international co-productions that unite established filmmakers with well-known actors]

perception thus rendered the funding of his films as less of a 'risk' in financial terms. Furthermore, it funds a film that supplements the cultural cachet of the 'national cinema' category.

The third feature film, *Mister Nobody*, which received funding from the Fortis Fund tax shelter initiative, is an interesting break from Von Dormael's previous films. Both *Toto le héros* and *le huitième jour* are articulated in French, whereas the dialogue in *Mr Nobody* is in English. This change of language from French to English is mirrored in a shift in terms of France's consumption of Von Dormael's works. Between 2009 and 2010, 138.351 admissions to the film were recorded in France, whereas Belgium accounted for 97.005 admissions (bilan, 2010: 198). Furthermore, the polyglot cast accounts for the greater distribution, circulation and consumption of the film beyond Belgium's borders. The cast is assembled of actors from the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, and Vietnam. The international dimension of the casting and the shift in language have altered the patterns of film consumption in Europe, with the gap in spectatorship between France and Belgium narrowing when the global lingua franca, English, is utilized. Although France remains the primary consumer, the use of English has opened up the possibility of entering new markets externally, and it has increased the potential spectatorship internally.

The first two sections have outlined the funding mechanisms that exist at a linguistic community level (CCA and VAF) and the 'national' mechanism of the tax shelter. However, in the context of a small 'national' cinema, the impact of foreign sources of funding cannot be overlooked.

Bilateral funding mechanisms and the relationship with France

The issue of the co-production opens up the concept of 'national cinema' to further interrogation, and begins to suggest that the 'transnational' notion is more appropriate in terms of film funding. The effect of the de-centralization of finance has implications for 'national' cultures, which are increasingly becoming hybridized across national, cultural and political borders. Jäckel suggests that the 'widespread use of co-productions has led to the smaller territories frequently aligning themselves with a larger neighbour' (Jäckel, 2003:61). It has

become a fiscal necessity to create and forge relationships in bilateral and multilateral agreements in order to receive greater levels of film finance, but also to increase distribution levels, as we will see in Chapter Two. The co-production agreements pertain to a transnational dimension of film funding within Belgium. As previously outlined, the federalized entity of Belgium fits into this 'small nation' category in both an industrial and geographical context.

The de-centralization of finance in Belgium has led to the forging of relationships beyond its corporeal borders, and in particular with France. Prior to 1990, there was a unique unilateral treaty formalized between Belgium and France, which allowed France to contribute financially to Belgian films of French expression (Sojcher, 2003: 72). However, this treaty was suspended in 1989 due to the inception of multilateral agreements such as EURIMAGES (*ibid*). This potentially pertains to a negative evolution of the French-Belgian cinematic relations, but these connections were re-formulated through European funding networks. Since these European multilateral operations necessitated a trilateral funding system, smaller cinema producing countries, such as Belgium, were encouraged to forge financial connections with larger producing countries, such as France and Germany. The formation of these multilateral operations intended to support smaller cinema producing countries and allowed for a 'pooling' of finance, support and talent. It also allowed for the imbrications of star systems, with French, German and Spanish film stars becoming a more accessible commodity for Belgian producers and projects, and this in turn would impact upon a film project's European levels of distribution. Co-producing relationships between France and Belgium have therefore evolved from individual national treaties to part of European legislation.

The information in the (Table 1.2) highlights to what extent this fiscal interconnected-ness is a contemporary reality, since, between the years of 2000-2009, the institution of the Centre du Cinéma et de l'Audiovisuel supported 182 feature length films, with only 25 supported by funding avenues intrinsically bound to the francophone community of Belgium. The CCA bilan (2010: 139) outlines that 152 (86%) projects were funded by virtue of co-production agreements and synergies with sources deriving from outside of the country, with 130 film features (nearly 83%) co-produced with the linguistic neighbour and cinematic powerhouse of France. These statistics highlight the

extent to which co-productions function as a support mechanism to the vagaries of the 'national' film production, but also demonstrate to what extent France helps to fund (francophone) Belgian cinema. It also further accentuates the internal differences that exist between the regions of the country, in which one cinema is better financed than the other, simply by virtue of the linguistic affinities with France. The majority of the financed co-productions are accredited to the francophone regions of Belgium, with the 'other' Belgian cinema of Flanders gaining less fiscal support from a country with linguistic similarities, the Netherlands. The Flemish cinematic mode of funding is thus largely predicated upon its internal framework.

Table 1.2: Co-production agreements with Belgium

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
FR	14	10	9	17	13	10	16	13	13	15	130
LUX	1	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	0	2	19
NED	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	4	3	15
CH	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	3	0	14
DEU	3	1	1	1	2	0	3	1	0	2	14

(Source: bilan, 2010: 139)

The co-production agreement between the Government of the French Republic and the Government of the French community of Belgium outlines criteria for determining the nationality of bilateral films. The agreement states that

Co-production films that have been approved under the terms of this agreement shall be treated as national films in accordance with the legislation in force within the territory of each of the two parties (CNC, 2004).

This assertion emphasizes that the nationality of a film, produced under the terms of this agreement between France and the francophone regions of Belgium, moves between the two countries. It is therefore imperative, according to Finney, for European film productions to forge synergies and relationships with partners that do not co-produce, but instead co-finance (Finney, 1996: 94). For Finney, writing in the 1990s, the co-production model shows an influence upon a given film project that transcends film funding, and moves into the sphere of added cultural, creative, and artistic input from the financial partner(s). This combination of input and influence presents a danger of creating films that adhere to the nebulous notions of European-ness, and can even retain the possibility of creating a film that fits into the 'Euro-pudding' label.³⁸ The distinction of where the film project can be situated or which nation can claim ownership of such a text is blurred.

Within the artistic and technical areas, each of the two countries (France and Belgium) must participate in the film's creation, but in accordance with the financial contributions provided. Since it is highlighted in Article Three of the agreement (signed on the 16th May 2004) that each country involved in a co-production must provide the relevant level of participation in the film project, it is fundamental to consider the conditions that are bound to the finance. This fiscal participation by France manifests itself within the sector of employment and the

³⁸ Jäckel provides a clear definition of the 'Euro-pudding' label as 'a hybrid mixing of artistic and cultural inputs, in which the use of a polyglot cast and international locations betrays the film's multinational sources of finance' (Jäckel, 2003: 62). Finney also outlines the dangers of 'Euro-puddings' as potentially leading to 'issues of cultural specificities and creative integrity' (Finney, 1996: 91).

technical and artistic crew involved within the project. Finney also emphasizes the production requirements placed upon the co-producing countries concerned when implicated within a multilateral system, by stating that ‘between 10 and 25% can be purely financial, with no creative or technical input’ (Finney, 2010: 77). This example thus adheres to a co-financing rather than co-producing model, since there is no overlapping of technical or creative competencies placed upon the film project. The previous case study of *Indigènes* (2006) fits with this co-production model, since the Belgian level of funding for the film project totalled only 10% in relation to 90% from France (‘La production cinématographique en 2005’, 2006: 40).³⁹ In this case, Belgium is the minority co-producing partner, and, due to its low level of fiscal input, the country is not required to provide a technical or artistic contribution to the film project.

The co-production relationship with France is important to the development of a Belgian, and in particular francophone Belgian, film culture. The connections, in this case, can be predicated upon a source of ‘affinitive transnationalism’ (Hjort, 2009: 17) in which mutual intelligibility between the languages and cultures has a role. As Hjort notes, this is primarily the case for the cinema systems of small nations with challenges to sustain a ‘national’ cinema (*ibid*: 18). However, as Giles Daoust (2012: Appendix H) later notes, this is not always the case, since there is also the possibility for reciprocal arrangements between the countries that allows for ‘opportunistic’ forms of transnationalism in Hjort’s terms (Hjort, 2009: 19). The availability of film funds - such as the tax shelter and regional film funds - opens up the possibility for co-productions to occur between the two cinema systems in which a French film utilizes the Belgian film funds to increase the film’s budget. The previously described film, *Indigènes*, is a case in point of this transnational co-production.

In an interview with the author of this thesis, the writer-director-producer for the Brussels-based production company, Title Media, Giles Daoust laments the notion of France engaging in co-production agreements with the francophone community of Belgium primarily with the aim to take advantage of and benefit from the fiscal incentives available in the francophone regions:

³⁹ Although *Indigènes* is recognized as having four co-producing partners, the CNC report on the production of the film does not include the percentage of fiscal support provided by either Morocco or Algeria.

En terme de nombre de films, la majorité du cinéma Belge francophone est composée de coproductions avec la France. Souvent minoritaire, où les producteurs français viennent en Belgique pour y profiter des incentives (tax shelter, wallimage, etc.) C'est financièrement intéressant pour les producteurs belges, qui sont payés pour leur travail sur ces coproductions. Cela permet à de nombreuses sociétés de production de survivre, ce qu'elles ne pourraient pas faire uniquement avec des films majoritaires belges ou d'initiative belge (Giles Daoust, 2012 : Appendix H).⁴⁰

Daoust therefore supports the case for co-production agreements to be formalized and acted upon by France, in a minority and majority capacity, because of the financial incentives at play, such as the national funding instrument of the tax shelter and the regional funding mechanisms of Wallimage and Bruxellimage (which will be considered in more detail in Chapter Three). However, Daoust also outlines how the flows of financial support and film projects between the countries serve to benefit the francophone regions of Belgium in addition to France. The *Hexagone* benefits from the financial incentives, but francophone Belgian producers benefit from guaranteed employment on both minority and majority projects. The guarantee of employment and work provides extra finance and funding to the francophone Belgian production companies, and this subsequently assures their continued existence.

The automatic aid system additionally rewards international co-productions for funding in the Belgian communities, since they automatically qualify for this aid. It provides a further stimulating factor for foreign films, for example from France, to cross the national borders and to de-localize. For example, the labour costs and industry technicians in Belgium are more economically viable than across the border in France. According to the French

⁴⁰ [In terms of the number of films, the majority of francophone Belgian films comprise co-productions with France. Often a minority involvement, the French producers come to Belgium in order to profit from the incentives (such as the tax shelter, Wallimage funding schemes etc.). It is financially attractive for Belgian producers, who are paid to work on these co-productions. This allows numerous production companies to survive, which they would not be able to do by only producing majority Belgian films or those of Belgian origin.]

institution, the CNC, the labour costs are inferior to those of France by a figure of 5% ('Etude comparative des systèmes d'incitation fiscale à la localisation de la production audiovisuelle et cinématographique', 2011: 31). A labour salary saving of 5% between France and Belgium is not a great enough incentive to de-localize production. However, the benefits that a French producer can achieve from the added automatic aid, combined with a more economically viable labour sector, further entice the film projects across the border.

The director of the CCA, Henry Ingberg, reaffirms the creative advantages for the de-localization of film projects across the border rather than financial incentives, by claiming that

C'est d'abord grâce au talent et à la notoriété des créateurs et des artistes, des comédiens, des réalisateurs. La réputation du cinéma est d'abord basée là-dessus, pas sur des mécanismes financiers (Ingberg, 2007: 18).⁴¹

Ingberg thus suggests that the financial incentives for projects to traverse the border are secondary to the creative talent that Belgium possesses. For the continuation of the flows of film projects across the border, Belgium's reputation must therefore be built as a creative hub. The consistent funding of the national cultural film industry, by both the State and extra-territorial investment, highlights that the state has thus 'recognized the value of employment and governmental tax revenues generated by film and television production' (Broche et al., 2007: 3). The investment branch of the Belgian production company, Scope, advertises a creative hub status for the federal state in order to entice investment, for example

Studio facilities in Belgium are also very up to date. Above all, Belgium offers exceptional quality of technical and artistic services, and its reliability is acknowledged worldwide, the best evidence being the list of internationally acclaimed productions shot in Belgium (Scope Invest, n.d.).

⁴¹ [It is first of all thanks to the talent and the notoriety of the (film) creators and artists, the actors, the filmmakers. The cinema's reputation is firstly based in these areas, not due to the financial mechanisms in place.]

This mantra emphasizes francophone Belgium as a centre for international production companies to come and use the facilities and expertise that the country and regions have created. As a result, the film institution is more concerned with increasing employment opportunities for francophone Belgian technicians and improving studio facilities. The government is promoting and encouraging the proliferation of a film culture, but it is not necessarily a film culture of 'national' character. This method of film funding does not necessarily promote a unified Belgian 'national' cinema, but it does serve to maintain a strong film and creative industry, and displays a shop window of what is available in the nation.

To end this chapter, we shall now focus on three case studies that are all co-productions between Belgium and France in which France maintained a fiscal stake of more than 25%. These three film projects highlight the overlaps in terms of funding between the two countries, and provide further context for the conditions attached to the finance from France. These case studies are a culmination of the approaches to Belgian film funding, which has been outlined in this chapter, since they have been funded through the linguistic communities (the CCA and in one case an intra-national co-production with the VAF), the tax shelter, and through co-production agreements. These three films are therefore intriguing case studies for discovering how these funding strands work together in order to finance a film project in the francophone community of Belgium.

Case Studies of majority Belgian bilateral and multilateral co-productions

In terms of the production context of *Eldorado* (Bouli Lanners, 2008), the film is a co-production between the linguistically connected countries, France and Belgium. However, the film is a majority Belgian project with minority French fiscal input, since 70% of the financial support came from Belgium and therefore 30% originated from France (bilan, 2007: 176). The total budget for the Belgian-French co-production is a sum of 2.29 million Euros (Cbo-boxoffice, 2013). Lanners' first feature film *Ultranova* (Bouli Lanners, 2005) follows a similar co-production arrangement and delineation of co-production competencies relative to the percentage of fiscal support from each country. For the film, 80% of the fiscal support was from Belgium, with 20% French input (*'Ultranova* fiche

technique', n.d.). The total budget was 2 million Euros (*ibid*) In terms of the funding from the linguistic communities, *Ultranova* received 362.605 Euros from the CCA (18% of the total budget) and 150.000 Euros from the VAF (12%) (*ibid*). *Ultranova* is therefore an example of the previously outlined agreement in terms of intra-national film funding between the CCA and VAF, which requires financial support from the two institutions to be provided to at least three Walloon films per year (Engelen and Vande Winkel, 2010: 55). Although the film is an example of this intra-national connection, the use of the Walloon regional label within the description of the requirement therefore distances the project from being categorized as a Flemish production or a 'Belgian' film.

Both of Lanners' films thus conform to a majority Belgian to minority French co-production dynamic, which is calculated upon the competencies given to the lead producer and the location of the lead producer's base. In the case of the two films, the lead producer is Versus Productions, based in Wallonia. This arrangement reinforces the importance of the connections with France as a fiscal source to ameliorate the overall film budget. Nevertheless, bilateral treaties require artistic and technical participation to be relative to the financial input (Finney, 2010: 77). Consequently, the small co-production input does presuppose the inclusion of French technicians, producers, and actors within the film projects.

Lanners (2011) asserts that the strings attached to his film projects due to the means of funding do not have a subsequent impact upon the aesthetic manifestation of his works. He affirms that 'j'ai toujours été libre et n'ai jamais subi aucune contrainte que ce soit avec mon producteur, les coproducteurs ou les distributeurs de mes films' (Lanners, in 'Déjeuners du Film Français à la plage des Palmes, Les', 2011: 13).⁴² The filmmaker hence asserts that he is able to create his films without the influences from producers, which is possible to connect to his cachet as a star in both Belgium and France throughout his film career.

Bouli Lanners also states that these connections are not solely rooted in the requirement for finance to produce the film project: 'en ce moment, le jeu est que les français essaient de s'inspirer de l'école belge' (Lanners, in Van Hoesj,

⁴² [I have always been free and have never been subjected to any constraint that may come from my producer, the co-producers or the distributors of my films.]

2010: 45).⁴³ There is thus a developing trend within the nascent Belgian cinema and a francophone Belgian cinema towards a 'soft power' influence from France upon film production at an aesthetic level in addition to a fiscal scale. The expertise and support are developed within the French cinematic system, which has percolated across the border to the francophone Belgian films. The presence of French finance, albeit at a reduced and minority level, still requires the inclusion of French producers and/ or technicians to work on the film projects within the francophone Belgian space. The two Bouli Lanners examples highlight the bilateral relationship between Belgium and France in a majority-minority co-production. The next study of the Dardenne brothers' film, *Le gamin au vélo* (Dardenne brothers, 2011), considers another form of co-production, the multilateral funding strategy, which encompasses financial support from three countries.

Le gamin au vélo exists as the filmmakers' sixth feature film in their post-1996 corpus of work. In terms of the production context of *Le gamin au vélo*, it is a co-production, funded through a tripartite funding strategy from Belgium, France and Italy. According to the Bilan produced by the CCA, the levels of finance are attributed as 46% from Belgium, 44% from France and 10% from Italy (bilan, 2010: 123). The total budget for the film was 5.84 million Euros (Cbo-boxoffice, 2013). The formation of a tripartite funding mechanism between the three European countries encourages additional support and meets the requirements for the European funding mechanism of the MEDIA programme, which provided 444.450 Euros of fiscal support to the project (bilan, 2010: 129). This production context further highlights the extent to which there is an increasing imbrication between the levels of fiscal support provided to a film project originating from Belgium by its linguistic neighbour, France. This film also adheres to the tripartite or multilateral funding operation, which is predicated upon the formation of three or more co-producing countries involved in one given project.

Le gamin au vélo therefore nuances the fiscally interconnected nature of the film industry in Europe, but it also serves to demonstrate the differences in terms of applying a co-production or co-financing appellation to the given

⁴³ [At the moment, the way things are is that the French are trying to inspire the Belgian schooling/ filmmaking education.]

project. The film is required, however, to be attached to a national framework by virtue of the base of the lead producer, which, in the case of this film, is the Dardenne brothers' own production company Les Films du Fleuve, based in Wallonia, Belgium. Nevertheless, for the *Le gamin au vélo* project, 44% of the film's budget also came from France, which necessitates a level of artistic and technical input relative to the fiscal imperatives (bilan, 2010: 123).

Within the synergy with France, there is the possibility of 'strings' being attached to the film's finance, since the French fiscal input was more than 25%. The logic of the funding mechanism therefore dictates that the filmmakers are required to work with French creative talent, such as technicians, producers and in some cases actors, to a level that is reflective of the fiscal input. The Dardenne brothers have a degree of cachet and influence on the choices of French creative talent that is provided to the project. The lack of French actors in their films points towards this influence, and this element will be considered in relation to the use of the non-professional actors and the importance of accent in terms of anchoring the film within a given regional environment (Chapter Six). In order to adhere to the requirements attached to the financial support of above 25% from France, the Dardenne brothers include French creative talent within the spheres of production, such as the collaboration with the sound engineer Jean-Pierre Duret and the producer Denis Freyd. Jean-Pierre Dardenne asserts that 'if we have to compromise on the technical crew, that's no bad thing, as we have technical friends working in France and who are French' (Jean-Pierre Dardenne, in Reynaert, 2005). This statement suggests that the involvement of French technicians is in fact encouraged by the filmmakers, rather than regarded as an imposition from France, if it is attached to the finance.

As Chapter Six will consider, the contribution of French technicians and producers has not impacted upon the Walloon regional specificity in their work. For example, this includes the use of non-professional actors and the subsequent importance of the accent. However, one significant example of this French contribution within the Dardenne brothers' films concerns the role of the producer Denis Freyd, who has collaborated with the filmmakers on the films *Le fils/ The son* (Dardenne brothers, 2002), *L'enfant*, *Le silence de Lorna/ Lorna's Silence* (Dardenne brothers, 2008), and *Le gamin au vélo*. This example

reinforces the point that despite the French influence upon the filmmakers' works since 2002 at a technical and production level, the Dardenne brothers have not been required to compromise upon their artistic vision. These roles are evidently fundamental to the creation of the film, although it is important to note that this French inclusion in the project does not leave a particular 'mark' or 'trace' on screen. The French creative talent is hence predominantly located within the off-screen sectors of the Dardenne brothers' films.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the complications of film funding in the 'national' environment in Belgium. The funding mechanisms in the country are organized according to the linguistic communities, with a clear delineation between the CCA for the francophone regions of Belgium and the VAF film institution in Flanders. The CCA presupposes a cultural test for the film projects that apply for this source of selective funding, in which the main criteria are the inclusion of the French language within the project and the 100% expenditure of this fiscal support within the French community of Belgium. The funding of films according to cultural criteria is therefore inherent to the given linguistic community. In essence, there is no sole film institution that is able to function within the national environment, such as the CNC across the border in France. Lines of fiscal support do exist between the CCA and the VAF, but they are primarily determined by the francophone Belgian institution and pertain to a recent evolution in the 'national' film funding. The tax shelter is, however, a true national funding mechanism, since the film projects that qualify are connected to production companies that are resident in Belgium. This mechanism therefore transcends the linguistic frontier between the francophone regions of Belgium and Flanders.

The co-production model is another key dimension to Belgian film funding. This method of fiscal support for a film project opens up questions of the transnational, since it presupposes funding from an extra-territorial source. In the case of Belgium, the primary source of co-production finance comes from France, with which the country shares linguistic connections and affiliations. This finance helps to sustain and support the production of films within the small

national context of Belgium, and in particular serves to produce francophone Belgian films. In the Belgian context, as will be explored in Chapter Three, the transnational sources of film funding are coupled with the cultural aims of the regional funding institution. The co-production arrangement with France can also be seen to have led to an increase in francophone Belgian films on offer. However, the circulation of capital has highlighted and reinforced the fractures deeply entrenched in Belgium, predicated upon linguistic differences. The erosion of the national borders economically has facilitated the construction of cultural boundaries internally. In this sense, film funding in Belgium can be viewed as 'transnational' and 'European' in its nature, however in Chapter Three, this thesis will outline the extent to which film funding has shifted into a more 'regional' and also 'transnational regional' mould.

Nevertheless, there are advantages to such a co-production agreement between the two countries beyond the mere fiscal support of a film project, since it provides the co-producing nation with an incentive to attract audiences to the film within their own domestic market. The transnational and the national are intertwined when approaching the cinema of Belgium, since 'the linguistic border which Belgium shares with France has enabled its francophone community to produce larger scale co-productions that are guaranteed a respectable market share' (Fowler, 1998: 221). Although Fowler is writing in 1998, the co-production trends between France and Belgium remain equally important now, and therefore open up questions concerning the distribution and exhibition of Belgian films beyond the national borders. Chapter Two will therefore consider the impact of the linguistic connections between Belgium and France, in addition to the high levels of co-productions, upon the domestic market in Belgium. The chapter also addresses the issue of how the different linguistic communities fragment the domestic market, and how the films emanating from the country perform beyond the domestic market.

Chapter Two:

Locating the Belgian 'domestic market': The Belgian box office and Exhibition trends of francophone Belgian films

In the context of the film industry, the 'domestic market' can refer to the circulation and exhibition of films. This chapter will approach the domestic market by assessing the levels of film spectatorship on cinema screens. Cucco notes that a film conceived within the confines of the nation-state normally has advantages over and above imported film products in the 'domestic market', since audiovisual programming can be an expression of a country's culture and these programmes are articulated in the mother tongue of the nation-state's population (Cucco, 2010: 154). However, in the case of most 'national' films in European cinema, this perceived advantage is not always present when faced with the economic might of Hollywood. This chapter will explore the presence of Hollywood films in the Belgian domestic market, and the other factor of films screened in Belgian cinemas from linguistically similar countries, such as France. The chapter will later move on to consider the place that the 'national' or linguistic community films occupy within and beyond the Belgian 'domestic market'.

The first area to consider within this idea of the 'domestic market' pertains to the form of 'cultural discount', which outlines that 'national' films and products are more likely to be consumed within the domestic arena, over and above imported films (Hoskins and Mirus, 1988: 499-515). The 'cultural discount' (*ibid*) mechanism essentially suggests that

a particular television programme, film, or video rooted in one culture...will have a diminished appeal elsewhere, as viewers find it difficult to identify with the style, values, beliefs, history, myths, institutions, physical environment, and behavioural patterns (Hoskins et al., 1997: 32).

As a film is exported, it may have difficulties relating to a foreign audience due to linguistic and cultural differences inherent to the film. This 'cultural discount' mechanism thus reinforces the importance of the 'domestic market', since the

film is produced in the country's native language, and contains cultural signifiers relevant to the country.

Wildman (1995) suggests that films exported to a country beyond its domestic market often have to overcome a 'linguistic and cultural handicap'. The two factors that prevent such a 'handicap' are the use of the English language and high production costs (*ibid*), effectively citing how Hollywood has been able to access exhibition sectors across the globe. However, it is possible to propose that Belgium has such a 'handicap' on two levels. Firstly, the domestic market is fragmented into two/three linguistic regions, and secondly due to the amount of films produced in France and the use of the French language in the francophone regions of Belgium. In this sense, French films do not have such a 'linguistic handicap' when exporting beyond their own domestic market. In Europe, for example, France has access to the Belgian and Swiss domestic markets.⁴⁴ However, this 'linguistic and cultural handicap' (Wildman, 1995) that separates the domestic market can also be utilized as a competitive advantage for the films created within this environment. As will be explained later in this chapter, the linguistic similarity with France allows francophone Belgian films to cross over and receive increased levels of film admissions across the border. New markets can thus be formed beyond the domestic market economic model. In this case, the 'linguistic and cultural handicap' can be turned into an advantage in terms of film export.

The presence of Hollywood cannot be overlooked in the consideration of a 'national' or 'transnational' cinema in exhibition terms, since Crofts notes that 'national cinema production is usually defined against Hollywood' (Crofts, 2002: 26). This chapter will later consider the alternative approaches taken by the internationalizing energy of Hollywood in European domestic markets, and the distribution pathways that have been adopted by 'national' films in response. The sheer availability of Hollywood fare that is present on the cinema screens in Europe, and for the purposes of this thesis in Belgium, means that 'Hollywood can hardly be conceived ... as totally other, since so much of any nation's film

⁴⁴ See Cucco, M. (2010) 'The borders of the domestic market and their importance in the economy of the film industry: The Swiss case study', *European Journal of Communication*, 25: 153, pp. 153-167, for a further engagement with the notion of the domestic market in Switzerland.

culture is implicitly “Hollywood” (Elsaesser, 1987: 166). In this case, Hollywood is more than a mere footnote within the exhibition sector of a given country. The reasons for the presence of imported films, whether they may be from Hollywood or France in the case of Belgium, can also be considered through the commercial prism of supply and demand.

As Hayward notes in her writings on French National Cinema, ‘if, as a national cinema, it cannot respond to the market forces of supply and demand, then distributors must import to keep exhibitors and audiences satisfied’ (Hayward, 2005: 21). The demands of the ‘domestic market’ against the levels of film production can therefore dictate the number of films that need to be imported in order to fill the vacuum. In the context of a small ‘national’ cinema, such as Belgium, it is possible to suggest that Hollywood is part of a cross-border exchange that clearly meets a level of market demand (on the basis of the levels of production outlined in Chapter One).

The increasing significance of foreign markets to Hollywood has been recognized since the early 1920s. Maltby and Vassey state that Hollywood films affirmed their strong presence in Europe through ‘aggressive marketing procedures’ (Maltby and Vassey, 1999: 39), which are still recognized today. The European market has also been an important battleground for Hollywood films, since Hollywood gained over half its revenue from extra-territorial exhibition in the continent in the late 1940s (Guback, 1969: 10-12). Guback saw this initial requirement for increased levels of distribution in Europe as a response to the increase in film production costs during this period in Hollywood (*ibid*). As Dale (1997: 78-79) and Finney (1996:140) point out, foreign markets are also a fundamental reason behind the continued presence and might of Hollywood films across the globe. These foreign markets are where Hollywood films now make most profit, since they are able to recoup most of their production costs within the domestic market. This is why Hollywood films market overseas countries aggressively and why promotional budgets for major Hollywood films abroad can be higher than many of the budgets for the domestic films that they are competing against at the box office.

A brief overview of Hollywood in Europe

The internationalizing energies of Hollywood have been able to dominate individual national markets across the globe since the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, overcoming such hurdles as the advent of sound in film. Previously, France monopolized the cinema screens whilst Hollywood was still in its infancy. During the pre-war period, 80% of films exhibited in France were domestic productions, but by 1917 this monopolization of the domestic screen had reduced to 37% (Forbes and Street, 2000: 4). This reduction coincided with the rise of Hollywood films and foreign films screened in French cinemas (*ibid*). Furthermore, France's domination was not restricted to the domestic market, since by 1910, 70% of films exported on a global scale were from France (Sadoul, 1962: 12). However, for various reasons, France failed to capitalize upon this early success and consolidate its dominant position, and failed to modernise its production practices and techniques. A lack of innovation was compounded by increased competition from other European cinemas, such as Germany, Denmark, Sweden and the United States. Finally, during the war years, France's production levels dwindled, which allowed American films to fill the void (Hayward, 2000: 20). A dearth of French supply to the domestic market was compounded by developments in film taste, since 'the war years witnessed a dramatic shift in French cinema-goers' taste away from their own national product towards that of the United States' (*ibid*). Both supply and demand for French films thus shifted during this era towards the United States.

The years up to 1914 witnessed the zenith of French film consumption, which was followed by its nadir during the Great War years and early 1920s. Although Hollywood films may not have dominated the box office in countries such as France and Belgium (as this chapter will later highlight) until the 1980s, Hollywood had still been a force since at least the 1920s in Europe. Nowell-Smith notes that during the 1920s, American films dominated the market with around 50% of market share in some European countries, and more than 80% in the United Kingdom and Italy (Nowell-Smith, 1998: 3). The silent era constituted a universalizing of moving images, in other words 'an international language', since 'it dealt with simple melodramatic or comic themes, which easily crossed national boundaries, or because its iconography and

performance styles were based on a set of simplified, exaggerated and easily “legible” codes’ (Forbes and Street, 2000: 29). Without the barricades of language, silent films could thus be ‘naturalized’, since audiences (re-) interpreted the films and (re-) appropriated them in line with the local psyche, values and traditions. An absence of any national and cultural codes within a silent film text removed the possibility of constructing barriers between the film and the spectator. However, with the arrival of dialogue and sound, the concept of national boundaries began to take shape, by highlighting the national specificity of language.

The lack of linguistic coherence between the spectator and the film emphasized issues concerning nationality and cultural specificity. The re-drawing of the national borders on the cinematic map has enabled the film industry to fragment into domestic markets. Europe is not a monolithic entity, and therefore does not function as a homogenous market. Everett asserts that ‘language difference is also, arguably, one of Europe’s greatest obstacles to creating a profitable film industry’ (Everett, 2005: 11). The lack of linguistic coherence in Europe reduces the possibilities for a film’s success on a European scale, since a strong performance for a film is generally only witnessed within a linguistic market. The arrival of sound allowed for a brief reprieve of domestic national markets from Hollywood’s international domination, with the market share of American films deteriorating as the linguistic lines were reaffirmed. For example, as Forbes and Street discuss, ‘in Europe, sound reinforced national rivalries, stifled the co-operation that had been adumbrated in “Film Europe”, but also offered temporary protection from Hollywood’ (Forbes and Street, 2000: 30). However, this protection was difficult to realize, since the introduction of sound also presented two problems at the time for European cinemas, particularly in relation to smaller nations. The film studios needed to have recording equipment and they were required to cover the costs for dubbing when exporting the completed films (Guback, 1969: 9). Guback further notes that both the introduction of sound due to the financial implications and the end of the Great War ‘accounted for the American industry’s initial expansion into Europe’ (*ibid*).

The Hollywood film industry has always been a commercial enterprise, but the control that the Major studios have had over the sectors of production,

distribution and exhibition changed between the 'classical' period and the 'post-classical' or 'New' Hollywood epoch. During the 'classical' period, the studios were vertically integrated, which, in essence, meant that the studio had control over all sectors of film production through to distribution and exhibition from the 1920s to the end of the 1940s. This studio system was regarded as a 'mature oligopoly' due to the control of the complete market by eight studios (Bordwell et al., 1986; Schatz, 1988). In this period, the studios adopted a method of mass film production that drew comparisons with the Fordist system of manufacture (Hoskins et al., 1997: 53; Staiger, 1985: 90). The intention was therefore to create films with the view of maximizing potential profit (Staiger, 1985: 90). In terms of distribution, Jarvie outlines five advantages that Hollywood had over the European market at the end of the Second World War (Jarvie, 1998: 44). This included investments already made in Europe, a reliable supply of films for exhibition to local cinemas (from the backlog), blocked currencies and the inclusion of overseas talent, economic might, and a solid record for popular entertainment (*ibid*). These factors were therefore all significant in the (re-) consolidation of Hollywood on screens in Post-War Europe.

However, following the Paramount decree's breakup of the vertically integrated system in 1949, the Hollywood studios were forced to adopt a horizontal system of production, distribution and exhibition in the USA. Schatz notes that this enforced change in the studio structure resulted in fewer, yet 'bigger', productions during the 1950s, as the studios became more preoccupied with film financing and distribution (Schatz, 2008: 16). However, although the vertically integrated system was divested in the USA in 1949, the Hollywood studios were still able to operate in such a manner across the globe (Miller et al., 2001: 25). The perceived "crisis" of the American 'domestic market' for the Hollywood studios therefore reinforced the significance of the European (and global) markets.

The new trend of 'bigger' productions adopted by the Hollywood studios is still present in the form of the 'High Concept' film (Wyatt, 1994) or the Hollywood blockbuster. Wyatt refers to the 'High Concept' film as part of "post-classical" or "New" Hollywood of the 1960s and 1970s (*ibid*: 8). This shift was facilitated by greater conglomerate control of the studios (such as Universal,

Paramount and Warner bros), which therefore 'provided the financial depth of resources to be able to shoulder the increasing financial risks associated with a new film making strategy' (Hoskins et al., 1997: 54). This strategy coalesced around 'a high-cost, high-speed, high-concept entertainment machine' (Schatz, 2008: 19) that is primarily 'market-driven' (Wyatt, 1994). The ancillary markets and growth of television took on greater significance in terms of the marketing of the film, and also accounted for a substantial portion of the profits (Smith, 1998:12). Moreover, Europe presented a lucrative market in terms of television pre-sales, since the continent had one of the largest concentrations of television sets across the globe at the time (Wasko, 1994: 221). The blockbusters were also able to perform well in international markets (Hoskins et al., 1997: 54), due to their low cultural discount (Cucco, 2009: 217; Grant and Wood, 2004: 126). Dale outlines the differences in the approaches adopted by Hollywood and the European film industries in terms of the sources of financing and the types of films that were created in the period:

The New Hollywood emerged and took advantage of new ideas, marketing techniques and special effects, and over time has forged links with Silicon Valley and the cyber revolution. In Europe the state took charge of the cinema and the sector has been reduced to a marginal existence (Dale, 1997: 124).

Hollywood and Europe embarked upon divergent paths and alternate methods of film selection, commission, and financing. Hollywood has diversified its domestic infrastructures into the sphere of pay per view, cable and satellite television, video and DVD, merchandising, theme park attractions, music recording, and publishing, whereas, from Dale's perspective, European cinema has taken a more cultural turn.

State Patronage in Europe: the 'popular' and the 'art cinema' circuits

Since the end of the Second World War, European cinema has turned towards an inward-looking approach with greater involvement from the State through subsidies for funding and distribution support (Forbes and Street, 2000: 37). For

example, France has had the *avances sur recettes* selective aid mechanism since the late 1950s. One of the responsibilities of the State in the film industry is to ensure and continue 'a cultural mode of production' (Elsaesser, 1989: 41-43). The European commissioning bodies and the decision-making for film selection is not predicated upon market demand for a film, but, as we saw in Chapter One, a project is largely selected according to a set of criteria or 'cultural test' that is set by the film institution of the nation or the linguistic community (in the case of Belgium). Dale discusses the consequence of the State being implicated within the selection of film projects, by asserting that 'films are no longer decided by the 'interest of the public' but rather by the 'public interest' (Dale, 1997: 197). In essence, Dale is emphasizing the differences between how films are funded in Hollywood by the studios who consider projects in terms of whether they 'meet a perceived market demand' (Cowen, 2002: 98), as opposed to the European method of implementing selection criteria or a 'cultural test'. While many see such cultural protectionism as vital for safeguarding national cinema, for champions of the free market such as Dale, the shackles of state patronage are regarded as

the principle reason for the decline of European cinema as well as many other areas of European cultural life...If Europe manages to break free from this benign 'paternalistic' influence then she may begin to rejuvenate her culture (Dale, 1997: 129).

However, if we look at the example of France, a nation that promotes a clear policy of cultural protectionism in relation to film production, the recent renewal of French cinema contrasts with Dale's conception due to the continued supply of State funding for films with a cultural concern, such as *La Vie rêvée des anges* (1998), *La Vie de Jésus* (1997), *L'humanité* (1999), *Ressources Humaines/ Human Resources* (Laurent Cantet, 2000), and *La ville est tranquille* (2001). O'Shaughnessy references this corpus of films, amongst others, in order to highlight

what drives French film policy is clearly not the desire to create a politicized cinema, such a cinema could not have taken the dimensions

and found the audiences it did without France's generous state-support system and the unrivaled network of art cinemas and alternative exhibition venues it helps defend (O'Shaughnessy, 2011: 343).

According to O'Shaughnessy, the French film culture has been able to be rejuvenated alongside maintenance of State funding, which therefore reinforces the importance of the State within a cultural industry. Alongside this continued critical success of films from micro-geographical areas in France, there has equally been a rejuvenation of France's popular cinema in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Higbee outlines the early signs of recovery in terms of the admissions to French films in the French domestic market through comedies in particular (Higbee, in Hayward, 2005: 304). Films, such as the success of *Les Visiteurs/ The Visitors* (Jean-Marie Poiré, 1993) (13.78 million spectators), *Le Dîner des cons/ The Dinner Game* (Francis Veber, 1998) (9.22 million), and *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain/ Amélie* (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001) (9.19 million) (Higbee, in Hayward, 2005: 304), emphasize the substantial levels of spectatorship that can be obtained in the domestic market by national films. To update this position even further, two French comedies and mainstream fare have broken the record for film admissions in the French domestic market, and thereby surpassed *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1998). *Bienvenue chez les ch'tis/ Welcome to the Sticks* (Dany Boon, 2008) attracted 17.4 million spectators in France (Marché du Film, 2008: 6), before the runaway success of *Les Intouchables/The Untouchables* (Olivier Nakache and Eric Toledano, 2011), which received 15.693 million spectators (Marché du Film, 2013b: 22) in 2011 and a further 5.721 million in 2012 (*ibid*: 23). These examples further confound the position adopted by Dale (1997: 124) in relation to the shackles of State patronage on the European film industries. This in turn prevents 'national' films in Europe from receiving high levels of spectatorship in the 'domestic market' and across European markets.

In the case of Belgium, Chapter Three will further nuance this dimension and this shift to the micro-geographical and the development of regional film funds. These funds and institutions still receive fiscal contribution from the State, but they militate against a preoccupation with the production of big

budget films due to their cultural logic. This perspective therefore proffers a more positive interpretation of the role of State funding within European cinema systems. The issue of State funding plays a fundamental role within the context of the cinemas from small nations, which includes the example of Belgium, as the State is one of a few sources, or even the main support mechanism, for audiovisual production (Dijon Film Forum, 2012: 4). For a small 'national' cinema, public subsidies and provisions for film production provide a level of stability in the number of films that can be produced on an annual basis. However, the economic crisis in the Eurozone since 2008 has presented challenges to the levels of public subsidies for film production, with countries such as Spain, the United Kingdom, Italy, and to a smaller extent France, all reducing State aid to film development (*ibid*: 3).

State aid provides a significant level of financial support to the European film industries, and it is a common perception that without this financial support, there would be a paucity of these industries still in existence (Broche et al., 2005: 1).⁴⁵ Between the years 2002-2005, 6.5 billion Euros of State aid was supplied in order to fund more than 3.600 films (*ibid*). According to the Maastricht treaty, the State must provide

aid to promote culture and heritage conservation where such aid does not affect trading conditions and competition in the Community to an extent that is contrary to the common interest. This may be considered to be compatible with the common market (Treaty of Maastricht, 1992: 10).

The protection of cultural objectives is thus central to the legalities of the State aid funding systems. Moreover, the relationship between cinema and culture is specious, since 'the popular cinema of any given European country is not always acknowledged' (Vincendeau and Dyer, 1992: 1). With reference to the chapters by Jeancolas and Hietala in the publication *Popular European Cinema*, Vincendeau and Dyer attribute this disregard of 'popular' film productions to the notion that they 'seldom travel well beyond their national boundaries; when they do...they are generally repackaged for art cinemas'

⁴⁵ This study (Broche et al., 2005) particularly draws upon the significant levels of State aid that has been provided to the film industries of Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

(*ibid*). There is therefore an elision between notions of 'European cinema' and 'art cinema', which obscures the presence of 'popular' films in the 'national' canon.

Artisanal and auteur films are not restricted to the periphery of film production, but can pervade 'popular' consciousness and achieve greater distribution and circulation beyond its local environment. These tendencies can be elided into the broad 'art cinema' framework. Bordwell's notion of 'art cinema as a mode of film practice' (Bordwell, 1979) thus obscures the cultural, linguistic, and stylistic specificities of a given film, merging together films from different European countries. At the level of national film production, such a categorization enables films, from particularly small national cinemas or domestic film industries that are economically weak, to improve their visibility and popularity via success at prestigious international festivals and via international art cinema and world cinema distribution and exhibition networks.

Since the 1980s, European cinemas have hence been attempting to bolster their standing and reputation, primarily against Hollywood, which since the 1950s has assumed an increasingly dominant position at the box office for all European cinemas (Nowell-Smith, 1996: 567). These national film industries were required to reposition themselves, embracing alternative strategies, which would help the 'national' cinemas to regain their position at the box office. The cultural dynamic of the 'art house' traditions and film festivals function as an alternative distribution strategy for films and cinemas outside of Hollywood (Bordwell, 2008: 160). The 'art house' cinema pantheon attracts the attention of a 'world cinema' circuit, and these filmmakers are thus more dependent on how they sell their films to a global market (in both theatres, and, increasingly, on DVD). This is especially the case if the country in question has a small population and a small internal market. The restricted internal market necessitates the forging of a relationship with external markets beyond the borders of the country in order to survive and flourish. There is thus a degree of 'productive messiness' (Vincendeau and Dyer, 1991: 2) attributed to the definition of a 'popular' cinema in the national context, since these transnational elements and forces aid in the gauging of a commercially successful film.

In their writing on *Popular European Cinema*, Dyer and Vincendeau (1991: 2) highlight two strands within the notion of the 'popular': the commercial/

market and the anthropological. In this sense, the 'popular' has negative connotations embedded within it, since it is either regarded as pure business or appealing to mass preferences. This perception of the 'popular' was conflated with the idea of American popular culture and cinema, whereas 'art' cinema was regarded as primarily European (Dyer and Vincendeau, 1991: 1). This perpetuated the 1990s fear of a loss of national and cultural identity. The anti-American stance, manifested through the 1993 GATT negotiations, was most greatly articulated by French president François Mitterrand, who stated that

creations of the spirit are not just commodities; the elements of culture are not pure business. Defending the pluralism of works of art and the freedom of the public to choose is a duty. What is at stake is the cultural identity of all our nations. It is the right of all peoples to their own culture (Mitterrand, cited in Jeancolas, 1998: 57-59).

The defence of European cinema and of the assemblage of European identities was instead predicated upon the 'art house' and auteurist cinema circuit, as they are perceived to function in contrast to the 'popular' American model. However, the industrial nature of cinema is not absolute and can thus be equally applied to films that are attributed to the art house cinema label and 'popular' cinema, since both are subjected to commercial and modern industrial practices and both contain elements of artistic premise and merit.

Eleftheriotis refers to Johann Von Herder's conception of 'folk culture' (Von Herder, 1965) in order to highlight an anthropological approach to the 'popular'. Folk stories, tales and music exist as forms of cultural nationalism, as they are engendered by linguistic and cultural empathy. This idea of 'folk culture' is bound up with the creation of a cultural unity and coherence, which are born from 'artisan works involving traditional craft, locally produced and consumed and heavily depending on popular traditions and themes' (Eleftheriotis, 2001: 72). In this sense, the 'popular' is formulated from locally produced and relevant works, rather than appealing to the masses within and beyond the nation. It is difficult to appropriate such an interpretation to films in the current era, due to the previously outlined modern industrial practices and the fact that even low budget films require relatively high levels of fiscal

investment. However, the 'folk culture' conception further highlights the semantic nuances of the 'popular', which suggests that the term can be applied to both sides of the art/popular binary.

In terms of film production in Belgium, this interpretation of 'popular' in relation to 'folk cultures' suggests the need to delineate the 'popular' along the regional and linguistic lines of the country. For example, these 'folk cultures' pertain to production of films in the francophone regions of Brussels and Wallonia, and in the Flemish region of Flanders, and the subsequent consumption of the films within these areas. Nevertheless, films, which are produced solely within the confines of a local environment with financial resources only from that given region, can still have a wider appeal. In her writings on a French 'national' cinema, Hayward argues that 'economic exigencies (in the form of downswings) do entail, at brief intervals, a "supremacy" of the aesthetic over the economic, when artisanal and auteur cinemas flourish in the face of constraint' (Hayward, 1993: 31).⁴⁶ In essence, there is not always a clear correlation between a film with a substantial budget that subsequently receives high levels of distribution, and an auteur film that is consumed locally. One example of this in the francophone Belgian context is *C'est arrivé près de chez vous/ Man bites Dog* (Belvaux, Bonzel, and Poelvoorde, 1992), which was able to receive international circulation despite its extremely low budget.

Jäckel asserts that for the most part auteurist films function differently to films that are successful in the domestic market, since they are 'outside fashion and, with a little help from the boom in cultural and media studies, still cross borders. So do several low-budget films directed by young talented filmmakers' (Jäckel, 2002: 161). The francophone Belgian film *C'est arrivé près de chez vous* (1992) epitomizes this trend; the film project was created by three students at the Belgian State film school with a final cost of \$100.000, \$30.000 of which was subsidized by the Belgian community (Dale 1997: 254). The film was screened at both Cannes and Sundance film festivals, receiving awards from the former (*ibid*). *C'est arrivé près de chez vous* was acquired by an international distributor during its Cannes screening. In an interview, the actor

⁴⁶ Hayward's assertion primarily focuses upon the extent to which economic exigencies in France in the 1930s engendered Poetic Realism.

and filmmaker for the film Benoît Poelvoorde stated that '(f)aire du cinéma en Belgique est toujours très difficile...Il a fallu un festival en France pour qu'on puisse exister! Avant Cannes personne ne voulait acheter notre film!' (Bradfer, 1992; Sojcher, 1999c : 125).⁴⁷ In this case, Poelvoorde is clearly highlighting the importance of film festivals in order to gain recognition for a film project on both an international and a domestic scale. In terms of spectator admissions, the film recorded a total of 395.000 spectators in Belgium (Sojcher, 1999c: 230) and 536.490 admissions in France (Cbo-box office, 2010). This film example highlights a greater number of film admissions to francophone Belgian films in France than in the Belgian domestic market, and this will be considered in more detail later in this chapter.

The former chairperson of the CCA, Henry Ingberg, reinforces the significance of the festival circuit, by claiming that 'jusqu'à présent ce sont nos réalisateurs qui ont créé des poussées extraordinaires grâce aux festivals, aux ventes à l'étranger et cela continue' (Ingberg, 2005: 27).⁴⁸ The success of Belgian films on the festival circuit highlights the existence of two systems that are operating simultaneously: there is a group of films that are successful within the country of origin (mainstream or 'popular' cinema) and an auteurist cinema that exports well. The auteur functions as a brand, clear marketing device and promotional tool (Bordwell, 2007). This brand of the auteur enables a film to accommodate a national cultural significance and an internationally marketable commodity to audiences (Bordwell, 2008: 159). The films are aimed at an international art house audience and the 'world cinema' circuit; these films are going to be viewed at festivals and then acquired by distributors in order to be sold as niche films. The French community of Belgium, and its administrative representative (the CCA), actively encourage a greater distribution and circulation of francophone Belgian films, since it 'octroie des aides aux longs métrages sélectionnés dans des festivals internationaux ou sortant dans le

⁴⁷ [Producing cinema in Belgium is always very difficult...It took a French film festival so that we could exist. Before Cannes, nobody wanted to buy our film.]

⁴⁸ [up to the present day, it is our (Belgian) directors who have created extraordinary growth, thanks to festivals and foreign sales, and it will continue to do so]

circuit commercial' (Massin and Vanden Abele, 2010: 12).⁴⁹ For example, the CCA supports the promotion of francophone Belgian films selected in the main international festivals. In 2009, the budget for this support reached 376.607.64 Euros, which is a small reduction in relation to the sum for 2008 (a reduction of 2.24%), and is an increase from the amount offered in 2006 (+ 31.09%) (bilan, 2009: 109). The notion of the global reach of films does, however, have consequences for local cultures. The increasing effect of globalization and global processes places local cultures under threat of extinction and retains the possibility of the eradication of these cultures. It is at this point the GATT dispute comes into play, as we consider to what extent the European film industries have a hold over their own domestic markets, against the backdrop of these global flows of films.

The GATT dispute and its subsequent effects upon the cinematic landscape

The threat of the hegemony of Americanization, or more precisely Hollywood, has proved a site of contestation for European national markets, since they have strived to defend and protect their domestic market from its internationalizing currents. Hollywood functions as a prime example of 'soft power' due to its global success beyond the USA. In the current neoliberal era, while the means of film consumption have increased, the markets and platforms for viewing have fragmented through the proliferation of cinema repositories (such as Television, DVDs, Blu-rays, and devices with film streaming capabilities through the Internet). There is currently a greater accessibility to films and the means of restricting film imports is not as absolute as it once was. The film industry even has the ability to relegate national films to the fringes of the exhibition sector within their country of origin since, in Belgium for example, there are no quotas placed upon imported films.

On the basis of the market share statistics of US films in Belgium, Hollywood dominates the Belgian screen, since the lowest market share that

⁴⁹ [grants financial support to feature length films selected in international film festivals or released onto the commercial circuit]

Hollywood has had in the country since 1993 is 65.7% in 2006 (See Tables 2.1 and 2.2). This therefore reaffirms the American film industry's strong presence in the market. Indeed, this market share breakdown and box office statistics do not take into account the further distribution channels of English speaking films, such as DVD and Video rentals, television, Internet streaming and piracy.⁵⁰

The GATT negotiations of the Uruguay Round commenced in 1986 and were concluded in 1993 (Williams, 2005: 95). One of the elements within this discussion over trade tariffs concerned the domination of Hollywood films in European exhibition markets. European governments were, at this time, subscribing to the conflicting ideals of maintaining control over their cultural output, but also opening up the European borders to increased integration and greater circulation of people, goods, and capital. In terms of cinema, the GATT negotiations served only to highlight the lack of coherence in European film policies, which vary from country to country. The US government sought a deregulation of the European audiovisual market, which would then lead to the abolition of quotas and subsidies that discouraged the screening of Hollywood products. It highlighted an American desire for the removal of, what the US perceived as, 'protectionist' measures, which would allow free unbridled access to a European spectatorship. It was a stance that sought to return the power to the consumers, and let the free market decide, rather than those who govern them.

Some European film communities, led by France, called for a 'cultural exception' to be placed upon film and audiovisual products, therefore aligning cinema with culture (Grantham, 2000: 2). The cinematic medium was not a product open to the traditional business and industrial processes of trade. Belgium was one of the six countries (along with Canada, Greece, France, Italy and Spain) that articulated a strong cultural exception stance. Ulf-Moller outlined the similarities between the Herriot-Hays agreement (1928-1930) and the GATT discussions, as France took the lead both times (Ulf-Moller, 2001: 107). At this time, France asserted that 'film quotas were a legitimate means of cultural protection' (*ibid*). However, it is a fallacy to suggest that the imposition

⁵⁰ The issue of piracy is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it remains a factor within the notion of 'soft power'. In this context, piracy has unintentional soft power imperatives, which are unregulated and uncontrolled within the national environment.

of screen quotas would have a positive effect upon the European industry, and the domestic film industries that are dominated by Hollywood. The translation of 'cultural exception' into European film policies has led to a conflation with 'cultural diversity' and cultural pluralism (Frau-Meigs, 2002: 7). 'Cultural exception' is a notion formulated in defence of local industries, talent and film productions: all of which are at the fulcrum of the creation of heterogeneous and pluralistic culture (*ibid*). The development from 'exception' to 'diversity' refines an approach to the national and re-locates the notion of identity to the regions or linguistic communities, which is particularly the case in Belgium.

State involvement and fiscal support for a film is required to have cultural imperatives ('Contribution to the public consultation on the issues paper on "Accessing State aid for films and other audiovisual sources", 2011). In contrast, Hollywood functions under a system of concentration and centralization; it is a geographical cluster of cinematic talent brought together primarily for economic gain (profits at the box-office) (Cowen, 2002: 74-75). Although this system is commercially successful, 'cultural diversity' is absent, since there is a lack of regional institutions that promote issues of local and regional identity. The result is a perception of Hollywood and Americanization as embodying homogenized tendencies. The European Union, on the other hand, celebrates its diversity through the notion of 'Europe of the Regions' in addition to its increasing aims for centralization.

In the Seattle (1999) and Doha (2001) negotiations, the United States once again declined the notion of 'cultural exception' led by France, and instead adopted a new position concerning the liberalization of the audiovisual sector. Within the MAI, the USA wanted no audiovisual exception clause to be included, so that American companies could by-pass national and international obstacles (Depétris, 2008: 242). This would allow US companies to be afforded the same favours and advantages as European investors within the European Union, thereby enabling mergers between US and European audiovisual and exhibition companies in order to further prohibit performance requirements, for example screen quotas. It would also enable US production companies to utilize European funding mechanisms, both on a pan-European, national and regional level, so as to ameliorate the film budgets.

A shift in approach was noted in which 'there has also been a growing tendency to substitute bilateral or regional agreements as faster ways to achieve market liberalization' (Aylett, 2010: 359). Emphasis is, consequently, placed upon the national, regional and supra-national institutions in order to implement trade agreements and negotiations. For example, in the cinema sector, the MEDIA programme and EURIMAGES were created in order to form a multilateral support network. In the case of Belgium, these multilateral operations have opened up the European market for increased levels of film circulation.

'Cultural Exception' and 'Cultural Diversity': from Multilateral schemes to Screen Quotas

In her approach to the concept of a post-1989 'European cinema', Everett (2005: 16-18) outlines Europe's Pan-European response to the veritable presence of Hollywood in the exhibition sector. Multilateral operations, such as the MEDIA programmes and EURIMAGES, have sought to encourage greater European integration to improve the distribution and training sectors of the European film industry (*ibid*: 18). The schemes required financial participation of at least three countries in order to foster greater European involvement. Elsaesser outlines the conflicting ideals embedded within schemes, such as the MEDIA programme, which subscribes to the notion of 'cultural diversity' whilst attempting to create the idea of European unity (Elsaesser, 2005: 120).

The aspirations of such schemes are orientated towards supporting countries or regions with low levels of film output (Jäckel, 2003: 71). In this context, it is possible to include the 'Belgian' film industry. The Pan-European distribution support serves to introduce a new audience to these multilaterally-produced films. For example, the European audiovisual support programme, MEDIA 2007, was allocated a budget of 755 million Euros for the period 2007-2013, in order to support the film professionals and to distribute their work across Europe (European Parliament, 2006). The CCA bilan (2011: 125) states that around 65% of this sum will facilitate the circulation of the European audiovisual works to other European countries and the rest of the globe. The third incarnation of the MEDIA programme has invested more than 107.7 million

Euros in some 2.239 projects across Europe; in Belgium, this programme has supported 93 projects for an overall sum of 5.437.626 Euros, which represents 5.26% of European support (*ibid*). Nevertheless, Sojcher argues that the evolution of EURIMAGES support requirements, from previously requiring three co-producing countries to now only two, favours the larger film producing countries, and thus hinders smaller cinematic nations (Sojcher, 2003: 73). By reducing the number of partners, smaller film producing nations may not be as equally sought after and often involved, as they previously were, in order to unlock European fiscal support. This evolution thus reinforces the strategic importance of the cinematic relationship between France and Belgium, from a Belgian perspective, but does, however, suggest a potential future reliance upon France, in order to sustain a viable Belgian film industry. For example, Belgian films, which are produced without either French or European financial support, are created on minimal budgets, such as the aforementioned *C'est arrivé près de chez vous* (1992).

The conceptualization of 'culture' is becoming increasingly prevalent within European cinema, primarily in the guise of multilateral European operations. These funding mechanisms serve to celebrate 'cultural diversity' and 'cultural difference' in a form of Europe that exists as an assemblage of different nation-states, but at the same time encourages filmmakers and film producers to consider a transnational approach in terms of funding and increased levels of distribution. This accentuates the structural issues of European cinema, which converge around the desire to sustain an imagined centre and shared traditions, values and experiences, whilst also promoting 'cultural diversity' (Eleftheriotis, 2000: 93-94). For example, the pan-European scheme of the MEDIA 2007 programme emphasizes the importance of increasing the circulation and distribution of European films alongside the preservation of 'cultural diversity' (Commission of the European communities, 2004: 5).

Belgium has signed a series of multilateral international co-production agreements, for example the recent Francophone Development fund with Canada in 2009 (bilan, 2010: 9). Belgium also frequently co-produces alongside France, Germany and Luxembourg. The ramifications of a contracting domestic market have led to a decrease of film finance for future projects (Eleftheriotis,

2000: 93), and a pooling of finance from different countries therefore enables the sustainability of certain 'national' cinemas. The reality of the market has enforced these changes in favour of bilateral partnerships and multilateral operations. Furthermore, according to the study on 'The circulation of European co-productions and entirely national films in Europe 2001-2007' (2008), co-productions receive greater levels of distribution and therefore earn more than national films. The study states that 'on average, co-productions get released in more than twice as many markets as national films, with 77% shown in at least one non-national market compared to 33% for entirely national films' (Kanzler et al., 2008: 1). As a consequence, co-productions receive 2.7 times more spectators than national films (*ibid*).⁵¹ The continuation and strengthening of co-producing partnerships is important not only for the pooling of film finance and receiving funding for a project, but it also plays a significant role in the distribution and exhibition of the completed film. This trend suggests that it is necessary to transcend the formation of relationships predicated upon the maintenance of partnerships that have been in a series of continuous connection due to historical reasons, and also partnerships that have been forged due to linguistic, cultural or geographical proximity.

In 2005, a form of 'cultural exception' or 'cultural diversity' was put in place at the UNESCO convention (Commission IV of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). It outlined that:

the rights and obligations of Parties (Articles 5 to 11) include a series of policies and measures aimed at protecting and promoting the diversity of cultural expressions, approaching creativity and all it implies in the context of globalization, where diverse expressions are circulated and made accessible to all via cultural goods and services (UNESCO Press Release, 2005).

This declaration was engendered by the GATT dispute in 1993, and marks the continued development of the desire for 'cultural exception'. The notion of

⁵¹ The study (Kanzler et al., 2008) also concludes that co-productions receive greater levels of distribution in non-national markets. For example, this is the case for 41% co-productions compared to 15% for entirely national films (*ibid*: 1). These aforementioned trends thus further accentuate the importance of co-producing partnerships to the health of European cinema.

'exceptionism' pertains to the ability to preserve culture in the form of a protectionist mode.

The UNESCO Convention was first conceived in Canada in response to the strong American domination of the magazine and film sectors in the country (Fraser, 2005). The 2005 UNESCO press release uses the term 'cultural expressions', which encompasses 'music, art, language and ideas as well as cultural activities, goods and services' (Moore, 2005). In essence, this Convention permits countries to institute a cultural policy and establish quota systems at a national level, when the 'cultural expressions' and the notion of a cultural identity are 'at risk of extinction' (Article 8, UNESCO Convention, 2005). It is therefore a way of protecting the cultural activities of a given country. 191 states passed the initiative with two countries in opposition (USA and Israel) and four countries opted to abstain (Australia, Honduras, Liberia, and Nigeria) (Craufurd-Smith, 2006: 26). The USA maintained its position taken during the GATT dispute of 1993 in favour of market liberalization, emphasizing the notion of 'free trade' and 'the free flow of information, and freedom of choice in cultural expression and enjoyment' (United States Mission to UNESCO, cited in Voon, 2006: 1). The USA returned to the UNESCO convention in 2002, after a period of self-imposed exile commenced within the Reagan era. However, the return of the USA was perceived as a measure to prevent the Convention's progress (Von Schorlemer and Stoll, 2012: 8). This was primarily attributed to the importance of foreign markets to American cultural sectors, such as film, music and print media. However, with this Convention, the avenues for maintaining these streams of fiscal currents to the USA are taken away from market forces and demands, and placed into State patronage and protection. France's former culture minister (2004-2007) Donnedieu de Vabres stated that 'this makes culture an exception, which is to say that it is not the market that should regulate, it is the state that should support and promote their own artists' (de Vabres, in Klausmann, 2005). The UNESCO convention has thus reaffirmed the role of the State in the governance of its cultural sectors, and therefore highlighted its role in ensuring 'cultural diversity' and sovereignty.

Belgium had representatives present at the UNESCO discussions and voted for the Convention (UNESCO, 2005). Belgium has not since embraced 'protectionist' measures against perceived cinematic hegemonies, such as

screen quotas in the film sector, but has instead met some of the aspirations that celebrate and fund 'cultural diversity' on a regional scale. In relation to television and radio operators, Belgium has recently taken measures 'to reserve a certain quota of their programs to domestic or European music and films in the national language' (Von Schorlemer and Stoll, 2012: 214). In the cinema sector, there has been a small embracing of the UNESCO Convention recommendations (which will be further developed in Chapter Three) in the form of regional film institutions and regional investment. These regional institutions are charged with the responsibility of including cultural and local expression in their works in addition to forging connections with other regions on a 'transnational regional' basis. Although the increased levels of regional film investment may lead to more films being produced in a given region, it does not necessarily have an immediate effect upon the levels of films consumed from foreign sources, such as Hollywood and France.

In 2013, the 'cultural exception' debate re-emerged in terms of a petition that was circulated on the 13th March. This issue occurred due to the fears of a reduction in the aforementioned policies that allude to 'cultural exception' during trade negotiations between Europe and the USA (Coalition pour la diversité culturelle, 2013). The francophone Belgian filmmakers, the Dardenne brothers and Jaco Von Dormael, signed this petition in favour of strengthening the resolve for 'cultural exception' or policies in favour of 'cultural diversity' (SACDE, 2013).

Hollywood's presence on cinema screens in Europe reaffirms the importance of policies in favour of 'cultural diversity', but also highlights that State intervention has never been formally established in Belgium, for example through the existence of screen quotas. The existence of such quotas reinforces the role of governmental policies and measures in order to help foster a 'domestic market' or, as Delvaux puts it, 'un jardin protégé' (Delvaux, in Pâquet, 1972: 2). These policies and regulations impact upon the film trade, and thus limit the consumption of foreign films within the nation. This subsequently safeguards goods and films produced within the domestic industries. The notion of a screen quota can be imposed through both television broadcasting quotas and cinema exhibition quotas.

Belgium is a small national cinema with no direct protectionist screen policies and measures in place that encourage the consumption of films of Belgian origin within its internal market. In essence, the country does not impose additional taxes upon the box office revenues of films that are not intrinsically bound to the federal State. Belgium has not put in place a screen quota policy beyond that of the European Union's *Directive Télévision sans Frontières 1989* (89/552/EEC). The former Chairperson of the CCA, Henry Ingberg states that

Théoriquement, nous avons la capacité de fixer un quota de diffusion par rapport aux films américains en mettant dans ce quota tous les films européens, pas seulement les films belges (Ingberg, 2005: 27).⁵²

Ingberg is therefore asserting that the imposition of a screen quota upon American films in Europe is distinctly possible, but he conversely highlights that should a quota be implemented for US films, European films must also be included. A screen quota is not unique in limiting and restricting the cinematic productions of one country, but is a device that implicates the works of other nations. The difficulty in imposing a screen quota directly against American and Hollywood films is because the *Directive Télévision sans Frontières 1989* (89/552/EEC) requires Belgium to screen films and television programming of European origin. A 'cultural exception' and 'cultural diversity' policy is established at a national or regional level.

A screen quota as a cultural policy cannot make a distinction between American and European films, since it can distinguish only between Belgian and non-national products. The only European countries to have enforced significant restrictive practices for film exhibition that exceed the stipulated European Directives are France, Italy, Poland and Spain.⁵³ Furthermore,

⁵² [Theoretically, we have the capacity to lay down a screen quota with regard to American films, whilst also putting into this quota all European films, not only Belgian films.]

⁵³ France maintains the most restrictive quota system in Europe; a system that is nationally orientated and encompasses film, television and radio. In terms of film exhibition, it is mandatory for cinemas to allocate five weeks per quarter to French feature films (National Trade Estimate Report, 2012: 153). In Spain, there is a ratio system in place, in which cinema screens are required to exhibit a minimum of one day of EU films for every three days of non-EU film exhibition, whether that is in its original language or dubbed into Spanish languages (*ibid*). Italy and Poland have implemented additional broadcasting quotas, requiring certain

Hollywood films are not the sole elements of the current neoliberal and globalized market. Some countries agreed with the American desire for free trade, since they have their own commercial interests to retain. As Riding notes, Hollywood is not the sole global exporter of film or television products with Brazil, Bollywood, Japanese Animation movies, Mexican soap operas, and Venezuelan cultural products all receiving considerable levels of distribution on global markets (Riding, 2005). To legislate against the exhibition of American films ignores other significant commercial imported films and audiovisual productions that are consumed by spectators within a given country.

The *Directive Télévision sans Frontières 1989* (89/552/EEC) legislates that the majority of entertainment broadcast transmission time is allocated to programming with European origin (Article Four). However, the Directive states that European works and productions must circulate around all the countries in the European Union. In Article Six, the Directive clearly sets out how it determines a European work, which therefore, in effect, serves to establish a restriction on American works and their transmission time on European screens. An imposition on American works in Europe is, however, more apparent and enforced within the sphere of television programming in Europe. Dale (1997:119) notes that the State monopoly of both film and television industries in Europe has led to an over-investment in the film industry from the television sector in order to cover the deficits. It is in effect a subsidization of the film industry through policy, which is largely imposed upon the public service broadcasters. For example, in the case of Belgium since 2009, the contribution of television broadcasters is coordinated in terms of two alternate strands: firstly in the form of a co-production or a pre-purchase of the audiovisual works, or secondly in the form of a payment to the francophone Belgian institution (CCA) (bilan, 2009: 69).

The notion of 'cultural exception' is, however, becoming increasingly problematic to enforce with the proliferation of Internet broadband and provider services. This has encouraged a 'free trader attitude', which has led to 'the general feeling...that the days of "cultural exception" are numbered' (Frau-Meigs, 2002: 13). The current free model transcends the *Directive Télévision*

percentages of film and television programming to be conducted in the national languages (NTE, 2012: 153).

sans Frontières 1989 with a context of even greater abundance of programming and film availability. There is nearly an unlimited choice for the spectator in Europe, which is outside of State control. However, in 2009, measures were taken in order to prevent EU broadcasting quotas from becoming increasingly obsolete. The revision of the initial 1989 green paper extended its legislation from 'without Frontiers' to 'beyond Frontiers' (Pauwels, 2010). The notion of 'beyond frontiers' extends the legislation in order to manage and deal with on-demand television programming via the Internet; a media economy with greater ambivalence, predicated upon a 'free' model (*ibid*). The revised Directive (European Commission, 2012) therefore imposes a less restrictive quota on these on-demand services, but still states that it should encourage the production of, and access to, works of European origin. However, only Belgium, alongside Romania and Slovakia, has implemented this development in 2009 ('New TV without borders: chronic transposition delays', 2009). Through these legislations, the Belgian federal State has enforced broadcasting and media quotas, but the policies are primarily European and emphasize European media pluralism, rather than serving national and cultural objectives.

The Belgian box office

One explanation for the discrepancy between domestic and Hollywood performance concerns the imbalance in Belgium between production and exhibition. In the 1980s, Boulard outlined the reasons for this imbalance, which still persists to the present time of writing:

La Belgique, pour le cinéma, n'est pas un paradis fiscal. Territoire trop petit pour amortir un film, la production nationale y est fortement limitée. Aussi faut-il remplir les écrans ... avec d'autres réalisations
(Boulard, 1986: 2).⁵⁴

⁵⁴ [Belgium, in cinematic terms, is not a fiscal paradise. With a territory too small to write off a film's costs, the national production is heavily limited. Consequently, should it instead fill its cinema screens ... with other film productions.]

This issue is therefore one of production versus consumption. In Belgium, demand is greater than the domestic production line can support, and this has led to an augmentation of both Hollywood films, and greater visibility of French films, crossing the borders in order to fill the vacuum. The significant presence of Hollywood films at the Belgian box office is, however, a relatively recent phenomenon.

On the basis of Table 2.1, until 1979, Hollywood was not the dominant force that is recognized in Belgium today. The linguistic neighbour of France eclipsed both the market shares of Hollywood and the Belgian 'national' product, but it was a power that has slowly been in decline since 1968. The linguistic allegiance between France and Belgium accentuates the presence of French films in Belgium, in addition to the impact of geographical proximity. France retained a majority share of the market in 1968 (51.3%), but its slow erosion during the decade of the 1970s gave rise to an increasing Hollywood presence. The year 1980 counts as a key moment of inversion, with the Belgian market distancing itself from, and consuming less French films. In essence, in the case of Belgium, what was formerly recognized and defined as 'popular' and received mass appeal, in terms of admissions and market share, has fluctuated from a francophone to an Anglophone sphere.

Since the start of the 1990s, Hollywood films have been able to retain a presence upon Belgian cinema screens, fluctuating between its lowest market share of 65.7% (2006) and its highest point of 75.8% (1993-94) (See Tables 2.1 and 2.2). This shift in French film consumption in Belgium could be determined by the changing patterns in film exhibition in the period, and the rise of Hollywood blockbusters in the 1970s. Laurent Creton (2010: 65-68) acknowledges a series of shifts in how films have been consumed since the 1950s in France. The first pattern concerns the increase in the concentration of film spectatorship, in which the top twenty box office films have received higher levels of film admissions, whereas there is an increased level of films that receive less than 1.000 spectators (*ibid*: 65).

A second dimension pertains to the Hollywood system and how it is orientated towards appealing to a certain demographic. Creton remarks that 'la force du système hollywoodien est d'avoir tout de suite pensé le spectateur comme consommateur et d'avoir conçu pour lui des produits très calibrés'

(Creton, 2010: 67).⁵⁵ In essence, the business side of the Hollywood system designs films as products for a particular market, which it has success in attracting to cinema screens. Creton also outlines that the 'économico-esthétique' (Creton, 1997: 108) dimension of Hollywood has led to its success in international markets.⁵⁶ The economic investment in stars, decors, special effects etc. attracts spectators to Hollywood productions (*ibid*: 109). Arguably, this is one of the key dimensions to the shift away from French films to Hollywood products in the 1980s alongside the production of the blockbuster. The greater concentration is also significant to acknowledge in relation to the shifting patterns in Belgium at the same time, since Hollywood blockbusters could dominate the box office and lead to a diminishing of spectatorship for a wide pool of films (as outlined at the start of this chapter).

The European film Yearbook studies (as summarized in Tables 2.1 and 2.2), outline the Hollywood domination of European cinema screens, which demonstrate that the 'national' films or the films produced within the nation overall receive the second largest levels of spectatorship. This is the case in European countries such as Italy, Germany, and Sweden. However, Belgium is an exception to this established trend, since there is not only a threat from Hollywood; there is another threat posed by its linguistic neighbour and cinematic powerhouse, France. On the basis of the breakdown of European film admissions in Belgium, the percentage market share of French films exhibited in the federal entity typically remains above the 10% mark, reaching its peak in 2008 with 18.2% of market share (EAO, 2010). There are extenuating factors for this peak, since one film, in this case the unprecedented success of the French comedy *Bienvenue chez les ch'tis* (Dany Boon, 2008), was able to cause this excessive increase in the French market share.⁵⁷ Nevertheless,

⁵⁵ [the strength of the Hollywood system is to have immediately thought of the spectator as a consumer and to have conceived for him/ her very balanced products]

⁵⁶ [economic-aesthetics]

⁵⁷ The French film *Bienvenue chez les ch'tis* is a comedy that explores the widely disseminated stereotypes and perceptions of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region in Northern France. The film struggled to find a distributor outside of France, since the film's humour primarily comes from language and the accent of the region. This example highlights the issue of language and the role of language in European cinema, since some films will filter across national boundaries more easily than others. This thus distorts the view of a national cinema, gazing in from outside. As a genre, comedy does not filter across national boundaries well, since the comedy is generally derived from cultural and linguistic specificities. Nevertheless, the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region shares a border with Belgium, in addition to the linguistic allegiance between the two

France retains a sizeable portion of the Belgian market share, especially in relation to the performance of domestic films, which attracts a market share that has exceeded 5% on only two occasions after tripartite federalism in 1993 – 2004 (5.1%) and 2009 (7%). The domestic spectatorship level for ‘national’ Belgian films also achieved a level higher than 5% on two occasions prior to federalization in the years 1972 (5.1%) and 1973 (5.7%). This is an abnormality in the European context, since films are not generally successful and attract a major audience share in a second country beyond the national boundaries. However, should a screen quota system that would limit the amount of Hollywood films exhibited be implemented in Belgium, it is not inconceivable that another wave of films from beyond the national boundaries would fill the vacuum. The ‘national’ product is not always the direct beneficiary of screen quota systems. However, the gap has begun to narrow in recent years, with the relative increase in percentage market share of Belgian films (7% in 2009). This increase has not coincided with a loss of French market share. The percentage of French films remains steady, but it is the decline in Hollywood spectatorship that has encouraged and facilitated this domestic growth.

Although the multiplex gained currency in Europe only towards the end of the 1980s (Creton, 1997: 202), its impact can be recognized in the Belgian domestic market, particularly through the high levels of spectatorship for Hollywood and French films in the 1990s to the present day in Belgium. The presence of the multiplex in the cadre of film exhibition is raised at this point, since it is questionable to what extent the multiplex provides diversity in film viewing choice. The films exhibited within the multiplex are ‘plus généralement un cinéma commercial destiné à un large public, quelle que soit sa nationalité’ (*ibid*: 205).⁵⁸ The nationality of the film is not the primary element of consideration for the exhibition of a given film, but it is its commercial potential that is the predominant concern. This is the cadre for big budget film productions from either Hollywood or France. The multiplex then uses the film as a means of selling further products and advertising time before the start of the film (O’Shaughnessy, 2011: 332). This therefore encourages the multiplex

countries. This therefore impacted upon its relative success in Belgium, since it attracted 940.000 spectators from the Belgian regions of French expression alone (Engelen, 2009).

⁵⁸ [more generally a commercial cinema destined for a wide audience, no matter what nationality it (the film) may be]

to opt for films that will bring the highest number of spectators in any given time slot. The multiplex also has a “lock in” power of schemes that aim to retain spectators and incentivize them to visit only their cinema chains (*ibid*), which again limits the spectators to the films that are on offer within the multiplex arena.

Table 2.1: Breakdown of market share according to origin of feature films in Belgium (%)

Year	National	France	EUR Others	Non-EUR	USA
1968	2.2	51.3	12.1	-	34.4
1969	0.6	39.2	25.5	-	34.6
1970	2.6	49.5	15.7	0.3	31.9
1971	1.7	47.2	26.9	-	24.2
1972	5.1	35	21.3	0.5	38.1
1973	5.7	44.6	24.3	2.8	22.5
1974	0.8	49.1	18.7	2.2	29.2
1975	3.9	45.8	15.1	4.6	30.6
1976	3.7	47	15	2.1	32.2
1977	0.6	37	20.7	2.2	39.5
1978	0.5	38.2	15.1	1.2	46
1979	2.4	40.8	18.9	0.4	37.4
1980	2.6	37.2	11.3	2.3	46.6
1981	0.9	34.7	15.4	0.9	48.1
1982	0.8	42	11.6	3.1	42.5
1983	1.6	31.3	10.1	5.1	52
1984	0.9	30.7	13.2	1.2	54
1985	0.8	23.1	11.7	3.4	61

(Source: Jaumain and Vandenbulcke, 1986 : 65)

Table 2.2: Breakdown of market share according to origin of feature films in Belgium (%):⁵⁹

Year	National	DE	FR	GB	IT	EUR others	USA	Others
1993/1994	1.6	-	10.2	-	-	0.2	75.8	3.6
1994/95	1.1	0.2	10.6	4.6	1.2	5.3	72.4	4.6
1995/96	0.3	0.1	11.3	6	0.2	9.4	69.7	3
1996/97	0.1	0	13.3	3.2	0	5.7	73.7	3.8
1997/98	0.9	0	11.9	9	0.1	5	71.9	1.3
1998/99	0.5	0.3	8.4	2.9	3.8	12	70.9	1.3
1999	3.5	0.4	12.1	6	1.6	4.8	69.5	2.1
2000	1.9	0.1	9.8	3.6	0.3	12.5	70.6	1.2
2001	1.5	0.3	13.3	4.9	0.6	4.6	72.2	2.5
2002	1.4	0.1	13	7.2	0.2	2.3	74.5	1.4
2003	2.4	1.4	11.5	8.2	1	1.1	71.5	1.1

[Continued overleaf]

⁵⁹ The countries included within this breakdown of European admissions are the largest contributors to the European market share of admissions in Belgium and/or linguistic neighbours to the federal entity.

Year	National	DE	FR	GB	IT	EUR others	USA	Others
2004	5.1	0.4	13.3	6.2	1.1	1.8	70.1	2
2005	2.7	1.6	12.4	7.3	1.3	2.1	70.7	2
2006	2.5	0.3	15.1	10.5	0.6	2.9	65.7	2.4
2007	2.9	2	13.2	7.6	0.3	1.8	70.6	1.6
2008	4.7	0.4	18.2	8.1	1	1.9	66.8	1.6
2009	7	0.1	12.7	6.	0.5	2.2	66.1	1.6

(Source: Data compiled from EAO, 2004; 2010)

Belgian film spectatorship in the 'domestic market' and beyond

A Finney (1996: 120-121) outlines three approaches to the films that are being produced within a given territory, and how the selection of the film projects is predicated upon expected performance and expected income generation.⁶⁰ The first category concerns 'films that are expected to recoup in a single national market' (*ibid*: 120). This includes projects that are not expected to export well, but attract a potentially large spectatorship within the domestic market. For example, certain genres, such as comedies, do not traditionally transcend national boundaries, since the comedic elements are language and culture-specific. In order to approach this concept, a dividing line needs to be drawn, which is consistent with the linguistic border and institutional frontier that fragments the Belgian federal entity. Along this linguistic divide, there are contrasting bifurcated cinemas that are predicated upon alternative models and

⁶⁰ A. Finney's third and final strand deals with European films shot in the English language as the global lingua franca, which has the ability to help films 'recoup from the worldwide market' (Finney, 1996: 120). The use of English removes the national and linguistic barriers, and allows for film projects to enter, and take advantage of, lucrative Anglophone markets.

embrace different strategies. The issue with such an overview is the risk of fostering broad generalizations of the genres produced in each linguistic region.

Box office data, produced by the Lumière database (EAO, 2011) and compiled by the author of this thesis, is utilized in order to indicate the current trends in the market. Box office admissions are thus a commercial reference point used in order to quantify 'success', alongside Video and DVD sales and rentals, sales to television networks, and money recouped after release.⁶¹ Forbes and Street (2000: 44-45) question the evaluation of box office admissions as an indicator of a film's success or failure both within and beyond national borders, by emphasizing that 'art cinema' films do not generally perform well at the box office. These 'art house' films are instead engrained in film histories through critical celebration and validation in film magazines and journals, and are thus posited as an alternative to Hollywood. Furthermore, it is necessary to highlight the presence of lag times in the box office data, since the film productions are released in different years across the European market. Individual case studies will therefore be drawn upon in order to supplement the wider discussion of the market trends between Belgium and other European markets.

The box office statistics (Table 2.1 and 2.2) underline not only the paucity of film production within Belgium, but also the disinterest in consuming the 'national' products. Within the period (2000-2008), only three 'Belgian' films *Loft* (Erik Van Looy, 2008), *Podium* (Yann Moix, 2004), and *De Zaak Alzheimer/ The Memory of a Killer* (Erik Van Looy, 2003) were able to intrude into a sphere reserved for the Hollywood brethren. The success of *Loft* is unprecedented in terms of a domestically produced film's performance in the Belgian domestic market, since it attracted approximately 1.195.000 spectators, surpassing the previous Flemish record of 1.082.000 admissions attracted by *Koko Flanel* (Stijn Coninx and Jef Van der Water, 1990) ('The other Belgian cinema', 2010). However, this level of domestic success was achieved despite a minimal number of copies of the film being circulated in Wallonia (*ibid*). This example

⁶¹ The use of the term 'success' is problematic in the context of box office admissions, since the borderlines for determining a film's success varies according to a series of different criteria. For example, it is dependent upon population size and demographics (urban to rural locations of populations and age demographics).

reinforces the linguistic and cultural divide within the federal State, and highlights an internal delineation of the domestic market. *Loff*'s box office performance demonstrates that the Belgian domestic market is primarily rooted in Flanders and Flemish-speaking areas.

Of this triad of 'Belgian' films, *Loff* and *De Zaak Alzheimer* were produced in Flemish, and funded by avenues bound to the Flanders regions and the VAF, and *Podium* is a majority Belgian co-production with France, born from synergies between the francophone communities of Belgium and France. Indeed, the lack of 'Belgian' films, within such a summary of cinematic performance, can be largely attributed to the linguistic diversity of the country. The lack of linguistic harmony in the country inhibits the mass consumption of a domestic 'national' film on a national level, since the language that the film is produced in immediately occludes a proportion of the market.

In the current era, since 2000 in particular, there have been developments in the spectatorship of Flemish cinema, and there is an increasingly confident Flemish screen (mirrored by a strengthening French cinema), which potentially leaves the Belgian cinema of French expression in a precarious and vulnerable position. It is possible to suggest the existence of a pincer movement; the flooding of Belgian screens with Flemish and French films in addition to Hollywood. Nevertheless, the French-language predicate of the francophone Belgian film production opens up the possibilities of transcending the national borders and gaining considerable spectatorship levels across the border in France.

The second category, as conceived by Finney, pertains to 'films, shot in any European language, which are expected to recoup across Europe as a whole' (Finney, 1996: 120). This strand does not incorporate English-language films, since they do attract audiences not only on a European basis, but also have the power to generate audiences on a global scale. In the context of European cinema, language can allow certain films to 'travel' well from one territory and national cinema to another, which further distorts the perception of what a 'national' cinema is. This includes bilateral and multilateral film projects, which have been produced by one or more European partners. The combined investment in a project incentivizes a greater circulation and distribution within the respective country's domestic markets.

As previously discussed, European co-productions generally travel better than their 100% national counterparts. Kanzler et al. claim that in terms of film admissions, non-national markets constitute a more significant focus of film distribution for co-productions than entirely national films, since non-national film admissions represent 41% of the total number of admissions for co-productions, compared to 15% for completely nationally funded films across Europe (Kanzler et al., 2008: 1). This co-production category is important to consider within the framework of francophone Belgian films, since there is a discernible level of fiscal imbrication between Belgium and France in terms of film production (as outlined in Chapter One), and this in turn incentivizes greater circulation within the linguistically affiliated countries.

Appendix A outlines the exhibition levels of francophone Belgian films across Europe from the period of 1996-2010.⁶² The cumulative total for these statistics emphasizes the greater number of film admissions in France for these francophone Belgian films than within the domestic market of Belgium. The data points towards a more than two-fold (2.4) higher level of admissions in France, with the cumulative total of 3.939.769 spectators in France in relation to 1.642.290 admissions in Belgium. These macro-statistics clearly highlight the levels to which France is a greater market for francophone Belgian films than the domestic market. These statistics nuance the open nature of the French exhibition system for Belgian films that have been distributed in France. France has hence become the largest consumer of francophone Belgian films.

Appendix B engages with Flemish-language Belgian films, and affirms the Belgian domestic market as the largest consumer of Flemish films.⁶³ The cumulative total from the same period outlines 8.729.300 admissions in Belgium, with the second largest consumer of the Netherlands (another linguistically affiliated country) with a figure of 3.467.644 spectators. According to the compiled data, France is the third-largest consumer with 250.085 admissions. The cumulative data for all Belgian films within the same period emphasizes the strength of the domestic market, thereby confirming its status

⁶² This data was compiled by the author of this thesis, by individual film released according to language each year on the basis of the spectatorship levels included in the EAO database (EAO, 2011).

⁶³ This data was compiled by the author of this thesis, by individual film released according to language each year on the basis of the spectatorship levels included in the EAO database (EAO, 2011).

as the largest consumer of its own films. The presence of the Flemish domestic market (in an autonomous capacity) highlights the necessity to recognize the Flemish corpus of film productions, which is often regarded as 'l'autre cinéma belge' (Masson and Vanden Abele, 2010).⁶⁴ Yet, within the domestic market, this perception of Flemish cinema as the 'other' to francophone Belgian films is a fallacy. Between the years 1996 to 2010, the spectatorship levels of Flemish language films in Belgium accounted for approximately 88% of the domestic market (Appendix B). The French-language film admissions in Belgium therefore only total approximately 12% of the domestic market for Belgian films (Appendix B).

Appendix C overlooks the question of linguistic differences, and outlines the figure of 9.890.423 film admissions to Belgian films in Belgium.⁶⁵ The second and third largest exhibition markets for Belgian films are the linguistically affiliated countries of France (4.254.475 admissions) and the Netherlands (3.180.706 spectators), which affirms the significance of linguistic links with countries beyond the national borders. The question of language provides a competitive advantage for the distribution of Belgian films across national borders and throughout Europe.

The population and linguistic divides of Belgium have engendered the present situation in which domestic 'Belgian' films are finding problems connecting with and attracting a domestic spectatorship. The problems for francophone Belgian productions lie in its small domestic market. Overall, Flanders has the highest level of film admissions per year (10.223.991), with Wallonia second (7.302.434) and Brussels (3.787.573) (Statbel, 2013).⁶⁶ In this sense, the Flemish region represents the largest section of the Belgian domestic market. On this basis, the dominant linguistic population is Flemish, which therefore allows Flemish cultural films to have a substantially more numerous potential spectatorship base. Furthermore, as Flemish is a natiolect of Dutch, films produced in the language can also transcend the borders with

⁶⁴ [the other Belgian cinema]

⁶⁵ This data was compiled by the author of this thesis, by individual film released according to language each year on the basis of the spectatorship levels included in the EAO database (EAO, 2011).

⁶⁶ The overall population for Belgium in 2011 was 11.047 (OECD.Statextracts, 2011).

the Netherlands, but the population base is four times smaller than the 'other' linguistic neighbour, France.⁶⁷

A more nuanced approach to the internal and insular spectatorship levels pertains to the breakdown of the Belgian domestic market into the three delineated regions (according to the regions at a political level). The market is therefore constructed of three spectatorship bases in Bruxelles-Capitale, Flanders and Wallonia. The statistics are also compiled according to the smaller provinces of the three aforementioned regions. The engagement in this section pertains to the levels of spectatorship at a macro- regional level, rather than a focus upon the provinces that construct the linguistically delineated regions.

The patterns of regional spectatorship in Belgium correlate with the population dynamics in the country, with Flanders constituting the largest internal exhibition market across the period of 1999-2010 in terms of the numbers of film admissions. Across the period, the percentage of the film admissions in this region remained just under 50% (47.87% in 2002 with a peak in 1999 of 49.96% - Appendix D) of the domestic market. The francophone region of Wallonia, on the other hand, pertains to a smaller section of the 'national' film market, since the data displays that the region accounts for only around 30% of the total film admissions; the region marked a nadir of 28.34% in 1999 and its zenith occurred in 2009 with 33.66% (Appendix D). This data hence outlines the extent to which Wallonia constitutes less of the domestic and national market in terms of spectatorship and film admissions, although the spectator to inhabitant ratio is higher than Flanders consistently across the selected period (Appendix E). This demonstrates that, on an autonomous regional scale, the region of Flanders pertains to the largest internal film market in Belgium.

Nevertheless, it is a fallacy to suggest that the population demographics and the autonomous cinema attendance levels in the Flanders region have a direct influence upon the levels of Flemish films consumed within the 'national' sphere, since the highest concentration of film attendance occurs in the predominantly francophone region of Bruxelles-Capitale. This has fluctuated between 17.4% in 2010 and 21.69% in 1999 (Appendix D) and has the highest

⁶⁷ Population figures are consistent with 2011 estimates of 16.69 million size of the population in the Netherlands, as opposed to a 63.2 million in France (OECD.Statextracts, 2011).

levels of attendance per habitant (Appendix E). As a consequence, the overall regional exhibition dynamics are equidistant between the linguistic communities, and other factors beyond a parochial consideration of French language films viewed in the francophone regions of Belgium and Flemish language films being consumed in Flanders need to be explored. In essence, the francophone regions of Belgium pertain to the most frequent consumers of films per habitant, with the Flemish region representing the largest film consumers in terms of the percentage of film admissions. A correlation along these regional delineations does not necessarily reflect the screen cultures in the regions. These trends outline the bifurcation of the national and domestic film market in Belgium, and nuance the levels of admission concentration across the tripartite federal State. The case studies at the end of this chapter will provide a micro- consideration of the patterns of spectatorship in Belgium, but they will also emphasize the importance of foreign markets.

Despite the fragmentation of Europe due to linguistic diversity, language can be turned into a competitive advantage. The currents and flows are not only unidirectional and restricted to the sphere of finance between France and the francophone regions of Belgium. The traditional conception of the domestic market prefers an inward-looking approach to filmmaking, since ‘the domestic market offered a certain percentage of “captive” viewers who preferred their native language’ (Cowen, 2002: 86). The ‘domestic market’ offers an internal linguistic advantage, which functions instead as a ‘linguistic handicap’ (Wildman, 1995) in the case of Belgium. The francophone regions of Belgium have re-positioned their approach to the domestic market, by instead externally facing the largest market of France. In an interview with the author of this thesis, Philippe Reyneart, the Chairperson of the regional funding institutions of Wallimage and Bruxellimage, stated that

le cinéma belge ne dispose pas d’un marché intérieur suffisant pour amortir sa production et encore moins la rentabiliser. Son vrai marché

intérieur, c'est la France où, pour exister, il n'a d'autre choix que de se singulariser par sa pertinence (Reynaert, 2011: Appendix F).⁶⁸

Before considering Reynaert's quotation in more detail, it is important to introduce a series of case studies in order to further nuance and clarify the points made about the 'true' domestic market for francophone Belgian films being located in France. The films by two prominent contemporary francophone Belgian filmmakers, Bouli Lanners and the Dardenne brothers, all provide intriguing case studies to further nuance the points made by Reynaert.

Firstly, according to a study conducted by LMDFB, Bouli Lanners averaged a figure of 26.984 spectators across his two films *Ultranova* (2005) and *Eldorado* (2008) in Belgium between the years 2002 and 2011 ('10 ans de films reconnus comme belges', 2012: 25). The spectatorship level for Lanners is consistent with the average for a Belgian feature film performance in Belgium, which was calculated at 26.331 spectators ('10 ans de films reconnus comme belges', 2012: 24). Nevertheless, this is a modest figure for the filmmaker in relation to the average levels of spectatorship within the internal exhibition study, with Yann Moix attaining an average number of 339.478 for his two films⁶⁹ and the Dardenne brothers averaging 100.041 spectatorships for their four feature length films between 2002 and 2011 (*ibid*). Lanners' first feature film, *Ultranova*, received 7.512 admissions in Belgium (bilan, 2005: 283), and 7.005 spectators in France (EAO, 2011). In the case of *Ultranova*, the number of film admissions in Belgium is only marginally higher than in France. Nevertheless, the average number of admissions for Lanners' two feature films in France is 77.583, which is discernibly higher than the previously described averages within the internal Belgian market.⁷⁰ The number of prints circulated in the two countries further nuances the greater levels of spectatorship, since there is an increased opportunity for the consumption of the film. For example,

⁶⁸ [Belgian cinema does not have a sufficient interior market available in order to absorb its production costs, and even less to make a profit. It's true interior market is France where, in order to exist, it (Belgian cinema) has no other choice but to stand out]

⁶⁹ The substantial levels of spectatorship across Yann Moix's corpus of films from 2002 are largely attributed to the veritable "success" of *Podium* (Moix, 2004), which received 647.678 admissions in Belgium and 3.559.786 admissions in France ('Le top du top en Belgique en 2004: Benoît Poelvoorde dans "*Podium*", 2005: 21).

⁷⁰ The author calculated the average number of spectators in France on the basis of the previous spectatorship figures for the two films.

6 copies were circulated in Belgium for *Ultranova* (Jennotte, 2005) with 17 prints distributed in France (Cbo-boxoffice, 2013). The number of prints distributed for this film points towards a greater opportunity for circulation in France, although the performance for the film was especially poor in France when considering nearly three times the amounts of prints were circulated in the country relative to Belgium. For *Eldorado*, 14 copies made it to cinema screens in Belgium ('Distribution', 2009: 14) and 53 prints in France (Cbo-boxoffice, 2013).

In the case of the second feature film, the number of spectators fits into the overall pattern of francophone Belgian film circulation between France and Belgium, with the film achieving 46.456 admissions in Belgium and 148.161 admissions in France (EAO, 2011). The trends between the two films thus point to the greater film circulation occurring across the border in France with this film gaining a three-fold increase in film admissions in the linguistically connected country. As this chapter has previously outlined, the internal linguistic borders have fragmented the national market sphere, which nuances this rise in film spectatorship between Belgium and France. This thus problematizes the film circulation on an internal basis, which is a further mitigating factor when considering the greater levels of spectatorship in France for a film by a Walloon or francophone Belgian filmmaker, in addition to the higher population levels of French-language speakers in France. *Eldorado* thus highlights these spectatorship trends that belie francophone Belgian film production.

Secondly, according to the same LMDFB study ('10 ans de films reconnus comme belges', 2012: 25), the Dardenne brothers received a high level of admissions in relation to other Belgian filmmakers and the national average. Nevertheless, the French spectatorship average for the same films within the same period is considerably higher, and represents a greater portion of the film admissions to the filmmakers' corpus of work. The French average is calculated at 381.775 film admissions across the same corpus produced by the Dardenne brothers.⁷¹ This therefore represents more than a three-fold increase in average film spectatorship for the francophone Belgian filmmakers across the border in France, as opposed to Belgium. These figures predicated upon the

⁷¹ The author calculated this French average according to data provided by EAO (2011) for the following four films; *Le fils* (2002) – 259.376; *L'enfant* (2005) – 391.713; *Le silence de Lorna* (2008) – 349.184; *Le gamin au vélo* (2011) – 526.825.

exhibition context of the Dardenne brothers' films from 2001 exemplify the discernible level of French spectatorship for francophone Belgian films (in comparison to the Belgian market). In the case of *Le gamin au vélo*, the overall figure represents 660.000 film admissions, with Belgian spectatorship comprising 132.026 admissions (20%) as opposed to 526.825 admissions (80%) from France (bilan, 2011: 212). Once again, the number of prints circulated in the two countries for the films nuances the greater level of French film admissions to their corpus of work. For Belgium, the number of prints distributed to cinemas were *Le fils* (26) ('Distribution', 2003: 18), *L'enfant* (42) ('Distribution', 2006: 28), *Le silence de Lorna* (28) ('Distribution, 2009: 16), and *Le gamin au vélo* (34) ('Distribution', 2011: 35). For France, the number of Dardenne brothers' films prints made available were as follows: *Le fils* (107) (Cbo-boxoffice, 2013), *L'enfant* (214) (*ibid*), *Le silence de Lorna* (125) (*ibid*), and *Le gamin au vélo* (172) (*ibid*). The number of prints circulated for these films in France nuances the higher number of film admissions, but again highlights the French domestic market as a key point of export. These two case studies on the films by Bouli Lanners and the Dardenne brothers further emphasize the importance of the French market in terms of spectatorship levels, thereby questioning the location of the francophone Belgian 'domestic market'.

Referring back to Reynaert's initial quotation, the French market functions as an extension of the francophone Belgian 'domestic market', since the films are able to transcend the borders and filter onto the French cinema screens. The consumption levels of these francophone Belgian films, over and above their Flemish counterparts, emphasize the significance of the mutual intelligibility of language. The domestic industry is involved in a unique situation. The case of a francophone Belgian film has the ability to extend its reach, in terms of finance, distribution and exhibition, towards its linguistic neighbour, France. As we saw in Chapter One, the level of co-production funding from France for francophone Belgian films is considerable, especially in relation to the finance that they receive from other international sources. A further positive result from securing this finance can also be reflected in the greater numbers of film spectatorship that francophone Belgian films receive in France. The box office statistics for francophone Belgian film spectatorship in France begin to

question where the true location of the francophone Belgian 'domestic market' is. In fact, Reynaert (2011: Appendix F) clearly suggests that France functions as the 'domestic market' for the francophone Belgian films. This market is primarily formed due to linguistic similarities. Belgium may have a 'linguistic and cultural handicap' (Wildman, 1995) in relation to the high level of French films that are consumed in Belgium, but at the same time this can be seen as an advantage in terms of film distribution and visibility.

In the final line of the above quotation, Reynaert claims that the francophone Belgian films should try to 'stand out'. The second half of this thesis will seek to address how the films are (un)able to assert their 'regional' difference. In order to do this, we will look at how the Walloon 'regional' landscapes and space are reproduced (or not) on screen. Within this 'true' domestic market in France, the francophone Belgian films should therefore not be conflated with, or even masquerade as, a French 'national' product, since it potentially obscures and veils the space in which the films were conceived and filmed.

Conclusion

This chapter highlights the extent to which the Belgian domestic market is fragmented, not only through the stream of Hollywood and French language films that percolate onto the cinema screens, but how the market is also delineated along linguistic and cultural lines in its own 'national' film production. The Belgian 'domestic market' is affected by the confluence of two major film-producing centres, which therefore presents a difficulty for the 'national' products to perform well on a domestic scale. However, linguistic similarity for films produced in both the French-speaking regions and Flanders opens up possible markets abroad in France and the Netherlands, with France existing as an important consumer of francophone Belgian films. Although there is a competitive disadvantage on the 'national' scale due to linguistic difference, this issue is discounted by the advantages of transnational spectatorship in countries that have an increased population and market size than the domestic market, namely France.

The question for the distribution and exhibition of francophone Belgian films and domestic cinemas is not how to prevent foreign films from gaining high levels of spectatorship in the internal market through the imposition of screen quotas pertaining to a degree of 'cultural exception', so that the domestic product can fill the void. As Reynaert (2011: Appendix F) asserts, the point is instead how the internal films are distinguished through their own 'specificity', or their need to 'stand out', on an international exhibition circuit, so as to develop a greater level of spectatorship following for (francophone) Belgian films outside of Belgium. In essence, this driving force concerns the production of a local film, which is intended for a global or wider distribution market. This clearly demonstrates Higbee and Lim's approach to 'critical transnationalism' (2010), since the local and the regional (in this case in terms of the location and identities) and the transnational modes of funding, distribution and exhibition are not mutually exclusive. The creation of certain cultural and regional specificities in the film and the development along the lines of a mantra of 'cultural diversity' will be considered in the next chapter that seeks to engage with cultural film policy in the francophone regions of Belgium.

Chapter Three:

The development of the regional film institution in Europe and in Belgium

The previous two chapters outlined a primarily 'transnational' approach in terms of the production, distribution, and exhibition of francophone Belgian films. As Chapter Two introduced the shift from 'cultural exception' to 'cultural diversity', this chapter seeks to build upon the latter in relation to the formation of the regional film fund in Wallonia in 2001. This further strand of film policy, within a nation-state, therefore concentrates upon a commitment to cultural objectives and highlights a nation's diversity.

In the context of Belgian 'national' cinema, there is a requirement to move beyond the homogenized conception of a State to a multiple, heterogeneous culture and image of being Belgian: as being Walloon, Flemish, or Bruxellois. Given that Belgian national identity is rather ambiguous in terms of its values, traditions, and heritage - can these aspects be attained only at a more local or regional level – in short at the point where they cease to be 'national'? In essence, as we saw in the Introduction, there is no nationally constructed culture in Belgium; the culture is multiple and fragmented. Like in other smaller national cinemas, in its attempt to gain greater awareness on the global scale, Belgian 'national' cinema has established a number of short-term initiatives, with only the most 'successful' schemes being later perennialized as policy.

As previously outlined in Chapter One, Belgium has established schemes to encourage foreign investment on a national scale, such as the tax shelter initiative, but has, at the same time, established schemes to encourage creative hubs, and develop skills and expertise in the sector. However, due to the evolution towards mechanisms that encourage and facilitate the notion of 'cultural diversity' in the UNESCO Conventions, the practical implementation of such policies occurs on national and regional levels. The primary aim of the 'hub' is, in effect, to attract filmmaking and post-production activities to the city and the region. This chapter aims to explore the intra-national and the inter-regional dimension of European cinema. In this case, the State is implicated within a regional-national-transnational dynamic, as the 'cultural diversity' of the nation is recognized within transnational co-production agreements.

In terms of the Belgian Constitution, the notion of culture does not figure as a binding mechanism for the State, but is instead governed by the linguistic communities (Belgian House of Representatives, 1994: 39). Due to the complex nature of culture, it must therefore be shaped and controlled by institutions. The institutional form embedded within the cultural area is fundamental to the conception of a national or regional cinema, since it is at this level where the aesthetic is truly imagined through the rigorous selection processes and the formulation of selection criteria for film projects to be financed and developed.

Developing these ideas in the context of imagining a European Union, Edgar Morin, in his work *Penser l'Europe* (1987), outlines two key strands to the future of Europe. Morin outlines that culture is different to the notion of civilization, thereby highlighting that culture is singular and specific to one society, whereas civilization pertains to a level of transference between different societies (Morin, 1987: 72). A culture can therefore be both local or regional and transnational at the same time. In terms of the local, 'culture' is conceptualized along ethnic and regional groupings, which are part of the national sphere, for example Flanders and Wallonia (*ibid*: 150-151). Cultures can therefore exist below the national façade in multiple forms.

However, as Sklan notes in general terms, the world is becoming 'more centralized and homogenized through the workings of the giant transnational corporations who know no boundaries and no loyalties and through the formation of nations into competing trading blocs, the world is also being fragmented by the forces of regionalism' (Sklan, 2006: 227). This process coincides with notions of the regionalization of culture and community identity that are at the heart of current debates concerning the European Union and its policies. The region has, as a consequence, become implicated within a series of connections, since the delineated space is subject to transnational, national and local effects.

The UNESCO Convention's concept of 'cultural diversity' has similar conflicting ideals in terms of referring to both the local and the transnational at the same time. 'Cultural diversity' pertains to a replacement of the 'cultural exception' debates, which were instigated during the GATT trade negotiations (as outlined in Chapter Two). The traditional conception of 'cultural exception' was an intended distancing from the increasing Hollywood hegemony in the film

industry, allowing for the implementation of, for example, screen quotas in order to restrict the flow of Hollywood films into Europe. The shift in the lexicon from 'exception' to 'diversity' is not a complete washing away of the cultural issue, but is instead a softening of the attitude towards Hollywood's perceived hegemony over a global film market. The use of the term 'diversity', in effect, accepts the position of US films in the national imaginary, by suggesting that they supplement the films already on offer within the nation-state and permit the existence of a heterogeneous cultural environment. Michael Lynton, CEO of Sony Pictures Entertainment, suggests that

certain products have worldwide reach and appeal. But it is not true that some cultures are quashed in the process. Consider that from Germany and France to India and Japan, more than half the theatrical box office is made up of films produced in those lands, in their own languages (Lynton, 2007).

In this sense, Hollywood films form part of the diverse cultural environment of the film industry, rather than being exempt from cinema screens in other countries. However, with the existence of such powerful cultural hegemonies across the globe, the difficulties in preserving the local and regional cultural landscape and cinematic ecosystem are greatly accentuated, especially for nations and States that are linguistically and culturally divergent. According to Lynton, the monopoly of the spectatorship resides with films produced in the dominant language, such as Germany and France, but this is not always the case, especially in countries that are already fractured due to linguistic differences, such as Belgium. In Belgium, 'cultural diversity' accentuates the fissures of the contemporary state of Europe and the nation-states embedded within the continent.

The *UNESCO declaration on Cultural Diversity* (2001) includes twelve articles that are designed, in essence, to create a broad interpretation of the concept. The articles are divided into four key sub-sections, which essentially consider identity, human rights, creativity and international solidarity. The first article of the declaration pertains to the 'common heritage of humanity', which refers to the importance of culture as a means of exchange, innovation and

creativity between human societies (Article One). Within this notion of 'cultural diversity', cultural goods and products are specious and intrinsically connected to the space from which it is conceived: 'Cultural goods and services: commodities of a unique kind' (Article Eight). This article thus highlights the importance of creating products in order to articulate a given cultural heritage, but they must not then be subjected to typical consumer and neo-liberal capitalist methods (Article Eight). There is also a tendency for creativity to be embedded within the articles, which emphasizes the formation of policies to encourage the use of talent in the region or nation in the creation of unique products. It describes '(c)ultural policies as catalysts of creativity', which is a notion that immediately transfers the obligation of implementing appropriate regulations to the State. The use of the creativity lexicon pertains to the importance of talent development and national renewal. Articles Ten and Eleven exist in contrast to one another, since they pertain to the national and international dimensions of the film industry. Article Ten refers to 'strengthening capacities for creation and dissemination worldwide', which considers the exchanges and flows of finance and cultural goods to and from the Member State. Article Eleven, on the other hand, discusses the relationships between 'the public sector, the private sector and civil society'. In this case, it is the State or regional body's responsibility to formulate a cultural expenditure process that re-affirms and protects the production of cultural goods.

The impact of this Declaration can be seen in the increasing number of regional film funds in the film industry, such as the creation of the Walloon fund of Wallimage in 2001 and the European network of Cine-regio in 2005. The previously discussed articles are aspirations as opposed to a policy that must be adopted within the film industry, since no institution is legally obliged to conform to any of these articles. However, as this chapter outlines, some of the articles have begun to filter through into the objectives and motivations of the regional film funds in Europe.

This summary of the key components of 'cultural diversity', according to the UNESCO Declaration, highlights the intrinsic complexities embedded within the concept. The Declaration recognizes that an international agreement is required, so that cultural products are supported and further developed by the State. In this sense, 'cultural diversity' does not necessarily pertain to a

protection of cultural identity and sovereignty. The creation of regional film funds and the European network of regional film funds aspire to promote 'cultural diversity' ('Contribution to the public consultation on the issues paper on "Accessing State aid for films and other audiovisual sources"', 2011). This consequently legitimizes the concept proposed by the UNESCO Declaration. In this sense, the notion of diversity can be translated various ways. Firstly, it can be connected to the transnational nature of the film industry in terms of the distribution of films, and having technicians, producers and cast of different nationalities attached to the project. Secondly, it can refer to the cultural particularities that emerge on screen. In essence, this is encompassed in the notion of 'exchange'.

Within the context of the Doha negotiations, Baer outlines this form of exchange in relation to a prefigured relationship that is left over from the colonial experience, by stating that:

l'observatoire pourrait dresser un état des lieux des échanges culturels entre pays et en particulier entre pays du Nord et du Sud et faire des recommandations aux états pour qu'ils redressent des situations déséquilibrées et intègrent davantage la culture dans les relations bilatérales ou multilatérales (Baer, 2003 : 25).⁷²

There is therefore the possibility of unequal exchanges and relationships being created due to some desires for cultural influences to be perpetuated. However, this unequal exchange does not always come from relationships forged during the period of colonialism, as this thesis serves to demonstrate in relation to the small cinema context of Belgium. In so-called developing areas and countries, culture is a priority area for amelioration due to a paucity of cultural policy that supports and funds film production, distribution and exhibition. However, in the (post-)colonial context, these relationships, formed by former imperialist connections, are not always unbalanced in a pernicious manner for the former colonized nation, since a small national cinema is able in turn to achieve greater

⁷² [the Commission would be able to assess the cultural exchanges between countries of the North and South, and make recommendations to the States so that they correct unbalanced situations and integrate more culture into their bilateral and multilateral relations.]

financing and reciprocal spectatorship, and thus visibility. Aylett argues that, according to Article 16 of the UNESCO Declaration, it may be possible 'to correct powerful market dynamics, and to adjust asymmetries in trade and to achieve greater reciprocity with minority cultures excluded or weakened in cultural exchange by the hegemony of more dominant cultures' (Aylett, 2010: 364). This issue concerning relationships with imbalances of power could also be transposed onto countries with linguistic connections and maintain these 'exchanges', such as the previously explained partnerships between Belgium and France in Chapters One and Two. Aylett highlights the flaws in the 'cultural diversity' project, since it occludes references to multilateral operations predicated upon pre-formed allegiances;

It is Article 21 that provides for strengthening consensus, particularly in trade negotiations. To be effective its remit should encompass not only multilateral forums such as the WTO, but also forums based on regional and linguistic associations, such as...La Francophonie and others (Aylett, 2010: 366).

At this point the transnational relationship between Belgium and France re-emerges through the continued financing and spectatorship patterns due to the historically forged linguistic connections, and also due to the geographical proximity between the two countries.

At the 2010 Mons conference, in a workshop entitled 'Cinema, between culture and industry', Diana Elbaum (producer for the Belgian film production company *Entre Chien et Loup*) provides an alternative interpretation to the root of 'cultural diversity' as the work of the authors (Diana Elbaum, 2010: Workshop 3:2). Diversity thus resonates with the individuals that create it and the effects on their consciousness, which again draws attention to the local environment and the local experience. The workshop therefore placed an emphasis upon the significance of the creator, and Elbaum stressed the need to enable young cinematic talent to blossom through cultural aids.

Elbaum (2010: Workshop 3:2) consequently highlighted the three layers of funding mechanisms in Belgium (federal, linguistic community and regional), which work together in order to support film projects on both a fiscal and cultural

basis. Article Eight of the Declaration reaffirms the rights of the author and the creator, stating that 'particular attention must be paid to the diversity of creative works taking into account the rights of authors and artists as well as the specificity of their goods as carriers of identity' (UNESCO Declaration, 2001: Article Eight). Due to the levels of public funding within the European film industry, the emphasis shifts to the national and regional institutions and the cultural infrastructure, which has the power to commission film production.

However, as Anna Herold (2008: 33) notes, European states are increasingly struggling to fulfill their commitment to the film industry due to the level of economic integration and the conflicting social, cultural and political issues. The emergence of subnational or regional institutions pertains to a movement towards 'cultural diversity'. The cultural, social and political issues that Herold outlines (*ibid*) that exist at the level of the State are thereby removed, and reflect a State aid that is determined according to cultural distinctions. In Belgian terms, this concerns the VAF and the CCA for the linguistic communities, but also to Wallimage and Bruxellimage for the federalized francophone regions.

The regional shift in European and francophone Belgian cultural film policy

The development of regional film institutions marks a small evolution from the UNESCO Convention and its ideals of nurturing local expression and diversity in order to contribute to the cultural assemblage in Europe and reinforce the notion of regional identity. In the context of Belgium, the linguistic regions of Flanders and Wallonia, significantly, pre-date the Belgian federal State. In the 1960s, the period of cultural reform occurred in Belgium, and led to a progressive regionalization of the cinematic medium. As the Introduction outlines, this first occurred in Flanders in 1964 and in the francophone communities of Belgium in 1967. With these reforms,

le cinéma produit dans le cadre belge ne repose pas uniquement sur quelques individualités créatrices tels que Alfred Machin, Henri Storck, Paul Meyer, André Delvaux... Les nouvelles entités politiques

investissent dans le cinéma, que ce soit au titre de leur politique culturelle, audiovisuelle, économique ou de formation et d'enseignement (André, 2002: 13).⁷³

This evolution marked the beginning of the period of de-centralization in the film industry in Belgium to the linguistic communities, but also adapted the means by which films in Belgium were commissioned and funded. Emphasis was previously placed upon the figure of the auteur (the power attributed to the name and cachet of the filmmaker) to attract foreign and national investment for a film project. However, the devolution from the national framework to the community-based approach enabled the funding of new talent, and embraced a cultural policy that encouraged film to be used as a vector of cultural identity.

The nation-state is, of course, diverse below its homogenized façade, and in a cultural sphere, such as the film industry, one must critically engage with and consider the cultural policy. The regional institution is thus catering to the underlying diversity within the nation-state, supporting creativity that extends beyond artisanal production. The implication of regions within the cinematic framework is a recent phenomenon, and represents an innovation of cinema economics in pursuit of 'cultural diversity'.

The first regional film funding institutions occurred in Germany. In this case, funding is attributed and decided upon according to the 'Länder' - the German delineation of regions. Since the turn of the second millennium, there has been a gradual increase in regional funding institutions in Europe. Wood argues that

cultural arguments are overwhelmingly behind national governments' allocation of tax payers' money to the film industries and usually include the defence of minority languages and culture, the necessity of speaking with one's own voice in the contemporary world (Wood, 2006: 8).

⁷³ [Cinema produced within the Belgian framework does rely not only on some creative individuals, such as Alfred Machin, Henri Storck, Paul Meyer and André Delvaux...The new political entities invest in cinema, whether it may be connected to their cultural, audiovisual, economic policy or training and teaching.]

The regional institution now commands a prominent position in the film sector, since at the Dijon film meetings in 2008, Phillippe Reynaert (Chairperson of Wallimage-Bruxellimage) stated that 'en Europe, 25% des aides publiques viennent des collectivités territoriales' ('Cinéma et audiovisuel, quel rôle et quelles politiques pour les collectivités territoriales', 2008: 1).⁷⁴ This proliferation of regional funding institutions has supported the development of products that reflect regional and local cultures, but they also play a role in the attraction of major film productions to the region. This has had a fiscal impact upon the region (such as job creation discussed in Chapter One). In this sense, Milèna Poylo (*ibid*) talks about the regional film funds as a type of 'guichet' [ticket office], which alludes to the regional film institution as a commissioner who informs the film producer as to when and where they are able to shoot. This is thus a positioning that highlights the dual nature of the regional film institution, which must encourage filmmakers emerging from the region and supporting their film creation in a selective manner, at the same time as enticing and incentivizing larger scale productions into the region.

In 2002, the small regional funds began to create and forge links with one another beyond the national boundaries. The first inter-regional grouping of five funds consisted of a German fund, an Austrian fund, a Dutch fund, an Italian fund and a Belgian fund (Reynaert, 2003: 22). One regional institution with a strong visibility (and agreements in place with Wallimage) at the present time of writing in Europe is the Nord-Pas-de-Calais *département* due to the commercial success of *Bienvenue chez les ch'tis* (2008) on a national and international level. This French regional film fund was one of the first funds to be established in the country in 1985. In France, the law of decentralization, dated 2nd March 1982, provided a new level of power and competencies to the regions. However, this incentive did not come to fruition until 1986 ('Cinéma et audiovisuel, quel rôle et quelles politiques pour les collectivités territoriales', 2008: 14).

The French regional decentralization of film funding is a relatively recent phenomenon. Since 13th August 2004, the French regions have acquired greater responsibilities for film production, and thereby forming a significant part of the French cultural landscape (Cinéma et audiovisuel, quel rôle et quelles

⁷⁴ [in Europe, 25% of public support comes from territorial collectives]

politiques pour les collectivités territoriales', 2008: 14). CCRAV/ Pictanovo of Nord-pas-de-Calais is currently the third largest source of regional film funding in France, after the Paris-centric Île de France (estimated total budget of 19.1 million Euros for 2013) (Cine-regio, n.d.) with an average of 14 million Euros for cinema (Idf-film, 2013) and Rhône-Alps region (a capacity to provide funding between 3 and 4 million Euros for cinematographic activities overall) (Rhône-Alps Cinéma, 2013). It is also estimated that the Île de France support fund finances around 70% of French films (Cine-regio, 2013). The financial support provided by Nord-pas-de-Calais and Pictanovo for cinematic activities in 2012 was 2.72 million Euros, of which 860.000 Euros was provided through the CNC to the regional fund (CRRAV, 2012:6). The objectives outlined by this regional fund are unspecific in terms of a points value system to adhere to certain criteria. The fund maintains that the judging panel assess 'les projets d'abord sur leur qualité artistique et culturelle mais tient également compte de l'implication régionale en termes d'emplois et de retombées économiques' (CRRAV, 2011: 1).⁷⁵

As the case studies later in this chapter further nuance, the hiring of local technicians and actors is a consideration for the panel in addition to the economic benefits that the film will bring to the region. The artistic and cultural qualities required for a film project are not outlined, but the head of Wallimage claims that CCRAV/ Pictanovo is increasingly concerned with 'the image of the region' (Reynaert, in 'Shaping the future of cinema', 2010: 9) that is disseminated.⁷⁶ This notion is also confirmed through a study commissioned by the *Chambre regionale des comptes de Nord-pas-de-Calais* published in July 2013 that includes a series of recommendations for the fund and a breakdown of the shifting patterns of tourism across the region after *Bienvenue chez les ch'tis* (Percheron, 2013: 14-17). This increase in tourists to the region is categorized as 'retombées économiques' (*ibid*), connecting the funding of a film project with the veritable impact that it can have in terms of disseminating 'an image' of the region. Percheron notes

⁷⁵ [the projects first of all on their artistic and cultural merit but also (they are assessed) according to what they can bring to the region in terms of employment and ancillary regional earnings]

⁷⁶ Chapter Five on the case study *Cages* (2006) will engage with the "touristic" concerns of the regional film fund from Nord-pas-de-Calais for the project.

(l) a hausse de la fréquentation touristique à Bergues est spectaculaire : le nombre de sollicitations de l'office de tourisme est passé de 9.083 en 2007 à 35.707 en 2008 (Percheron, 2013: 16).⁷⁷

As Percheron's (2013) study highlights, the impact of a film project is more than just the film expenditure in the region during production, but it can have a lasting impact upon the vision of the region both within the country of origin and beyond its borders. The economic advantages of attracting a project to the area are connected to how the space is portrayed within the proposed film. This appears to be a fundamental consideration in film selection within the Nord-pas-de-Calais region.

The regional film funding mechanism in France does not exist as a separate entity away from the national fund, and this is also the case in Belgium with Wallimage's connections to the CCA. All the French regional institutions have the same connections to the CNC, which pertains to a nationally coherent institution in terms of film production in France. In general, the CNC provides a sum of around 8.5 million Euros to the regional film funds in France for cinematic activities (Cinéma et audiovisuel, quel rôle et quelles politiques pour les collectivités territoriales', 2008: 12). However, the relationship between the Nord-pas-de-Calais region and its regional Belgian counterpart in Wallonia, Wallimage, highlights the extent to which the region has moved beyond intra-national connections and has extended its reach on an international scale. Reynaert discusses the significance of this inter-regional synergy for both cultural and economic reasons:

On doit un peu repartir à la pêche parce que le marché français s'est un peu refermé bien que notre collaboration s'affirme avec notre voisin du

⁷⁷ [the increase in tourism to Bergues (the filmmaker's hometown) is spectacular: the number of inquiries at the Tourist Office went from 9.083 in 2007 (before the film's release) to 35.707 in 2008]

Nord-Pas-de-Calais, ce qui nous permet de nous présenter de manière commune (Reynaert, 2006: 23).⁷⁸

As previously discussed, the French projects benefit from this additional allocation of finance and fiscal incentives, and the francophone regions of Belgium benefit from the investment spent in the area in return. The contribution of finance from the francophone regions of Belgium has thus enabled the increased employment opportunities, investment into Belgian production companies, and turns the percolation of film projects from France into 'invisible earnings'. Examples of this collaboration between the two regions are films such as *Cages* and *Rien à déclarer/ Nothing to Declare* (Dany Boon, 2010). The film industry is therefore not a nationally specific industry, since it relies upon transnational enterprise, for example the external forms of funding and spectatorship that facilitate the further proliferation of films. It is the conflicting nature of a 'regional cinema', which is composed of transnational and regional finance, and a regionally specific aesthetic that is able to appeal to an international audience. In essence, cultural pluralism functions in association with regional and 'transnational regional' imperatives, which do not necessarily exist in opposition, but are able to work in a form of collaboration.

In 2005, Cine-regio was engendered by this cultural imperative, and subsequently co-ordinates 38 regional film funds (as of 2012) in order to support regional film infrastructure, promote local and regional identities and to also encourage co-development and co-production initiatives. This in turn fosters exchanges of talent and finance between the regions. Through the desire to ossify co-production exchanges between the devolved set of regions (existing below the national façade), the notion of the 'region', in this context, also pertains to a transnational or international sense of the term. In essence, the regional film institution no longer sits below the national means of film selection and financing, but is able to form partnerships with other regional institutions beyond the national borders. The regional film funds are therefore not intrinsically attached to the national cinema. Gregory Faes, of Rhône-Alpes

⁷⁸ [We must desperately look for solutions because the French market is a little restrictive, although our collaboration exists with our regional neighbour, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, which allows us to represent ourselves alongside one another.]

Cinéma, notes that Cine-regio marks 'une belle ouverture sur l'Europe',⁷⁹ and Philippe Reynaert suggests that it is 'un lieu d'échanges de bonnes pratiques, et une force de lobbying auprès de la Communauté européenne' ('L'Europe des régions à l'heure du dialogue', 2008 : VI).⁸⁰ Cine-regio places an increased significance upon the cultural dimension of filmmaking, by providing and enabling income on a local and regional level. The means of funding is primarily provided by either local or regional governments, and this encompasses around 60-70% of the overall income to the regional film funding institution (Newman-Baudais, 2011: 122).

According to the directors of the regional institutions, the ability to form a network, in which expertise, funding and policy concepts can be shared, is fundamental in the formation and maintenance of creative hubs and clusters below and beyond the level of the State. This method of collaboration is actively encouraged by the European Union, since 'by encouraging co-productions across regional borders, Cine-regio and its members contribute significantly to EU audiovisual policy goals' (Cine-regio, 2012: 3). These aims necessitate a greater cohesion of the assemblage of cinemas in Europe and adhere to the EU's greater neo-liberal mantras, which thereby encourage a viable and dynamic creative economy. In essence, an initial form of diversity arises through the multitude of financing sources and methods (which have to some extent already been addressed), and subsequently ensures a film's production.

The Walloon cultural project: *Manifeste pour une culture wallon (1983)*

Before considering the shift to the regions in Walloon cultural policy in cinema, it is important to outline the gradual regionalization in the Walloon conceptions of culture more generally. The push for a Walloon cultural project has been the domain for primarily politically aware Walloon-based writers and intellectuals (in the French language), who first published the *Manifesto for Walloon culture* in 1983 (Mosley, 2001: 19). Overall, there have now been three installments of such a manifesto with *Pour une Wallonie Maîtresse de sa Culture, de son*

⁷⁹ [a beautiful opening of Europe]

⁸⁰ [a place where good practices are exchanged, and a lobbying force alongside the European Community]

Education et de sa Recherche/ For a Walloon Mastery of its culture, education and research (2004) and the most recent development *Livre blanc de la Wallonie/ The Walloon white paper* (2008, revised in 2009) ('Culture et citoyenneté en Wallonie', 2009). This latest white paper asserts a powerful notion of the region to reclaim and to attempt to control and govern the regional image that is perpetuated; 'La Wallonie doit récupérer dans ses compétences tout ce qui touche à son image symbolique, à sa culture' (*ibid*).⁸¹ This rhetoric also suggests that the region has still not fully re-asserted its own self-image within the cultural sectors, and that development in this area must continue to build upon the Walloon manifesto. However, there is still a connection in the cultural sectors between the two francophone regions of Belgium and within the internal francophone network with the capital region of Brussels.

The original manifesto (1983) was engendered by a desire for cultural self-affirmation during a period of subordination to the decisions taken in Brussels and to the competencies of the capital city. There was also the backdrop of increasing Flemish nationalism and the perception of a hegemony existing between the francophone institutions of Brussels with France (Karmis and Gagnon, 2001:166). The manifesto therefore sought to encourage a regionalization of institutions and community based initiatives in Wallonia that would be equal with Brussels (*ibid*). The intention was to help 'la naissance à partir des années 70 d'une littérature, d'un cinéma, d'un théâtre, bref d'un art wallon florissant qui n'a plus grand-chose à voir avec la culture « belge » d'antan' (Govaert, 2000).⁸² This therefore pertains to a sense of renewal, but also a desire for regionally specific filmmaking that engages with the cultural reality and intricacies of the Walloon region and its population.

A regional dimension to the cultural products is also important for the dissemination of the cultural reality of Wallonia within and beyond the borders of the country. The desire for specificity emerges from the manifesto's description of the Unitarian conception of 'Belgian' or even the creation of a 'francophone Belgian' culture alongside Brussels as a 'notion hybride et artificielle qui est de nulle part' ('Manifeste pour la culture wallonne', 1983).⁸³ There is hence a clear

⁸¹[Wallonia must recover in its competencies all that touches its symbolic image and its culture.]

⁸²[the birth of a literature, a cinema, and a theatre from the 1970s; in short, a flourishing Walloon art, which no longer has anything to do with the "Belgian" culture of yesteryear]

⁸³ [hybrid and artificial notion that means nothing]

sense of internal fragmentation and difference in terms of a francophone conception of culture and the Walloon culture that can be portrayed through cultural products. The manifesto therefore points towards the desired formation of a cultural sense of belonging and an attempt to re-assert the cultural referents in the particular region.

During the period of the Manifesto's conception, Sojcher notes the early signs of an emerging 'Walloon cinema' in the feature films of Jean-Jacques Andrien, who signed the original manifesto, and the early documentary works of Thierry Michel (Sojcher, 1999b: 354). Nevertheless, the subsequent requirement to revise and re-articulate the regional conception of culture across the decades highlights the sentiments of the Walloon culture as struggling to re-assert itself in the forms of literature and cinema. This struggle can be viewed in relation to the internal variation in the country and the competing cinematic and literary canons across the border with France. The creation of a regional manifesto highlights the increasing attempts to define and assert the culture of the Walloon region, and can, to some extent, nuance the reasons for the development and creation of a regional film institution and fund in Wallonia before both Brussels and Flanders.

The formation of a Walloon regional film institution and regional film policy

In 1998 at the University of Mons, the Belgian filmmaker and president of the *Cinéma Wallonie* professional filmmaking network, Jean-Jacques Andrien, stated that

Il y a aujourd'hui en Wallonie un manque de vision de ses réalités culturelles, sociales, institutionnelles ... en rapport avec son devenir. Il y a un manque de connaissance des situations, un manque de lieux où débattre et échanger sur ces problématiques, un manque de représentations dans les médias de ses véritables réalités. Il en résulte

incompréhensions, amalgames, exclusions et effacements (Andrien, 1998).⁸⁴

According to Andrien, Walloon cinema was in a state of institutional neglect with a lack of coherence and direction with how to present and define a Walloon cultural product. In the case of Belgium, which exists as a federal tripartite State, the basis of a regional cinematic policy system is already in place, since there is no united cultural policy in existence. In certain countries, there is a natural delegation of power and competencies from the State to the regions.

This policy is, in essence, a means of developing creative talent and helping to finance cultural products within the framework of the region. The emphasis on the region therefore places an importance upon the local gains from attracting films to the area. It can thus lead to creation of job opportunities and filter down into the regional and local economy. Hence, cultural policy in the film sector includes the means to reinforce the structures for film creation and film distribution in addition to developing networks to facilitate access to external markets, and in particular, the European market. In effect, this policy in the film sector perpetuates a modernization impulse that drives towards a neo-liberalization of markets and an increased desire for diversity: in terms of funding this translates to a 'transnational regional' approach to accessing film finance. The regional institution aspires to 'cultural diversity' aims, since it is able to put in place the financial means to encourage and support the emerging aspirations recommended in the *UNESCO Declaration* (2001) and the *UNESCO Convention* (2005).

In the current state of European cinema, Reynaert states that:

c'est aux états ou aux communautés de prendre en charge l'accès à la culture pour tous les citoyens alors que c'est plutôt aux régions qui sont impliquées dans les problèmes quotidiens d'emploi et de circulation des

⁸⁴ [Today in Wallonia, there is a lack of vision of its cultural, social and institutional realities ... in relation to its evolution. There is a lack of knowledge of the situations, a lack of places where discussion, debate and exchange on these problems can take place, a lack of representation in the media of the true realities. It results in incomprehension, amalgamations, exclusions and obliterations.]

richesses de prendre en charge l'aspect industriel du cinéma (Reynaert, 2006: 23).⁸⁵

Reynaert is postulating that the process of regionalization is not absolute and that there are still anomalies in the system and sites of possible tensions between the State, the community and the region. In the Belgian context, the three areas of State, community and region refer to the three levels of governance and control within the country, for example the Belgian State, the Flemish and francophone communities (predicated upon language) and then the tripartite regions of Flanders, Bruxelles and Wallonia. Therefore, the cultural film policy in Belgium functions at two separate levels; the cultural criteria are decided by the CCA and outline the requirements for a francophone Belgian film, whereas the film projects are further supported and financed at a regional level, by Wallimage (of Wallonia). There is no centripetal force in terms of where the financial and creative control is situated. In terms of Belgian cinema of French expression, it is located in both Brussels and in Wallonia.⁸⁶ With the formation of regional audiovisual institutions, such as Bruxellimage and Wallimage, the production of Belgian cinema is more fragmented and therefore not heavily reliant upon a single institutional organization.

The aim of the francophone Belgian regional funds of Bruxellimage and Wallimage is to structure and maintain an audiovisual industry in Brussels and Wallonia and support the philosophy of 'cultural diversity', which, in effect, pertains to a regionalizing impulse of the federalized Belgium's screen culture. Belgium therefore has the potential of having a multiplicity of cinematic and audiovisual centres, according to the federalized regions. In April 2012, the subnational fund for the Flemish region of Belgium, Screen Flanders, was launched, with the primary objective of increasing the appeal of Flanders to international productions, and to improve the structure of the Flemish film industry (Screenflanders.be, 2013). The creation of such a fund further

⁸⁵ [it is up to the State or the communities to take charge of the access to culture for all of the citizens, whereas it is, in effect, up to the regions that are implicated in the daily problems of employment and circulation of wealth to take charge of the industrial aspects of the cinema]

⁸⁶ Since Wallonia includes a small German-speaking community, German language film productions can also benefit from the Wallimage regional institution. The region is thus inclusive of the linguistic minority. With this source of finance, the community can support three cinemas and the production of German-Belgian documentaries in association with Germany (Gras, 2005).

emphasizes the bifurcation of the Belgian film industry on a regional scale.⁸⁷ Due to the francophone community of Belgium incorporating two regions, Wallonia operates the regional institution, Wallimage, and the auxiliary regional fund of Bruxellimage, which is, in essence, conjoined with its Walloon counterpart. The elder fund, Wallimage, was originally conceived as a three-year long trial system in 2001, and was later made permanent in 2004/2005 ('Wallimage tient la distance et élargit son horizon: entretien avec Philippe Reynaert', 2004: 10). The Walloon government, in the guise of Wallimage Coproductions, has opted to support 136 productions, in which 31.305.580 Euros has been spent, and will generate an estimated 94.051.460 Euros of expenditure in the audiovisual sector in the region, which is a 300% margin ('Wallimage a dix ans: bilan positif' 2011: 18). The regional institution is thus orientated towards formulating a strong regional creative economy.

The regional institution's policy highlights the broad spectrum of possibilities in determining 'culture' and 'cultural diversity'. The policy outlines the institution's responsibility to 'guarantee the cultural character of the work' (Wallimage Regulations, 2009: 5) by assessing its adherence to a series of criteria, and underlines the ability of 'enriching the cultural patrimony of the countries or regions that co-produce it [the audiovisual work]' (*ibid*). In terms of 'cultural diversity', Wallimage has formulated a series of transnational economic activities, which are, in effect, fiscally supplementing regional cultural activities. It is the role of the regional institution to attract the external finance to the region and provide financial incentives for this transaction to occur.

The co-production finance is assessed by the subsidiary of Wallimage (Wallimage Coproductions), and this is, in turn, divided into three investment lines. These lines have a total budget of 5.5 million Euros, which is provided internally by the region. The Wallimage line is financed with 2.5 million Euros, with the pre-requisite that the investment must be spent within the Walloon region (Wallimage Règlement, 2009: 6). The other two lines, the Animated Series line and the Wallimage/ Bruxellimage line (which was created in 2009),

⁸⁷ The annual budget for Screen Flanders is 5 million Euros, with a majority co-production being able to receive a maximum of 400.000 Euros. The regional film fund necessitates the expenditure of 100% of the provided sum in Flanders. There is a cultural criteria test, which presupposes that a film project has a veritable Flemish cultural identity or is predicated upon a Dutch language work (Marché du Film, 2013: 11).

are provided with 1 million Euros each; the latter of which must be spent equally within both of the francophone Belgian regions (*ibid*). In order to acquire Wallimage Coproduction financial support, a film project must already have 30% of the total budget in place and intend to spend a minimum sum of 250.000 Euros in the region of Wallonia (Wallimage, s.a, n.d: 1). The sum of the Wallimage co-production investment is split into two sections: 60% direct investment and 40% loan, which must be repaid over a period of three years. However, the amount of the loan can be reduced by 1% for every 5% extra expenditure the producer makes in the region (*ibid*).⁸⁸ In this sense, the external funding intends to ameliorate the project's budget, and Wallimage intends to benefit from the finance filtering into the region's economy. However, the primary connections of Wallimage are with its linguistic neighbour, France.

Philippe Reynaert, the director of the francophone regional funding institutions of Wallimage and Bruxellimage, recognizes this confluence of French and francophone Belgian finance as the creation of a 'monoculture':

Je rêve qu'on coproduise avec les territoires Anglophones, avec l'Italie, avec l'Espagne (Reynaert, 2006: 23).⁸⁹

This 'monoculture' is a culture that has been forged upon the linguistic connections between the aforementioned countries, and does not account for the cultural diversity that exists within both France and Belgium. Reynaert outlines a desire to transcend the synergies with France.

In contrast to this perspective, the Francophone support and development fund for cinematic productions was launched in 2009. This francophone network, originally conceived in 2004, has the objective of granting support to the development of feature length projects, involving Belgian, Canadian, French, Swiss, or Luxembourgish co-producers. The formation of a transnational funding strategy links together the smaller linguistic groups within the given nation-states, and serves to support the augmented creation of cultural assets. Wallimage therefore includes a fundamental strength in terms of

⁸⁸ Documentary films are exempt from these regulations. They are only applicable to feature films and animations.

⁸⁹ [I dream that one day we may co-produce with the Anglophone territories, with Italy, and with Spain.]

the ability to pool the acquired funds alongside other regional and national funding mechanisms. For example, a film project can utilize an amalgamation of funding mechanisms in Belgium, such as a combination of the Wallimage Co-production line and the tax shelter. Both of these mechanisms require the inclusion of a Belgian producer and production company in the project. It suggests that in the current climate of austerity, it is necessary for cinemas of nations, which are linguistically, culturally, and geographically small in size, to look beyond the nation-states' borders for increased film finance, in addition to possibilities of increased exhibition. The co-financing pact that exists between the francophone nations, of which France, Luxembourg and Switzerland are the largest, highlights the level of economic integration between the francophone cinema industries.

The French funding aid policy is, however, restricted not only to the 'monoculture' (Reynaert, 2006: 23) model predicated upon linguistic allegiance, but it can also form part of France's general co-production strategy for providing funds to film projects on a European and global level. For example, France has provided fiscal support to directors, such as Pedro Almodóvar and David Lynch (Frau-Meigs, 2002: 11). These 'monocultural' connections do not necessarily pertain to a unique transnational arrangement with Belgium or Wallonia from the French perspective, but they rather fit into a wider sphere of co-production agreements.

However, there are emerging concerns for the Wallimage regional fund. Firstly, the regional film fund could lead to a sentiment of discrimination against the regions of Brussels and Flanders, since the technicians are obliged to have a permanent address in Wallonia. Cine-regio suggests that the prevention of local talent leaving for other countries is crucial to the creation of a burgeoning regional film industry. It states that

regional funds contribute to retain European talent and to foster creative ecosystems, to form the creative clash – creative people that, once gathered in a specific place, create synergies and fruitful collaborations, thereby fostering further creativity ('Contribution to the public consultation on the issues paper on "Accessing State aid for films and other audiovisual sources"', 2011: 2; Cine-regio, 2011: 2).

However by imposing these restrictions, the fund is preventing a free flow of internal and external film professionals, which is included in the European Union Constitution (Conference of the representatives of the governments of the Member States, 2004). Prior to the formation of the economic infrastructure of the Bruxellimage regional fund, the Wallimage regulations encouraged the abandonment of the strong cinematic infrastructure in the capital region in order to seek finance and employment in its regional neighbour. In this sense, the shaping of a cultural film policy is perceived as competitive, even within an intra-national environment.

Nevertheless, Herold stated that ‘the EC can be expected to revise its position on territorialization at some point, given its potential restrictive internal market and anticompetitive repercussions’ (Herold, 2008: 39). Initially, the report was instigated in order to find a solution to a fragmented model of production. The intention was to move away from regional and national territorialization clauses and create a more European-friendly model: ‘une territorialisation européenne des soutiens’ (Lamant, 2007: 54).⁹⁰ The current stance of the European Commission justifies the existence of such territorialization clauses as long as the support of local filmmakers and technicians leads to the creation of cultural products (Germann, Avocats, 2008: 3). Despite reviews in 2007 (European Commission, 2007) and in 2009 (European Commission, 2009), the European Commission decided to continue with the current strategy for film production. The maximum that a regional and national institution can impose upon the region or area that the institution governs is a limit of 80% expenditure of the film budget, which hence permits a further expenditure of the remaining 20% in other Member states or regions (Germann Avocats, 2008: 3; European Commission, 2013: 5).

Wallimage includes territorial clauses and requirements, which were adopted with the continuation of the institution in 2004 after its three-year trial period. The producer is consequently bound ‘to spend a minimum of 100% of the granted sum in audiovisual expenditures in the Walloon region’ (Germann, 2007: 35). The principle is that ‘every euro of aid given to a producer should generate at least one euro of audiovisual expenditure in the Walloon region’ (Reynaert, in ‘Quel développement pour le cinéma à Bruxelles?’, 2008), and

⁹⁰ [a European territorialization clause]

this enables a structuring of the region's film industry due to the potential economic filter down effect. However, the above statement alludes to a form of 'indirect territorialization' (Germann, 2007: 35), since it is still requiring audiovisual expenditure in the region to recoup the funds provided. In pursuit of culturally diverse aims, such as retaining creative talent within the region, the regional fund is at the same time preventing the possibility of creatively diverse production teams intra- and inter- nationally due to the residence imposition.

The econometrics report produced by the European Commission states that there is no correlation between territorialization clauses and a reduction in co-production films - 43% of co-productions occurred in Member States with clauses, and 43.3% were created without such clauses in place (Germann Avocats, 2008: 9). In fact, such clauses can also lead to an increase in production costs within the given region and nation-state (*ibid*). Hence, this suggests that with the formation of a reliable regional institution with adequate access to funding, investment can still be attracted to the region. The inclusion of clauses does not provide an anti-competitive advantage. Nevertheless, the report did acknowledge the tendency for countries that share national borders to embark on co-production arrangements (*ibid*). This is epitomized by Wallimage's frequent co-funding strategy with the French départements.

Although there is a tendency to co-produce films between regions in different countries, the creation of a regional film fund in Wallonia distinguishes between the two francophone regions on an intra-national level, in terms of film production and film funding. This partition between Wallonia and Brussels is unique to the film industry, since the spheres of scientific research and legal research coalesce the two francophone regions. Charles Piqué (the President of Bruxelles) proposed that, in such a small country and in particular within the francophone Belgian linguistic community, there should be only one regional fund, which serves all the francophone regions, rather than maintaining a fragmented and fractured system predicated upon regional identity (Piqué, in 'Quel développement pour le cinéma à Bruxelles?', 2008). However, in 2000, the francophone Belgian filmmaker Jean-Jacques Andrien noted the fear of an amalgamation of Wallonia and Brussels in an audiovisual capacity, by stating

la marginalisation des entreprises de production établies en Région wallonne par l'aggravation de la pression au déménagement vers une ville internationale où le monde du cinéma francophone belge se concentre (Andrien, 2000).⁹¹

At this stage, the Walloon cinematic infrastructure was in a fragile and embryonic state. In effect, the rigid territorialization clause is a legislating product to prevent the movement of local Walloon talent to the hub of the francophone Belgian sphere and a potential centralization of the industry, and helps develop a cultural pillar of Belgian cinema. Consequently, due to the culturally diverse aims of the regional funding institutions, the rapprochement between the two regions occurred only in 2009 in the form of a Wallimage-Bruxellimage intra-national co-production line as an economic structure, and not predicated upon cultural grounds.

The Wallimage- Bruxellimage evolution

The creation of the regional film institution of Wallimage in 2001 has given the film industry in Belgium a new impetus. The creation of a regional institution gave the Belgian screen a new façade and a new image to present to Europe and the rest of the world. After the decision to continue Wallimage after its initial trial period, a series of debates erupted, particularly on television, highlighting that the problem in Brussels, in terms of cinematic production, was not, in fact, the presence of Wallimage, but a lack of a Bruxellois counterpart. Until 2009, 'Bruxelles Tournage' represented the Bruxellois region in cinematic terms: an institution that had been formulated in order to promote a touristic vision of the area. It had not been designed and structured to foster the creation of films for 'art house' cinema circuits or even for cinematic release, but the films created were primarily conceptualized to engender increased tourist traffic to Brussels. This mechanism is, however, a flawed concept, since it is regarded as 'une service d'accueil',⁹² and 'une vitrine pour la ville' (Lesmesre, in Quel

⁹¹ [the marginalization of production companies established in Wallonia by the increase in pressure to move towards the international city, where the sphere of francophone Belgian cinema is concentrated (Brussels)]

⁹² [a welcoming service]

développement pour le cinéma à Bruxelles?', 2008).⁹³ These perceptions of 'Bruxelles tournage' adhere to the requirement to convey a touristic vision of the Brussels space, functioning to a degree as an advertisement vehicle.

Bruxellimage provides 1 million Euros per year to the Bruxellois cinema sector (with a maximum of 500.000 Euros available per project), so that it is able to economically support its local talent and enhance the cinematographic structure in the metropolitan region ('La région de Bruxelles-capitale et la région Wallonne unissent leurs forces pour créer un fonds spécial «Wallimage-Bruxellimage»', 2009: 23). Amongst the 136 total, 25 film projects belong to the Wallimage-Bruxellimage production line (launched in 2009), in which the capital region has invested a sum of 2.000.500 Euros (intended by the end of 2012), and will have generated a sum of 12.751.108 Euros for the capital region (Bruxelles-Capitale) ('Wallimage a dix ans: bilan positif', 2011: 18). The regional institution of Bruxellimage, however, does not exist as a solitary unit, but is instead linked with the Walloon regional institution. It is rather an extension of Wallimage, which is then liberated from the requirements for audiovisual expenditure in Wallonia, and is thus more accessible to Bruxellois producers. However, it operates in a less restrictive manner than its regional partner in terms of requirements for audiovisual expenditure, since 100.000 Euros (around half of the maximum equity provided by the Bruxellimage institution) must be spent in the francophone regions of Belgium: 50% in Brussels and 50% in Wallonia (Wallimage regulations, 2009: 5). Furthermore, the clause is not discriminatory according to the regional residence of the applicant for the financing, since any producer residing in Brussels, Flanders or Wallonia can apply.

The assimilation of a Brussels and Walloon regional institution enables the creation of solidarity between the film professionals residing in each region, thereby encouraging an open exchange and creative diversity between the professionals. This relative 'openness' of the Bruxellois regional institution relates to the city-region itself, since it is positioned between the linguistic communities in terms of cultural matters. The Ministers of Culture for the respective communities described this growing coherence as the presence of a 'Brussels model', which suggests that an increase in cultural collaboration will

⁹³ [a shop window for the city]

help the federal State to emerge from its political stasis (Dernière Heure, 2011). The institutionalization of a Bruxellois regional film fund as an auxiliary of the Walloon fund appears to perpetuate a mono-cultural film policy in the region, and therefore displays a disconnection from the pluri-cultural realities of Belgium.

Cages (Olivier Masset-Depasse, 2006) and the conditions attached to inter-regional film funding

The film, *Cages*, marks an evolution in the collaboration of regional film funds across national borders, and particularly between Wallonia (Wallimage) and the Nord-pas-de-Calais region (CCRAV/Pictanovo) in France.⁹⁴ *Cages* is the first feature length film by the francophone Belgian and Walloon filmmaker, Olivier Masset-Depasse. The filmmaker had previously produced two short films set around his hometown of Charleroi. However, as revealed in an interview (Masset-Depasse, 2013: Appendix I), *Cages* was re-located from the intended site of Charleroi to the French region of Nord-pas-de-Calais. In short, the film deals with the central protagonist's (Eve) loss of her ability to speak after an accident, and the impact that this subsequently has on her relationship with Damien.

The film project is, in essence, a co-production between Belgium and France, but it - more precisely - pertains to an inter-regional pooling of financial (and production) resources. The method of the two regional institutions working in a form of collusion has a filter down effect, thereby generating and attracting an increased form of income into the regions. Nevertheless, as this case study outlines, the clauses attached to this funding mechanism do impact upon the choices made for the film project's production, post-production and employment strategies. This film project epitomizes the "monoculture" notion that Reynaert posits (Reynaert, 2006: 23), with francophone Belgian film projects looking primarily towards France in order to ameliorate their budget. The trend also adheres to the transcendence of the region as an autonomous and insular

⁹⁴ The CCRAV [Centre Régional de Ressources Audiovisuelles] is now defunct, since the fusion with the Pôle Images Nord-pas-de-Calais to form Pictanovo, the Lille Region Image Community on 29th March 2013.

entity, which thereby propagates its consideration through a 'transnational regional' prism. The cross-border synergy created between the two regional funds was formed at an institutional level with the directors of the two institutions highlighting the requirement for increased pooling of finance. The director of CCRAV/Pictanovo, Vincent Leclerq asserted that

We [Leclerq and Reynaert] discussed some interesting projects and decided to do something together. At first it seemed impossible – for example the criterias [sic] of both funds were that more than half of the shooting had to take place in the region – which makes it an equation impossible to solve (Cine-regio, 2006).

The clauses attached to the fiscal imperative therefore required a re-configuration of the filming location, predicated upon both practical requirements, such as production and post-production facilities.

The problematic nature of this collaboration is particularly evident in this case study, since the funding requirements from the Nord-pas-de-Calais region necessitated the removal of the project from Wallonia in terms of the location of where the film would be shot. The setting for the film was therefore moved to the French region, which does not have a synchronous landscape with Wallonia, since the film unfolds upon a cliff on the Côte d'Opal, overlooking the marine vistas of la Manche [English Channel] and the North Sea. The location of the film is hence placed within a problematic position concerning the spaces to which the film is able to correspond across the border with Belgium. There is the use of French in a film that is shot in France, conceived and post-produced in Wallonia but is forced to consequently take place along the Northern coast of Belgium (which resides in the Flemish-speaking region of Flanders) due to territorial requirements emerging from the finance.

The formation of funding strategies according to the remits of the regional funds, predicated upon both cultural and linguistic connections alongside geographical proximity, manifest a fundamental linguistic issue due to the problematic insularities at the centre of the Belgian federal State. The film thus straddles a fine line between de-localization (the moving away from Wallonia) and a re-localization (in terms of the French landscape substituting for

the Flemish coastal areas). The territorial clause was therefore structured and altered in order to encompass the strengths of each of the regions, primarily in terms of facilities. The regional funding institution of Wallonia (Wallimage) provided 250.000 Euros to the film project to what is considered a majority Belgian-French co-production, with an expenditure in the Walloon region of 690.000 Euros, which is a 276% margin of expenditure relative to the funding provided (Wallimage s.a, 2012: 3).⁹⁵ This is contrasted with the amount of funding supplied by the CCRAV, which totalled a figure of 150.000 Euros with expenditure in the French region of 200.000 Euros (Cine-regio, 2006).⁹⁶ On the basis of these statistics, the fiscal input by the regional funds had a positive filter down effect in terms of cinema in an industrial and economic capacity. Furthermore, the figures demonstrate that the film project fulfilled its obligations and criteria to the regional funding institutions in terms of its audiovisual expenditure.⁹⁷

In terms of the overall delineation of production requirements for the film project, there was a 70% Belgian to 30% French split, which therefore nuances the levels of audiovisual expenditure in each of the respective countries ('La production cinématographique en 2006', 2007: 47). According to this breakdown of production support, this project is a Belgian majority co-production, which also complicates the possible national label attributed to the film due to the absence of Walloon or Belgian recognisable sites in the final cut of the film.

The re-localization of the project from Wallonia to France was not the only requirement attached to the logic of the film funding, since it also necessitated a mixed casting of French and Belgian actors. The guidelines for Wallimage require that one of the main actors or three of the secondary roles must have Belgian nationality or must have been born in Belgium (Wallimage, 2010: 5). The regional film fund does not specify whether the actors must be from the francophone regions of Belgium, since the Wallimage co-production guidelines require the film to be articulated in only one of the Belgian languages (*ibid*). The

⁹⁵ The estimated cost provided for the film project, *Cages*, was a figure of 2 million Euros (Cboxoffice, 2013).

⁹⁶ The expenditure margin for the *Cages* film project was therefore 133%.

⁹⁷ The typical requirements for regional film funding institutions in Belgium and France encompass an audiovisual expenditure within the region of 100-150% of the finance provided for a given project.

use of French therefore aligns the film project with the requirements of the Wallimage co-production rules and the French regional film fund. This dimension is not compulsory as it is part of a list of ten criteria, to which four must be adhered.

In the case of *Cages*, the Wallimage criterion that requires a Belgian actor is met through the casting of the Bruxellois actress Anne Coesens in the lead female role as Eve. The filmmaker also remarks that the role of Eve was written with the actress in mind, since she has starred as the central protagonist in all of Masset-Depasse's works (Masset-Depasse, 2006). Nevertheless, she has previously been cast in films both sides of the border between Belgium and France. She has most frequently starred in films by other prominent francophone Belgian filmmakers, such as a small role in *Ma Vie en rose/ My life in Pink* (Alain Berliner, 1997), *Demain on déménage/ Tomorrow we move* (Chantal Akerman, 2004), *Élève libre/ Private Lessons* (2008), and *9mm* (Taylar Barman, 2008). This therefore posits that her level of 'star' currency is best established within francophone Belgian films.

The CCRAV/Pictanovo guidelines for a feature film's eligibility do not specifically refer to the numbers of the actors or technicians, whether that may be lead or secondary, and technicians to be included within a co-production. However, the regional fund seeks to encourage the casting of local and resident actors/ technicians within film productions through the dissemination of actor and technician catalogues. In terms of technicians, the guidelines propose that at least four local internships must be available within the film production (CRRAV, 2011: 4). Despite this preference for casting local actors, there are no formal criteria that determine the inclusion of French actors for the Nord-pas-de-Calais region. The French national funding mechanism of the CNC also does not actively encourage the casting of French actors over and above other European actors from Member States, such as Belgium. A French actor carries with him/ her the same point value on the funding barometers; '(i)n order to accumulate points, lead and supporting actors as well as crew members must be of French nationality, come from a European Union State or a European Council signatory State' (Priot et al., 2013: 38). Although there is no direct fiscal incentive to cast French actors from the French regional involvement, the second lead role of Damien is played by Sagamore Stévenin, who originates

from Paris. According to the DVD commentary (Masset-Depasse, 2006), the producer of the film remarks about the difficulty in finding an actor who fitted the brief for the character, and opted for the Parisian Stévenin, who has largely played roles in French television series throughout his career. The secondary roles for the film comprise actors who come from Wallonia, thereby adhering more to the Wallimage criterion for the levels of Belgian casting. In essence, the Walloon funding mechanism engenders the casting dimension of the film project, whereas the location was determined by the fund from Nord-pas-de-Calais. However, this presents a confusing image of the French region to the French spectator, since the film project screens the 'touristic' image (Masset-Depasse, 2006) of the Côte d'Opal, which is predominantly populated by Belgian and Walloon actors.

The majority-Belgian co-productions with Wallimage funding do not always struggle to shoot the film in Wallonia. The territorialization requirements in the regional film fund's regulations can lead to economic advantages for the region.

Wallimage regional film funding and the economic benefits to the region

Although the previous section and focus on *Cages* outlines some of the complications that are attached to the regional film fund, the territorialization clause can also generate economic benefits and high levels of audiovisual expenditure in the region. This section outlines the level of regional film funding and economic fallout to Wallonia from those projects. As Chapter One outlined, *Ultranova* (2005), *Eldorado* (2008) and *Le gamin au vélo* (2011) are all majority Belgian co-productions on a general level, but they also all have a level of regional film funding from Wallonia.

Bouli Lanners' first feature film, *Ultranova*, was awarded a regional film fund sum of 375.000 Euros, which led to an expenditure of 834.912 Euros (223%) in Wallonia (Wallimage s.a, 2012). This film is set in a suburb on the fringes of Liège, and tracks the character of Dimitri as he struggles to maintain relationships with people who are all discontent with their current lives and employment. In the case of *Eldorado*, the regional fiscal support for this film from Wallimage amounted to 333.333 Euros, which generated 916.683 Euros (275%) of audiovisual expenditure in the Walloon region (*ibid*). The second

Lanners film is a road-movie that follows the journey of two male characters from the city of Liège to the semi-mountainous region of the Ardennes.

For *Le gamin au vélo*, the Dardenne brothers' film was granted 300.000 Euros, which generated 2.109.960 Euros (703%) audiovisual expenditure in the region (*ibid*).⁹⁸ *Le gamin au vélo* is set in the Dardenne brothers' hometown of Seraing, which is a small former industrial powerhouse outside of the city of Liège. The film follows the movements of the young boy, Cyril, as he cycles around the town in search of his father, Guy.

Each of these case studies is embedded within the region of Wallonia and in particular within the space of Liège. In an interview conducted with the head of Wallimage by the author of this thesis, Philippe Reynaert stated that 'Bruxelles a toujours été ce centre mais ces dernières années, le dynamisme wallon a imposé Liège, patrie des frères Dardenne, comme un véritable Pôle de l'Image' (Reynaert, 2011: Appendix F).⁹⁹ Since the formation of the regional film fund, Liège has subsequently developed as a centre for the visualizing of Wallonia. With the inception of the Walloon fund, the francophone Belgian film projects are no longer considered and compete against projects seeking finance in Brussels from the CCA, and this has led to the development of a Walloon regional cinema around the city of Liège.

On the basis of these case studies, the films recorded a dramatic audiovisual expenditure in the region, which dwarfed the fiscal input by the region. The regional film institution is therefore having a considerable positive economic influence in terms of attracting finance to the region. All of these case studies are co-productions, which therefore suggest that a proportion of the generated finance can through funding from foreign sources, in addition to the linguistic community funding from the CCA. Although the funding of these films can have positive immediate economic fallout for the region, as this thesis will later consider in the individual chapters, these film projects also have a cultural and regional value.

⁹⁸ According to the Wallimage funding records, the title of this film is *Délivrez-moi/ Deliver me*, rather than the released title of *Le gamin au vélo*.

⁹⁹ [Brussels has always been the centre, but in the last few years, the Walloon spirit has established Liège, the homeland of the Dardenne brothers, as the true pole of cinematography.]

Conclusion

This chapter served to outline a further dimension of how the notion of 'cultural diversity' is created on a devolved level in terms of film production. It is important to acknowledge that film policy retains the possibility of crossing over into the sphere of 'culture' in the form of the regional film fund and institution. The institution is therefore an organizing principle, which legislates and shapes its delineated space. The formation of the regional institutions of Bruxellimage and in particular Wallimage introduced the concept of a 'territorialization' clause into their cultural film policies. By including cultural criteria and such a clause, the regional film institution is able to posit a vision for the region, such as locations to shoot, employment opportunities for local actors with local voices and for local filmmakers and technicians. Despite such criteria and clauses that presuppose expenditure in Wallonia, Reynaert still recognizes the high levels of co-productions with France and the francophone regions of Belgium, which he describes as a 'monoculture' (Reynaert, 2006: 23) that must be expanded.

The intention of the regional film fund is hence to presuppose the creation of culturally or regionally specific films through a conflicting funding arrangement, since it is engendered through transnational and 'transnational regional' agreements that exist alongside a cultural agenda. For example, the most prevalent transnational co-operation with the francophone regions of Belgium is the fiscal connection to France, which is best exemplified in the case studies of *Eldorado*, *Le gamin au vélo*, and *Ultranova*. 'Transnational regional' alignments are also forged between Wallimage and the regional film funds of France, of which the associations with CCRAV/ Pictanovo is the most apparent. It is possible to suggest that this particular connection between the film institution of Wallonia and Nord-pas-de-Calais is predicated upon both linguistic connections and geographical proximity, since the two regions share the use of the French language and a national border. In terms of the *Cages* case study, there are practicalities associated with this convergence of fiscal means from Wallimage and CCRAV due to the geographical proximity of the two regions, and also the facilities that each region can offer.

The regional film funds are also more likely to take risks on projects by young talent, and this helps to foster an image of the region. In terms of this

fiscal approach to the region, the notion of 'diversity' is thus manifested through transnational and 'transnational regional' finance that can aid in the production of the local or the regional. In essence, the cultural criteria, laid out by the regional film fund, are partly conceived through transnational collaboration and circulation of film finance.

The first three chapters of this thesis have provided an economic analysis of a series of case studies by the filmmakers Bouli Lanners, Olivier Masset-Depasse, and the Dardenne brothers. The next three chapters will engage with these same case studies, and they will consider either how the films offer a sense of Walloon regional identity or to what extent the representation of Wallonia is lost due to the logic of film funding. These case studies all meet the cultural criteria set out by the CCA and Wallimage at the same time as receiving transnational financial support from France or the French regional film funds. These films therefore highlight how the transnational and the regional are not mutually exclusive and that both of these concepts need to be considered alongside one another when analyzing the issues of representation.

Chapter Four:

Visualizing the Walloon ‘transnational regional’ landscape: *Eldorado* (Bouli Lanners, 2008) and *Ultranova* (Lanners, 2005)

The first three chapters have been primarily concerned with how Belgian cinema and the ideas around the ‘transnational regional’ are constructed through an industrial and institutional framework, such as ‘national’ and regional funding mechanisms, co-productions, distribution and exhibition. However, as Crofts outlines in his concept of national cinema, it is necessary to take into account the national-cultural specificities of a film (Crofts, 1998: 387-388). This therefore emphasizes a shift in Crofts’ thinking from the issues of production and exhibition to the issues of representation. In his Introduction to the concept of an Australian national cinema, O’Reagan also outlines his definition of a national cinema that encompasses both the industrial practices and the cultural, political and social representations (O’Reagan, 1996: 1). The next part of this thesis therefore moves from a consideration of the modes of production, distribution and exhibition within the concept of the ‘transnational regional’ to how it is represented on screen. This therefore leads to the reading of the cultural specificities of the national, transnational and regional identities in Belgium. The next three chapters will therefore consider how the regional and cultural specificities are manifested in the co-productions by Bouli Lanners, Olivier Masset-Depasse and the Dardenne brothers, with particular focus placed upon the presence (or absence) of the Walloon landscape, a centre-periphery dynamic and social marginality.

The first half of this chapter will turn to two films, *Eldorado* (2008) and *Ultranova* (2005), produced by the actor/ filmmaker, Bouli Lanners, in order to read the regional and cultural contexts embedded in the contemplation of the Walloon landscape. The second half considers how the movement of the characters through the Walloon space opens up questions to transnational influences and spaces.

The consideration of the aesthetic approaches to the ‘transnational regional’ commences with the exploration of the Walloon landscape. Wallonia is both a geographical region and an imagined community linguistically and

culturally. As we saw in Chapter Three, the first *Manifesto for Walloon culture* (1983), which was signed by filmmakers such as Jean-Jacques Andrien, points towards a desire to assert a cultural image of the region. The Walloon space is also produced in terms of the funding and the fostering of a Walloon cinema. Since 2001, the regional film fund, Wallimage, has selected and financed film projects that adhere to its cultural test. Nevertheless, at the same time, the film projects are largely funded through a transnational co-production with France.

As Hjort outlines in her typologies of cinematic transnationalism, the funding of a film project is a weak form of transnationalism (Hjort, 2009: 13). In essence, the film project is left 'unmarked', or the transnationalism is 'invisible', since it can be traced only through researching the lines of funding (*ibid*: 14). This weak form is aligned with a co-production in which the nationality of the co-producing partner has no relevance to the setting of the film, the context, or the theme of the film. As outlined in Chapter One, the two Bouli Lanners films, *Eldorado* and *Ultranova* are majority Belgian co-productions with France. However, there are strings attached to such funding from a co-producer, such as the inclusion of French actors and technicians, and this is acknowledged with regard to *Eldorado*. The question that therefore needs to be considered is to what extent the inclusion of these requirements from France has an impact upon the film. Or does the finance from France help to foster an image of the Walloon region through financial support? At a level of production, the transnational and the regional are intertwined in the case of francophone Belgian and Walloon films. As Chapter Three outlined, the finance from Wallimage necessitates the location of the film project in the Walloon region, which therefore leads to the inclusion of regional landscapes and cities. Wallimage provided funding for *Eldorado* (14.55% of the total budget) and *Ultranova* (19% of the total budget) (*Ultranova* fiche technique, n.d.). These two films are therefore examples of Wallimage co-productions that are benefitting the region economically, but this chapter intends to extend this by opening up the films to questions of 'regional identity', as outlined by Paasi (2003), and how these films represent the Walloon region on screen.

In the context of this chapter, the Walloon space is outlined as representational in terms of how the Walloon landscape and the individual's relationship to it is imagined and portrayed in these films. As Mosley claims, the

charting of the Walloon space is typically engendered through an urban-rural binary (Mosely, 2001: 2), which is present in both of these films by Bouli Lanners.

In Paasi's (2003) conceptualization of 'regional identity', the geographer outlines two significant strands, which will be engaged with in this chapter: the landscape and periphery-centre relations. When considering the roots of the term in the English language, the 'landscape' initially pertains to the Anglo-Saxon transformation of the natural world into an agrarian space. In French, the definition of the landscape is more complex due to the existence of terms such as 'paysage', 'pays', 'terroir', and 'campagne', which can all be utilized to refer to the broad notion of the landscape (Jackson, 1984: 5-6). All of these French equivalents chime with the rural milieu and the agrarian use of the space. However, the current usage of the term in English relates to not only an agricultural milieu but can also be utilized to refer to other human transformations of the land and urban accretions, such as towns and cities (*ibid*). This use of the term thus highlights how the land has gradually become significant in terms of the human relationship with the area; it has essentially been transformed into a site of work and production.

Within the repertoire of the region and regional specificities, the landscape functions as a key signifier with its connections to lineage, and as a conservator of social and cultural referents. Donald Meinig states that the landscape is 'an attractive, important and ambiguous term [that] encompasses an ensemble of ordinary features which constitute an extraordinarily rich exhibit of the course and character of any society' (Meinig, 1979: 1-3). In essence, the landscape is perceived as attached and connected to an individual or a collective consciousness, since it is understood through human interpretation. The space of the landscape therefore has a human investment embedded within it. Cosgrove highlights this engagement with the landscape as a social phenomenon, since the land is viewed in relation to the human that occupies the space;

the frequent association in geographical writing of landscape with studies of the impact of human agency in altering the physical environment serves to remind us that landscape is a *social* product, the consequence

of a collective human transformation of nature (Cosgrove, 1998: 14 – emphasis original).

In this sense, the landscape functions as a means of documenting the social state within the given space.

In his summary of J.B Jackson's work, Meinig outlines the presence of 'human life', 'dwellings', 'in living terms', 'in terms of its inhabitants', and 'a reflection of society' (Meinig, 1979: 228-229) when discussing a reading of the landscape. All of these ideas on the theorization of the landscape thus highlight the human interaction with the space and how the communities and societies change the land in relation to their requirements. The land has a social role for the human individual in terms of allowing the creation of communities and a subsequent sense of belonging. These geographical writings argue for the necessity of human presence in order to provide the landscape with a certain meaning. The landscape is thus translated through the human as a filter to view the landscape in relation to a people, whether that may be an individual, a community, a region, or a nation.

In terms of these geographical writings and more 'anthropological' approaches, the landscape is perceived through the prism of ownership and belonging, and therefore elucidates 'the "possessive" character of territory which contrasts with the experience that one can make of space in terms of aesthetic contemplation' (Lefebvre, 2006: 53). In this sense, by removing the possessive nature of a direct connection to the land, one is able to appreciate the pictorial and attractive elements of the landscape. Within the painterly genre of landscape painting, the landscape was able to be interpreted as the core subject matter and in an autonomous capacity (*ibid*: 23). It is no longer the backdrop for a consideration of the human state, but the landscape image is invested with cultural and social connotations due to its inclusion as more than a mere setting.

Nevertheless, as Lefebvre outlines, there is a level of overlap between the competing notions of "territorial gaze" and "landscape gaze" in certain instances, such as the military (Lefebvre, 2006: 54). In this sense, there is hence a human and political dimension to the idea of the 'scape', and this is then applied to the natural phenomenon of land. The inclusion of the suffix

'scape' pertains to the presence of the human within the image of the space, which suggests that the land is, in essence, appropriated in order to take on a human significance and is viewed with reference to human ties. The evolution of the land through human associations, the land 'scape', therefore allows for the infusion of the land with cultural significance. This is primarily due to the human interaction with the land that has changed and altered over time.

In terms of the dynamics of space, Massey notes that 'no spaces are stable, given for all time; all spaces are transitory and one of the most crucial things about spatiality (a characteristic which lends both its continual openness and, thus, its availability to politics) is that it is always being made' (Lury and Massey 1999: 231). This conception of space as a process that is in a state of 'being made' allows it to be opened up to re-articulation and re-configuration over a period of time, and in relation to different films. The individual begins to have an imagined relationship alongside the charged significance of the landscape. There is hence a gradual development of importance imbued within the landscape; 'every landscape is an accumulation, and its study may be undertaken as formal history, methodically defining the making of the landscape from the past to the present' (Meinig, 1979: 6). Each layer of this accumulation has a certain cultural and symbolic value.

A particular image of a given landscape can represent the current predicament of the space, but it is also an elucidation of the historical importance of the site. This will be considered in relation to Massey's notion of the 'still' image (an interpretation of the long take on the landscape), which she states has certain allusions to the work of Henri Bergson in terms of his concept of *durée* (Massey, 2005, 57-58). The association between the past and the landscape is embedded within memory. The 'absent presence' in Massey's terms (Massey, 2011) of the human is equally as important as the presence of the landscape on screen, which brings to light the connections between the imagined and the imaged in relation to the region.¹⁰⁰ What is imaged on screen

¹⁰⁰ In her essay on Landscape/ Space/ Politics, Massey utilizes the notion of 'absent presences' in relation to the 'big systems, huge infrastructural networks, the military, the financial crisis' (Massey, 2011.). All of these elements shape the landscape and the space, but they are not always visually evident. In this chapter, I will be using this phrase in order to note the impact that the human figure has had upon the landscape, and how it has been shaped by human influence.

can function as a conservator of crucial elements that are relevant to the imagined state of the region.

In terms of the aesthetic reproduction of the landscape, the images are interpreted within the context of the narrative form, and this pertains to an exploration of 'national' or regional culture and identity. The use of the static or lingering camera frames the landscape, and therefore

makes the place pregnant with significance. We *contemplate* inherently, in a way parallel to but separate from the characters. We are engaged, even before they arrive or after they leave, in a scrutiny that we do not understand but that seems nonetheless urgent (Chatman, cited in Lefebvre 2006: 40 - emphasis in the original text).

There is thus an engagement with the cinematic medium as a visual form, but it does not detract from its narrative requirements. The landscape functions as the habitual basis of the cinematic frame, providing the backdrop for the action that takes place between the characters. The significance of the landscape even transcends the human figure that is included within the frame, since a national or regional identity has been maintained over a succession of generations and thus cannot solely be embedded within the ephemeral state of the human on screen. For example, within the rural landscape, there are traces of the human being and experiences of human nature that have shaped the land, creating and moulding it into an agricultural habitat so as to continue the presence of people in the space.

Let us now apply these ideas to the regional landscapes found in francophone Belgian cinema. According to Andrien, the region of Wallonia 'n'est pas un désert culturel! Il y a là une terre qui demande à être irriguée ... Il y a là une attente' (Andrien, 1998).¹⁰¹ Andrien thus views Wallonia as a region that is underappreciated and excluded from the cinema of Belgium. The region is not a space void of cultural significance, but is a space that needs to attract further cinematic investment and production facilities in order to garner ameliorated cultural consideration and awareness.

¹⁰¹ [Wallonia is not a cultural desert! There is a land there that demands to be irrigated... There is an expectation there.]

Andrien utilizes his film *Le Grand paysage d'Alexis Droeven/ The Wide Horizons of Alexis Droeven* (Jean-Jacques Andrien, 1981) as an example that signifies the social situation of Wallonia and the problem of the delineation of the Belgian regions in the early 1980s. The film can therefore be read on two levels; the first concerning the shift in the use of the land and the changing socio-economic patterns in Wallonia (Mosley, 2001: 191), and the second strand in relation to the re-drawing of the national and regional cartography (Sojcher, 1999b: 184-185).¹⁰²

Mosley discusses Andrien's film more on the level of the 'regional' rather than an intrinsic focus on the local issues of the 'Fourons' villages. He asserts that the film truly encompasses 'the mood of indeterminacy and historical suspension symbolizing Walloon society in the throes of socioeconomic decline' (Mosley, 2001: 191). In essence, the film is not limited to a particularly local and specific place within the region of Wallonia, but the issues and problems suffered by the population are part of the Walloon region on a more general level. The issues of the changes to the agrarian society and use of the land are not restricted to one place, but it has also affected other rural areas within the francophone Belgian region. The French newspaper *Le Monde* also described the film as 'le premier grand film d'un cinéma wallon' ('Le premier grand film d'un cinéma wallon', 1981).¹⁰³ This therefore points towards the nascent creation of a Walloon cinematic regional identity and heritage, and highlights the fragmentation of the national within the cultural production of cinema.

The film blurs the boundaries between fiction and the socio-economic realities of the region, since Andrien intersperses the fictionalized narrative with documentary footage of the 1962 and 1978 farmer strikes (Mosley, 2001: 191). These strikes are set against the backdrop of a changing region, as the agricultural business was suffering a decline (Thomas, 1995: 207). This evolution was therefore viewed as having potentially destabilizing and disturbing effects upon the human relationship with the land. Emphasis is placed upon the rural ancestral lands of work and production as axiomatic to the conception of a Walloon regional identity.

¹⁰² Sojcher (1999b: 184) also acknowledges the shifting patterns in the agricultural business in Wallonia and the subsequent effects upon the socio-economic condition of its inhabitants.

¹⁰³ [the first major film of a Walloon cinema]

Against the backdrop of the regional problems, the rural milieu in the 'Fourons' was utilized in order to foster the sense of self-determination and self-affirmation (Sojcher, 1999b: 185). The rural landscape plays a significant role in terms of the memory and history embedded within the territory, which affirms the person's sense of belonging to Wallonia over and above Flanders. The visualization of the rural landscape also compresses the notions of past and present (a space-time continuum), equating the notion of a regional identity with the historic and ancestral landscape. The notion of a regional identity is thus conflated within the rural environment that relates to a more historical conception in order to re-affirm spatial difference.

The previous theorizations of the landscape (Cosgrove, 1998; Jackson, 1984; Meinig, 1979) emphasize how the space is viewed in relation to human culture and society. A salient example of this dimension is the film *Eldorado*, which has the figure of the filmmaker injected into the film as one of the two central protagonists. The two central figures function as a character presence within the Walloon regional landscape, thereby connecting with the landscape as more than a mere setting. Cultural significance is thus imbued within the Walloon landscape through human interaction and contemplation. The contemplative shots suggest a psychological and inherently human connection to the landscape portrayed on screen. For example, in *Eldorado* and *Ultranova*, the filmmaker includes a contemplation of the rural and the urban environments of Wallonia. The filmmaker frames the rural and the urban areas in a similar manner in both *Eldorado* and *Ultranova*, which consequently suggests the significance of both landscapes in relation to his characters and to his filmmaking style.

The next point to note is that the urban and city environment are also compatible with this conceptualization of the landscape. The notion transcends a mere depiction of natural features and incorporates human and social ties and associations that are embedded within the city's formation. The landscape is not only parochially concerned with the agrarian transformation of the space, but it also engages with the space of the city and the artificial human additions to the land. Massey describes the city as 'an intense form of spatiality' (Massey, 1999: 232), which has multiplicities (with its cited connections to Henri Lefebvre,

1974),¹⁰⁴ relations,¹⁰⁵ and flows that are firmly entrenched within its contours (*ibid*). In this sense, cities are open entities that are part of an ongoing sense of production and renewal, and this brings into consideration the notion of temporality in relation to this spatial construct.

The main feature to extrapolate from Shiel and Fitzmaurice's introduction to a collection of essays entitled *Cinema and the City* is the existence of 'uneven development' (2003: 8-9), which is considered in relation to the 'post-industrial' development. Shiel and Fitzmaurice (2003: 8-9) further emphasize this as a sociological concept, predicated upon the economic and social conditions of the city environment. The discourse of 'postmodernism' in relation to space, as conceptualized by the scholars Harvey (1989), Soja (1989) and Jameson (1991), fits with the development of post-industrialism, which has assumed a significant position in the representations of the urban environment in film (Shiel and Fitzmaurice, 2003: 8-9). The contemplation of the city will consequently bring to light issues concerning social marginalization and social polarization.

In this chapter, the urban environment is also considered as a man-made environment within the wider Walloon landscape and flatlands. Incidentally, Belgium is one of the most urbanized countries in Europe, since 97% of its population resides in urban spaces (Datamonitor, 2008: 65). The distinctions between the cities of Wallonia are rather convoluted, since there is no dominant city; Namur is the Walloon capital, Charleroi is the most populous city, Mons is perceived as the cultural capital and Liège has the largest metropolitan area.

In terms of the overall Belgian urban hierarchy, the city of Liège is positioned third behind the capital region of Brussels and the Flemish city of Antwerp (Kesteloot et al., 2007: 86). The number of inhabitants in the city is calculated at a figure of 193.948 (Liège.be, 2013),¹⁰⁶ whereas the overall population number for the Liège arrondissement (the metropolitan area) is in

¹⁰⁴ Massey also engages with the dictum of multiplicities in a spatial context, which she refers to as the layering of 'difference' and 'heterogeneity' within a given sphere (Massey, 2005: 10).

¹⁰⁵ The notion of 'relation', at this point, refers back to the aforementioned powerful idea of the space being in a constant state of evolution and flux, which Massey describes as a 'story-so-far' and a space that is 'under construction' (Massey, 2005: 10-11).

¹⁰⁶ The 2012 and 2013 statistics for the city centre population are available. The figure for 2012 is 194.962 and the most recent figure is 194.962 for 2013.

the region of 614.600 people in 2011 (Eurostat, 2013).¹⁰⁷ Liège is perhaps best conceived as an industrial city in decline, or as an increasingly de-industrialized city that is beginning to embrace neoliberal policies. The city has been in a state of decline since the 1950s with the Keynesian-Fordist economic system, that the city was predicated upon, being re-located. This weakness in the forging of a regional centre in Wallonia is partly attributed to ‘the lack of a medieval urban tradition, comparable to that of Flanders’ (Thomas, 1990: 47). The rapid development of the cities and towns in the region occurred instead during the period of industrialization of the nineteenth century, which has created an intrinsically urban industrial character. The economic base of the city had already been marked by a shift from coal mining to heavy steelwork industries during the nineteenth century. The closing of metallurgic factories in the 1950s and 1960s has resulted in deterioration of both human and social ties and bonds that has witnessed a divestment in the community. This has resulted in an increase in antisocial values and behaviour in these given areas.

The instability of employment, due to the de-industrialization of the city, has resulted in urban marginalization and social polarization. In the two films in this chapter, these are the primary issues that are manifested in the characters and how they are positioned in relation to the city landscape. Unemployment in the city is at 26% (IWEPS, 2013), which is significantly higher than the Belgian national average of 7.6% (Eurostat, 2013). The region of Wallonia also shows high levels of youth unemployment, for members of the region under the age of 25, with 29.6% (Macguire et al., 2013). These statistics thus suggest that the post-industrial and de-industrial environment in the arrondissement is in a period of decline in terms of socio-economic issues.

Within the cinematic representations of the city in the films of Bouli Lanners, this geographical unevenness is manifested through internal hierarchies and “zonings” (as reflected in *Ultranova*’s original title) that are constructed through a periphery-centre dynamic. These “zonings” are essentially areas where issues of social marginalization and social polarization are most pronounced. In both *Ultranova* and *Eldorado*, the suburban and city outskirts exist as spaces that are typically conceptualized as areas of social

¹⁰⁷ The 2011 statistics are the most recent figures available for the levels of population by arrondissement in Belgium.

marginalization. However, as we shall see, there are also key differences to the way these fringe areas of the city are represented in the two films. In *Eldorado* the characters are able to traverse beyond the outskirts of the city before returning to the starting point of the film, whereas in *Ultranova* the characters are firmly locked and entrenched within a particular “zoning” of the urban space.¹⁰⁸

Bouli Lanners’ first film, *Ultranova*, takes place in the same location as the beginning and the ending of his second feature, *Eldorado*. The original title of the film *Zoning Lonesome Cow-boys* presupposes a consideration of the city in relation to its inhabitants, since it delineates a particular space within the city of Liège that is reserved for and includes people who are suffering from issues of social polarization. The film focuses upon the development of the flatlands in terms of constructing a housing area on the periphery of Liège. The central protagonist, Dimitri, serves as a guide for the spectator, navigating the film through this delineated “zoning”, which encompasses the rural flatlands on the fringes of the Walloon city and the suburban industrial metropolitan periphery.

The film is constructed as a series of sequences with the Liègeois “zoning” and the character of Dimitri as the uniting factors. The six people that Dimitri comes into contact with are discontent with the state of their lives, and this is exemplified through Jeanne’s attempt to gouge her hand in order to create a new ‘course’ for her life and Jean-Claude’s decision to commit suicide. Although all of the six central characters have jobs, a sense of loneliness and helplessness remains, which is manifested not only through the two characters’ decision to self-harm, but also embedded within Dimitri’s failed relationship with Cathy and his upbringing as an orphan. The narrative is a construction of fragmentary vistas, which are composed of interactions and exchanges between the six central characters. In terms of the film’s spatial configuration, *Ultranova* infuses the urban with the rural milieu, since the characters are not viewed within the centre of the city of Liège, but a peripheral zone that is impinging upon the encircling rural environment. The inclusion of such a space allows for a contemplation of the changing landscape on the fringes of the city,

¹⁰⁸ The salience of the notion of “zoning” in relation to *Ultranova* is manifested through the initial film project title *Lonesome Zoning Cowboys*.

and how this dimension correlates with the characters' interaction between the given spaces.

The narrative and notion of 'journeying' through the Walloon region pertains to a personal project for the filmmaker Bouli Lanners, since there are connections in terms of his heritage from the Ardennes region and the same voyage was included in his first short film, *Travellinckx* (Lanners, 1999). In the title of the short film, the notion of 'travel' is firmly entrenched as the central protagonist voyages across the Ardennes to seek reconciliation with his father. There is thus a mirroring between this short and his feature film *Eldorado*. Moreover, the fact the director casts himself as one of the central protagonists reinforces the notion of the film existing as a personal project for the filmmaker.

It is also possible that the casting of the director in one of the two lead roles is connected to Lanners' 'star' status in Belgium and France. With Lanners, there is the possibility of appealing to larger audiences in both countries than his previous film *Ultranova*, in which he was not cast. Lanners' image was honed as part of the TV programme, *Les Snuls*, in which '(i)l se fait ainsi très rapidement connaître au début des années 1990 grâce à un image d'acteur comique et jovial doté d'une forte présence physique' (Van Hoeij, 2010 : 86).¹⁰⁹ This 'star' image in Belgium has persisted and consequently led to roles in major productions in France, such as *Astérix aux jeux olympiques/ Asterix at the Olympic Games* (Frédéric Forestier and Thomas Langmann, 2008). The francophone Belgian actor is, at this point, part of the cross-border flows of personnel and cast between France and Belgium. Lanners' record of casting in high production films in France has subsequently improved the filmmaker's visibility beyond Belgium. As Chapter Two outlined, *Eldorado* received a higher number of film admissions and more prints in circulation in both countries. This exhibition trend can be partly attributed to the casting of Lanners himself in the film.

Lanners' second film, *Eldorado*, traces the journey of two male characters, Yvan and Didier (who initially refers to himself as Elie), as they travel across Wallonia. Their quest begins in Liège in the direction of a small town on the French border before returning to the narrative's point of origin. The

¹⁰⁹ [he therefore quickly became well-known at the start of the 1990s, thanks to his image as a comic actor, due to his strong physical presence]

development of the relationship between the two characters begins through Yvan's discovery of the desperate, disenfranchised and drug addict youth (Didier) in his home, as he searches for money in order to satisfy his addiction. Yvan does not contact the police; instead he slowly agrees to aid the youth in order to reduce his engagement with criminality and drug addiction by embarking upon a journey of self-discovery to Didier's parents, who reside on the other side of the region of Wallonia. The quest leads to an engagement with diverse characters and spaces within the Walloon environment, such as the fields, the forests and the abandoned holiday parks. The protagonist's evolution in the narrative is viewed against the backdrop of the Walloon region, highlighting the apparent inextricable link between the landscape and the character. Upon arriving at their intended destination, Yvan discovers the fractured relationship between father and son and the destabilized familial unit, which had previously resulted in Didier's decision to leave and live in the city of Liège. Yvan attempts to reconcile this unit in the capacity of a faux-elder brother for Didier, which highlights his internal grief and battle for his biological brother's death due to his heroin addiction. The impossibility of reconciliation for Yvan leads to the return journey to the city, where the two central protagonists continue their previous existences alone. This is perpetuated by the film's conclusion in which Yvan and Didier re-engage with their previous positions, which further highlights the cyclical nature of the narrative in which the two characters conclude the film in the same predicament(s) and residing in the same positions in terms of location and societal standing. This is particularly ironic, given that the film is a road-movie, which is a genre that typically employs the narrative convention of the journey as a metaphor for self-discovery.

The rural landscapes and the "still" in the works of Bouli Lanners

Catherine Fowler and Gillian Helfield (2006), in their Introduction to the collection of essays entitled *Representing the Rural: Space, Place, and Identity in Films about the Land*, outline how the rural has not been developed within film studies, which is instead preoccupied with the urban space. Fowler and Helfield claim that this is owed to the cinematic medium's long and 'innate'

connection to the urban environment (Fowler and Helfield, 2006: 1; Clarke 1997). Sitney (1993) highlights the occlusion of the representation of the rural environment within the scholarly field of film studies, and introduces a possible form of aesthetics, and this can be used in order to approach the landscape beyond the confines of the urban space in film. In terms of film syntax, there is the existence of the panoramic shot, the long shot, and deep-focus editing, which are all typically utilized in order to frame the rural milieu (Sitney, 1993: 105; Fowler and Helfield, 2006: 8).

The presentation of the rural spaces of Wallonia in *Eldorado* and *Ultranova* continues this extra-diegetic function of the landscape, since the characters do not appear and feature within the pictorial vignettes. The inclusion of such images therefore has a primarily symbolic purpose, since they are not detached from the narrative. The absence of the human in the image emphasizes a connection between the mechanical reproduction of the landscape, the tradition of the painterly landscape genre and photography. Lefebvre notes that, in these other media, the 'landscape has come to signify the depiction of a natural space freed from any emphasis on the representation of human figures and eventhood' (Lefebvre, 2011: 63).¹¹⁰ This is one of the important strands that allow the landscape to be engaged with beyond its function as a setting. The filmmaker is offering the landscape for contemplation by the spectator without any human interaction occurring between the setting and the camera. The landscape is no longer subservient to the characters (Lefebvre, 2006: 23), since it is purposely placed in the foreground so as to highlight its significance and affirm its dominance in the narrative. For example, in *Eldorado*, the rural fields of Wallonia are brought to the fore in terms of a long take without the presence of a character (Figure 4.1).

However, Massey (2011) suggests that the cinematic medium approaches the consideration of space, such as a landscape, in a manner that does not pertain to the still image. The long take in cinema is not a still image, which Massey considers through the Bergsonian prism of *durée* (Massey, 2005:

¹¹⁰ In his earlier writing on the 'landscape', Lefebvre (2006) outlines the notion of 'eventhood' in more detail through Cauquelin's reference to paintings in which the landscape is 'the basic material conditions of an event, a war, an expedition or a legend to which they remain subordinate' (Cauquelin, 1989: 39). In this sense, the landscape functions as merely the setting for 'events' and does not have any other meaning.

57-58). Massey develops in detail an interpretation of duration in relation to space, which utilizes Bergson's distancing from the notion of a frozen instant being imbued with a sense of temporality. Bergson writes in *Matter and Memory* that 'the fundamental illusion consists in transferring to duration itself, in its continuous flow, the form of the instantaneous sections which we make in it' (Bergson, 1911: 193). In this sense, the instant section, which is consistent with the notion of the still image, cannot be provided with a sense of duration; time cannot be created from the space included within the image reproduction. The still image in an instantaneous form therefore compresses the space-time flow to a point where duration cannot truly exist. Massey seeks to move beyond the instantaneous form as a 'static slice through time' (Massey, 2005: 23), which is thus viewed as immobile. However, the cinematic form is more than just an "instantaneous section" when utilized in a long take, since the mechanical reproduction is imbued with a sense of temporality due to the inclusion of 24 frames per second as an average for the medium.

The long take thus transcends the notion of an enclosed 'slice through time' (*ibid*), since it is not static. There is a level of movement and mobility that remains in the image at its core. Furthermore, the representation of the space for the period of time encourages spectator contemplation of the image, and this therefore imbues the long take and the space with a sense of 'simultaneity' or a 'story-so-far' (Massey, 2005: 9). The space and the landscape, which is portrayed within the long take, can be viewed as an unfolding environment on one hand and as an incomplete narrative pieced together in the spectator's psyche on the other. The presence of the rural milieu in the case of Bouli Lanners retains an 'absent presence' (Massey, 2011) of the human figure within the frame, and does not include a surface level of movement and mobility. Lanners' use of long unfolding shots of the Walloon landscape uses the camera to capture the landscape and the space with a sense of still-ness, but the mechanical reproduction in this case does not consist of one single image.

Although this analysis is primarily centred on the composition of the shot and how the landscape is framed, the visual images do not exist in isolation, as cinema also has an aural quality, and this therefore necessitates a consideration of sound. The sounds provide extra information to the spectator about the long take and the environment re-created on screen. The emergence

of sound from these long takes 'gives the landscape a voice' (Sitney, 1993: 110), which highlights the cinematic medium's difference in visualizing a sense of stillness from the photographic or painting reproduction of the landscape. Sitney recognizes the adjunctive nature of sound to the cinematic mechanical reproduction of the landscape, since sound in film can be 'artificially produced and doctored' (*ibid*). However, it is also important to note at this point that sound is not the only element that can be altered, since it is true of the image and the landscape that can be artificially reproduced in the digital era. If we think of films such as the CGI recreation of ancient Rome in *Gladiator* (Ridley Scott, 2000) or even the CGI changing of the colour of the natural landscape to an autumnal tone in *O brother where art thou?* (Coen brothers, 2000) the landscape has either been artificially recreated or manipulated. This is not the case in the two films by Lanners, but the filmmaker does often utilize voiceover with a long take in order to provide the landscape with significance in relation to the character. The cinematic medium therefore retains the possibility of creating a space that is a mere representation of the temporal state of the landscape at the time of the mechanical reproduction of the image. In essence, an artificial world can be constructed by the filmmaker, which thereby suggests the creation of a natural space through human interpretation.

The (absent) human figure from the cinematic frame does not occlude the relationship between the human and the land. The choice of shot is selective and requires a human figure to conceive and interpret the visual image. The constructed nature of the film by the filmmaker during the editing procedure additionally encourages the spectator's consideration of the shot (or in this case long take) alongside the sequences that are placed before and after. Although the character is absent from the visual image, there is still the possibility for the contemplation of the image in relation to the (absent) human figure. In essence, the lingering shots are viewed and contemplated in relation to the characters and their experiences, thereby providing a backdrop for the characters' previous experiences and Walloon sense of identity. These visual images that Lanners composes are therefore about characters and are concerned with space and place. Lanners reinforces this case in point

J'adore les paysages. J'aime bien intégrer les personnages dans le paysage. Pour moi, le paysage a une force narrative, parce qu'il détermine aussi le caractère des personnages (Lanners, in Gabriel, 2011: 80).¹¹¹

The characters in Lanners' films are thus intrinsically bound to the environment and enmeshed within it; the condition of the environment is articulated through the character's affiliation with the region and sense of belonging. In this sense, the images of the landscape function as a place for the characters to return and seek a degree of self-affirmation. The long takes are thus engaged with issues of belonging and therefore bring to light identity politics in relation to the region and nationhood. For example, the long takes of the countryside in *Eldorado* (Figure 4.1) encourage a contemplation of the Walloon fields and ask the spectator to consider their significance in relation to the characters that are travelling across the region. In this context, the rural environment is a way of interpreting and engaging with Walloon regional identities that have been forged over time in relation to a given space. Since a given space is imbued with temporality, the long take shot encourages an interpretation of the rural milieu in relation to its past, and this then brings into question the significance of memory and previous representations of the area.



Figure 4.1: *Eldorado* (Bouli Lanners, 2008)

¹¹¹ [I love the landscapes. I like to integrate the characters into the landscape. For me, the

In their conceptualizations of the rural environment and the landscape beyond the city, Fowler and Helfield (2006: 9), and Lefebvre (2011: 70) cite the importance of “memory” in relation to the space conceived on screen. Schama writes, in his publication *Landscape and Memory*, that ‘(b)efore it can ever be a repose for the senses, landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock’ (Schama, 1995: 6). Harper and Rayner concur with Schama, arguing that ‘cinematic landscapes [...] can also be considered *conduits to memories*’ (Harper and Rayner, 2011: 19: emphasis added). In this sense, memory is embedded within the natural world and features of the landscape, which thereby suggests an ‘absent presence’ (Massey, 2011) of the human within the frame.

In *Eldorado*, the long takes of the rural milieu and fields of Wallonia pertain to the historical source of agriculture, which is referred to in order to re-affirm one’s sense of belonging and regional Walloon identity. The exemplar screenshot from the film *Eldorado* (Figure 4.1) highlights this engagement with the “still”, which unfolds over the duration of 36 seconds. During this period, there is the existence of movement, with the wind flowing across the wheat crops in the fields and the sweeping of the grey clouds across the rural background. The duration of this shot and the (absent) human figure from the countryside encourage the engagement with memory and contemplation in order to piece together the salience of the shot to the film’s narrative. There is thus a memory of the use of the fields as a key construct of the region’s economy, lifestyle, and local traditions deeply embedded within the long takes of the fields. Furthermore, the inclusion of the “stills” function in contrast to the notion of the American frontier that is alluded to in reference in the title, *Eldorado*, since the rural fields do not necessarily pertain to a marginal ‘void’ where people are rootless, but refers to a space that is salient in the re-discovery of a sense of identity along regional lines. This notion of the ‘void’ pertains to Sargeant and Watson’s (1999: 14) discussion of the desert in the US road movie, which will be considered in more detail later in this chapter.

Although the title is a direct reference to the Hollywood film *El Dorado* (Howard Hawks, 1966) (Cinergie, 2008), *Eldorado* is conjuring up and referring to other Walloon films, such as the aforementioned *Le grand paysage d’Alexis*

landscape has a narrative force, because it also determines the character of the protagonists.]

Droeven, in which the agricultural heritage of the region refers to a sense of community and solidarity on a local and regional level that has since been lost. There is thus a layering of the past and the present through the reference to memory, and this has in turn left a trace upon the individuals in terms of their group consciousness. Andrien's film highlights the shifting patterns in the construction of the images of the region, since it asserts an investment in the agrarian way of life and traditions, which are in a process of being lost to the increasing forces of urbanization and (de-)industrialization. This therefore suggests that Andrien's corralling of memory into the agrarian landscape is not necessarily nostalgic, but it is reinforcing a point about the loss of the agrarian Walloon past. The rural landscape, in this case, is used to emphasize how the region has changed, and also how the life of the Walloon population has also adapted and shifted to the current de-industrial and post-industrial environment.



Figure 4.2: *Ultranova* [Opening Sequence]



Figure 4.3: *Ultranova* [Final Sequence]

In *Ultranova*, the rural environment opens (Figure 4.2) and closes (Figure 4.3) the film, which signals the film's circular narrative. The decision to utilize the images of the rural landscape to bookend the film highlights the positioning of the countryside as a liminal space that encircles the urban environment, at the same time as it delineates the normative limits of Liège. The spectator is introduced to the character of Dimitri within a vast, deserted and barren grey rural landscape on the fringes of the city of Liège next to an upturned car. This shot of the rural environment emphasizes the deserted and 'void' nature of the space inhabited by the character. The rural milieu thus signals the end of the journey for the central protagonist; it is a space that has brought an immediate end to the mobility of the character with the car crash in this area. The interaction between the rural-urban environments is part of the distinctive geography of Wallonia, and will be considered in more detail later in this chapter in terms of the character contemplation shots of Liège.

The concluding shot of *Ultranova* (Figure 4.3) pertains to this conception of the "still" in relation to the rural environment, as the cinematic frame concentrates upon the bleak flatlands of Wallonia. The camera is static in terms of its positioning for the period of 42 seconds, with no presence of the human figure within the frame. However, after 15 seconds, the filmmaker introduces a voiceover. The use of voiceover temporalizes the space, and forges a contemplation of the landscape in relation to the human figures that have been previously present in the film. The ending of the film reveals that the character of Dimitri has not travelled to the countryside to seek a sense of comfort and

self-affirmation like the character of Didier in the later film *Eldorado*, but the act of fate, with the engaging of the airbag that causes the crash, renders the character stranded within this environment. The inclusion of the rural environment thus primarily serves to heighten the marginality of the central protagonist, Dimitri. The fields delineate the normative limits of Liège, where Dimitri lives and works, so therefore he is immediately situated upon the margins and distanced from his home and urban community.

The bookending of the film with images of the countryside thus imbues the space with a salience that extends to its presence at the nexus of a sense of Walloon regional identity. In essence, the rural milieu provides the characters and the spectators with a part of a Walloon regional identity that has since withered away. It is a space that was fundamental to the dwelling, traditions, and a way of life before the periods of urbanization and industrialization in the Walloon region. However, this inclusion of the rural milieu and its allusions to a formative sense of collective identity serve only to heighten the contemporary status of the individual on the margins. The lack of people and dwellings in the shot also emphasizes the distance that the individual has from a community, and a sense of communion that is no longer apparent, but is located far in the past. This relation to the past informs the present disaffection from the community for Dimitri, thereby confirming the individual's situation as a marginal figure. The inclusion of the rural environment suffuses historical and cultural significance with the image of the landscape, and therefore relates to a Walloon regional sense of identity that is located in the past. It is also a point of contrast with the city, which took on greater importance in terms of employment and led to the formation of new communities at the time of industrialization. The current state and exploration of the city is linked to the period of de-industrialization, and the gradual deterioration of these communities. The evolution of a Walloon identity follows the shifting dynamics of the space, from an agrarian heritage to a present de-industrialized city.

From the rural to the urban: Liège in *Eldorado* and *Ultranova*

When discussing *Eldorado*, Bouli Lanners stated that 'j'ai essayé d'échapper à tout ce qui est urbain' (Lanners, in Van Hoeij, 2010: 45).¹¹² Instead, the filmmaker sought to re-direct his emphasis and focus onto the rural aspects of Wallonia and Belgium and distance the characters from an association with the urban environment. Nevertheless, the central protagonists are enmeshed beings from the city environment of Liège, and therefore their senses of belonging and sense of Walloon identity are considered through this prism. The moments of introspection by the characters upon the landscape are engaged with in relation to the urban environment. In this sense, the 'regional' is thus conceptualized as outside and on the periphery of the city; there is an affiliation with the rural environment as a key component of Walloon identity, as expressed in the previous discussion on *Le grand paysage d'Alexis Droeven*. It is to say that the city is a unique space that has formed its own culture from interactions between the surrounding areas and from beyond the region's borders.

The journey in *Eldorado* moves away from the backdrop of the city and the suburbs, in order to offer a contrast between the urban spaces and the 'regional' and rural spaces of the film. So, yet again, the city is qualified as a more generic urban environment, whilst it is in the rural locations that a true sense of Walloon history and identity is to be found. However, the filmmaker does not necessarily 'escape' the urban environment in terms of occluding its presence for the film frame. He instead engages with the urban space from a distance that infuses the rural milieu with the urban skyline. This consequently questions the human associations to the urban environment, thereby reinforcing the salience of the rural milieu to the conceptualization of a 'regional' sense of identity.

Contrast between rural and urban locations are recognized in the two Bouli Lanners films considered in this chapter through the theme of mobility, which allows for the passage between the two distinct environments. The spatial configuration of the film *Eldorado* is not concerned with the urban city centre, but posits a distinction between the suburban and rural environments of

¹¹² [I tried to escape everything that is urban]

Wallonia. The passage between the urban space and the rural milieu is formed through the use of the road movie genre conventions and the notion of mobility, which will be engaged with later in this chapter.

The mere inclusion of the city centre in the cinematic frame pertains to a spatializing principle and cultural turn through the type of the shot, the space as the setting for the narrative, and the sequential development of the narrative that forges a relationship between these different settings. Within the cinematic frame, the city space is emphasized and included in order to serve not only as a predicate for the narrative action, but it is also a space of contemplation, notably within the two works of Bouli Lanners. The presence of the city is viewed in contrast with the rural environment in this film, since the rural borderlands that encircle Liège play a fundamental role for the reading of the city. The films are not necessarily enmeshed within the workings of the centre of the Walloon city, but they are instead considering the peripheral zones. It is within these zones that issues, such as social polarization and social marginalization are brought to the fore.

The social polarization in the space of the city accentuates the lack of community identity and solidarity. In essence, the characters in the space are individualized. The notion of the city is therefore constructed along a centre-periphery pattern and a schema of inclusion and exclusion. In Lanners' films, the centre-periphery model is partly engendered through topographical particularities that have created historical and traditional associations with the city centre and the growth of the suburbs in Liège. There is thus the creation of social fragmentation that is predicated upon the nascent industrialization in the city. The geography of Liège posits this centre-periphery dynamic with the steep riverbanks of the Meuse, thereby creating a distinct concentric circle between the city centre and the industrial worker suburbs (Kestelout et al. 2001). These suburbs emerged around the more bourgeois core due to the presence of a topographical particularity, which presented a physical border to the creation of housing and industrial worker areas closer to the city centre. This clear topographical distinction is portrayed in the 'contemplation shot' of *Ultranova* (Figure 4.5), since the central protagonist of Dimitri is positioned behind the river, La Meuse, which restricts his access to the city centre of Liège and maintains his position within the suburban reaches of the city.

The narratives of *Eldorado* and *Ultranova* also highlight the disconnection between the centre and its suburban concentric circles. Social polarization, which is a significant theme of the post-industrial condition within a given space, is not visualized on screen, but is embodied within the characterization and the confluence of the two protagonists in the space of the car in the film, *Eldorado*. The spectator witnesses Didier's socio-economic lack through his requirement to steal money from the home of Yvan in the opening sequence. This thus suggests that the suburban areas of Liège, in which Yvan resides, are not composed of marginal figures and populated by people who are suffering from the notion of urban abandonment. The flows are rather in the opposite direction (in particular in relation to the films of the Dardenne brothers), with Didier, who resides in the centre of the city, migrating to the outskirts in search of increasing his personal wealth through criminal means in order to satisfy his habits.

In *Ultranova*, this dimension is further nuanced through the location of the film in its entirety within a suburban 'zone' on the fringes of Liège. The six characters in the film are all provided with employment, either as workers in a furniture depot or as housing salesmen, but the sense of social polarization is engendered through their lack of parent-child relationships, for example Dimitri and Cathy suggest that they are orphans and Verbrugge commits suicide after the breakdown of his marriage. The clear delineation of a centre-periphery dynamic across Liège does not neatly map onto an inclusion-exclusion schema, since the inhabitants of the fringes are able to maintain employment through their location in a space of possibilities.

In the film, *Rosetta* (Dardenne brothers, 1999) for example, the Dardenne brothers position their protagonist on the outskirts of the town of Seraing in a caravan park. This space thus functions as a site reserved for the people who are excluded from the imagined centre for the employed and financially stable inhabitants. Symbolic borders, such as the woodland area and the river, are constructed in order to further highlight the levels of exclusion and the difficulties in attaining a place within the city centre. In Chapter Six, the centre-periphery dynamic will be engaged with in relation to *Le gamin au vélo*, which considers the location of the marginalized child figure on the periphery of the city as he seeks a sense of stability in the city centre. The notion of a

Walloon identity is hence conceptualized as de-centred, since the characters in these films are primarily located on the periphery of the city. This adheres to the universally conceived construction of the urban margins as a site of the dissolution of the proletarian worker, which is predicated upon the uncertain future of temporary jobs and high levels of unemployment. An occlusion from the local economy thus leads to the sentiments of abandonment and rejection from the community, which is created through a positioning of the character in fringe settlements.

In the case of *Eldorado*, Yvan's employment as a car trader and mechanic for racing does not necessarily belong to the reformed city centre and the hub of business and economic activity. It is rather a mode of employment that is a nostalgic harkening back to the times of the traditional working class and proletarian modes of employment and opportunity in the formerly industrial spaces on the fringes of Liège. For Didier, this hub functions as an internal zone of exclusion due to his lack of active participation in the lived experience of the city. The meeting of the two characters questions the social insecurity and the precarious nature of the society in the city, by positing two alternate modes of identification that are able to co-exist within the same space of the sprawling city environment.



Figure 4.4: *Eldorado*



Figure 4.5: *Ultranova*

Gabriel notes the similarities in these two shots from Lanners films, and suggests that the characters are not only content to journey across the landscape, but they stop at points to contemplate it (Gabriel, 2011: 87). Furthermore, as this chapter outlines, the contemplation of the landscape is a way of viewing the character against a landscape, thereby opening up their Walloon regional identity as de-centred.

The concluding shot of the film reinforces the notion of individual solitude with Yvan situated on the periphery of Liège, contemplating his relationship to the landscape and witnessing the space through the character's prism (Figure 4.5). The use of this 'contemplation shot' is a recurrent element in Lanners' corpus of work, since the filmmaker frames the relationship between the human figure and the landscape in a similar manner in *Eldorado* (Figure 4.4) and *Ultranova* (Figure 4.5). In both films, the character's back is turned to the camera and to the spectator, and this encourages and directs the spectator to the background and the setting of the film. The two shots are composed with the character in the immediate foreground and the outline of the city in the distance, which positions the two characters on the periphery. This method of shot composition establishes a human psychological connection to the landscape, and emphasizes the salience of the landscape as more than a setting for the characters' actions. The mechanical reproduction captures the essence of the regional setting, and it reinforces the human correlation of the land and the landscape, due to the presence of dwellings in the shape of Liège

constructed upon the land. However, the presence of the human figure in the foreground of both of the images adheres to a temporalizing tendency of the landscape, since the spectator is encouraged to view the outline of the city through the prism of the character. There is thus a manifestation of the notion of relation between the human figure and the space in which he resides. The positioning of the character is mirrored in each of the films, since the character remains in the foreground at a distance from the city centre. The contemplation shot does not include the intricacies and particularities of the city of Liège, but it is the use of the city skyline to designate a centre from which the character is clearly viewed to be at a distance and occupy a margin. The character therefore inhabits a zone on the periphery that is between the rural milieu, which is conceived through the use of the “still”, and the city centre, as outlined by the city skyline.

The composition of the image brings to light the centre-periphery dynamics that lie beneath Paasi's (2003) conception of the 'region' and 'regional identity'. The use of the city centre as the salient space for contemplation by the character highlights their de-centred positioning, which can be combined with their isolated individual presence on the fringes of the city to create an inside-outside schema. The characters are not located within the centre, but contemplate their existence in relation to this space. By combining this notion with the contemplation of the rural milieu in both films, the characters can be seen to be considering their 'regional' sense of identity and community through an outward-looking (to the countryside from the city) and an inward-looking (from the periphery to the centre) perspective. The two landscapes are charged with different symbolic meanings and possible readings, since the rural equates to a historical and traditional formation of nationhood and regional identity, whereas the city is imbued with a sense of transnational connections through its position as a hub of business activity in addition to the presence of internal multiplicities in terms of identity and communities. The space that the characters inhabit oscillates between the urban and rural milieus, which posit a reading of the space in flux, since it navigates between the two distinct milieus. The “zoning” on the fringes highlights the fragmented nature of the city, which is imbued with internal multiplicities and de-centerings in terms of an individual sense of belonging. This is consistent with the formulation of the urban

environment in relation to the post-industrial image culture, which has internal hierarchies composed across the city space. This moment of introspection and contemplation allows for a mental and emotional evaluation of the land as the fundamental basis of the regional identity, thereby affirming the character's sense of belonging. However, it is a consideration of a space that sequesters and isolates individuals from the possibility of a communal regional solidarity.

The contemplative nature of the lingering shots of the rural environment and the city in both *Eldorado* and *Ultranova* distance the use of the landscape as merely the setting for the film, but the shots highlight it as a salient signifier and need interpreting in this manner. These static shots function in contrast to the conventional camerawork of the American road movie genre, and prevent the sense of perpetual mobility, which is imbued within the use of the travelling shots (Laderman, 2002: 15). However, as Laderman suggests, in the context of the European road movie, the quest for 'meaning' is foregrounded over and above 'the high speed, thrill-seeking driving typical of American road movies, their films (European) emphasize introspection and reflection' (Laderman, 2002: 248). In this sense, the European films seek significance in the landscapes that encircle the characters and the automobile. In the case of *Eldorado* and *Ultranova*, the filmmaker, Bouli Lanners, encourages a contemplation of the landscape and a 'regional' or de-centred form of identity through his inclusion of long takes and "stills". The camerawork reflects this approach, by utilizing a static frame to circumscribe the spectator's gaze to the desolate landscape. This therefore identifies an important dynamic that occurs throughout *Eldorado*, which oscillates between fixity and flux in terms of camerawork and notions of a Walloon or 'regional' identity.

In his first short film, *Non Wallonie, ta culture n'est pas morte/ No Wallonia, your culture is not dead* (Bouli Lanners, 1996), Lanners explores the use of the travelling shot upon the empty rural landscape in order to re-assert the cultural remnants that remain within the francophone Belgian region. Although there is a sense of movement imbued within the travelling shot from the car, the focus remains upon the rural landscape rather than the characters. The voyage motif enables an engagement with the landscapes beyond the confines of the urban environment and serves to exhibit to the spectator the plurality and variation of the landscapes in Wallonia, such as the countryside in

the case of the images that perpetuate a sense of still-ness. In the next section, the journey, through the use of the road movie genre (with wider primarily American influences), introduces the spectator to the Ardennes. This is a region that geographically extends beyond Belgium and Wallonia. In this sense, the journey allows for an engagement with landscapes that are not intrinsically bound to the Walloon region.

Eldorado: The Ardennes and the Road Movie

In *Eldorado*, the use of the road movie sub-genre pertains to an engagement and exploration with the concept of Walloon regional identity through the shifting landscape. The previous two sections outlined the questioning of 'regional' identity in relation to the contemplation of the rural and urban environments. As we saw in the previous section, the rural landscape pertains to a formative regional sense of identity in Wallonia, and references an agrarian way of life and community that has since withered away. The situation of the characters in the two Lanners films - on the fringes of the city - also notes how the use of the land and the role of particularly the working class male have changed in Wallonia. The use of the road movie genre, primarily in *Eldorado*, enables the filmmaker to include and contemplate the variety of landscapes in the Walloon region.

As Cohen and Hark note, the road movie genre retains the 'potential for romanticizing alienation as well as ... problematizing the uniform identity of a nation's culture' (Cohen and Hark, 1997: 1). By substituting the nation for the region, the use of the American road-movie convention, in this case, introduces the characters to a variety of different landscapes across the Walloon region. This therefore opens up the understanding of the Walloon region as more than just a parochial urban-rural binary opposition and one that is potentially transnational, the Ardennes, through a transnational influence (Hollywood).

Harper and Rayner note the significance of the road movie genre as an 'interpretive filter' (Harper and Rayner, 2011: 24), which informs the spectator's engagement with the landscape. The act of the voyage thereby encourages a reading of different landscapes that exist within a delineated space. The road movie pertains to a level of fluidity in terms of the engagement with the

landscape, since it does not remain static throughout the course of the film. The characters' journey shows the variety of landscapes in Wallonia, since the two protagonists pass through urban, rural and semi-mountainous terrain. The work of Bouli Lanners, arguably more than any other Belgian filmmaker, transcends and re-charts the Walloon region that is cited as a standard urban-rural conception (Mosley, 2001: 2), by including both the flatlands and the rough Walloon terrain in *Eldorado*. The inclusion of the semi-mountainous terrain of the Ardennes in the film engenders a further dimension to the Walloon space, which is inherently regional in a devolved Belgian sense, but is also transnational in terms of the situation of this area within and beyond the national borders of Belgium.

The motif of the journey has European connections and roots, but the notion of freedom and wide, open spaces pertains to an American evolution of the road movie and travel film genre (Eyerman and Löfgren 1995: 55-56). Sargeant and Watson (1999: 14) consider the desert as one such space in the American road movie by describing it as a 'void in which long established meanings vanish' (*ibid*). This perception of the North American 'void' thus allows the protagonist's self-discovery and re-invention of the self, whereas the journey motif in the European context is more problematic due to its constellation of nations, states, cultures and languages.

The characteristics of European travel and road films therefore concern 'crossing national borders or, in the case of national travel, on the landscapes that the voyagers traverse, moving, for instance, from the deprived to wealthy areas, from the country to the city, or simply through regions presenting different cultures' (Mazierska and Rascaroli, 2004: 5). The European road and travel film is thus concerned with a more parochial approach to the nation and the State, in which the emphasis is placed upon the protagonist's subsequent response and reactions to the shifting landscape and environment within the borders of the region or the nation-state.

In *Eldorado*, the open spaces of the rural Walloon heartlands reference a formative sense of Walloon identity, thereby foregrounding the protagonists' journey 'through and into culture' (Laderman 2002: 252) and highlighting 'the use of the road to express a national (or European) imaginary space' (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2004: 6). It is thus fundamental to retain a

consideration of national, regional and local specificities in order to perpetuate the heterogeneous formulation of this road movie as a European version of the American genre. This journey, within the European context, elucidates questions of community, difference and also issues concerning identity politics. It also outlines a route that encompasses both urban and rural spaces, and this therefore necessitates a consideration of how the notion of Walloon identity and social relationships differs between a rural and urban environment. As we previously saw, the rural areas traversed within the film retain cultural and historical importance, whereas the urban space serves only to emphasize the characters' marginality.

The journey enables the two protagonists' metaphysical exploration of the notion of regional or Walloon identity, which draws a social map and therefore highlights to what extent the mental geography matches the physical landscape presented on screen. Arguably, it is part of human nature to attempt to find a sense of belonging to a community, with the nation and/ or the region fulfilling this desire. The constant movement of the two characters throughout their journey highlights the instability of the notion of identity (whether that may be national, regional, personal), which is constantly in a state of flux and renewal as the film progresses. As Zygmunt Bauman argues, within the postmodern 'problem of identity' one tends to 'avoid fixation and keep options open' (Bauman, 1996: 18). Masierska and Rascaroli (2004: 1) foreground Bauman's notion of the 'problem of identity' in order to better understand mobility and identity in the European road movie. In the case of characters in the road movie genre, identity can be seen as fluid and ever-changing in relation to their shifting surroundings.

In *Eldorado*, the character of Didier embodies this problematic sense of identity, since he decides to embark on this journey home and at the same time embraces a false persona in order to do so. This fluidity is embodied within the character of Didier in *Eldorado*, who is initially introduced to the spectator as "Elie", which is then revealed as a false identity forty-seven minutes into the film. The mobility and fluidity of the camera simultaneously explores the character and the landscape. By embracing a false persona, Didier (as Elie) is refusing a fixing of his Walloon or Belgian 'national' identity within defined contours, which is mirrored in the state of flux of the film's narrative. In fact, he

highlights the state of uncertainty that lies within the notion of a Belgian 'national' identity. He has a false persona in Liège, and is rejected from his home town on the border with France. The sense of belonging within an imagined community, whether that may be Belgian or Walloon, is absent. The idea of travelling 'home' suggests a movement towards self-affirmation and discovery, but it is ultimately left uncertain and unfulfilled as both Didier and Yvan return to their original positions in Liège. This uncertainty of identity in Belgium is best exemplified by the singing of the Belgian national anthem by Didier. The national anthem as paean to Belgian 'national' unity evokes the notion of an imagined solidarity amongst the citizens of both Wallonia and Belgium. However, an imagined bond does not even exist between the two central characters (Didier and Yvan) on a regional level, since the false persona points to the gradual deterioration of the social bonds that connect Didier to an imagined Walloon community. His decision to use the name "Elie" is predicated upon his inability to trust Yvan, and this accentuates the lack of solidarity between the Walloon people in a post-industrial landscape. In essence, this sequence emphasizes the artificial nature of a Belgian 'national' identity, since the imagined Walloon community is in fact undermined, not solidified, through the relationship between Yvan and Didier. Referring back to the "stills" in the rural landscape in *Eldorado*, the references to a Walloon rural form of identity located in the past further emphasizes this current lack of solidarity.

The casting of the role of Didier also feeds into this questionable notion of a Walloon or Belgian identity, since the actor, Fabrice Adde, is a young French actor, who studied at the Conservatoire de Liège in Wallonia. There is thus the casting of a French actor to take on the role of a young Walloon/Belgian character, which further highlights the idea of exchange within the film industry, and can be extended to the actors within the film, between France and the French speaking regions of Belgium. Moreover, as previously discussed in Chapter One, the inclusion of a French actor is attributed to meeting the requirements of the funding from the minority co-producing partner of France.

The journey represents a return home to the unnamed border town for Didier, but it is an internal return that does not require a confrontation and engagement with exterior cultures, values and traditions in order to re-affirm his sense of belonging. The characters travel towards the national border between

Wallonia and France but they do not cross it. Although the trajectory of the film is towards France, there is no consideration of re-configuring the exploration of the self within the context of a French-Walloon relationship. The film reaches the liminal point of Wallonia and Belgium, before completing the circular nature of the narrative and returning to Liège. There is an oscillation of constant movement and instability across the regional landscape. This movement prevents Didier from finding a source of stability, whilst encountering places that have been subsequently abandoned, such as the rural and Ardennes environment. The journey alludes to the possibility of self-discovery for the character and a sense of renewal, but the return to Liège highlights how limited his position is. However, the French-Belgian border remains “invisible” since it is materialized in political and social cartography and does not have an evident natural symbolic or linguistic marker (in terms of the film’s representation of the border region). Paradoxically, the presence of the national political border is recognized only through the conversations between the two male characters. When the two characters, Yvan and Didier, arrive at the border town, there are only shots of homes and houses, which pertain to a degree of stability and fixity and highlight the borders between the urban and rural binary opposition. The borders and boundaries in the film are hence drawn according to the environment, utilizing symbolic borders such as the forests of the Ardennes region in order to delineate between different areas. In this sense, the urban-rural distinctions provide the contours for the mapping of Wallonia, and this further accentuates the inside-outside schema that is assigned to the notion of a regional identity. The rural areas in Wallonia are no longer at the heart of the formation of a current Walloon regional sensibility during the shift from agricultural needs to the industrial and current post-industrial environment.

In Liège, Didier’s engagement in drug-taking and acts of petty crime in order to satisfy his habit show an anti-social side to the contemporary Walloon society. This view of social fracture is consistent with the image offered by the Dardenne brothers in the nearby city of Seraing, since the youth have turned towards crime in the wake of economic crisis, unemployment, and family breakups (Dardenne brothers, in Andrew, 2006). The young (and in particular male) delinquent characters highlight the fracturing and the breakdown of Walloon society in the post-industrialist era. In *Eldorado*, Didier represents an

individual who has fallen through the emerging cracks in this changing society, and is thus imbued with a sense of hopelessness and failure. The notion of the loss of a working-class male regional identity in Wallonia surfaces through the loss in the industrial base for the community in Liège.

The post-industrial Walloon environment, portrayed in *Eldorado*, has engendered social and political issues concerning the population and is thus riven with tensions between the loss of working-class regional identity and employment. The lack of employment opportunities has resulted in a precarious social landscape, and a competitive environment between the Walloon people. Lanners' view of social fracture is primarily considered from the perspective of the Walloon male working-class identity that has subsequently been lost in the current post-industrial period. The character of Didier, in particular, opens up questions around the decline of working-class communities, and shows what has happened when the industry that used to provide jobs for many of the working class people disappears and is not replaced. The consequence is poverty and exclusion, which is best exemplified by the character of Didier, since he has turned to drugs and crime to survive. Alongside this social exclusion, there is also a loss of working-class regional identity formed during the period of industrialization. As a result, all of Lanners' central protagonists are lone marginalized males, who have lost, to some extent, a source of community identity, as viewed in previously outlined contemplation shots of the city. Discernible differences are present, most notably in terms of the employment dynamic, which has led to the disenfranchisement of Didier. A lack of employment opportunities has led to youth marginalization and disenfranchisement, which are factors in the resulting levels of petty crime. The film introduces the two central characters through this prism of criminality, since Yvan returns home from work and finds that his house is in the process of being burgled by Didier/ Elie, who has been driven to steal from Yvan's home in order to satisfy his heroin addiction. Didier is thus a social outcast, since he is unable to participate in the community due to his addiction, and requires the journey in order to redefine his place and sense of inclusion both within the city (as a symbol of the community) and within the region on a larger scale.

Within the European road movie, there are key distinctions that emerge, for example 'in American films the travelers tend to be outcasts and rebels

looking for freedom or escape, in Europe it is rather the “ordinary citizen” who is on the move, often for practical reasons (for work, immigration, commuting or holiday-making)’ (Mazierska and Rascaroli, 2004: 5). However, in *Eldorado* the characters pertain to a more Americanized version of the road movie genre, since Didier/ Elie is conceived as an outcast from the throes of the community, residing upon the fringes as a petty thief and drug addict, and their desire to travel is not engendered through necessity but is rather a choice. This notion of journey through choice opens up the Walloon ‘regional’ sense of identity to transnational influences, which emphasizes to what extent the influence from Hollywood has become increasingly present in the regional consciousness. The adoption of American codes and conventions for this road movie highlight to what extent Hollywood has had an impact on the ‘national’ cinema in Belgium (as outlined in Chapter Two). The consequence of this transnational influence problematizes the understanding of a regional identity as bounded, but one that is open to potential ‘soft power’ influences. The adoption of further American influences in the film will be considered later in this section.

As the journey for Yvan and Didier progresses, the re-engagement with the countryside highlights its role as a metaphor for the antecedent notions of a tightly-bound and close-knit community, in which a local sense of communion was entirely possible. However, the prevailing theme of abandonment is manifested in the imaged creation of the space of the Ardennes in *Eldorado*, which highlights the societal shift from rural to urban communities. This therefore refers to the fluidity and state of evolution that is attributed to identity formations, and the oscillation of movement in order to seek renewal and affirmation.

The Ardennes constitutes an area that spans three national borders (Belgium, France, and Luxembourg), thereby transcending the three linguistically inter-connected nations. This thus reinforces the notion that nations are not a teleological phenomenon, but are instead ontological formations. The existence and inclusion of a transnational and regional space in the film further highlights the extent to which the region and the nation and the State do not neatly map onto one another.

The semi-mountainous region has a heritage that sits both within and beyond the confines of the Walloon corporeal borders. This is a space that

therefore fits into the 'transnational regional' concept, in which the regional spaces can be perceived from both an intra-national and international perspective. In this example, the region is not necessarily bound by national and political borders, and can be formed through linguistic connections. The two characters cross the natural symbolic border of the Ardennes forest, which is conceived as an isolated yet transnational region of Wallonia. The area is bound by linguistic inclusivity in terms of the French language and the nations that govern the forest, and transcends the imposition of national political borders. Its geographical location removes the area from the prospect of possessive contemplation of the space, in which the human's relationship to the land is perceived as dominant. Through the human presence in the frame, the space is imbued with a sense of temporality, and this in turn restricts the perennial perception of the land. The figure of the human therefore inscribes a possible possessive dimension to the land, since the spectator is drawn to the human figures acting within the space, which thereby distracts the spectator from an aesthetic contemplation. Through the sequential manner of the film editing and the presence of the characters, the spectator is provided with an idea of the location of the Ardennes within a Walloon framework. The spectator knows from where the characters originate, and understands that they are travelling towards the border with France. In this sense, film is utilized as a cartographic repository for the spectator; the journey of the two characters and their presence within the frame confirms the land's location within Wallonia. The image of the Ardennes landscape (Figure 4.6) is not just focusing upon a parochial consideration of the space and place, but the visual images are concerned with character and therefore the relations between the people, the land and the heritage.



Figure 4.6: *Eldorado* [the Ardennes]

In relation to *Eldorado*, the Ardennes landscape (Figure 4.6) is utilized to enhance the relation between the characters and the geographic details of the river, hills and forest. For example, this is the case in the sequence in which Yvan and Didier stop to wash in the river at the half-way stage of their voyage. The sequence positions the two central characters in the centre of the frame, but they are dwarfed by the enormity of the hills and the forest. The choice of the long shot in this case does not foreground the actions of the characters, and therefore allows for the inclusion of wide views. These extensive views of the landscape are attached to the notion of a painterly vista. The human figures are shot in a way that diminishes the human scale. Furthermore, the sequence does not have a fundamental narrative requirement, which allows the spectator to scan the visual image. This reinforces the pictorial elements of the space in addition to the juxtapositions between the urban people in the rural environment.

The inclusion of the river at the centre of the frame also pertains to a metaphorical role of water and the characters' voyage. Water in its composition is ever changing and in a state of flux with the flow of the river, and this is also present in the instability and the fluidity of the 'national' or regional identities experienced throughout the characters' journey in this film. However, the human presence within this image cannot be occluded from a significance that transcends the beauty of the landscape.

The Ardennes also has a degree of significance in terms of an intra-national or regional Walloon past, since the mineral rich region of hills and forests represents a combination of material and production and therefore the prosperous period of the industrial revolution in Wallonia. It is also a liberating space for urban individuals, which is reinforced through the inclusion of the caravan parks. The caravans on the landscape relate to Yvan's childhood memories, in which the caravans were part of his holiday-making past. The current state of the caravan park in the Ardennes is more pessimistic and pertains to profound negative transformations in the area; the caravan parks are deserted and vacant, and the area has degenerated into a state of disrepair and abandonment, which coincides with the Walloon post-industrial condition that has impacted upon its inhabitants. The prevailing notion of abandonment is central to the conception of a community identity and group consciousness for the characters; Yvan's family is deceased and Didier's father no longer wishes to have contact with his son. The characters are thus sequestered from a generational transmission of identity, and are forced to carve out their own meagre existence within the bleak Walloon environment. The limited human connections and a lack of social bonds are primarily manifested through the destabilized families that Lanners' protagonists experience. The narrative theme of abandonment pertains to a series of displacements, and is thus developed through the mobility of the car and the previously outlined contemplation of the landscape.

With the disrepair of the caravan park, there is a sense of movement away from a particular space and the changing relationship between the individual and the collective in society, on the one hand, and the way that society utilizes and engages with the regional spaces, on the other. For example, the caravan park can be a type of permanent dwelling, but in the context of the caravans in *Eldorado*, it was primarily intended as a temporary holiday space (a site of leisure that formed part of the tourist industry) and one that is now in decline. The placement of the caravan at the centre of the frame (Figure 4.7) focuses the attention of the spectator to the caravan, which therefore emphasizes the touristic consumption of the Ardennes.

The caravans pertain to a temporary dwelling, which highlights the transitory nature of the human presence within this space. As Kaplan states

'(t)ravel is very much a modern concept, signifying both commercial and leisure movement in an era of expanding Western capitalism' (Kaplan, 1996: 3). This act of capitalist enterprise pertains to an evolution in the flows of people between the urban and rural environments. This form of holiday-making is different from the traditional conception of the flows from the rural to the urban environments during the period of industrialization in search of consistent work. The return to the countryside and the beauty spots in the Walloon landscape have taken on a touristic significance through these changes, as the people travel to these spaces. In the sequence of *Eldorado* under discussion, the spectator is, however, not encouraged to witness the display of beauty created in the Ardennes landscape, but instead contemplate the shift in the capitalist enterprise of holiday-making in the space. The caravans are vestiges of a bygone era in which the Ardennes proved a popular holiday destination for Belgian nationals, who now, because foreign travel has become more accessible to the general population, choose to holiday in more 'exotic' foreign locations. The caravans on the land bear witness to previous use, which is no longer apparent. Although the presence of the caravans in the space refer to the holiday-making past, the re-visiting of the Ardennes in this film is instead engendered through the personal experiences of the filmmaker, Bouli Lanners, whose grandparents originated from the province. The images are therefore linked to personal recollections and memories of childhood for both the filmmaker and the character of Yvan. The visualization of the space emphasizes how the use of the Ardennes has altered or even remained stagnant over time with shifting patterns of tourism.

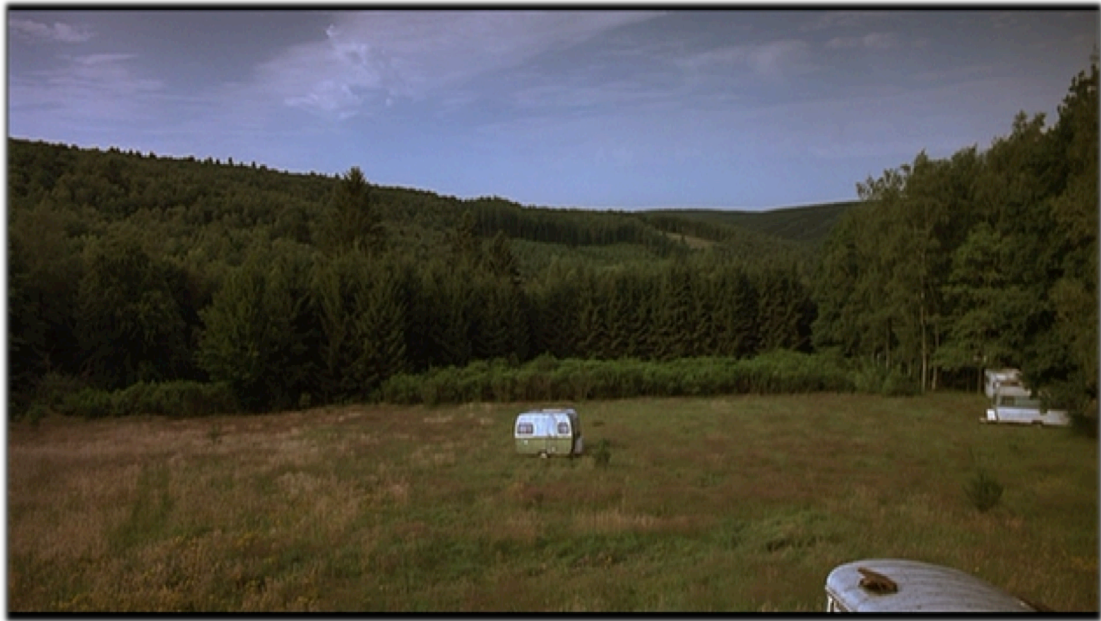


Figure 4.7: *Eldorado*

The bordered and autonomous nature of the region of Wallonia is also undermined by the inclusion of transnational American influences in the film, which are primarily addressed through the choice of the title, the allusions to the road movie sub-genre and the American Western frontier, and the use of the American automobile (Figure 4.8).



Figure 4.8: *Eldorado*

The filmmaker and actor in the film, Bouli Lanners outlines his 'psychical' or mental relationship and connection to American culture, which has informed his sense of self-identity. He states 'ma culture personnelle n'est en effet pas liée à la cinématographie belge du tout, au contraire: je suis plutôt inspiré par le film anglo-saxon et américain' (Lanners, in Van Hoeij, 2010: 45).¹¹³ The US influence pervades all audiovisual media, the films and television programmes that he watches and the music that he listens to. Lanners makes this statement that his films do not encompass Belgian cinematic traditions and labels his films as infused with transnational American influences. However, his preoccupation with the Walloon landscapes, as this chapter has previously outlined, alongside these influences opens up questions of the national, the regional, and the transnational, which particularly converge within the film *Eldorado*. However, as we saw in Chapters One and Three, the funding of the film was from Belgium (and Wallonia) and France, which is therefore at odds with Lanners' cinematic influences from the USA. For Lanners, his films are largely shaped by Hollywood cinema, which connects back to the significant presence and consumption of Hollywood films in Belgium, as outlined in Chapter Two. In this case, the level of Hollywood consumption in the country has clearly had an impact upon the films produced in Belgium, and highlights the extent to which the transnational influence has gradually become part of the 'national' or regional culture. Nevertheless, the filmmaker also acknowledges the influences at a regional level.

The films that he creates do not easily fit into an overarching national form of cinema, but they are rather local and regional in terms of their landscapes, themes and characters. Nevertheless, the cinematic traditions that he utilizes in his films, and in particular *Eldorado*, are not unique to this corpus of films, since the consideration of the rural Walloon environment was previously utilized in the works of Jean-Jacques Andrien and the engagement with characters that have suffered from the post-industrial condition in Wallonia is also manifested in the films of the Dardenne brothers. There is therefore an existence of regional cinematic connections. The American influences do, however, pertain to the shifting 'psychical' conception of identity, which has co-

¹¹³ [in fact, my personal culture is not linked to Belgian cinematography at all, on the contrary: I am instead inspired by Anglo-Saxon and American films]

opted and included elements on a personal level from the 'soft power' of the audiovisual services in the USA.

The references to American audiovisual and film culture are not solely connected to the works of Bouli Lanners in a Belgian environment. The French-Belgian-German co-production *Toto le héros* (Von Dormael, 1991) includes references to Anglo-American culture in the francophone Belgian psyche, with the central protagonist Thomas's admiration of American thrillers and detective films, which he has watched on television since he was a child. In the film's fragmentary vistas, Thomas creates a fictional character in the guise of himself, named Toto, which represents his desire to transcend his current sense of belonging and engage with other linguistic and cultural influence in order to renew his notion of identity. Hence, the Bouli Lanners dimension of the cinematic medium in Wallonia combines two discourses: the cultural repositories embedded within the region and the external flows of influences.

In *Eldorado*, the US influence also pervades film through the use of a car, as opposed to the European road-movie, in which the films habitually 'opt for public transport (trains, buses), if not hitch-hiking and travelling by foot' (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2004:5). The mode of transport is thus considered in relation to the stratification and status of the people requiring the journey. The use of the car exists as a status symbol and a metaphor of social mobility. In *Eldorado*, this draws a clear delineation between the two characters, Yvan and Didier, highlighting the key differences in social status: Yvan works as a car trader and owns a Chevrolet (an American automobile), whereas Didier is devoid of material goods and possessions, and requires Yvan to enable his voyage.

The American influence, as previously noted by Bouli Lanners commenting on his films, is therefore reflected through the inclusion of the automobile. The car symbolizes the notion of freedom and liberation, which is also manifested through the wide, open spaces of the Walloon rural landscape. However, it does, at the same time, represent a constraint, since it is a financial burden in terms of the costs involved with automobile ownership. Consequently, it is not a freedom possible and affordable for everyone, which further underlines Didier's marginal position. However, the car is also a synonym for the increasingly 'networked' and 'connected' nature of national and regional

identities, since this mode of transport enables the individual to avoid isolation. In the context of *Eldorado*, it is only with the aid of Yvan and the use of his car that Didier's re-connection with his family ties and his origins are possible. Furthermore, within the American road movie, there is an obsession with the automobile, which is mirrored in *Eldorado* with its conversational references to the Chevrolet brand and the sequence in which the car is thoroughly cleaned and polished by Yvan, Didier and Alain Delon. This is a self-conscious reference to use Delon's name, which is attributed to Bouli Lanners' decision to take the chair of the French star as a souvenir from the set of *Astérix aux jeux olympiques* (2008), to use as a prop in Lanners' film (Verhaeghe and Feuillère, 2007). This constructed story around the inclusion of the Delon name clearly emphasizes Lanners' admiration for the French actor. The reference can therefore also be seen as a type of homage to Delon, who, through his association with Jean-Pierre Melville, was linked to a series of films that were preoccupied with the relationship between France and America in terms of socio-cultural influences.

The car is not the sole means of reaching the intended destination in *Eldorado*, but it is also a more individual and personal mode of transport that places greater emphasis upon the relationship between the characters in the car. The automobile is thus a contained and intimate space, which forces a relationship to develop between the characters. This forced proximity engenders a nascent camaraderie, and thus leads to a male-orientated narrative that is aligned with the American 'buddy' road-movie. However, this 'buddy' element occurs only within the enclosed environment of the car, and is rendered obsolete at the finale of the film, in which Didier flees with the money that Yvan provides him with, for the purpose of ending the dog's pain through a heroin injection. The elliptical nature of the narrative and the journey is also manifested in terms of the relationship with Yvan and Didier, since the two central characters conclude the film in the same state that they commenced with. In Didier's case, his addiction to heroin and his life of petty crime persist and his 'psychical' state remains, and is thus unaffected by the act of the journey. This suggests a damning indictment of the contemporary post-industrial miserablism that encapsulates the Walloon population. In essence, the use of the road movie is ironic, since the journey highlights the loss of a

Walloon regional working-class identity in the form of Didier, and therefore uses the cyclical nature of the narrative to highlight how limited his marginal position is. The use of this genre, and the journey it entails, allows for a questioning of a Walloon regional identity in relation to the variety of landscapes that are presented, and through the method of travel.

Conclusion

The landscape within the works of Bouli Lanners is included in terms of three different conceptions of the Walloon region, notably in the road-movie *Eldorado*. The first approach to the Walloon region concerns the long takes and the “stills” of the rural milieu in *Eldorado* and *Ultranova*, which provides the landscape with significance and encourages the spectator to contemplate the memories infused within the images of the space. The rural milieu connects with a sense of the ‘regional’ in terms of presenting a space that is beyond the confines of the city. In essence, it is ‘regional’ by virtue of its situation on the periphery of the city. The centre-periphery model that Paasi (2003) discusses as pertaining to ‘regional identity’ is engendered through the countryside. These images on the fringes of the urban environment further re-affirm the marginal.

The contemplation shots from a semi-rural environment to the centre of the city emphasize a disconnection between the centre and the periphery, and this in turn conceptualizes the individual within the space as a marginal figure. The individual gazes towards the centre from his marginal position, which is reflected in his position within society, his lack of family and connections to a wider community.

The Ardennes is also ‘regional’ in terms of its status as part of the countryside, but it is a space that is not normally perceived as intrinsically Walloon. The Ardennes is, however, a forested and semi-mountainous space that sits outside of this Walloon ‘regional’ conception. It also highlights how the ‘regional’, in terms of Wallonia within this thesis, is primarily an ontological formation as opposed to a teleological one, since the forested area forms a natural border for a region that encompasses part of France and Luxembourg. In short, the Ardennes can be viewed as a ‘transnational region’. Moreover, the use of the road movie genre to chart these spaces in Wallonia forms a

connection to Hollywood and the USA, thereby fusing together the American influence in terms of genre with the landscapes of Wallonia. The two films by Bouli Lanners thus incorporate, on an aesthetic level, transnational and regional elements that are suffused at certain points with the narratives. These transnational and regional elements arise through the filmmaker's use of American influences, and also naturally through the charting of the Walloon space.

The next film to be considered through the prism of the Walloon landscape is 'transnational regional' not through the intentional choices of the filmmaker, but the dynamic is engendered through the fiscal input of the French film fund that presupposed the de-localization of the film project from Wallonia to Nord-pas-de-Calais, thereby crossing the national border between Belgium and France.

Chapter Five:

Cages (Masset-Depasse, 2006), the terrils and the 'marked' regional landscape

The second section of this consideration of the Walloon and francophone Belgian landscape looks at the film *Cages*. As we saw in Chapter Three, the film project was moved from its intended location in the screenplay from Wallonia to Nord-pas-de-Calais due to decisions made at an institutional level. The sources of funding have led to a re-location of the film's shooting, and this in turn complicates the film's geographic positioning and obscures elements connected to nationhood and regional identities. It is therefore necessary to consider the alterations made to the film project at an institutional level, predicated upon their territorial and fiscal demands, in relation to the aesthetic considerations at the centre of the film. In this sense, the logic of the film fund impinges upon the cultural referents included within the pre-conceived film. The filmmaker, Olivier Masset-Depasse, acknowledges this shift in the production of the film as 'une vraie coproduction qui devient artistique' (Masset-Depasse, 2006).¹¹⁴ In essence, the funds have altered the original conception of the film, which has had an artistic impact upon the aesthetic and cultural connotations connected with the original space in Wallonia. The French coastline landscapes substitute for the Belgian coastline, which is a forced shift due to the economic rationale, but it is an alteration that is incongruent with the national spaces and their inhabitants. There are thus forces that are directly affecting the film's intended basis, which can have an effect upon the cultural concerns at the heart of the film.

The use of the landscape is 'marked' by the economic rationale of the production, and it is more appropriate to conceive the coastline space as accommodating the required landscape in the film's narrative. This engagement with the 'marked' label in relation to the film was engendered through Hjort's (2009) typologies of cinematic transnationalism, as outlined in the Introduction. The case study of *Cages* arises through the questions posed in Hjort's typologies, since the film moves between the 'unmarked' and 'marked'

¹¹⁴ [a true coproduction that has become artistic]

conceptions of transnationalism (Hjort, 2009: 13-15) in relation to the spaces included within the film. Within Hjort's typologies of transnational cinema, this film project adheres more to the notion of 'affinitive transnationalism' (Hjort, 2009: 17) between the two regional film funds of Nord-pas-de-Calais and Wallimage, as outlined in the case study in Chapter Three. Affinitive transnationalism is a form that allows for 'ethnic, linguistic, and cultural affinity that was believed to make cross-border collaboration particularly smooth and therefore cost-efficient, pleasurable, and effective' (*ibid*). The mutual intelligibility of the French language between Wallonia and Nord-pas-de-Calais engenders this transnational turn alongside the interactions between the regions on a historical level, notably concerning the coal-mining histories of the French region and across the border with Hainaut in Wallonia.

As a consequence, Masset-Depasse's film does not discernibly adhere to the 'marked' conception in the same manner as the so-called 'Euro-puddings' of the 1980s and the 1990s for example, but the financial imperatives linked to the production costs have impacted upon the intended landscapes and spaces in the screenplay to the actual creation of the film. In terms of production costs, the film is a majority Belgian co-production. However, the funding from the French regional film fund of Nord-pas-de-Calais necessitated the inclusion of French locations that were not included within the original screenplay set in Wallonia. The film is 'marked' through its requirement to film the coastline in Nord-pas-de-Calais, as opposed to an 'unmarked' *terril* landscape in Wallonia. The coastline landscape thus presents a geographical impossibility in terms of a possible localizing of the film within Wallonia. The first half of this chapter will outline the intended Walloon space of the *terril* in *Cages* through a selection of Walloon films and how they reproduce the Walloon space. The second half of this chapter will focus more on how the film and its landscape are 'marked' by the shift to Nord-pas-de-Calais.

In terms of the film's narrative, *Cages* centres on the gradual breakdown of a seventeen-year relationship between Eve and Damien. The impetus for this breakdown is an accident that occurs for the female paramedic, Eve, who suffers a neck injury in a car accident. This consequently inhibits her ability to speak, despite the medical diagnosis suggesting that her vocal chords are not damaged. The trauma of the accident persists and Eve becomes unable to

speak. This sequesters Eve in her relationship with Damien. As he grows increasingly frustrated with her refusal to converse, he begins an affair with Léa, who supplies the alcohol to his bar. It is upon the discovery of this affair that Eve decides to confront her psychological condition and change in order to encourage Damien not to end the long-term relationship. The final act of the film engages with this confrontation through a peculiar annual ritual, in which the locals compete to imitate an animal on stage constructed in the bar. This competition is not rooted within the cultural concerns of Wallonia, but it is instead an idea that has a symbolic function within the narrative.¹¹⁵ This chapter does not consider the significance of this animal imitation ritual, but it does function as a metaphor for her psychological state as indelibly connected to the human condition. In Masset-Depasse's film, this ritual is a form of bringing the community together through an activity that requires the locals to suspend their sense of self and behave in a manner that acts as a cathartic function. It is through this notion of 'release' that the central female protagonist can recapture her social and communal ties through conversation and speech.

In the Introduction to *Cinema and Landscape*, Harper and Rayner (2011: 15) compare a filmmaker to an individual map-maker, since both the discipline and the cinematic medium are produced through human interpretation of the surrounding landscapes and spaces, and allows for the guidance of another person (or spectator in the case of cinema) through a familiar or unfamiliar area. The authors are therefore suggesting that there is a geographical function embedded within the cinematic medium, and the filmmaker has the ability to steer and navigate the spectator through a given space due to their experiential knowledge. This dimension of eliding the filmmaker with a map-maker can also 'be particularly prevalent and tempting within national cinema contexts, in which the aura of art is co-opted by motivations of national, ideological and aesthetic value' (*ibid*: 22). In this sense, the use of the landscape in film is seductive for attributing a national label to a given area, and also for perpetuating a touristic vision of an area of natural and outstanding beauty. The landscape and the

¹¹⁵ During the DVD commentary, Masset-Depasse (2006) notes that the aim of the competition was to retain a sense of intimacy between the characters even in madness, although the filmmaker acknowledges that he does not feel that this sequence was completely successful in conveying the message. He also elucidates that the idea for the competition can be traced to the animal sounds compared in hunting circles and events.

area can consequently take on an extra value in terms of self-affirmation purposes, but can also allow for the creation of a greater economical advantage for the area through tourism, for example.

The filmmaker and film producer for *Cages*, Jacques-Henri Bronckhart, states that there are touristic imperatives attached to the logic of the film fund, which necessitate the inclusion of certain areas as a means of advertising and disseminating images of the Nord-pas-de-Calais coastline. Although the filmmaker and the producer make a passing comment concerning this 'touristic vision' (Masset-Depasse, 2006) of the regional film fund, there is a significant idea behind the logic of the film fund contributing to the re-location of the film in one of the key areas of natural beauty in the region. When discussing Wallimage's partnerships with other regional funds at Cannes, Reynaert stated that 'Wallimage focuses on post-production...while CCRAV concentrates on the promoting the image of the region' (Reynaert, 2010: 9). This posits the notion that there is an importance for the regional film fund, in this case CCRAV/Pictanovo, to endorse the region and heighten the image of the region beyond its borders. *Cages* adheres extremely well to this conception of the partnership between the regional funds, and their expectations for a film project, with the production of the film centred in Nord-pas-de-Calais and the post-production taking place in Wallonia.

Masset-Depasse also notes the significance of the French regional film fund in terms of even enabling the film's creation, with the change of location adding to, rather than taking away from, the filmmaker's intentions; 'ce déplacement a même été salvateur car, grâce à l'aide de la région Nord-Pas-de-Calais, le film a été plus simple à réaliser, avec une vraie plus-value au niveau artistique via les décors et paysages' (Masset-Depasse, 2013: Appendix I).¹¹⁶ On a purely pragmatic level, the fiscal support provided for the film is the most significant aspect during film creation, since the film would not exist without the added finance. Nevertheless, this section approaches a space that cannot exist within the region of Wallonia and provokes a difficulty in affirming a

¹¹⁶ [this movement (of the film's location) was a life-saver because, thanks to the support from the Nord-pas-de-Calais region, the film was simpler to film, with a true artistic value added by the decors and the landscapes]

national or regional appellation upon the space in *Cages* due to the filming in France.

It is possible to suggest an alignment between the coastal lands, which are viewed in the film, with the Northern fringes of Flanders on the other side of the national border. The –scape suffix complicates this dimension due to its consideration as a human interaction with the surrounding land. It is this interaction that causes the problematic distinctions of the film as a cartographic repository, since the use of French in the film is incongruent with the Flemish-speaking region of Flanders. The film therefore ends up presenting a geographical impossibility, since a suggestion that the film can still be situated within the country of Belgium brings to light issues around language and linguistic difference.

As previously outlined in Chapter Three, the combination of the regional film funding from CCRAV/Pictanovo and Wallimage led to the requirements to have both French and Belgian actors attached to the project. The accent differences and inflections, imbued within the French language across the border in Wallonia, are not noticeable for the spectator due to this combination. For example, French-speaking actors from Wallonia do not portray the two central protagonists: Anne Coesens (Eve) comes from Brussels and Sagamore Stévenin (Damien) originates from Paris. The possible placing of the film within the confines of Belgium is complicated due to the accents that the actors may have in the film. The fact that the francophone Belgian actress (Anne Coesens) does not speak further problematizes the possible location of the film in Belgium. This dimension thus opens up questions concerning national identity and regional identity, which emerge through the use of the French coastline as a direct replacement for the *terrils* [slagheaps] of Wallonia. It is the intended significance of these *terrils* in *Cages* to which we shall now turn our attention.

According to the DVD commentary for the film, the director, Masset-Depasse, claims that the original draft of the script necessitated certain sequences of the film to unfold upon a *terril*, which was designed to function as the points of contrast with the interior action. In an interview with the author of this thesis, Masset-Depasse stated that the original location for the slagheap in the screenplay of the film was in his home city of Charleroi (Masset-Depasse, 2013: Appendix I), and this also carries with it a potential inclusion of an

atrophied industrial space in the film. The filmmaker¹¹⁷ describes the intended location for the film as ‘ville industrielle "monstre" délabréé, ancienne ville minière déchuée du sud du pays’ (Masset-Depasse, 2013: Appendix I).¹¹⁸ The slagheap therefore allows the spectator to read the film through a different prism, since it is a man-made formation created from the coal residue of the extraction process in the mining industry. This space has become part of the natural world and part of the Walloon regional landscape through its economy, which posits its existence through human intervention and artificial creation. Their mere presence on the Walloon landscape is connected to the history of the region’s industrial development, which positioned Wallonia as one of the largest centres for industry, only second to the United Kingdom during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

With the decline of industry and in particular the mining industry since the 1970s in the province of Hainaut in Wallonia, the space of the *terrils* has changed from an area of work and production to an area where socio-economic issues and problems have become most pronounced. The photographic essay of the industrial areas of Hainaut, *Pays Noir*, includes a series of statistics that are compared to the ontological state of the province. According to the available data, Hainaut had a population size of 1.317.498 people with an active male unemployment rate of only 2.4%.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, 39.5% of the overall active male demographic was employed in the heavy industries, which emphasizes the importance of the coal and metallurgic industries to the Walloon region and the province (Auquier and Delepeleire, 1970: 6-7). The 2001-2012 figures for Hainaut show 18.6% for active male unemployment, 18.9% for the female

¹¹⁷ In the conversation with Masset-Depasse, the filmmaker describes the narrative of the film and the Charleroi space as “surrealist”. However, the reference to the “surrealist” nature of the film and the city is often elided with the formation of Belgian cinema. The filmmaker Benoît Mariage posits that surrealism - on a general level - pertains to ‘une émanation de l'esprit du rêve, de l'inconscient, qui ne passe pas par la barrière de la raison. Alors qu'ici on est justement dans la projection de quelque chose qui est hyperréaliste et presque documentaire’ (Mariage, in Gravel, 2000: 8). The most conventional “surrealist” elements of the narrative pertain to the mimicking of animal behaviour and sounds within the final sequence. The “surreal” nature of the city of Charleroi, however, does not necessarily arise from psychological or human behaviours, but it is an aspect that is embedded more within the polarized differences between history of the city and its present state. According to Mariage’s conception of the ‘surrealist’ tendency in Belgian cinema and in the space of Charleroi, this notion is engendered by a capturing of the space in a way that reflects the present state of the socio-economic condition (Mariage, 2010).

¹¹⁸ [a dilapidated industrial “monster”, formerly a declining mining town in the south of the country]

¹¹⁹ Statistics for the other demographics in Hainaut were not provided in the publication.

demographic, which provides 18.7% as the average (Agence de développement de la Province de Hainaut, 2013: 18-19). The vast differences, illustrated by the unemployment figures in the area, clearly correlate with the socio-economic issues and high levels of unemployment, alongside the shift in the economic base.

During the period of rapid de-industrialization in Belgium and Wallonia in the 1970s, the Hainaut province was the worst province affected, since its levels of unemployment reached a figure of 30% with the Walloon region overall suffering 18% and Flanders only 8% (Deschènes and Lamonthe, 2001: 92). The city mirrors the industrial heritage of other cities in Wallonia, such as Liège. Furthermore, it is a city that has suffered from similar socio-political issues and consequences that derive from the decline of the area's mining and industrial past. This negative transformation of the socio-economic situation in the region has not been counteracted by other means of employment, since the levels of unemployment have still not recovered and have remained stable. In the city commune of Charleroi in particular, this poor performance remains at a figure of 26.92% in 2010, which is a slight increase from the lowest figure in the 2000s of 29.19% in 2006 (IWEPS, 2013).¹²⁰ Charleroi is one of the worst affected areas in terms of unemployment levels, social deprivation, and social exclusion in Wallonia and in Belgium, alongside Liège, as previously outlined in Chapter Four. For these socio-economic issues, Charleroi also maintains a position significantly below the Belgian national average. These statistics therefore elucidate the issues that exist at the locus of the region, since the urban centres of former industrial power in Wallonia now represent areas with community issues and problems with social marginalization.

The location of the *terrils* is also particularly relevant since they are artificial accretions occurring upon the fringes of the larger towns and cities of Wallonia, and most notably within the coalfield belt that stretched from the Charleroi district across the border to the French region of Nord-pas-de-Calais. The majority of these slagheaps occur in the region of the *pays noir* (which is often used to refer to the Walloon province of Hainaut) with twenty-six in total: eight lying upon the fringes of Mons and ten within the area of Charleroi (and

¹²⁰ The statistics of the individual communes in Wallonia, provided by the *Institut Wallon de l'évaluation, de la prospective et de la statistique*, are for the period of 1997-2010.

eight in close proximity of the city). The city of Liège and the surrounding space are less marked by the mining industrial heritage of the Walloon region, with a total of eight *terrils* present in the area. The use of these slagheaps in Walloon cinema navigates an elision between the found and the constructed landscapes, since they both represent human interaction with the natural space. However, this chapter will later outline how natural forces have gradually reclaimed these given spaces. Their presence has thus been imbued with significance due to their denotation of a successful economic past for the region. The *terrils* have become identifiable as regional particularities in the Walloon topography. Olivier Masset-Depasse also emphasizes the significance of this space in relation to the national and regional Belgian environment, by stating that the idea of the *terril* was a dimension 'vraiment très belge' (Masset-Depasse, 2006).¹²¹

Images of the *terrils* occur at various points within the history of Belgian, and in particular Walloon photography. This accentuates the notion that Masset-Depasse's film *Cages* is 'marked' through its transnational form of funding. In the 1970s, with the Walloon industrial landscape in decline, much photographic representation of the region was concerned with the banality of daily life and the socio-economic difficulties experienced by its inhabitants (Sarlet, 1993:126). From this wave of documentary and social photography, Yves Auquier's work *Pays noir/ Black Country* (1972) captured the decaying industrial landscape in Charleroi and Hainaut, as well as the sense of loss and failure felt by the local population. This pervading sense of frustration is manifested through the images of the daily life of individuals who are not employed. There is a discernible sense of absence of employment and opportunity, and this is in turn included in the images of the Hainaut landscape. Another work that emerged from this region during the same period, *Terrils/ Slagheaps* (1978-1980), was an art collective, which focused upon the man-made industrial accretions on the Walloon landscape. However, these images do not contain the same crushing sense of loss, suffered by the population, but they exhibit the accretions in a more nostalgic and ornamental manner (Sarlet, 1993:126). Both of these photographic essays and collectives do, nevertheless,

¹²¹ [really, very Belgian]

reinforce the significance of the slagheaps suffused within the Walloon region, and reaffirms their presence within visual media.

The documentary tradition has included the *terril* within its social commentaries on the industrial state of the region, with an early example in *Déjà s'envole la fleur maigre/The scrawny flower has already flown* (Paul Meyer, 1963).¹²² This documentary traced the integration of a family of Italian emigrants in Wallonia, and particularly the area of Borinage, as they looked for work in the region during a period of economic destabilization and regression (Belmans, 1974: 17). The slagheaps form part of a landscape 'comme inscription d'une mémoire...le charbonnage comme identité collective, enjeu communautaire et quotidien; le chômage comme drame social et menace toujours présente' (Leboutte, 1998: 10).¹²³ Meyer's film has connections to the documentary *Misère au Borinage* (Storck and Ivens, 1933), since it is also based within the Borinage coalfield region and includes a focus upon the daily lives and struggles of individuals within the area. Storck and Ivens' short documentary film explores the violent social strikes and conflicts of miners in their place of work in the area of Borinage in Wallonia. The documentary filmmaker Thierry Michel also includes the space of the *terril* in the opening sequence of *Pays Noir, Pays Rouge/ Black Country, Red Country* (Thierry Michel, 1975), a film that explores the declining levels of industry in the Walloon province of Hainaut.¹²⁴ The placement of the images of the *terrils* alongside the deserted factories and abandoned *courrés*¹²⁵ therefore posits the slagheaps as symbols of the past coalfield economic base for the area, which is viewed as gradually declining despite the protests of its inhabitants. The *terrils* are a reminder of the present industrial decline of the region, and the factories

¹²² The filmmaker, Paul Meyer, maintains a problematic positioning in terms of the pantheon of Walloon filmmakers due to his German origins. He also produced films across the Belgian regions in Flanders, Brussels, and Wallonia.

¹²³ [as an inscription of a memory...the colliery as a collective identity, a failure of the community and daily life; the unemployment as a social drama and an ever-present threat]

¹²⁴ The 'pays rouge' [red country] element of the documentary's title has connections to the socialist political dimension of the Walloon region and also represents the Walloon industry worker. This possible connection emanates from the rhetoric of Arthur Gailly, the leader of the socialist trade union in Charleroi, in which he stated 'Wallonia red [socialist] and blue [liberal], the capital red and blue, will never submit to black [Christian democrat] Flanders. Leopold will never become the king of the Walloons, not ever of the workers' (La Wallonie Libre, 8 August 1950, in Moreau 1984: 61).

¹²⁵ The '*courré*' does not have a direct translation in English. It is utilized to designate a grouping of old mining houses, and is specific to the region of Wallonia (Bénézet, 2005: 165).

highlight the atrophied metallurgic industries, which have both resulted in the images of the deserted housing areas designed for the proletariat and their families. As we saw in Chapter Four, the caravans are also symbols of abandonment and decline in Lanners' film *Eldorado*. There is thus an imbrication between the economic base and the social formation of communities that function alongside it. The shift in the economy has resulted in a change in the forms of community and communal solidarity. In *Pays Noir, Pays Rouge*, this is best exemplified by the contrasting shots of the former mining houses with the newly built high rise blocks of flats with the voiceover stating 'très peu de relations entre les personnes qui habitent comme ça'.¹²⁶ The reconstituting of the small former *courrés* within such large blocks presents a difficulty for the individual to meet and truly know all of those people who surround them, and this in turn emphasizes the growing sense of disaffection with a collective, alongside the decline in the heavy industries. This vision of the industrial space has social implications, since it suggests a negative transformation of the social environment for the community and its future.

Two documentaries from the early years of the Dardenne brothers' film career, *Lorsque le bateau de Leon M. descendit la Meuse pour la première fois/ When Leon M's boat went down the Meuse for the first time* (Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, 1979) and *Regarde Jonathan/ Consider Jonathan* (Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, 1983), include images of the *terrils* in a similar vein to Michel. The procession of images of the river, La Meuse, the steelwork plants both in use and decaying, and the *terrils* that lie on the outskirts all emphasize the particularities of Seraing to the spectator. However, these sites all have projected meanings beyond that of topographical particularities to localize the action. They pertain to the significance of the industrial heritage of the region, but the current grass-covered status of the *terrils* alongside the images of decaying and empty shells of factories emphasize the extent to which this economic presence has waned. These examples of the *terril* space in the Walloon region highlight how an abandoned and atrophied space is retained within the Walloon regional identity, thereby becoming a salient component within the Walloon cinematic and photographic landscape. As we saw in the Introduction, Paasi (2003: 447) foregrounds the indelible connection between

¹²⁶ [very few relationships between the people who live like that]

the landscape and regional identity, which – in this case – relates to the recurrent presence of the ‘terril’.

The Psychological-Physical axis and the terril

Within Masset-Depasse’s films, the central protagonists are frequently handicapped by constructed psychological borders, emerging from their internal suffering and struggles, which the central protagonist is forced to overcome. This sense of continuity between Masset-Depasse’s two short films, *Chambre froide/ Cold Storage* (2000) and *Dans l’ombre/In the shadows* (2004), and then in his first feature emerges through the recurrent casting of Anne Coesens in the central role.¹²⁷ Masset-Depasse notes that the fundamental theme at the basis of *Cages* is ‘l’angoisse de la séparation’ (Masset-Depasse, 2006).¹²⁸ In *Cages*, the handicap pertains to the difficulty of verbal communication after an injury sustained at the beginning of the film. Nevertheless, this injury does not physically prevent the central protagonist (Eve) from speaking; it is instead a psychological boundary that has been constructed by the character. There is thus an exploration of the imbrication between the physical and the psychological impact of handicaps and disabilities. The image of the slagheap therefore enhances the pervading senses of sequestration in a man-made space.

Masset-Depasse (2013: Appendix I) asserts the intended significance of the slagheap for the character of Eve, which is a cultural depiction of the region at the same time as representing the psychological state of the character. It is a meeting of the psychological and the physical: ‘les terrils sont des collines de la misère. Eve sur son tas de misère, voilà ce qu’aurait représenté le terril pour son personnage’ (Masset-Depasse, 2013: Appendix I).¹²⁹ In this sense, the physical environment arguably functions as a metaphor for the internal condition from which the characters are suffering.

¹²⁷ Anne Coesens also plays the central protagonist role in *Illégal* (2010), in which she plays a Russian immigrant in the Brussels region who faces the possibility of enforced deportation.

¹²⁸ [the mental distress of separation]

¹²⁹ [the slagheaps are hills of misery. Eve is on her heap of misery, which is what the slagheap would have represented for the character]

In his writing on landscape, Lefebvre conceptualizes an exteriority/interiority axis, where '(a)t one end of the spectrum we find the neutral setting, which relates indifferently to the action or the characters, while, at the other end, lies the formative setting, which seeks to express the character's interior state of mind' (Lefebvre, 2011: 64). The second dimension of this axis is present in the original screenplay for *Cages*, which intends to utilize the space of the *terril* as a metaphor for the character's internal psychological struggles. The setting therefore functions beyond its status as a predicate for the action, but it does not have an independence from the narrative due to its requirement to shape and convey the character's state of mind. Melbye (2010), however, develops the notion of the landscape as 'allegorical', in which the landscape seen on screen functions as a social and cultural critique. In this sense, he claims that a spectator from a given country is able to interpret 'culturally significant' elements that spectators from other countries or cultures may not be able to comprehend (Melbye, 2010: 3-4). The landscape is therefore able to exist beyond the narrative, but also has cultural elements included. In the case of *Cages* both of these approaches to the psychological significance of the *terril* are appropriate, since the *terril* is perceived as a topographical particularity of the Walloon region, and it is intended to emphasize the character's psychological condition in the film.

As the *terril* in Wallonia was included only in the original screenplay for the film, this section will explore the ways in which the *terril* is used in photography and films based in Wallonia. Gabriel highlights the recurrence of the *terril* in Yves Auquier's photography *Pays noir/ Black Country*, and its presence in *Ultranova* and *Les conveyeurs attendent*, which underlines its significance in Walloon photography and cinema (Gabriel, 2011: 70-73).¹³⁰ In these examples, the *terrils* are used to highlight how 'le personnage fait partie du paysage et s'en détache' (*ibid*: 70).¹³¹ Gabriel is thus suggesting that the *terril* is functioning beyond a setting for the characters; there is a relation between the characters and the landscape, but the characters also bring to it

¹³⁰ It is also significant to note that, as this thesis explored in Chapter Four, *Ultranova* is located on the fringes of the city of Liège, rather than in the *pays noir* region of Charleroi. However, the possible connections to the use of the *terril* landscape remain consistent with the photographic and cinematic work in the region.

¹³¹ [the character is part of the landscape and also stands out from it]

their own histories and personal struggles. In *Ultranova* and the intended use of the *terril* in *Cages*, the slagheap has significance in terms of mapping how social marginalization functions spatially and topographically. The location of a lone character at the top of the man-made feature immediately highlights his/her isolation from a sense of community. This reading of *Cages* brings to mind Lefebvre's conception of an interiority/ exteriority axis, in which the use of the landscape correlates with psychological self-exploration.

Another film worth referencing at this point is *Les Convoyeurs attendent/ The carriers are waiting* (Benoît Mariage, 1999), the first feature film directed by Mariage, based in the suburban fringes of Charleroi. Mariage followed a similar career trajectory to the francophone Belgian filmmakers, the Dardenne brothers, since he began working in documentary before moving to feature filmmaking. In essence, the film is focused upon a dysfunctional filial unit, which is embroiled within dire economic struggles. The social issues that occur within the destabilized family unit as a symptom of the Walloon regional sense of identity will be engaged with in more detail in relation to *Le gamin au vélo*. The inclusion of visual modes of regional identification roots *Les Convoyeurs attendent* in a particular space, such as Wallonia or, more specifically, Charleroi. Bénézet describes the inclusion of the slagheap and the *courré* as 'topographical particularities of this region [Wallonia]' (Bénézet, 2005: 164), and this immediately highlights the importance of the industrial landscape to the identification of a Walloon film. In the following statement, Mariage references the temporal nature of the space of the slagheap landscape in the region:

Je tenais à ces paysages fortement typés, où, sur une toile de fond industrielle, la nature commence à reprendre ses droits: c'est l'image du terril recouvert d'herbe où Roger va chercher Luise. On est dans le réalisme, mais le décor porte déjà une charge poétique assez forte (Fluctuanet, 1999).¹³²

¹³² [I clung to these really typical landscapes (of Charleroi and Wallonia), where nature is beginning to re-assert itself against the industrial backdrop. An example of this is the image of the slagheap covered in grass, where Rogers goes to look for Luise. There is a sense of realism, but the background brings with it a quite strong poetic element.]

According to Mariage, the space of the slagheap is part of an on-going process in which the slagheap is evolving, as it is reclaimed by nature after the decline of industrialization in the region. The inclusion of the slagheap compresses the time-space continuum, since it pertains to the industrial and mining heritage of the region, having shifted away from the agricultural and rural lands of work and production, which is imbued in the screening of the rural milieu. In *Ultranova*, *Les Convoyeurs attendent*, and the short film *Chambre froide*, the grasslands have slowly reclaimed the slagheap, since the economy of the region has once again mutated into de-industrial and post-industrial environments. The slagheap therefore encapsulates for the spectator the passage of time, embedded within the landscape included on screen. It is a clear pictorial manifestation of how this particular space is not static and immobile, as the history of the region has altered its geography.

In *Les Convoyeurs attendent*, the *terril* is a recurrent element within the film, with the variations in the repetitions of the space providing information for the development of the characters and their social relations. The slagheap functions as more than just a topographical marker for the city of Charleroi and the region of Wallonia. It is a point of intersection for the character of Luise with other characters, such as the neighbour, and it is a space for her desire to escape from tensions within the family unit. For example, after the son Michel has crashed the car and remains in a coma in the hospital, the parents argue over the unstable state of the father's employment as they celebrate their daughter's birthday. During this argument, the daughter flees to mount the *terril* at the bottom of their street. This young female character, Luise, is perched on the top of the slagheap looking down onto the atrophied industrial *pays noir* landscape. At this point, the family unit is precariously implicated in a state of dysfunction and destabilization due to the injury to Michel, the unstable nature of the father's work and their lack of funds.

For Luise, the *terril* is a place of reconciliation and a (re-)creation of social bonds, which have deteriorated in the *courré*. At the beginning of the film, Luise walks across the *terril*, holding a picture that she has reclaimed on her journey home from school. However, as the film progresses, she forges a friendship with the neighbour, Felix, as he trains his homing pigeons. These birds have a symbolic value in the context of the film; '(i)l y avait cette image de

la fidélité absolue, avec le pigeon qui finit toujours par retourner chez lui. Et par contraste des liens humains un peu distendus' (Mariage, in Gravel, 2000: 6).¹³³ The filmmaker is therefore suggesting that there is no longer a strong social cohesion between the people who reside in the area, and that underlines a more pronounced sense of disaffection with a sense of community in the area and region. However, the site of the *terril* finally enables Luise to re-establish the filial bond with her father after the birthday argument (Figure 5.1). The presence of the slagheap that exists behind the *courré* allows Luise the opportunity to escape from the growing sentiments of disaffection within the community, and therefore enables the character to regain her own sense of social connectivity. These developing sentiments link with the slagheap's formation upon the Walloon landscape through the proletarian history of coal mining within the region.

The *terril* has historical connotations, in which the memories of the past collective system that led to its accretion are acutely visible in the re-forming of social bonds within the community. The image of the former economic and social 'success' for the community is utilized in combination with the figure of the child, which is a symbol of the future, in order to formulate an optimistic conception of the Charleroi denizens, the "Carolos". The ending of the film, in which the characters welcome in the new millennium and the birth of a new member of the family (with the slagheap situated behind the housing area), also highlights this sense of hope for the future, and the desire for a newly acquired sense of community in Charleroi.

¹³³ [there was this image of absolute loyalty, with the pigeon which always ends up coming back to him. On the other hand, the human connections are a little stretched]



Figure 5.1: *Les Convoyeurs attendent* (Mariage, 1999)

In the short film *Chambre froide*, Masset-Depasse includes a series of images of the *terrils* that lie behind the *courée* where the two characters of a mother and daughter reside.¹³⁴ The use of these images affirms their existence as regional markers for the city of Charleroi and Wallonia. The shot of the *terril* behind the residence, as the characters hang out their washing in the garden, chimes with the photographs of the *pays noir* space (Figures 5.2 and 5.3). Gabriel also compares this image (Figure 5.2) of the washing line in front of the *terril* to a similar image of the young girl Luise hanging out her washing in the *courré* in *Les Convoyeurs attendent* (Gabriel, 2011: 75). The recurrence of this image in the early work of Masset-Depasse clearly highlights its significance to the post-industrial community in Charleroi in particular. The mirroring of the composition of the topographical particularities highlights how the images of the landscape in the photographic and cinematic media in Wallonia suffuse the representation of the space in the immediate epoch of the shifting economic and social patterns with the present.

¹³⁴ It is also possible to discuss the similarities of images included within *Les Convoyeurs attendent* and *Chambre froide* within the city of Charleroi. For example, there are similar images of the two family members travelling upon a scooter through the atrophied industrial Charleroi landscape. The formulation of these images is strikingly similar in terms of filmmaking approach, but in *Les Convoyeurs attendent* the father is steering the scooter with his daughter seated behind him, whereas in *Chambre froide* the roles are reversed with the adult daughter driving with her mother as the passenger.



Figure 5.2: *Pays noir* (Auquier and Delepeleire, 1970)



Figure 5.3 : *Chambre froide* (Masset-Depasse, 2000)

There is thus a consistency in the images of the region that has lasted across the decades from the 1970s to the start of the new millennium. This suggests that the socio-economic effects from the de-industrializing region upon its population have been maintained and continue into the contemporary era. There is clearly a veritable passage of time imbued within the two images, but the meanings embedded at the heart of these mechanical reproductions remain the same. These symbolic meanings concern the struggles of the individual and

the failed attempts to re-create a sense of (imagined) community. The use of this space serves to highlight the peripheral positioning of the community in relation to the urban environment and in terms of the region. It straddles a space on the margins of the town, and marks the outer reaches of the industrial suburban area of Charleroi. There is hence a localization of the action through the depiction of this space, but it also serves to heighten the discordant nature of the social ties and relationships within the community and the filial unit.

The *terril* exists, in Masset-Depasse's terms, as a 'heap of misery' (Masset-Depasse, 2013: Appendix I) for the characters and for the community that live within its shadow. The similarities between the shots from the aforementioned Walloon films of the *terril* forge a line with the immediate period of de-industrialization, thereby highlighting how the sentiments of misery have persisted. Again, the slagheap symbolizes the character's psychological struggles, but – in this case – the elision with previous photographic renderings emphasizes the perennial social and economic issues at the locus of the Charleroi community's problems. The visual re-creation of the area has remained the same, which coalesces with the continuing and declining sense of community in Charleroi and Wallonia. The *terril* is also re-affirmed when the daughter decides to briefly scale the topographical feature (Figure 5.4), which further serves to reinforce its position on the margins of the city. The significance of the site of a *terril* for contemplation purposes and to heighten the marginality of the character is best exemplified in *Ultranova* (Lanners, 2005).



Figure 5.4: *Chambre froide* (Masset-Depasse, 2000)

In *Ultranova*, the central protagonist, Dimitri, leaves his suburban space in order to scale a *terril* on the fringes of Liège, and consequently gazes over the Walloon region and, more specifically, the city space of Liège. The sequence occurs directly after a meeting with his adopted parents in a shopping centre in the city. The placing of this sequence, which has no evident narrative purpose, serves to further emphasize the breakdown of family units within Wallonia. It is an interlude, with a similar function to Dimitri's contemplation of the city as outlined in Chapter Four, in which the character frequents places on the outskirts, which emphasizes his marginality and questions his sense of belonging (in this instance in relation to his family). The slagheap is included as part of a series of different spaces within the journeys of Dimitri around the Liègeois space. As we saw in Chapter Four, the character encounters the developing suburban areas and the rural milieu that surrounds the city in addition to the *terril*. The slagheap initially posits a relationship with the past, since it is imbued with the 'absent presence' in Massey's (2011) words of proletarian class stratifications due to its creation during the industrial period by mining and coal extraction. Immediately, there is a connection with a past that is no longer present within the current state of Wallonia and Liège. This human activity in relation to the slagheap can be viewed as a synonym for the industrial turn in the region. Wallonia was formerly one of the most prosperous regions by virtue of its industrial tradition. However, the decline of the heavy industries in

the region has led to social polarization in the former industrial communities. The slagheap, in the context of this film, is perceived as an uninhabitable space for the inhabitants, and is positioned on the periphery of human settlement, which therefore marks the space as a landscape of desolation.

The lighting and colouration of the shots correspond to this view of the landscape. As Dimitri scales the slagheap, the frame is imbued with darkness, which is viewed in direct contrast to the ethereal white sunlight at the summit. The juxtaposition of the black of the coal in the *terril* and the white light emanating from the sun and reflections of the snow chimes with the black-and-white images of the *Pays noir* photography of the space and the choice of film stock in *Les Convoyeurs attendent*. Gabriel (2011: 74) notes that the black-and-white colouration of the aforementioned photographs and film is a conventional way of depicting the industrial Walloon region. This sequence in *Ultranova* demonstrates the extent to which the black-and-white colours are a natural manifestation of the *terril*. The darkness is consistent with the *terril* landscape as a space of desolation and accentuates the difficulties in maintaining employment and avoiding a marginal position in such a space. This darkness attributed to the *terril* is important to bear in mind when later approaching the change in location for the film *Cages*, since this darkness is instead used in the interior sequences.

The space of the *terril* can also be engaged with in relation to the central protagonist of Dimitri and a questioning of his sense of belonging. There is a distinct distance between the individual, in this case Dimitri, and the densely populated sprawling city space that lies beneath. Dimitri's position at the summit of the *terril* represents his inner experiences of isolation in relation to the society and community. The view that the character achieves also positions the *terril* on the fringes of the city, between Liège and the rural environment. However, the human figure remains at the centre of the frame against the backdrop of the slagheap (Figures 5.5 and 5.6). The human body thus remains at the locus of the field of vision provided to the spectator, which accentuates the space's symbolic significance. The dwellings assume a heightened significance as a demarcation of the community, and are viewed in the distance from the position of the central protagonist of Dimitri, which therefore questions his place in the community. As Dimitri reaches the summit, the space of the slagheap allows the

character to assess and question his sense of belonging to the city of Liège. The *terril* is thus imbued with meaning through the inner turmoil of Dimitri. As we mentioned earlier, Dimitri is seen as an orphan and has difficulty maintaining a romantic relationship with Cathy, and this reinforces his inability to connect to other human beings, in short to connect with an extended community.



Figure 5.5: *Ultranova* (Bouli Lanners, 2005)



Figure 5.6: *Ultranova* (Bouli Lanners, 2005)

Given the aforementioned issues around his belonging to Liège, the landscape is not sympathetically viewed in this sequence. In this sense, the slagheap is used to highlight the social fracture within both the national (Belgian) and Walloon space. This use of the *terril* space in *Ultranova* thus conjures up a similar image to the intended sequence and use of the slagheap in the original screenplay for *Cages*, which intended to show both Eve's sequestration from Walloon society and the breakdown of her relationship due

to her psychological condition. In the discussion about the *terril* in *Cages*, Masset-Depasse emphasizes the cultural importance of the slagheap in Walloon representations: 'le fait qu'il soit l'emblème d'un certain "pays noir" wallon est fortuit' (Masset-Depasse, 2013: Appendix I).¹³⁵ There is thus an acknowledgement that the *terril* does have cultural determinants embedded within its mere presence in a film, and highlights that they are particular to the region in cultural manifestations of the space, such as the medium of film. However, Masset-Depasse is highlighting here that the cultural determinants were secondary when selecting the inclusion of the *terril*. In essence, the imagined presence of the slagheap in *Cages* was "fortuitous" by virtue of its property as a representation of the character's psychological state.

Despite the filmmaker's assertion that the landscape serves to function only as a backdrop for the narrative, there is a definite cultural significance to the setting. For the filmmaker, the shift in location to the coastline of Nord-pas-de-Calais still allows for an exploration of Eve's psychological state and her relationship with Damien. However, the absence of the *terril*, and in Masset-Depasse's terms an 'emblem' of the Walloon region and Charleroi, pertains to the changing of an intrinsically local Walloon means of being noticed as different in the French market. This is an important feature and regional specificity to safeguard according to the earlier thoughts of Philippe Reynaert (2011: Appendix F) in relation to film policy in Wallonia. As we saw in Chapter Two, Reynaert claimed that France was the true internal market for francophone Belgian films, but they must stand out in this external market. The *terril* is one of these key regional particularities that can enable the films to retain their Walloon specificity, and consequently be identified as Walloon by French audiences. The logic of the regional film fund from an extra-territorial source (in this case CRRAV/Pictanovo) engenders the removal of a vision of the region, and prevents the maintaining of a sense of difference within the francophone sphere that crosses the national boundaries between Belgium and France.

¹³⁵ [the fact that it (the slagheap) may be an emblem of the particular Walloon "Black country" is fortuitous]

From the *terrils* to the cliffs of Nord-pas-de-Calais: the shift in the regional landscape

The remit of the funding mechanism dictated the shift from a physical space that exists in Wallonia (the region from which the director Olivier Masset-Depasse originates) to a landscape that is impossible to locate in the francophone Belgian region of Wallonia - the coastline. As outlined in Chapter Three, Wallimage provided 250.000 Euros to the project (Wallimage 2001-2010, 2012: 3), whereas CRRAV/ Pictanovo provided only 150.000 Euros (Cine-regio, 2006) of a 2 million Euro budget (Cbo-boxoffice, 2013). The relocation of shooting to the Nord-pas-de-Calais coastline was aligned with the logic of the film fund and with practicalities. Despite the small financial investment in the film, Wallonia had better post-production facilities than the Nord-pas-de-Calais region, and this led to subsequent arrangements being made that agreed with the clauses attached to the Wallimage film institution (Cine-regio, 2006). In essence, it is this practicality that encouraged the relocation of the shooting to Nord-pas-de-Calais.

The producer and filmmaker argue that the Côte d'Opal of Nord-pas-de-Calais was selected for potentially 'touristic' reasons (Masset-Depasse, 2006). Reynaert concurs with this sentiment when he proposed more generally that CRRAV/ Pictanovo is more concerned with the 'image of the region' (Reynaert, 2010: 9). The use of a 'touristic' place, in the form of the coastline, subsequently renders the film 'marked' by the transnational sources of finance. However, this inclusion of the Nord-pas-de Calais region along these lines is not necessarily consistent with the corpus of work that originated from the region during the period of French New Realism/ *le jeune cinéma* or 'the social renewal of French cinema' (Garbarz, 1997: 74-75) in the 1990s. Vincendeau argues that:

Where Ken Loach might go to Glasgow or to a former Yorkshire mining town to explore what Blairites term social exclusion, a French film-maker will turn to the working-class suburbs of Paris, Lyons or Marseilles or to the depressed north to depict the fracture sociale - a term that has dominated French politics in the 90s (Vincendeau, 1999: 14).

In this sense, the North - or the Nord-pas-de-Calais region more specifically - is perceived as a location where the issues of social deprivation, unemployment, and the acute struggles of individuals on the fringes of a sense of collective are most concentrated. The choice of film location in micro-geographical areas for the filmmakers included within French New Realism is implicated with a variety of factors, such as the increase in regional film funds in France in the 1990s, in addition to the prevalence of socio-economic issues within these spaces.

In the case of the previously described films from Wallonia, the *terril* is utilized in order to construct a cinematic representation of the post-industrial and depressed region in precisely this way. The *terril* is used to heighten the social marginality and exclusion of their characters, such as Dimitri in *Ultranova*. The socio-economic issues outlined in *Les Convoyeurs attendent* are also consistent with films set in the 'depressed north' of France. Although there may be thematic similarities, these films seek to include topographical particularities of Wallonia, which link back to its industrial past. The setting of a film in the 'depressed north' of France also leads to an engagement with a particular geographical, cultural, and socio-economic context that reflects the reported realities of the region.

Baxter (2002) reads the film *La Vie de Jésus* (1997), which is set in the small rural town of Bailleul in Nord-pas-de-Calais, as displaying a locale in France that pertains to the hinterlands of the country, and is a break with a Paris-metropole-centric image of French cinematic culture. Alongside the Brittany-set film *Western* (Manuel Poirier, 1997), Baxter states that 'the idea of France, as nation, as concept – seems far away, meaningful in its absence rather than its presence, a fitful notion rather than a vital reality' (Baxter, 2002: 67). The themes of social exclusion and marginality imbued within the characters and the setting in the Northern regions nuance the socio-economic difficulties experienced within spaces outside of the centre. It marks an engagement with the cultural and regional diversity that exists beneath this Parisian metropole façade. In relation to the character of Freddy and *La Vie de Jésus*, Baxter claims that 'Bruno Dumont shows this dislocation from the perspective of a youth locked in a region emptied by history of economic purpose and social vitality' (Baxter, 2002: 72). This image of Nord-pas-de-

Calais chimes with the portrayals of the space in so-called French New Realist films.

Through films such as *La Vie de Jésus* (1997), *L'humanité* (1999) and *La Vie revêue des anges* (1998), the Nord-pas-de-Calais region is viewed as a space with harsh and bleak social and economic conditions, with limited opportunities for young people. *Ça commence aujourd'hui/ It all starts today* (Bertrand Tavernier, 1999) also portrays these bleak conditions within the region for a young generation through the headteacher of a primary school, who witnesses social deprivation characteristics within his young students due to their parents' economically precarious position. This cinematic image of Nord-pas-de-Calais, found in the so-called French New Realism of the 1990s, offered an image of a region with acute issues of social fracture, which can be seen as a result of the withering away of its economic base since the closure of its mines and industry. The socio-economic realities of the French region are manifested in the breakdown of the community, with the characters suffering from a marginal and unemployed status. The on-location shooting of this corpus of films set in Nord-pas-de-Calais allows for the visualization of the ontological state of the region.

More generally, the importance of on-location shooting is referred to in Kracauer's (1997) interpretation of Cendrars's experiment. Kracauer acknowledged:

two film scenes which are completely identical except for the fact that one has been shot on Mont Blanc...while the other was staged in a studio. His contention is that the former has a quality not found in the latter. There are on the mountain, says he, certain 'emanations, luminous or otherwise, which have worked on film and given it a soul' (Kracauer, 1997: 35).

In essence, the re-creation of a space within the confines of the studio detracts from the ontological state of the space that is intrinsically embedded within the mechanical reproduction of the location. Filming on location provides the film with an extra quality and 'soul' (*ibid*), whether that may be through the lighting conditions or how the shot is composed and what is also included. In effect,

only by shooting on-location can the filmmaker truly include and embrace the ontological realities of a given place. In the context of *Les Convoyeurs attentent* and *Ultranova*, this refers to the presence of socio-economic issues in the films due to the loss of the industrial economic base in the region. However, for *Cages*, the on-location shooting in France immediately removes the Walloon context and specificities, which would have been embedded within the topographical particularity of the region. The re-location of the shooting to France therefore means that these Walloon regional specificities cannot be re-created in a studio or across the border. Despite the similar socio-economic issues in the two regions, a film can therefore be 'marked' through a re-location of shooting.

Although Vincendeau (1999) discusses the notion of the 'depressed north' in relation to the region within French New Realism in the mid- to late 1990s, Masset-Depasse describes his inclusion of the space in *Cages*: 'il m'est vite apparu que le romantisme de la côte d'opale, de ses falaises seyait mieux à mon histoire de désamour que les terrils déprimants de ma ville natale' (Masset-Depasse, 2013: Appendix I).¹³⁶ Masset-Depasse's film does not correlate with these previous conceptions of the bleak space in Nord-pas-de-Calais, since the film presents a lush and rich coastline, which advertises an oneiric and "touristic" vision of a region that is cinematically marked by harsh socio-economic conditions and problems. In essence, it is possible to propose that his film has been 'marked' by the re-location to France. Anne Coesens further notes that once

on a vu les falaises et on a compris l'importance du contrepoint. Filmer dans un terril aurait été du ton sur ton avec cette histoire de cloisonnement. Le côté solaire et ouvert de l'environnement a donné un souffle au film et des moments bénéfiques du fait de cette impression d'étouffement dans les autres espaces (Coesens, in Bayer, 2008).¹³⁷

¹³⁶ [It quickly came to me that the romanticism of the Côte d'Opal and of its cliff faces better suited my story of broken love than the depressing slagheaps of my hometown (Charleroi).]

¹³⁷ [We saw the cliffs [of the French coastline] and we understood the significance of them as a counterpoint. Filming on a slagheap would have continued the tone of the narrative with its preoccupation with sequestration. The sunny side and the open environment gave the film a fresh impulse set against the sense of constriction in the other spaces.]

There is hence a shift from an artificial human accretion on the land to a natural formation, and this subsequently affects the tone and use of the given space in the film. In *Cages*, the French coastal landscape is visualized as an oneiric site in which the history and positive memories of the central protagonists' relationship are embedded, rather than the site of sequestration and alienation suggested by the *terril*.

The deserted shoreline has a binary effect of representing solitude – a simultaneous opening up and closing down of possibility for the protagonist. Solitude is engendered in terms of the discernible distance from a form of community, whereas the connection is reinforced through Eve and Damien's relationship in the opening sequences on the shoreline. The images of the landscape thus offer a sentiment of being both within and outside a given community. This sense of solitude, however, is not imbued with the same meanings as the *terril*, since this is not the alienation of the individual in a deserted man-made space. The shoreline is the point of introspection, as opposed to the city, such as that found in the view from the *terril* in *Ultranova* earlier in this chapter. Instead, it is the "close-up" framing of the individual's body within the interior sequences that heightens Eve's disaffection from the community. The liminal space of the cliff is a point of re-negotiation and re-connecting with her partner and a future hope for assimilation into the community, which develops through the repetitive visits to the space. As we saw in *Ultranova*, the introspection of the character (Dimitri) and his contemplative gaze, from the *terril* to the city, questions a sense of belonging to a defined community. The character's lack of employment and family connections in an atrophied de-industrial and post-industrial space then become open to interrogation and re-consideration, which is also the case in *Les Convoyeurs attendent* and in Masset-Depasse's short film *Chambre froide*.

Within this space of the coastline, Masset-Depasse utilizes long shots and panoramic shots, the latter being obtained through the use of a helicopter. The long shot initially provides an 'establishing function' that seeks to locate the character within a given space (Sitney, 1993: 108), which, in the case of *Cages*, immediately positions the characters in a space that cannot be geographically situated within the contours of Wallonia and the francophone regions of Belgium. The extensive vistas of the Nord-pas-de-Calais coastline locate the

characters in a space that can still exist within Belgium, but in the Northern Flemish speaking region of Flanders. Although this is not intended by the filmmaker, the inclusion of the coastline emphasizes the multiple and fragmented regions of Belgium. The lack of the Flemish language in the film confirms that the film is not unfolding in the Northern region of Belgium. This therefore reinforces the fragmented nature of the Belgian 'national' identity, and further highlights the linguistic and cultural differences in the country. The use of the French language instead locates the film within the Northern French region, which has a border with Belgium.



Figure 5.7: *Cages* (Masset-Depasse, 2006)



Figure 5.8: *Cages*

The long shot (Figure 5.7 and Figure 5.8) displays wide views of the landscape that accentuate its extensive nature behind the characters in the foreground. This is in contrast to the types of shots utilized in the interior environments, which are restricted in terms of highlighting Eve's subjective sense of constriction that is attributed to her disability. The sense of constriction is thus engendered through a proliferation of close-ups upon the body of Eve, and in particular the close-ups upon her eyes, which are imbued with significance due to her inability to speak. The close focus upon the eyes is a means of allowing the spectator to experience and view her inner thoughts and feelings. Masset-Depasse asserts the significance of the transition between the two interior and exterior spaces, since 'je pars sur ces images intérieures, pour les développer le plus possible et chercher à aller vers l'intériorité la plus profonde du personnage' (Masset-Depasse, in *Cinergie*, 2005: 14).¹³⁸ The juxtaposition of the types of shots utilized within the interior and exterior spaces posits the natural formation of the coastline space as a correlative to the internal workings of the character to avoid her sequestration from her relationship and from the community. The choice of shots within the exterior and internal spaces therefore have inverted connotations, where the interior

¹³⁸ [I leave on these interior images (before a subsequent shot of the coastline), in order to develop them as much as possible and try to go towards the most profound interiority of the character.]

close-up focus pertains to her individual solitude and sense of sequestration, and the long shots on the cliffs re-affirm her desire to maintain a connection with her partner. Although the long shot may frame the space as one of desolation and solitude for the characters, it posits a more personal sense of belonging within a family unit. There is thus an interaction between the natural world and the mechanical means of reproducing the image of the landscape, since the choice of the shots utilized imbues the natural world with a sense of meaning in relation to the human figure. The title, *Cages*, also refers to her psychological condition, as she feels trapped and unable to break free and speak. Her handicap polarizes her position within society since she cannot maintain her relationship and human ties.

The space on the cliff face functions in clear contrast to the interior shots, which as previously noted, are concerned with emphasizing Eve's psychological state. The cliff top is therefore liberating for her since the shot shows the extensive nature of the environment and is oneiric in terms of colouration. Although the characters are situated upon a cliff, it does not represent a liminal positioning for the character of Eve; the space does not prevent her from a continued journey in which the sea is conceived as a further border or site of further connection.¹³⁹ In essence, the coastline allows for the embedded history of the relationship to be recalled and emerge within the characters' consciousness. The coastline is thus the predicate that the characters then inscribe with meaning. There is no cultural significance embedded in the landscape, it is merely a reference point for the character's relationship. Eve is never positioned alone in this environment and vast space, which suggests that there is no true isolation and sequestration of the character.

The cliffs are a space that reinforces Eve and Damien's relationship, since the memories of their relationship are inscribed within a stone situated at the top of the cliff. The space is thus a 'conduit to memories' (Harper and Rayer, 2011: 19), and this also recalls Schama's notion of the layering of memories in the rocks (Schama, 1995: 6). However, in *Cages*, the rocks of the cliff face pertain to the layering of memories within the relationship of the characters.

¹³⁹ In films such as *Welcome* (Philippe Lioret, 2009), the Nord-pas-de-Calais coastline is part of the journey to a further destination. The characters reside within a camp in Calais for asylum seekers, and they seek to escape this incarceration for a place in England.

However, it is important to note that this layering of memories is engendered through the context of the film, and does not necessarily have the inclusion of a past relevant to the cultural concerns of the region. The ending, as Eve throws the rock into the sea (Figure 5.9), highlights the significance of the coastline and the sea as a cleansing medium. Although the status of the relationship is left ambiguous, Eve is able to dispel the problems in her relationship and regain her voice in this final act.



Figure 5.9: *Cages*

The colouration of the coastline in *Cages* also alters the tone of the film, and is viewed in contrast to the space of the *terril*. In the photographic renderings of the *terril* and in the films discussed in this chapter, the slagheap is imbued with a black-and-white colouration, which connects with the region's history as the 'pays noir'. However, the space of the coastline incorporates a range of colouration, with variants of a blue hue in the sky and the sea, the white cliffs and the vibrant green grasslands. This also occurs through a particular type of lighting that the coastline offers at the point of leaving the land. Through this use of colouration, the space of the coastline is imbued with an oneiric quality; it is a space that allows for the transcendence of the characters from the constraints of their fraught lives, sequestration, and mistrust. The character of Eve, in particular, is able to leave behind her enclosed sense of

forced isolation and attempt to re-ignite her relationship with Damien. It is thus a space of liberation and escape, which is portrayed through a markedly different colour scheme that would be available within the Walloon and *terril* spaces. The shift in the locale thus affects the reading of the landscape in relation to the characters, and consequently changes the intended meanings for the spaces from the screenplay.

Conclusion

The film *Cages* presents a dialogue between the creative, aesthetic, and production orientated dimensions in France and Wallonia. The logic of film funding and the requirements attached to the regional film fund from CRRAV/Pictanovo presupposed the alteration of the film's location from Charleroi in Wallonia to the cliffs of the Nord-pas-de-Calais region across the border in France. This is therefore a clear example of how the transnational co-production has been able to 'mark' the regional landscape that is presented in the film. The topographical particularity of the *terrils* on the fringes of the Walloon city were removed from the original screenplay, and this in turn suggests a loss of a possible sociological approach to the film and an essence of Walloon specificity. This presence is traced through the photographic and cinematic renderings of the Walloon region, which ascribe a regional and socio-economic reading upon the landscape. The pre-determined inclusion of the slagheap could have provided an understanding of the space in addition to the symbolic meanings engendered by the character's disability. The cliffs of the Côte d'Opal region are inscribed with these properties through the characters' repetitious journeys to the space, which are developed in relation to memory and the relationship enclosed within the film's narrative. The Nord-pas-de-Calais landscape thus exists within this film as a social void, which is further complicated by its use of francophone Belgian, Walloon, and Parisian actors. The location in turn becomes a geographical anomaly, which also cannot easily be placed within the confines of Belgium due to the use of language in harmony with the shoreline.

In the aforementioned Walloon films, the *terrils* are used to clearly emphasize the characters' sense of marginality and their position on the

periphery. The way in which the characters are situated on the *terril* encourages a reading of the relation between the centre and the periphery. In this sense, the landscape is used in order to formulate a 'regional' identity for the characters. The *terrils* are also a vestige of a lost Walloon working-class 'regional' identity in terms of the absence of the heavy industries in the region. The next chapter continues this formation of a Walloon peripheral space, but it is conceived in a very different way. In the films of the Dardenne brothers, we are introduced to another town that was constructed upon the metallurgic industries that have since withered away. The result is socio-economic problems that are embedded within the characters and relationships. The relations between the periphery and the centre are not formed topographically, but they are introduced through a focus upon the abandoned figure of the child and his corporeal movements around the Walloon town. The next chapter will also consider the transnational with regard to the Dardenne brothers as contemporary Belgian filmmakers and European auteurs, and how their approach to the social issues and the centre-periphery relations are manifested through broader European cinematic influences.

Chapter Six:

Le gamin au vélo (Dardenne brothers, 2011): Corporeal and Spatial configuration of the ‘transnational regional’ space

Nous sommes dans un pays à la fois très libres et très ouverts à toutes les influences (Dardenne brothers, in Duplat, 2005: 38).¹⁴⁰

This chapter engages with the francophone Belgian filmmakers, the Dardenne brothers, and intends to explore the idea of the filmmakers as transnational auteurs. As we saw in Chapter One, the filmmakers receive funding for their films in a transnational context, since they receive the majority of the finance from Belgian or ‘national’ sources at the same time as all of their works being co-productions with France. The Dardenne brothers note the importance of France as part of their film funding strategy; ‘(y)ou cannot make a film in Belgium without [international] co-production. Not a single one! And our major partner is France’ (Dardenne brothers, in Edelman, 2007: 220). There are even multilateral agreements with a third country acting as a third (minor) producer, such as Luxembourg in the case of *La Promesse* (1996) and Italy in the case of *Le gamin au vélo* (2011). The modes of exhibition are also important to consider, since, as outlined in Chapter Two, the films of the Dardenne brothers are more widely circulated and consumed across the border in France than in Belgium.

As Hjort outlines in her typologies of cinematic transnationalism, auteurist transnationalism ‘arises in a more punctual, ad-hoc manner when an established auteur and icon of a particular national cinema...decides to embrace a particular kind of collaboration beyond national borders’ (Hjort, 2009: 23). While their consistent collaboration with French co-producers cannot be seen as ‘ad-hoc’, the Dardenne brothers can be viewed as transnational auteurs due to their involvement in omnibus and portmanteau films, such as *Chacun son cinéma/ To Each his own Cinema* (2007, Angelopoulos et al.) in which they directed a sequence entitled ‘Dans l’obscurité’. The purpose of this

¹⁴⁰[We are in a country, in which we are very free and very open to all influences.]

omnibus film was to mark the 60th anniversary of the Cannes film festival. For this project, a select group of filmmakers were invited to give their vision of cinema (Bordwell, 2008). In essence, the Dardenne brothers are viewed as auteurs, since the filmmakers are valorized and placed within the prestigious Cannes film festival. Powrie notes the tendency in French cinema to draw on the figure of the auteur as a form of marketing strategy (Powrie, 1999: 8). In the case of *Chacun son cinéma*, the figure of the auteur takes on a transnational connotation through this marketing since they are a brand name to appeal to international audiences at the same time as producing films that are intended to have a 'national' or cultural value. The inclusion of the Dardenne brothers in such a film points towards the francophone Belgian filmmakers' degree of currency and exposure on the international market to cinephile or 'art house' cinema audiences.

However, Hjort's previous assertion also points towards the fact that the auteur has initially formed their status within the 'national' framework. The Dardenne brothers therefore produce films within the 'national' arena, and this has in turn enabled them to achieve a particular auteurist status beyond the borders. At the same time, the Dardenne brothers are viewed as intrinsically 'Belgian' filmmakers. In Spaas' (2000) survey of francophone cinema, for example, the Dardenne brothers have a prominent section, in the chapter on Belgian cinema, dedicated to their films set within the region of Wallonia. Moreover, film critics outside of Belgium often refer to the Dardenne brothers as contemporary 'Belgian' filmmakers (Brooks, 2006; Dupont, 2002; Macnab, 2003; Wolfreys, 2008). In an interview series with a selection of Belgian filmmakers, Van Hoeij outlines certain phases in the development of contemporary francophone Belgian cinema, in which the final section is entitled 'the post-Dardenne generation' (Van Hoeij, 2010: 15). These are all clear references as to how far the Dardenne brothers have come to define what 'Belgian cinema' is from a national and international perspective. This phenomenon in relation to the Dardenne brothers epitomizes Higson's revision of the national cinema concept, in which he highlights the assumptions that the 'national' is formed and fixed, and that the borders are effective (Higson, 2000b: 67). The 'national' framework is a rather 'limiting' (Higson, 2000b) notion, since although the Dardenne brothers are seen as 'Belgian', the stylistic influences

and social themes bring to light whether their films can be considered as 'transnational' in relation to a wider European or French cinema or even a 'regional' Walloon cinema. In this chapter, this thesis will be tested out in relation to the Dardenne brothers' most recent film *Le gamin au vélo*.

Approaches to the Dardenne brothers' aesthetics and themes have led to comparisons of the filmmakers in a European context. Osganian (2003: 53) also references the Dogme 95 movement within an approach to the social in European cinema, and to the stylistic form of the works. For Osganian, the common ground between Dogme 95 and the Dardenne brothers is found in 'la création d'un cinéma social comme déconstruction du social' (*ibid*).¹⁴¹ Osganian's perspective is therefore engendered by the focus on the state of society within European countries from the point of view of those who reside upon its fringes. In short, the breakdown of social relations emerges through the focus on excluded people and groups. Austin also asserts that within this cinematic style of documentary aesthetics, there is a possibility of aligning such a technique with the transnational Dogme 95 movement (Austin, 2008: 231). Luc Dardenne has suggested that, while there are potential stylistic similarities between their films and those of Dogme 95, these are largely shaped by the fact that these filmmakers emerge - in the first instance - from small national cinemas (Belgium and Denmark), where the style of filmmaking is in part a response to the financial restraints that these directors are working under (L. Dardenne, 2008: 104). This comparison between the Dardenne brothers and the Dogme 95 movement is rather vague, and is predicated upon only the small number of similarities that Luc Dardenne outlines. However, one key difference lies in the fact that Dogme 95 was not initially conceived as a social or political cinema, whereas Osganian (2003) aligns the Dardenne brothers with a broader European framework of filmmakers that have produced films concerned with social issues.

Osganian (2003) introduces the notion of the 'aesthetic of the fragment' as a means of highlighting the presence of the theme of social exclusion in the films of contemporary European filmmakers, such as Ken Loach, Mike Leigh (United Kingdom), Pedro Costa (Portugal), Erik Zonca, Laetitia Masson

¹⁴¹ [the creation of a social cinema as a deconstruction of the social]

(France), and the Dardenne brothers (Belgium). This once again connects the Dardenne brothers to a transnational cinematic framework in terms of the themes in their films. The 'aesthetic of the fragment' thus links these European filmmakers through the 'non-réconciliation absolue entre l'individu et société, et le regard subjectif portée par l'individu' (Osganian, 2003: 53) found in their work. In essence, Osganian claims that, by focusing on the individual, these films emphasize the individual's marginalization from a community and from society. The central protagonist drives the narrative forward, as the camera tracks his/ - her struggles due to his/ - her marginal position in relation to a society in which traditional social bonds, especially in relation to traditional notions of class solidarity, are fragmented and uncertain. These characteristics are not specific and endemic to any given country, but they have all emerged from different 'national' frameworks across Europe at a similar point in time.

The comparison to French New Realism (Powrie, 1999) remains particularly strong in relation to the Dardenne brothers' films, and this point has a certain currency, given that it is a contemporaneous cinema of the francophone Belgian filmmakers. As Osganian suggests, the filmmakers are all dealing with the same point in European socio-political history, which has led to a similar approach in terms of how the socio-political realities are depicted on screen. Moreover, these filmmakers in the European framework are contemporaries and, as the *Chacun son cinéma* omnibus film shows, they may even at times collaborate. The Dardenne brothers have outlined their admiration for filmmakers from French New Realism (Powrie, 1999), such as Bruno Dumont and Laurent Cantet, and have even noted points of similarity (as well as difference) between their works (Dardenne brothers, in Dupont, 2002). This is not to say that the Dardenne brothers' film can be supplanted into French New Realism, but the socio-political and aesthetic similarities between their films and those produced in France during the so-called return to the political of the 1990s and early 2000s must be acknowledged.

Higbee (in Hayward, 2005) argues that films of French New Realism do not espouse clear political ideologies, but indirectly engage with and reference issues of social and political importance. For his part, Jeancolas proposes the emergence of this socio-political engagement through the 'réel de proximité',

which pertains to the creation of films that deal with the fragmented and atomized state of society, without the ideological frameworks that existed in 1968 (Jeancolas, 1997: 57). The political and social dimension of these films, embedded within the given place and space of France, pertains to a presence of fissures in the collective, and the increased sense of individual isolation within the social and economic spheres. These films, considered in relation to the 'réel de proximité', therefore depict how the individual responds to, and at times is driven by, their marginalization from society. The films retain ambiguous connotations, since the socio-political engagement arises from the characters and their predicaments. We can note the similarities with *Le gamin au vélo*, where the breakdown of the collective is thus engaged with through the destabilized family unit and the absence of the father. This preoccupation with the familial unit and the re-configuration of a destabilized family through foster care remains at the centre of the narrative. It is important to note that this particular film was produced around a decade after the period that is generally associated with French New Realism. However, the themes and issues that are included within the Dardenne brothers' film are still relevant in addition to the location of the film in a micro-geographical area.

As noted in Chapter Five, the location of films within the 'depressed North' of France was key for the depictions of social fracture in the 1990s and early 2000s (Vincendeau, 1999: 14). The social deprivation and socio-economic uncertainties that the characters experience either directly or indirectly posit a marginal or 'regional' space outside of the 'centre' of Paris.¹⁴² The Dardenne brothers even acknowledge that this point of comparison is engendered by the fact that 'we're [the Dardenne brothers and Bruno Dumont] somewhat on the same turf, and have more in common with each other than with French cinema today, or let's say, Paris cinema' (Dardenne brothers, in Dupont, 2002). This therefore suggests that the similarity fundamentally arises from the location of their films in a micro-geographical or even 'regional' area, engaging with its regional specificities and particularities that distance the film from a perceived 'centre', such as Paris in the cadre of French filmmaking. Films considered as

¹⁴² The indirect social deprivation is experienced by the teachers, viewing the poverty and the social issues of the children in *Ça commence aujourd'hui* (1999).

forming part of French New Realism (Powrie, 1999) highlight the plight of young, marginal figures in the Nord-pas-de-Calais region, rather than locating social fracture exclusively in the deprived urban peripheries of the French capital.

In the case of the Dardenne brothers, and in particular *Le gamin au vélo*, there are also certain allusions to Italian neo-realism. This influence is different to the aforementioned connections to French New Realism, since it is based on knowledge of an earlier period of Italian film history. The link to Italian neo-realism is based upon a combination of self-conscious decisions made by the filmmakers, and partly an influence that has tended to reach into European and World cinema when read against a social backdrop with non-professional actors and real locations. The Dardenne brothers note the importance of this transnational cinematic movement as a key influence in the creation of their own style in their post-1996 films. Writing in 1994, during the development of *La promesse* (1996), Luc Dardenne notes the direct influence of the Italian neo-realist classic *Allemagne, année zero/ Germany Year Zero* (Roberto Rossellini, 1948) on the brothers' approach to filmmaking: '(e)ncore revu *Allemagne, année zéro*. Toujours la même intensité, le même tranchant. C'est notre modèle' (Dardenne, 2008: 33).¹⁴³ However, it is necessary to note that the Dardenne brothers' films do not completely adhere to a checklist for Italian neo-realism. Millicent Marcus outlines that the

rules governing neo-realist practice would include location shooting, lengthy takes, unobtrusive editing, natural lighting, a predominance of medium and long shots, respect for continuity time and space, an uncontrived, open-ended plot, working class protagonists, a nonprofessional cast, dialogue in the vernacular, active viewer involvement, and implied social criticism (Marcus, 1986: 22).

All of these rules do not cohere to the Dardenne brothers' films, although it is possible to note the inclusion of certain elements in relation to *Le gamin au vélo*. For example, the film makes use of natural lighting (Dardenne brothers, in Rouyer and Tobin, 2011: 11-12), location shooting, the inclusion of working

¹⁴³ [Watched *Germany, Year Zero* again. Always has the same intensity, the same edge. It is our model.]

class characters (Guy and Samantha), an engagement with the social issues of the region (abandonment of the child, destabilized families, loss of traditional and regional forms of employment), and the use of the non-professional actor for the principal role of Cyril. Moreover, this Dardenne brothers' film has led to direct comparisons with the Italian neo-realist film, *Ladri di biciclette/Bicycle Thieves* (Vittorio De Sica, 1948) (Debruge, 2011: 19; Douin, 2011; Fluctuat.net, 2011; Mosley, 2013: 129). The primary points of overlap between the two films arise from the relationship between the father and the son, the way in which the city is depicted through the movements of the characters and the (initial) search for the bicycle.

In certain instances in recent scholarship, the Dardenne brothers have been collapsed into a framework of French cinema. This is the case in the publications *Contemporary French Cinema* by Austin (2008) and *French Political Cinema* by O'Shaughnessy (2007). The concept of the transnational emerges in this case through the blurring of distinctions between filmmakers and social and political issues between different countries. Although O'Shaughnessy (2007: 47) recognizes that the filmmakers are from Wallonia in Belgium, the publication suggests that the filmmakers are not necessarily localized within the Walloon environment due to their inclusion in the focus on the social and political issues depicted in French cinema. Nevertheless, the Dardenne brothers do have a 'regional' remit in terms of their location in the same town of Seraing throughout their body of work. The filmmakers have chosen to locate their films within the post-industrial town, which brings to light certain Walloon social issues, such as sentiments of abandonment, a loss of a 'regional' working class identity and social marginalization.

In *Le gamin au vélo*, it is possible to also identify a 'regional' focus in terms of the inclusion of a young male character that resides in a youth-care centre in Wallonia. The 'regional' emerges not only through the portrayal of a micro-geographical space away from the Capital region of Brussels in Belgium, but the 'regional' space is constructed through a centre-periphery dynamic. As the geographer Passi (2003: 447) noted, the formation of a periphery-centre dynamic is an important strand to a 'regional identity'. The relationship between the absent father and the pre-adolescent male child encourages a tracing of the

Seraing space through the corporeal movements of the child, which suggests a centre-periphery dynamic due to his father's position in the centre and the child's oscillation around his father's location. This binary is conceived through the theme of mobility - and the use of the bicycle in particular - which aid this process of a delineation of spaces and the creation of a margin in relation to a constructed centre.

The 'fortress of society': the creation of a 'regional' centre-periphery model

Le gamin au vélo focuses upon the *déplacements* of a male child, Cyril, who oscillates between a youth-care home, and the home of the hairdresser, Samantha, who offers him a place to live and some form of stability. This is contrasted in the narrative by Cyril's repeated attempts to re-connect with his father, cycling between his temporary accommodation at the youth-care centre, the hairdresser's and the restaurant where his father works. The father initially provides his child with false hope, intimating to Cyril that his position in the youth-care centre is only temporary and the two will be re-united, once the father is able to financially support both of them. Cyril's precarious position and lack of social stability lead to a moral question; should he follow the right path or turn towards delinquency? A similar dilemma faces the young male protagonists in the previous Dardenne brothers' films: *La promesse* (1996), *Le fils* (2002) and *L'enfant* (2005). In *Le gamin au vélo*, a dealer on the local estate, Wes, assumes the role of a (dysfunctional) surrogate father to Cyril, and attempts to engage the boy in petty delinquent activities, such as stealing money from a local newsagent. However, Wes refuses the stolen money in order not to be implicated in the crime after the newsagent's son witnesses this act. Cyril therefore suffers a repeated rejection from figures of paternal authority in the narrative. In contrast, the maternal figure of Samantha seeks to forgive Cyril and exhibits a degree of compassion towards the child. The film thus considers the treatment of abandonment but concludes with the resolution of mutual adoption between the child and the surrogate mother, which is evoked by the picnic and cycle ride alongside the river that flows through the town of Seraing, La Meuse.

The configuration of the on-screen space according to the movements of the child obscures the significance of the selection of the film's location, since the film's mapping by the movements of the child does not necessarily correspond with the layout of Seraing. As Cyril frequents the sites of the hairdressers, the forest and the garage, the child is travelling between spaces that create a triangle around the perceived centre where his father works (L.Dardenne, 2011). This formation of a centre and a periphery will be addressed in more detail later in this section. While these three sites are not geographically on the margins of the town, the spaces take on this significance through Cyril's seemingly constant movement. The decision to locate the film in Seraing is significant, since the town is present in all of the Dardenne brothers' films from the video documentaries of the 1970s through to their latest film *Deux jours, une nuit* (2014) – with the exception of *Le silence de Lorna*.¹⁴⁴ This builds up a picture of how the town has changed over time from the period of de-industrialization through to its post-industrial present in *Le gamin au vélo*. It is therefore possible to see that the working-class traditions of Seraing are now absent, and also that the young – and primarily male characters – are engaging in alternative means of earning money. There is thus an intrinsic link between the Dardenne brothers' films and the location of Seraing.

Seraing is a small industrial town near the city of Liège and is currently situated within the province of Liège, which was formerly dominated by factories, mines, and the industrial traffic that travelled along the river (La Meuse). Before its industrialization, the town was primarily rural with an agricultural economy and a population size of only 1.818 people in 1800 (De Saint-Moulin, 1969). Seraing began to urbanize around the metallurgic industries - and in particular the Cockerill plant - which was founded in 1817. The rapid urbanization of the town that followed in the second half of the nineteenth century led to the vast construction of poor housing for the workers on the fringes of the factories and plants (*ibid*). In 1977 and during the demise of the Cockerill plant and the metallurgic industries in Seraing, the population

¹⁴⁴ In *Le silence de Lorna* there is the inclusion of the old Cockerill plant in Seraing during the industrial period. This picture appears about 1 hour 2mins into the film, and is situated behind the two characters of Lorna and her partner Sokol as they dance in a bar. Although the location for the film is not Seraing for the first time, there is still an image of Seraing within the film. It is also important to note that it is an image of Seraing during its period of success, and is therefore further emphasizing the social issues attributed to de-industrial decline.

figure was 66.713 inhabitants (Faniel, 2009: 10), and today it stands at 63.575 inhabitants (Gembloux.ulg.ac.be, 2013). On the basis of the figures released in 2008, Faniel estimates that one in five people of working age in Seraing is unemployed (*ibid*), a level that is only slightly lower than in the nearby cities of Charleroi and Liège. Between 1981 and 1991, it was estimated that there was a reduction of estimated 7.2% (*ibid*: 392), making the town one of the worst hit areas in terms of unemployment in the Walloon region. More recent figures in 2010 show unemployment at 24.47% of the active population, which marks a slight improvement on the nadir of 27.14% in 2006 (IWEPS, 2013).

In terms of Seraing's layout, the lower part of the town is where the factories and houses for workers are located. This area was previously inhabited by the proletarian people, and has since mutated into a space where the poorer community currently resides due to the de-industrialization of the area in the 1970s. Unemployed, single parent families and immigrant populations now generally characterize this space. It is precisely this district in which the Dardenne brothers locate their films (Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, 2002). In *Le gamin au vélo*, Samantha's hairdressing salon appears to be situated within this area, since unemployed undesirables, such as the character of the dealer Wes, primarily populate it. The Dardenne brothers have focused their attention on the area that is the most affected by the loss of the industrial heritage in Seraing. The filmmakers thus explore characters that represent the people most affected by this change in the town's economy.

The Dardenne brothers' films offer a particular location and site for these issues of the Walloon individual in terms of dealing with socio-economic and marginal issues. The site of Seraing is engaged with in their films, and therefore uncovers how the daily routines of certain individuals underline the bleak and pessimistic situation that is propagated within Seraing. The particular issues constructed through the characters also chime with the sociological studies of Seraing that have been previously outlined. Moreover, the 'regional' centre-periphery dynamic that is constructed through the marginal (former working-class) Walloon protagonist can be seen as part of the Seraing microcosm that deals with wider socio-economic issues in Wallonia. These issues are also included in the works of Bouli Lanners, Olivier Masset-Depasse and Benoît Mariage through the representations of the landscape. As we previously saw in

Chapters Four and Five, the position of the character on the periphery looking in to the centre emphasizes the characters' marginalization. However, in the case of *Le gamin au vélo*, the relation between the periphery and the centre are not viewed geographically or topographically, but they are formed through the social situation and the movements of the child. The central protagonist, Cyril, is a marginal figure through his lack of a family unit and the fact that he lives in a youth-care centre. He desperately wants to live with his father, who has since moved and works in a restaurant in the city centre. Cyril wants to create a family unit as this section will later outline, but the distance of his journey to the centre of the town to see his father further highlights his marginal status. The 'centre' does not necessarily pertain to a geographical point in the urban environment, but it can relate to the character's status in terms of employment and social relations, and a lack of familial and father-son connections. The marginal spaces are engendered through the individual and the corporeal movements that the person at the heart of the film makes in order to navigate and ameliorate their position within the conception of society.

In *Rosetta*, the Dardenne brothers conceptualize the space that one inhabits through a centre-periphery dynamic. The filmmakers discuss in their journal a society that places Rosetta on the margins and the fringes; 'telle apparaît la société pour celui qui se retrouve jeté dehors: comme une forteresse dans laquelle il ne peut rentrer' (L. Dardenne, 2008: 66).¹⁴⁵ This highlights the significance of the configuration of Seraing to the filmmakers. In essence, it concerns a situation where the characters are located and also the characters' treatment of the space - in terms of constructing a mental periphery in relation to an unattainable centre. For example, in *Rosetta*, the central protagonist lives in a caravan park and is required to travel through a woodland in order to work firstly in waffle production and then on a waffle stand. The woodland forms a symbolic border between the caravan park (the periphery) and her employment (centre). The society that the Dardenne brothers describe is one that is constructed as a 'fortress'; it is an unattainable centre, which the characters at the heart of their narratives cannot inhabit. In *Rosetta*, this is exemplified by her failings to retain employment, since, in the opening

¹⁴⁵ [so appears a society for s/he who finds him/herself thrown outside: like a fortress that cannot be re-entered]

sequence, the spectator is introduced to Rosetta, as she is being forcefully removed from her job in a factory, and then she later loses her job in small waffle production house.

Through the changing of the Seraing economic landscape, delineations have been created between different inhabitants of the city; particular areas have thus emerged that are notably concerned with social, moral and ethical issues. The choice of the location and the particular characters that inhabit these areas highlight the issues of social marginalization, disenfranchisement and local struggles. For example, in *Rosetta*, the character is unemployed and struggles to find work and, in *Le gamin au vélo*, Cyril is abandoned by his father in a youth-care centre. Luc Dardenne's notion of the 'fortress of society' suggests that the physical space of Seraing does not necessarily correspond to the social relations that have formed a centre. This centre is the hub for employment and a means of ameliorating the character's position within society. In *Le gamin au vélo*, the Seraing space is also formed in this way with Cyril residing on the periphery, with his father living and working in the centre of the town. In this case, the centre-periphery model is predicated upon social relations, as outlined by Bourdieu (1999).

Bourdieu asserts that the human body always maintains a 'site' (*lieu*), whether that may be a particular localization within a specific urban or rural location or within a relational space, such as a position of rank within the society (Bourdieu, 1999: 123). There is therefore an overlapping of the inhabited space and the social space. Although these sites may not necessarily map neatly onto one another geographically, either space can situate an individual within a centre or periphery. In essence, distances in spatial and social terms can serve to marginalize an individual or situate a person within a given centre. The social space is thus relational in terms of how exclusion functions for the individual in relation to his or her social role and position within the hierarchy of the society. The inhabited space may also be affiliated with a site of exclusion, such as a youth-care centre in *Le gamin au vélo* and the caravan park in *Rosetta*. Both of these 'sites' are geographically located upon the fringes of the urban area, and the inhabitants of them are typically viewed as marginal figures due to their lack of permanence, employment, and destabilized family units. These have all

contributed to their residence in such spaces. Bourdieu notes that capital is at the heart of this overlapping between social space and physical space:

those who are deprived of capital are either physically or symbolically held at a distance from goods. The lack of capital intensifies the experience of finitude: it chains one to a place (Bourdieu, 1999: 127).

The social and physical centre pertains to a hub of economic activity, where there is the chance of experiencing goods and services, and also the opportunity of accumulating capital. Those individuals who do not have the capital means are restricted from accessing and living within the confines of the centre, thereby situating them upon the margins. This may, in the Dardenne brothers' films, translate into a geographic positioning on the outskirts of a city or even within a temporary abode. The individual is part of a vicious circle. The lack of money restricts access to the centre, which therefore situates the individual on the margins. This peripheral position in turn makes it more difficult for the individual to move towards this centre. Bourdieu's conception of capital, in this context, refers primarily to goods and the social status of the individual, who is perceived to consume such goods (Bourdieu, 1999: 125-126). Bourdieu's centre therefore alludes to social distinctions in a physical space, 'a spatial distance that affirms social distance' (*ibid*: 126). In the films of the Dardenne brothers, the centre is a place of employment for the inhabitants of the town, since it is the site of expenditure and consumption. The characters that work in this environment subsequently earn money, which allows them to maintain their position in the centre and improve their social standing. The periphery, on the other hand, is aligned with notions of unemployment and lack of opportunities, and this is in turn reflected in their marginal social status. In *Rosetta* and *Le gamin au vélo*, this social distance translates into the daily routine and rituals of travel and constant movement, which alludes to their displacement from the centre. Although a lack of mobility is a usual marker of social exclusion – see for example, the French *banlieue* films of the 1990s - the movements in these two Dardenne brothers' films emphasize the characters' distance from the centre. The distance of the journey to the centre therefore highlights the issues of social polarization and marginalization suffered by the

characters. For example, in *Rosetta*, this is exemplified by the symbolic borders of the forest and the busy road that must be traversed by Rosetta to arrive at work. In *Le gamin au vélo*, this is demonstrated through Cyril's use of various modes of transport (bicycle, bus, and car) in order to travel to see his father.

The opening sequence of *Le gamin au vélo* mirrors the earlier work *Rosetta*, which introduces the spectator to the characters as they are embroiled in a persistent struggle against people in positions of authority. The forceful rejection from employment pertains to her occlusion from a collective experience and from the imagined 'centre' of the dominant society. She is hence unable to provide active participation in the community, which restricts her sphere of influence to the fringes of society and to the margins of Seraing. O'Shaughnessy (2010: 52-53) approaches this opening sequence in *Rosetta* through a Rancièrian philosophy. Rancière (1995: 53) advances the possibility of social determinism for those who are suffering from displacement from a community. In the context of *Rosetta*, the central protagonist struggles to retain her employment, and this consequently foregrounds the absence of stability for the character in a space of urban abandonment. The sense of injustice created from the loss of her job pertains to a form of exclusion predicated at a structural and institutional level (O'Shaughnessy, 2010: 53-54). For Cyril in *Le gamin au vélo*, this struggle against abandonment is not engaged with through the prism of employment (since the character is only twelve years old) and the lack of available opportunities for him in the Walloon society. Rather it is framed in relation to the father's inability to retain consistent and reliable employment, and care for his son after the death of Cyril's grandmother. Cyril's predicament is therefore an example of social fracture caused by the de-industrialization of Wallonia. Whereas Rosetta is seeking active participation and conflates employment with her notion of self-identity in order to find stability, Cyril, in *Le gamin au vélo*, is searching only for stability, which concerns leaving the youth-care centre and re-inserting himself within the structure of a family (initially with his biological father).

The generational transmission of notions of working-class regional identity is not the same due to the de-industrialized and post-industrial present of the region. The working-class traditions and heritage of the Walloon region that used to be passed down from one generation to the next have been lost

during the period of de-industrialization. The danger for the current generation is to pass on a culture of unemployment and isolation to their children, rather than the traditions of the former working-class community. There is therefore a shift from a sense of community to individual isolation. In *Le gamin au vélo*, this transference of working-class 'regional' identity between the generations is fraught with difficulties due to the absence of Cyril's biological father and mother. In particular, the father's decision to place his son in the youth-care centre erases the family unit, severing the connections between father and son. In essence, the son cannot follow in the footsteps of his father. The erasure of a generational transmission of identity is emphasized across the Dardenne brothers' films, and is particularly evident in their second feature film *Je pense à vous/ You're always on my mind* (Dardenne brothers, 1992).

This film clearly points towards the gradual deterioration of the former working-class traditions in Wallonia, which has presented new problems for the male proletariat and their children to find new employment. O'Shaughnessy notes that the work reveals the 'raw face of social struggle denied a collective voice, a past and a future and thus condemned to be mute, corporeal and local' (O'Shaughnessy, 2007: 53). In *Je pense à vous*, Fabrice, the film's central protagonist, loses his job in the metallurgic factory in Seraing due to the shifting economic nature of the steel industry in the face of competition overseas. The lack of job opportunities in the area results in the character struggling to maintain social relations and support his family. It is, however, the notion of the 'future', which is important to emphasize at this point, since in one key scene Fabrice decides to show his son around the dilapidated steelwork plant whilst discussing the generations of his family that have worked within this environment as a labourer in Seraing. The empty factory represents a void in the future of the family, since Fabrice's son, Martin, is not able to return to the factory to continue the modes of employment that his ancestors retained. The disappearance of the working-class community as a result of de-industrialization suggests an increasing disaffection with a sense of collective that has been passed down. *Je pense à vous* therefore shows a shifting in the economic base in Seraing, with the loss of the metallurgic industries and the subsequent change in employment opportunities for the next generation.

According to Ernst Mathijis in his publication on the *Cinema of the Low Countries*, the concepts of 'cultural identity and reality as a whole are seen as sites of contestation – something to be fought over, causing drama and distress – rather than something one feels comfortable with' (Mathijis, 2004: 7-8). The region's working-class industrial heritage is no longer applicable to the contemporary notions of self and group identities, thereby requiring a quest and struggle for a renewed identity and sense of belonging. The contestation and competitive struggles over these renewed senses fragments the community, thereby propelling disenfranchised youths into a state of exclusion. In *Le gamin au vélo*, the spectre of industrial heritage and the realities of a post-industrial present evoked in the images of the Walloon region are not explicitly included or referred to in the film. However, the Dardenne brothers point towards the breakdown of a sense of community through competition in the film:

Il est vrai que dans notre société où les rapports sont dans la concurrence et la rivalité, où on est plus dans la guerre que dans l'amitié ou dans l'amour, le comportement de cette femme a l'air anormal ... Il est habitué à ce qu'on lui mente, à commencer par son père qu'il attend dans ce centre depuis longtemps et qui n'est jamais venu le chercher (Dardenne brothers, in Cinergie, 2011).¹⁴⁶

The notion of a crisis of personal identity is therefore created within this breakdown of the community, destabilized family units and sentiments of abandonment that are carried with it. Cyril's notion of identity is fragile and uncertain, thereby requiring a sense of self-affirmation and belonging. The individual attempts to improve his/her situation through a competitive struggle. The emphasis on the individual is rooted in the social situation and the cultural reality of the Walloon region. This emerges in *Le gamin au vélo* primarily through the destabilized family unit and the pervading sentiment of abandonment that is attached to it in relation to the figure of the child. The

¹⁴⁶ [It is true that in our society where the relationships are rooted in competition and rivalry, where we are more engaged in war than in friendship and in love, the behaviour of this woman (Samantha) seems abnormal... He (Cyril) is accustomed to being lied to, starting with his father, who he has been waiting for in the youth-care centre for a long time and has never come to get him.]

social aspect therefore considers the detachment of the figure of the child from a sense of communion and familial unit. The child, in this film, does not seek a re-embedding process through the institution of the youth-care centre, which provides shelter for the child, since it also reinforces his sentiment of abandonment.

In *Le gamin au vélo*, work, money, and employment are factors in Guy's decision to discard his child, since he cannot afford to look after his son due to the meagre amount that he earns and the difficulty in terms of the hours that he is required to spend working. Guy is therefore situated in a different sphere to his son, who is re-located to the margins due to his father's employment and lack of financial stability at work. With this positioning of the father figure at the centre, the construction of spaces distance the male adult figure from the child, and this becomes even more pronounced within the destabilized family unit. With the loss of the mother and this preoccupation of work for the father, the child is placed within a situation in which he is left abandoned and in an atomized family situation. This links back to Jeancolas's notion of the 'proximité de réel' (Jeancolas, 1997: 57) and the isolated individual in the context of so-called French New Realism.

Moreover, in *Le gamin au vélo*, a sense of emotional violence is created through the relationship between Guy and Cyril, in which the father provides the child with a sense of false hope that they will remain in regular contact. The father figure, in this sense, is failing to live up to his obligations and to take on a sense of paternal responsibility. Whilst at work, and in the first meeting between the two characters in the film, Guy promises to call Cyril to arrange another meeting. However, Samantha requests that Guy informs Cyril of his intentions, thereby exposing this as a lie and false hope for the child. The breakdown of this parent-child relationship causes a degree of emotional violence to be placed upon the figure of the child, and is manifested physically through Cyril's repeated striking of his head against the car door. There is thus a fine line between the emotional and physical manifestations of violence that are created through the breakdown of the father-son relationship.

Samantha functions as a surrogate mother and parent for Cyril in the film, but her motives for aiding the child and enabling him refuge are unclear (beyond that of altruistic values). The two characters meet in a chance

encounter in a doctor's surgery beneath his father's abandoned flat and Cyril attaches himself to her as a final desperate attempt for acceptance in search of his refuge from abandonment. Although she occupies a marginal social space - living on an estate on the outskirts of the city - she has stable employment and her own business as a hairdresser. She has been able to remove the shackles imposed upon her by the de-industrialization and lack of employment opportunities in Wallonia, and therefore she is able to afford Cyril the care and guidance that he requires. Furthermore, the filmmakers changed Samantha's job from a doctor to a hairdresser in order to locate her within the estate, thereby highlighting the significance of the location in the suburbs. The shift in the type of employment for Samantha is from a highly-educated position into a position in the service industry on a working-class estate. The sentiments of abandonment still linger during the week, but he is able to seek acceptance and support in a stable environment at the weekend.

The opening comments by Luc Dardenne, in his publication *Sur l'affaire humaine*, point towards the fusion of local struggles with the figure of the child in *Le gamin au vélo*. He notes

j'essayais de comprendre ce que pouvait vivre dans sa tête un gamin solitaire, abandonné, comment la violence des coups qu'il recevait pouvait ne pas générer chez lui une violence aussi destructrice que celle qui le détruisait (L. Dardenne, 2012: 7-8).¹⁴⁷

The figure of Cyril therefore suffers from violence, which is subjected to his body both mentally and physically. The mental harm that he encounters is created through the lack of a consistent father figure present in his life, but also the exploitation and physical abuse that he suffers through his adoption into the gang on the estate. There is hence a dualistic approach to the struggles that the young characters in the Dardenne brothers' films encounter within the constructed Seraing space. The increasing notion of individual solitude is emphasized by Cyril's physical distance away from a possible sense of

¹⁴⁷ [I tried to understand what was able to live inside the mind of a solitary child, abandoned, how the violence of the strikes that he received were not able to generate within him a violence that is was as destructive as that (the violence) which was destroying him.]

community and family with his father, since he requires various modes of transport to gain access to his father.

In *Le gamin au vélo*, the means of mobility is not connected to the requirement to gain employment, but the desire for acceptance into a community and a sense of solidarity both remain. Initially, the search for Cyril's bicycle is conflated with his journey to find his father; his generational notion of identity is rootless for him, since he has no home and therefore no familial centre to which he can refer back. Jean-Pierre Dardenne states that 'le vélo représente à la fois la liberté et son père' (Jean-Pierre Dardenne, in Rouyer and Tobin, 2011: 12).¹⁴⁸ Cyril's father's apartment is deserted and vacant, and his father has sold his bicycle in order to pay his required bills. The absence of his father and his bicycle emphasizes the abandonment of Cyril, since he is both excluded from a stable family unit with his father and has lost his prized possession that enabled him the freedom of movement across Seraing. Both of these elements in combination facilitated a place in the 'fortress' or the imagined 'centre' for Cyril. However, their absence further highlights the individual's isolation and marginalization.

When Samantha returns the bicycle to Cyril, he regains some mobility, but this serves only to further reinforce the dynamic between the periphery and the centre. Luc Dardenne (2011) asserts that the space was formed in a triangular manner, with the petrol station (Figure 6.1), the forest (Figure 6.2) and the hairdressers (Figure 6.3) existing as the exterior points between which Cyril is required to travel.¹⁴⁹ Although working in the kitchen of a restaurant in the city centre, Cyril's father forms a point of reference in the middle of this constructed triangle (Figure 6.4). Cyril is situated on the periphery through his repetitious journeys between the three fixed points, which again posits an inside-outside schema. The distance to the 'centre' to visit his father is too far on the bicycle,

¹⁴⁸ [the bicycle represents both freedom and his father at the same time]

¹⁴⁹ The forest also pertains to the periphery and the outer reaches of the city of Seraing in the film *Rosetta*. The character of Rosetta resides in a caravan park. Every day, she clandestinely leaves the caravan park through the forest to gain access to the town centre. The forest is not the designated means of entry to the given space, and therefore acts as a symbolic border demarcating the centre from the periphery. The construction of symbolic borders is salient to the constitutions of groups and the continuation of a group consciousness, but, at the same time, it pertains to an exclusionary gesture. The final sequence of *Le silence de Lorna* also takes place within a forest on the margins of the city of Liège in order to demarcate a periphery. In *Le gamin au vélo*, the forest thus marks one of the outer edges of the conceived triangle, which outline the fringes of Seraing.

since he is required to use either a car or a bus (in combination with a bike) in order to reach his father and the restaurant. This distance travelled and the modes of transport used to further reinforce the character's social marginality. These notions of the relation between the centre and periphery and marginalization are both at the heart of Paasi's description of a 'regional identity' (Paasi, 2003: 447). Consequently, the space of Seraing is created as a 'regional' space by Cyril. In essence, the periphery is constructed through the corporeal movements of the child, because while Cyril has a degree of mobility, he is still restricted to the margins.



Figure 6.1: *Le gamin au vélo* [the garage]



Figure 6.2 : *Le gamin au vélo* [the forest]



Figure 6.3 : *Le gamin au vélo* [the hairdresser]



Figure 6.4 : *Le gamin au vélo* [the restaurant]

Cyril's desired site of inclusion within a stable family environment (with his father) remains at the centre of this constructed triangle, but this is a possibility that is refused to him by his father's unemotional attachment to his son. His father, Guy, is more concerned with his own individual existence within the competitive environment; by excluding his son, he is able to perpetuate his continued sense of belonging at the centre of this triangle. This notion is consistent with Bourdieu's conception of the centre as the site of capital

(Bourdieu, 1999: 126), and therefore as key to being at the centre of society. Certain issues are raised through his need for employment and the exclusion of his son. The primary factor is that, should Guy need to look after his son, he may not be able to work the hours in the restaurant to earn the money he needs to look after both himself and his son. It also raises the question as to whether he can even earn enough money to support himself, let alone his son. This is suggested through Guy's loss of his apartment and his requirement to sell Cyril's bicycle in order to re-locate to a shared house in Seraing. The father, Guy, is also able to only obtain employment in the service industry, which points towards the same generational issues that were raised in *Je pense à vous* in terms of the loss of a working-class male employment in the heavy industries of Seraing. The father has hence become atomized by this shift in the post-industrial economy in Wallonia, since he is no longer able to maintain a relationship with his son.

Moreover, Cyril was primarily cared for by Guy's mother, and this suggests that Guy tends to view himself as a male worker. He sees his role as a worker, whether that may be in the service industry, as opposed to looking after his son. The role of caring for Cyril is aligned with only the female characters in the film, such as the late grandmother and the hairdresser, Samantha. Samantha's offer of a family unit is also destabilized, since Samantha's partner leaves her due to Cyril's lack of respect for the couple as parents. This breakup of a potential family unit further underlines the isolation of the individual in post-industrial Wallonia, as all the characters in the film struggle to maintain familial relationships. Cyril is once again denied the possibility of a stable family unit.

The character of Cyril belongs to a trend that has emerged through the Dardenne brothers' films in terms of their engagement with the figure of the child and the pre-adolescent. There is a particular stylistic pre-occupation with the young male child in their films, which is posited alongside the transition from childhood through adolescence to adulthood. Cyril is shown outside of the education system, and thus outside of the norms of social and educational development for a child. Cyril is briefly viewed at school during the film. In the opening sequence, he arrives at school with the view of truanting in order to find his father in the centre of Seraing. In this sense, Cyril is once more removed from the controlled environment of a traditional upbringing, which consequently

impacts upon his sense of innocence in addition to further underlining his urban marginalization.

The Dardenne brothers have explored the gradual transitions of the figure of the pre-adolescent to adult within the Seraing space through the actor Jérémie Renier. He has played characters at each stage of this development in *La promesse* (1996), *L'enfant* (2005) and *Le gamin au vélo* (2011). In *La promesse*, he plays the pre-adolescent Igor, who is implicated within his father's clandestine trade of utilizing illegal immigrants for his own gain. He uses this black market labour in order to cheaply construct a residence for the two francophone Belgian characters. *L'enfant* marks a shift in the use of Renier's body to the young adult father, who in his desperation for finance and in fear of the impending adult responsibilities, sells his baby on the black market. *Le gamin au vélo* develops this transition to adulthood as Renier plays the absent father to the pre-adolescent Cyril.

Returning to the influence of Italian neo-realism on the films of the Dardenne brothers, *Le gamin au vélo* contains elements that could be construed as inter-textual references to the Italian neo-realist classic *Bicycle Thieves*. The primary reason for this allusion concerns the inclusion of the bicycle and the young male child. The central themes of De Sica's film are 'unemployment, misery, loneliness – in other words, the crisis of post-war Italy' (Sorlin 1991: 118), which, when removing the post-war context, are all themes that are associated with the Dardenne brothers' films on a surface level. In the filmmakers' films, these three notions coincide and inform one another in relation to the post-industrial context in Seraing in Wallonia. Mobility is a fundamental feature of the Italian film, since the bicycle enables the possibility of gaining employment. The proletarian worker resides in the suburbs and the outskirts of the city, and this 'distance from the centre prevents the men from going into town to look for work' (*ibid*: 119). In the context of *Bicycle Thieves*, the proletariat is removed from the centre, and this in turn hinders the possibility of ameliorating the lifestyle and gaining employment. The bicycle is therefore a means of overcoming the obstacle of distance and gaining access to a sense of community and belonging. This reference to space and mobility in De Sica's film again brings to mind *Le gamin au vélo* and the film's depiction of clearly delineated lines between the centre and the periphery.

Although it is possible to cite similarities and intertextual links between *Bicycle Thieves* and *Le gamin au vélo*, both of the films do play out in culturally, geographically, and temporally distinct milieus. *Bicycle Thieves* clearly occurs within this distinct epoch of post-war Italy in which the breakdown of the sense of collective and the sentiments of marginalization are a product of the post-war struggles and difficulties. Within the Dardenne brothers' work, the filmmakers have selected a site that is personal for them, and they engage with the socio-economic realities of Seraing's de-industrialization. The city's concentric boundaries are then imbued with social distinctions, with those who are marginalized from the dominant society occupying the spaces on the periphery of Seraing.

In terms of *Le gamin au vélo* in particular, the father-son relationship and the focus on the child again references De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*. In his discussion of the Italian neo-realist film, Bazin (1971: 53) notes that the young boy witnesses disenfranchisement and social deprivation first hand. This is beyond the child's control since it is imparted through the social positions of his parents. The children are helpless in terms of this generational transmission of identity; the fate of the children and position of the child as a potential victim is beyond their realms of control. The depiction of the figure of the child therefore reveals information about the adults due to the required interrelation between parent and child. The film engages with this experience through the perception and the sensibilities of the child and through the core theme of the father and son relationship. These themes and issues are also applicable to the problems faced in the contemporary, post-industrial Walloon society in *Le gamin au vélo*. In this increasingly impoverished environment, the individual experiences feelings of isolation and dislocation due to the gradual breakdown of societal bonds.

Bicycle Thieves is a revelatory narrative for the young male child (Bruno), since the search for the bicycle brings his father's shortcomings to the fore. This is particularly the case when his father, Antonio, displays increasingly violent behaviour towards him due to the anxiety over the loss of the bicycle. The child also witnesses his father's desperation as he engages in the criminal act of stealing a bicycle himself. The figure of the child is therefore subjected to (adult) experiences, and there is thus a reversal of the responsibilities placed upon the

body of the child. A sense of innocence is removed from the essence of the child in this process due to the destabilization of the family unit and the decollectivizing realities of the space. Bazin's interpretation of the final sequence of *Bicycle Thieves* suggests the transference of responsibilities from the father to the son as the wellbeing of the family functions as a synonym of the wider hope for the future of post-war Italy in the film (Bazin, 1971: 54).

By adopting this position in relation to *Le gamin au vélo*, the young male child is forced to take on the weight and pressures of adulthood through the absence of his father, and subsequently loses his innocence. In the case of the character of Cyril, this leads to a negative transformation of the child. This dimension is also manifested through Cyril's decision to engage in criminal activities, such as stealing money from the newsagent. In relation to their early film *L'enfant* (2005), the Dardenne brothers note that

What we're interested in is what can still happen between a parent and a child. Maybe it comes also from the fact that in the city where we make our films, we have seen families destroyed by economic crisis, drugs, unemployment, truancy, and now kids are earning more than their parents but from illegal means (Dardenne brothers, in Andrews, 2006).

In essence, the Dardenne brothers' characters turn towards crime is linked to the post-industrial town of Seraing. Once again, the loss of the working-class industrial roots for the characters has led to the children's engagement in criminal activities. The children have forged their own illegal path as a result of their parents' lack of money and employment. The figure of the child thus displays the social ills that reside within the space. In *Le gamin au vélo*, Cyril is persuaded to turn to crime in order to provide for first, his surrogate father and male role model on the estate, Wes, and second, his biological father, Guy. In this sense, Cyril conflates money with stability by offering his stolen money to his father, after Wes' rejection, so that they can live together again.

This act by Cyril further emphasizes the socio-economic problems that are embedded in post-industrial Wallonia, as the children have taken on a more dangerous role of turning to crime in order to compensate for their parents' deprived financial situation. The lack of employment for the working class

population has led to the children finding a place in an alternative and illegal economy. However, in this case, Cyril engages in crime as a desperate attempt to escape his isolation, and find the financial means that might provide some form of stability in his home life. The young boy's isolation and his attempts to escape from his marginal status are also captured through the focus on the body of the child. It is to this relationship between the body and the camera in *Le gamin au vélo* that we shall now turn our attention.

The fragments of the 'real' and the 'body-camera'

The initial point of contact in terms of approaching the stylistic choices made by the filmmakers within this conceptualization of a cinema with social and political allusions concerns Osganian's 'aesthetic of the fragment'. Osganian emphasizes the camerawork, which is used to track 'la fuite des corps' and is therefore imbued with a sense of mobility.¹⁵⁰ The camera primarily 'traque le moindre signe distinctif de l'identité de l'individu' (Osganian, 2003: 55).¹⁵¹ The individual struggles of those who are socially excluded are thus visualized through the body. In the films of the Dardenne brothers, the question of how the camera is mobilized alongside (or even infused with) the movements of the body becomes crucial. The pre-occupation with the body through mechanical reproduction emphasizes the individual and his/her disaffection from a sense of community. The engagement with the corporeal image and the *mise-en-scène* emphasizes links between the fictional and the documentary in terms of Jeancolas' concept of 'réel de proximité' (1997), which I outlined at the start of this chapter. This dimension to the 'body-camera' chimes with the use of the camera in French New Realism. The notion of the 'réel de proximité', that Jeancolas (1997) proffers in relation to French New Realism, pertains to a certain intimacy and closeness between the spectator and the character at the same time as highlighting the individual's marginalization and distance from a sense of community.

Within the notion of the 'réel de proximité', Jeancolas (1997: 57) proposes a consideration of a fragmented and atomized society at the heart of

¹⁵⁰ [the flight of bodies]

¹⁵¹ [tracks the smallest sign of individual identity]

the film, and he also recognizes the proximity of the camera to the object of the filmmaker's observation. This can be achieved alongside a documentary style of observation. The Dardenne brothers acknowledge the presence of the documentary style of observation in their narrative films:

I think that we organise the *mise-en-scène* in a way to somehow give the camera this wrong place. That comes from our documentary experience, as if the object you're shooting could resist being captured (Dardenne brothers, in Cowie and Edelmann, 2008: 222 - emphasis in the original text).

Both of the strands, as conceived by Jeancolas, can hence be applied to the Dardenne brothers' films, since there is a proximity between the camera and the corporeal image or the object under observation, on the one hand, and through the shot composition and choice of camera positioning on the other. However, their films are not debarred from the artificial nature of the cinematic medium, and the filmmakers engage with a diligent process of careful planning of the *mise-en-scène* prior to shooting. However, this location of the camera in the 'wrong place' presupposes the camera's movement in order to locate the character. As a consequence, the documentary style filmmaking has informed the filmmakers' decisions in how they film the body in their feature works.

The engagement with the images of the body rather than a consideration of the physical landscape is predicated upon the response to the perceived critical 'failure' of their second feature film *Je pense à vous*. The Dardenne brothers stated that in future they needed to 'se méfier des paysages industriels qui étouffent les visages, les corps. Ne pas filmer des décors' (L. Dardenne, 2008: 170).¹⁵² The filmmakers therefore posit a distance from the landscape and the filming of an environment, and this consequently conceals the significance of Seraing's inhabitants and the individual.

Luc Dardenne notes the presence of the body as a crucial feature of the cinematic medium. The body provides the film with a continuing impulse and

¹⁵² [be wary of the industrial landscapes which cover up the faces and the bodies. Do not film the décor]

energy, in Dardenne words it is a “locomotive” (Dardenne, 2008: 32), which drives the narrative of the film.¹⁵³ This is in contrast to theatre, which maintains a certain distance between the spectator and the performer’s body, and is therefore inherently predicated upon the presence of speech (*ibid*). Luc Dardenne conceives the notion of the ‘corps-caméra’ (L. Dardenne, 2008: 175), in which the camera is required to trace the movements of the body that is placed at the centre of the frame.¹⁵⁴ In his journal, Luc Dardenne outlines the core functions of the ‘body-camera’:

les mouvements du corps de Benoît Dervaux portant la caméra sont plus subtils, plus vifs, plus sentis et plus complexes que n’importe quel mouvement réalisé à l’aide d’une machinerie. Son buste, son bassin, ses jambes, ses pieds sont ceux d’un danseur (L. Dardenne, 2008: 175).¹⁵⁵

The handheld camera is attached to the body of the cinematographer, and is thus a surrogate for the spectator on screen. The camera is not static, but instead moves in a corporeal manner and is in perpetual motion. The mechanism moves behind the body on screen, as if there are strings attached between the camera and the central protagonist. This mirroring of the movements of the body provides the camera with a human quality, since it is not static in its positioning and framing. For example, in *Rosetta*, the camera is used to track the movements of the central protagonist through Seraing. Luc Dardenne describes the character of Rosetta as ‘un soldat en guerre’ (Dardenne, 2008: 129), who goes off to the frontline, fights for her cause and

¹⁵³ The use of the term “locomotive” by Luc Dardenne also forges a connection with their early video documentary *Regarde Jonathan, Jean Louvet, son oeuvre/ Consider Jonathan, Jean Louvet, his work* (Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, 1983), which includes recurrent images of a shadow boxer and the filming of the playwright Jean Louvet on a train. The images of the shadow boxer are placed in between the theatrical vistas in the film, from Louvet’s play ‘Conversation en Wallonie’. The shadow boxer provides a corporeal presence, and emphasizes the fight of the Walloon people. The concluding images of the shadow boxer on the empty platform pertain to the possible continuation of the people’s struggle. The voyage of Jean Louvet on the train connotes the shifting economy of the landscape from an industrial powerhouse to a deserted and vacant space. The train was also formerly an important part of the industrial development of the region.

¹⁵⁴ [the body-camera]

¹⁵⁵ [the movements of Benoît Dervaux carrying the camera are more subtle, alive, more felt and complex than any movement created with the help of machinery. His chest, frame, legs and feet are those of a dancer]

attempts physically to assert her position in society.¹⁵⁶ A rhythm is engendered through the series of movements across the Walloon topography. This is predicated upon the body's needs and requirement to be sustained and maintained, such as the search for food, water, money, and gas. The need for these daily elements is mirrored in the mechanical reproduction of the image, which reinforces the connections between the body and the camera.

The notion of the 'corps-caméra' presupposes a fusion with the body and engenders a sense of proximity between the camera and the body on screen. The result is the production of a perceived 'real' through the corporeal image. Mai (2007) writes about the Dardenne brothers' use of the 'body-camera' as 'haptic' in relation to their film *La promesse* (1996).¹⁵⁷ In the context of *Le gamin au vélo*, Cyril travels between the previously described three fixed points of the constructed triangle periphery in Seraing in order to find his father. The repetition of these journeys and the repeated depiction of the locations in the film therefore allow the spectator to construct a mental map of these spaces in relation to the municipality of Seraing. The close-range areas and proximity of the camera to Cyril does not allow for a clear outlining of the environment that surrounds the character in the diegesis, but the spatial closeness does permit the connection between the corporeal image and the camera. In *Le gamin au vélo*, the filmmakers place the camera in an unconventional manner in order to allow the spectator to fully explore and discover the plight of the central protagonist.

In the filmmakers' post-1996 films, the camera is utilized in order to follow the actions of the central protagonist, and the camera functions to peer through the eyes of the character in order to tell the story from a singular point of view; Igor in *La promesse*, Rosetta in *Rosetta*, Olivier in *Le fils*, Bruno in *L'enfant*, Lorna in *Le silence de Lorna*, and Cyril in *Le gamin au vélo*. In each case, the Dardenne brothers are focussing primarily upon the filming of 'un

¹⁵⁶ [a soldier in battle]

¹⁵⁷ In his article, Mai (2007) discusses the 'haptic' in relation to the 'body-camera' that is utilized in the early Dardenne brothers' film *La promesse*. Mai approaches the 'haptic' as part of an intercultural experience in the film, and in particular 'the promise' that Igor makes to Hamidou at his point of death. For example, the corporeal connection between Igor and Hamidou at this point provides the spectator with the feeling of 'touching him [Hamidou] and his world' (Mai, 2007: 142). The proximity of the camera to the body and to certain objects, such as the Perrier bottle, sand running through the character of Assita's hands (*ibid*: 139-143), provides the spectator with a point of identification and a surface that engenders the sense of 'touch'.

visage, un corps' (Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, in Cinergie, 2011).¹⁵⁸ The filmmakers are therefore concerned with the individual body on screen that is embroiled within the situation in the given space and environment. This notion of filmmaking a singular face also points towards Jeancolas' notion of the 'réel de proximité', which pertains to a fragmented and atomized society. The Dardenne brothers are clearly suggesting that they are pre-occupied with the corporeal image, and this contrasts in particular with the films of Bouli Lanners and the original screenplay of *Cages* (2006). As we saw in Chapters Four and Five, the landscape in these films is inscribed with meaning and geographically places the characters on the periphery of the city. The characters are therefore part of the peripheral post-industrial Walloon landscape, whereas in the films by the Dardenne brothers, the characters construct the margins through their movements across the space. The camerawork continues the notions of mobility and fluidity, since it fits into the Dardenne brothers' aesthetic of the use of the handheld camera. This method of filmmaking follows the character; the camera does not function as a guiding force for the character, but traverses the terrain in order to follow the protagonist through the *mise-en-scène*. This approach to the 'aesthetic of the fragment' (Osganian, 2003: 55) is primarily manifested through the corporeal image production and the pre-occupation with the non-professional actor at the centre of the frame, which is a key component to *Le gamin au vélo*.

In this Dardenne brothers' film, the camera is primed to move in order to concentrate upon framing the young male child. In essence, it is the child that determines the camera's movements. The Dardenne brothers note that the camera is concentrated upon Cyril and attempts to retain an eyeline match with the central protagonist (L. Dardenne, in Rouyer and Tobin, 2011: 12). As a consequence, the body of the adult has restricted access to the frame. In the opening sequence, the physical presence of the child remains at the centre of the frame, with the voice of the adult introduced off-screen. As the child attempts to escape from the adult figures in the youth-care centre, the constant stream of re-framing imbues the camerawork with its sense of mobility (Figure 6.5). This conception of camera movement is in relation to the body of the child and his movements, which thereby creates the indelible connection between

¹⁵⁸ [a face, a body]

the body and the camera in *Le gamin au vélo*. Cyril's movements are predicated upon his desperate desire to escape the confines and constraints of the youth-care centre in search of his father. In effect, the camera is mirroring the rapid movements of the child in order to maintain his presence within the centre of the frame.



Figure 6.5: *Le gamin au vélo* [Opening Sequence]

A further example of this pattern occurs in the doctor's surgery. This is the first meeting of the characters of Cyril and Samantha during another failed attempt by Cyril to escape the youth-care centre. The figure of Cyril remains at the centre of the frame, and the camera is required to perform a 360-degree turn in order to capture the unfolding events. The requirement for the turn consequently engenders a sense of fluidity with the camera, as it attempts to retain the movements of Cyril and the position of the young boy in the centre. The sequence commences with Cyril's entrance into the doctor's surgery in his final attempt to escape the attention of the youth-care workers within the building where his father used to live. The collision of Samantha's and Cyril's bodies is due to the child's desire to be concealed within the doctor's surgery (Figure 6.6), and the movement of the camera is manifested through his movement around the waiting room away from the youth care workers. This is thus a further example of the relation between the body and the camera, with the driving forces that determine Cyril's desire to flee and find his father

necessitating the movements of the camera for framing purposes. The camera moves on both a lateral and vertical plane in order to follow Cyril's actions, and retain a connection with his body in the frame.



Figure 6.6: *Le gamin au vélo* [Doctor's surgery]

In both of these examples, the movements of the camera also occur due to the camera's proximity to the corporeal image of the child and chime with Jeancolas' (1997) conception, as these movements further emphasize the child's marginalization. The two examples from the film demonstrate Osganian's notion of 'the flight of the body' (Osganian, 2003: 55), since in both of these instances the movements of the camera are due to Cyril's desire to escape. The intense pre-occupation with the individual at the centre of the frame heightens the young boy's plight. It also points towards an atomized society of individuals, in which the figure of the child is desperately seeking to escape a sense of abandonment.

The importance of the focus upon the pre-adolescent character also merges with the choice of casting (and use of non-professional actors), since 'a young actor does not have as much control over his body as an instrument, he just throws himself into it. What is extraordinary is that he is discovering himself in front of us' (Dardenne brothers, in Cowie and Edelman, 2007: 219). The young body is therefore in a process of 'being made' and constructed through his encounter with the filmmakers (in terms of the casting of the non-

professional actor and how he is moulded into the desired character), with his on screen father Guy, and also in relation to the spatial environment. Katz also writes that this process of being made in relation to the young actor is intrinsic to the notion of childhood; '(c)hildhood defines an always incomplete state, when it is complete – if it ever is – it is no longer childhood' (Katz, 2008: 7). All of these encounters form the young boy as he slowly uncovers his own sense of identity and self during the narrative and in front of the camera.



Figure 6.7: *Le gamin au vélo* [Kitchen Sequence]

This notion of the non-professional actor and the young pre-adolescent character as in a state of 'being made' is best exemplified in the sequence in the restaurant, when Cyril meets his father for the first time in the film (Figure 6.7). In this space, the young character mirrors and copies the movements of his father, Guy, and this therefore highlights the connections between the two characters as father and son (L. Dardenne, 2011). In the restaurant kitchen where Cyril's father works, the handheld camera remains at the level of the child, thereby sustaining the previously conceived eyeline match. The camera once again retains its position, but shifts in order to frame the movements of the child and the father as he completes his work. These movements are engendered by his father's requirement to work. The figure of the child mirrors his movements around the space of the kitchen as they engage in a conversation. The corporeal image of the child remains at the centre of the

frame, but his father's movements lead him and navigate the space. As the sequence progresses, the child mirrors his father's action: once the father has begun stirring the sauces, the child offers to continue the food preparation. This emphasizes the child's lack of a sense of self-affirmation, which is required in relation to another being, and also between the amateur and the professional actor. A dynamic unfolds in which the creation of the child and the character of Cyril is affirmed through the copying of the corporeal movements of his on-screen father. In essence, this pertains to the marginal situation of the individual due to the destabilized family unit and the lack of solidarity within the post-industrial space.

In this instance, the figure of the child is qualified as incomplete, which is emphasized through the child's constant sense of mobility throughout the film, and the mobile state of the child as a mirror for his father's actions. The selection of the amateur actor is predicated upon suitability for the role, and what the first time actor can bring to the character. In this sense, this pertains to the notion of 'being made' on screen; a discovery of the character in relation to the space and to the adult figures who encircle him. The spectator also does not have any preconceptions with the first-time non-professional actor, which enables the viewer to truly "believe" in the character that s/he is embodying on screen.

The non-professional actor and the 'star'

The Dardenne brothers' method of framing and use of the handheld camera necessitate an engagement with the corporeal image. However, instead of casting professionally trained actors to portray the characters, the filmmakers have decided to engage with the non-professional body. This leads to the casting of Walloon people, who consequently have intrinsic regional and local "markers" (such as the use of French). The inclusion of the non-professional actor is reminiscent of French New Realism, in which filmmakers such as Bruno Dumont cast local people from the region. The use of the amateur actor also chimes with Italian neo-realism, which often cast people from the local environment as one part of the approach to 'visual authenticity' (Nowell-Smith, in Cook, 2007: 233).

The Dardenne brothers spend time in terms of the auditioning process and the selection of the person to assume the role. For example, Thomas Doret was cast through a response to radio announcements and adverts in the written press. However, there is a practical reason for this pre-occupation with non-professional casting, since there is a distinct lack of acting schools in Wallonia and Belgium, and this thus requires the casting of a non-professional actor, in particular for young and adolescent characters (L. Dardenne, 2008: 219). Luc Dardenne highlights the significance of finding a new body to depict on screen in order to 'ne pas participer à cette vaste entreprise de clonage qui fait que rien de nouveau n'accède à l'existence cinématographique' (*ibid*: 72).¹⁵⁹ The non-professional body does not carry with it the same connotations from previous roles and experiences in the same vein as the star body, since the non-professional has not been trained through dramatics. In this sense, the filmmaker is able to mould the non-professional actor into the role through diligent and repeated rehearsals that the Dardenne brothers insist upon for the central protagonists.

Across their films, the Dardenne brothers reject the cult of the star and utilize non-professional actors to portray the central protagonist, which is the case for the characters Igor (Jérémy Renier) in *La promesse and L'enfant*, Rosetta (Emilie Dequenne) in *Rosetta*,¹⁶⁰ Francis (Morgan Marianne) in *Le fils*, and Sonia (Deborah Francois) in *L'enfant* and Cyril (Thomas Doret) in *Le gamin au vélo*.¹⁶¹ Even with the presence of a recognisable star (Cécile de France) in *Le gamin au vélo*, the pre-adolescent character of Cyril remains at the centre of the filmmakers' framing methods, which are used in the film *Le gamin au vélo*, and the camera is therefore not solely preoccupied with the inclusion of the first

¹⁵⁹ [not participate in this vast business of cloning which brings nothing new to cinematographic existence]

¹⁶⁰ The non-professional actress Emilie Dequenne won the prestigious Best Actress award at the Cannes film festival in 1999 for her performance in *Rosetta*. The award was shared with another non-professional actress Séverine Caneele, for her role in *L'Humanité* (Bruno Dumont, 1999). However, Emilie Dequenne has consolidated her professional acting career, in addition to Jeremie Renier, by transcending the national boundaries and moving into mainstream French cinema.

¹⁶¹ The central character of Lorna in *Le silence de Lorna* (Arta Dobroschi) is a professionally trained actress and had featured in two films prior to her casting in the role of Lorna in the Dardenne brothers' film. However, she was not an established 'star' in the canon of (Eastern) European cinema.

star in a Dardenne Brothers film.¹⁶² Nevertheless, the inclusion of a star, and a Belgian one at that, in *Le gamin au vélo* certainly warrants further consideration in the context of this thesis. Moreover, the first inclusion of a star, both in Belgium and in France in this film, enables a buzz and hype to be generated around the film. This is not only the case in Belgium, but it is also possible for this to transfer into France. As we saw in Chapter Two, the French market is extremely important for the exhibition of francophone Belgian films, and in particular the films of the Dardenne brothers.

Cécile de France began her acting career in France, but in her first role she was cast as Belgian in the film *L'auberge espagnole/ Pot Luck* (Cédric Klapisch, 2002) due to the European nature of the casting procedure and demands for the film. Her subsequent roles have not been confined to any given 'national' cinema in terms of the film's fiscal origins, but the majority of her roles have been in French films. An international dimension to her star image has also recently developed in terms of her casting in Hollywood, such as in *Hereafter* (Clint Eastwood, 2010). In Hollywood and English-language feature films, she has been cast as French, thereby concealing her Belgian and Walloon origins.

In relation to Italian neo-realism, Bazin noted that it is not necessarily the use of the non-professional body that is pertinent to this Italian cinematic movement, but rather the 'rejection of the star concept' (Bazin, 1971: 27). Although Bazin celebrates the inclusion of suitable non-professional actors within Italian neo-realism, he also identifies the existence of experienced actors within this cinematic movement, as long as they are distanced from their pre-conceived codified star images. In *Le gamin au vélo*, Cécile de France is not the lead character in the film, and also there is a limited focus on de France's star body. Ora Gelley (2012) discusses this presence of the international star in Italian neo-realism, by considering the inclusion of Ingrid Bergman in films such as *Stromboli* (Roberto Rossellini, 1950) and *Europa 51/ Europe 51* (Roberto Rossellini, 1952). The meeting of the characters of Cyril and Samantha in the doctor's surgery, which were previously described in relation to the camera

¹⁶² The Dardenne brothers have also announced that their feature film *Deux Jours, Une Nuit* (due to be released in 2014) will include their second use of a star, which - in this case - is Oscar-winning French actress Marion Cotillard.

movements, highlights the Dardennes's rejection of the star image. The spatially confined space enforces the interaction and the encounter, thereby emphasizing the importance of corporeality. It is thus the corporeal image of Cyril, which retains its significance in this film over and above the engagement of the star and the actor.

The introduction of de France's character, Samantha, does not match a conventional star entrance, since there is no glorification and objectification of her female form and star body. She is instead positioned amongst the other actors in the scene in the waiting room of the doctor's surgery. Indeed, she is not framed by the camera until Cyril physically engages and interacts with her body, grasping her for protection and support from the youth care workers. As discussed earlier, the preoccupation of the camera lies with the corporeal image of the child. The enforced interaction of the central protagonist and Samantha posits the consideration of a relation between the two characters. Samantha and the corporeal image of Cécile de France are not viewed by the spectator on her own terms, but she is perceived in relation to the character of Cyril. This connection immediately inscribes the character of Samantha with a maternal influence and positions her in a parental role in relation to the child, Cyril. The corporeal image of Cécile de France does not stand out from the physical world that is conceived on screen, but the first time actor instead draws her out of the background. She is perceived as part of the physical world of the space, and the parent-child relationship is created through the corporeal contact between the two characters. In terms of the 'star body' of Cécile de France, she is hence not the central pivot for the camerawork and the methods of framing, which once again distances the film from a conventional engagement with the 'star'. Instead, she is positioned against the amateur actor and her corporeal image is inscribed with a maternal instinct.

Austin notes the Dardenne brothers' use of the non-professional body on screen - in the case of the female character of Rosetta - does not seek to fetishize the female figure, which is contrasted with the gradual development of a star image (Austin, 1999: 260). Her accent and appearance from Rosetta to the star of Emilie Dequenne dramatically altered in order for her to re-discover 'her nationality erased along with her Belgian accent' and become 'the idealized symbol of French womanhood and the Republic' (*ibid*) in the later film *Le pacte*

des loups/ Brotherhood of the Wolf (Christophe Gans, 2001). The inclusion of De France in *Le gamin au vélo* functions in direct contrast to this transformation of the image of Dequenne, since the actress, who already has a veritable degree of currency in the French cinematic market, is able to reclaim her Walloon origins and linguistic particularities in the Dardenne brothers' film.

Accent connected to the body of the 'actor':

During the casting procedure, the Dardenne brothers also take into account the accent of both the non-professional and the professional actor. The inclusion of the Walloon accent in the film is a further regional specificity, and this highlights a contrast between Wallonia and France. In the case of *Rosetta*, the Dardenne brothers highlight the significance of casting the non-professional Emilie Dequenne in the role of Rosetta, since

il fallait qu'elle parle français, sans accent parisien, étant donné qu'il y a des expressions...qui sont "belgicisms". Nous recherchions aussi une manière de parler, d'avoir le même accent que nous (L. Dardenne, in Benoliel and Toubiana, 1999: 49).¹⁶³

The non-professional actors, in this particular context, are therefore able to articulate themselves in an accent that mirrors the socio-cultural space in which the film is conceived. For the Dardenne brothers, casting of Emilie Dequenne as Rosetta is not simply due to her status as a non-professional actress. Her selection for the role is because she is from Wallonia and therefore has the right accent. The accent is more important than whether she is a professional or amateur, but the choice of a non-professional can be presumed as an easier way of finding an 'authentic' Walloon accent. Nevertheless, as previously outlined in this chapter, Emilie Dequenne was able to establish a career for herself as an actress, working in francophone Belgian cinema as well as more mainstream films in France, such as *La pacte des loups* (2001).

¹⁶³ [it was necessary for her to speak French, without a Parisian accent, considering that there are expressions...that are "belgicisms". We were also looking for a way of speaking, which had the same accent as us]

The linguistic particularities are not only intrinsic and natural to the non-professional actor, but the accent can also be retained within the trained performer. In *Le gamin au vélo*, the Dardenne brothers' decision to include trained actors, and a star in the form of Cécile de France, is significant when considering their nationality and place of origin. For example, Cécile de France comes from Namur, the capital of Wallonia, thereby highlighting the importance to the Dardenne brothers of retaining linguistic connections to the francophone region of Belgium. The Dardenne brothers persist with the importance of the inclusion of linguistic particularities, even in the professional actor, by stating that:

Nos comédiens ne parlent pas comme à Paris ni comme à Marseille [sic]. Même si leur langue est classique, elle a une couleur particulière (Dardenne brothers, in Duplat, 2005: 38).¹⁶⁴

The filmmakers therefore desire an inclusion of a language that is accented and retains the linguistic particularities of Wallonia and in particular Seraing, thereby distancing the region from a possible confluence with France. It also suggests a deliberate attempt to distance the characters from a conflation with the French Paris-centric standard and to differentiate a general reference form of the language. In essence, a linguistic border (through accent and vernacular) is forged that matches the symbolic frontier between the two nations. There is thus a geo-linguistic dimension that is consolidated in the francophone regions of Belgium. In terms of the use of language, films can function as one of the key indicators and recorders of regional diversity. However, the inclusion of these 'belgicisms' is not explicit and easily discernible for an international and non-French speaking spectator. The use of the term 'belgicisms' further brings into question the notion of 'double-ness' and the interplay between the three linguistic communities in Belgium; the French, Flemish and German groupings. These three languages (with German included to a lesser extent due to its minor usage in Wallonia) constitute a 'belgicism' and therefore suggest a linguistic influence and connection between the two majority languages in order

¹⁶⁴ [Our actors do not speak like they are from Paris, nor Marseille. Even if their speech is classical, it still has a particular colouring.]

to create its particularities. This regional diversity is hence predicated upon an intra-national connection and historical influence.

The consideration of accent in the Dardenne brothers' films also reinforces the francophone elements of the Walloon films, which thus highlights their difference from French cinema. The significance of language and accent in the Dardenne brothers' films simultaneously positions their work within a regional, national, and transnational paradigm, since they refer to linguistic specificities embedded within Wallonia due to the linguistic border with Flanders. This allows for the inclusion of their films in the sphere of *La francophonie*.

Certain French films located in Nord-pas-de-Calais also use non-professional actors, such as the films by Bruno Dumont. In his films, the use of the 'northern' accent becomes an important means of distinguishing the film from the centre (Paris). This is similar to the aforementioned filmmaking decisions made by the Dardenne brothers. French filmmaker Bruno Dumont, who originates from Bailleul in Nord-pas-de-Calais, establishes the local and regional differences linguistically through dialogue in the film, *La Vie de Jésus*, which is spoken and written in the vernacular. Nevertheless, the approaches taken by the Dardenne brothers and Bruno Dumont to the inclusion of the regional accent differ, since the French filmmaker tends to write the script and the dialogues phonetically (Chion, 2008: 175), which is a key indicator of the linguistic importance in his works. The Dardenne brothers do not utilize such an approach to the screenwriting process, and have focused their attention upon the casting of actors and non-professionals, which in turn retains the linguistic particularities of the Walloon region.

Conclusion

Le gamin au vélo constructs a 'regional' Walloon space in the town of Seraing through the engagement with transnational aesthetic connections, such as French New Realism and Italian neo-realism. The location of the film in Seraing is also important to consider, since the town appears in all of their films post-1996, arguably forming one of the authorial signatures in their work. The only exception to this trend is *Le silence de Lorna* (2008), which is set in the

neighbouring city of Liège. The continued presence of Seraing thus pertains to a localizing of their work within the francophone Belgian region of Wallonia. The filmmakers show an image of Seraing that has transitioned away from its previous strong economic base that served as a focal point in the growth of the town and the community through de-industrialization to a current post-industrial present. The socio-economic consequences of this shift have implications upon the working-class inhabitants of Seraing who feature prominently in the Dardenne brothers' films, where themes of unemployment and the breakdown of filial relationships as part of the wider disaffection with a sense of community are brought to the fore.

The intertextual reference to *Bicycle Thieves* (1948) locates the Dardenne brothers more in the cadre of a European framework of filmmaking, in which film styles from different countries and from film history have had an influence on their films. *Le gamin au vélo* is a particular case in point, since there are references to the Italian neo-realist film beyond the surface similarities of the aforementioned conventions of Italian neo-realism. The contexts are evidently very different, such as post-war Italy and post-industrial Wallonia, but the inclusion of the young boy, the father-son relationship, the bicycle, and the way in which the city is constructed through the movements of the characters, provide the intertextual link to De Sica's film. A consideration of the two films also brings to light certain social issues, such as the consequences of unstable employment and destabilized families, in a contemporaneous Wallonia.

The tracking of the individual corporeal image, in particular in *Le gamin au vélo*, constructs a centre-periphery dynamic, thereby situating the individual on the margins of the Seraing and Walloon formulations of society. The framing of the individual in a 'close-up' manner is consistent with Jeancolas' conception of proximity (Jeancolas, 1997: 57) between the body and the camera within French New Realism. This proximity refers to not only the reproduction of the corporeal image at the centre of the frame, but it also reinforces the individual's marginalization from a sense of collective and community. The camera traces the individual daily struggles, embodied within the figure of the child, as he moves between three fixed exterior points, and this in turn constructs a marginal space that the character inhabits. The 'fortress of society' (L. Dardenne, 2008: 66) is the centre to which the protagonists of the Dardenne

brothers' films aspire, since it alludes to a sense of stability and permanence in terms of employment opportunities and a stable family environment. This 'fortress' does not necessarily pertain to a clearly delineated and defined centre of a town or city - which is the case in *Rosetta* - but it can be constructed through the corporeal movements and the psychological connections to an individual, such as the father in *Le gamin au vélo*. The marginal space is therefore engendered both through the themes and how the corporeal image is framed and tracked by the camera. In essence, the Dardenne brothers are concerned with the marginal and peripheral spaces of Seraing, which are caused by the de-industrialization of the region, through both inter-textual references and transnational aesthetic influences and similarities.

Conclusion

La notion de "cinéma belge" est compliquée. Car elle englobe le cinéma francophone et flamand, qui n'ont rien à voir entre eux (Masset-Depasse, 2013: Appendix I)

Nos cultures [en Belgique] ne se mélangent plus du tout. C'est comme si on avait construit un mur de Berlin entre les deux régions (Lanners, 2010)

The primary concern of this thesis has been to engage with the concept of the 'transnational regional' through the lens of francophone Belgian cinema. This dynamic encompasses the competing forces of the global and the local within the sphere of the 'national', thereby highlighting the potential flaws within a national cinema framework. The concept of national cinema is not impregnable. Extra-territorial influences arise from production, distribution and exhibition, and from the aesthetic adopted.

The national alone is not sufficient to comprehend the local, regional and transnational forces that shape Belgian cinema. In Belgium, there is a clear and defined delineation of the linguistic communities at a federal level within the country, and this is also present within the cinema systems and film institutions. Crofts (1998) and O'Reagan (1996: 1) outline the importance of the combined analysis of the industrial with national and cultural context in relation to the concept of national cinema. This thesis therefore serves to highlight the issues of production and the issues of representation that contribute to this idea of the 'transnational regional' in Belgian cinema. The first half of the thesis therefore engages with issues of production budgets, the logic of film funding and, to an extent, star images. The transnational emerges in various contexts throughout this thesis, since it commences with the transnational levels of finance between countries, the circulation of films across national borders, the transnational connections between regional film institutions, before an engagement with the transnational and the regional on an aesthetic level. The second half of this thesis therefore considers the similarities found in contemporary Belgian cinema

with particular European film waves, genres, landscapes, and the supplanting of a film production beyond the national borders.

In relation to French cinema since 2000, Tim Palmer writes about the interaction of the production sectors and the aesthetic manifestation of a film as part of the 'ecosystem' of cinema within the nation-state (Palmer, 2011: 1-13). The cinema 'ecosystem' considers the roles within the act of filmmaking. This ecosystem is not restricted to the spheres of development, such as writing, or the textual manifestation of the film, but it also includes an industrial approach. Within the French film production 'ecosystem', the funding of a project commences at the national film institution of the CNC with the co-production initiatives resulting in the final part of call for the remaining 20-30% of the budget (*ibid*: 5-6). It is a top-down system in which film finance is distributed from a central film institution. The French film industry is also able to tap into funds through co-production agreements to ameliorate a film project's budget. The reciprocal results can be even more beneficial to the film industry of a small nation, such as Belgium.

A study of film funding in Belgium quickly moves beyond the national, since linguistic community-based and regional film institutions cannot fund films without the support of additional mechanisms. Films are able to supplement funds that have been acquired on a national and regional level through co-production arrangements. In relation to the francophone Belgian film industry, the co-production agreements, specifically with France, enable the production of films within two francophone regions. The high levels of transnational economic co-operation between the devolved regions of Belgium and France in particular require a focus on the combination of the transnational and the regional that are working in unison. The typologies of the transnational approach to funding, as outlined by Hjort (2009: 15-30), are important to consider at this point, since the fiscal incentives for co-productions can emerge from a variety of different strands, from opportunism to affinitive connections.

From the perspective of France and Palmer's 'ecosystem', the co-production relationships with Belgium (majority French – minority Belgian projects) appear to be more confined to what Hjort defines as 'opportunistic transnationalism' (Hjort, 2009: 18-19), whereas film projects seeking funding and development in the francophone regions of Belgium place more of a

significance upon the finance obtained from co-productions with France. For example, in this thesis' interviews with Belgian film producers and policy makers at a regional level, the co-productions with France are viewed as 'considerable' (Reyneart, 2011: Appendix F) and 'indispensable' (Daoust, 2012: Appendix H). This therefore emphasizes the extent to which the cinema of the small nation requires fiscal input from France. The extra-territorial film funding mechanisms are part of a more intricate network of exchange, which is important for Belgium (and the francophone regions in particular) and its domestic film industry.

The Belgian film industry is more complex due to the organization of the film institutions by linguistic community and by region. There is no central film institution that controls the Belgian film industry, since production funds can be accessed from either the CCA of francophone Belgium or the VAF for the Flemish sectors. To complicate matters further, a small fiscal line exists between the CCA and the VAF, in which the CCA allows a small level of funding to filter through to its Flemish counterpart. In essence, there are two central institutions that delineate the country's cinematic output according to linguistic community. The methods of film funding for the francophone Belgian cinema are analyzed in Chapters One and Three; the first part engages with the national and the transnational mechanisms, whereas the third chapter explores film policy at a cultural level and the development of the regional film funds. As these chapters demonstrate, film funding for francophone Belgian films emerges through the transnational (with France), the 'national' (tax shelter and linguistic communities), the regional (Wallimage-Bruxellimage), and even the inter-regional (funding alongside regional film funds across Europe). This final strand pertains to the connections between France and the francophone regions of Belgium, and both of the countries also operate regional film funds that tend to work and finance film projects together. The idea of the 'transnational regional' in a production context accounts for all of these methods of film funding.

Within the context of a cinematically small nation and a federalized State, the regional film fund is all the more economically and culturally significant. A film project can therefore be funded through co-production or multi-lateral agreements alongside national tax shelter initiatives and according to the CCA's selection criteria. This project is able to access further funds through the

regional film institutions, such as the Wallimage and the Wallimage-Bruxellimage lines. The transnational method of film funding is present, and it co-exists with the regional funds. These methods of film funding are a recent evolution in Belgium. The CCA was formed in 1996, Wallimage in 2001 and the tax shelter in 2004, and this therefore presupposes the engagement with case studies after the formation of the last mechanism in relation to the 'transnational regional' dimensions of francophone Belgian cinema.

The choice of case studies from the filmmakers Bouli Lanners and the Dardenne brothers adheres to this transnational and regional co-production for the production of their projects. Olivier Masset-Depasse's film *Cages* presents an interesting further dimension to this dynamic, since it utilizes two regional film institutions from France and Belgium in order to obtain the required finance for the film. The sources of the budget for a film project serve to determine the conditions that are attached to the film's creation. The Dardenne brothers discuss the constraints that are placed upon their working practices, but some of these constraints are voluntary and others are imposed through the low level of finance for the budget. In essence, the conditions of production and the technology available to the filmmaker will determine the aesthetic qualities of the film, which hence emphasizes a connection between the fiscal mechanisms and the aesthetics. For Masset-Depasse, the predisposed fiscal connections between the regional film funds led to a co-production that became artistic (Masset-Depasse, 2006). The conditions attached to the Nord-pas-de-Calais regional film fund necessitated the location of the film within the French region, as opposed to Wallonia. The shift in location therefore had a subsequent impact upon the aesthetic manifestation of the project. Nevertheless, as Masset-Depasse notes in the interview (Appendix I), the creation of the film project was the most important aspect for the filmmaker, since the future benefits for gaining greater recognition and visibility within the sectors of French and francophone Belgian cinema would enable the director to obtain a reasonable budget for his next film, *Illégal* (Masset-Depasse, 2011). In a production context, it is not possible to suggest that without French co-production funding, whether that may be through the CNC or smaller regional funding outlets such as CRRAV/Pictanovo, a francophone Belgian cinema would not exist. However, it does garner a higher level of exposure to broader French-speaking markets in

Europe and beyond. As Chapter Three served to outline, the regional film institutions are more open to creative and innovative projects by young directors and new talent. In the case of Masset-Depasse, they are a starting point, since the regional film funds are prepared to take more risks than the 'national' institutions and the tax shelter mechanism.

Within the funding mechanisms and systems, filmmakers with greater levels of 'success' in terms of film distribution and exhibition for their previously released films have a better chance of obtaining a higher budget for their next film project. The risk attached to the filmmaker is reduced. The Dardenne brothers and Bouli Lanners already have a certain cachet at this point due to their previous films, or, in the case of Lanners, his status as a prominent actor within both Belgian and French cinema systems. These three francophone Belgian filmmakers (Bouli Lanners and the Dardenne brothers) epitomize Maule's conception of the 'institutional figure of the author' (Maule, 2011: 17-18) in terms of their working methods. Although the three aforementioned filmmakers work within co-productions between Belgium and France, they are afforded the ability to film in the location and work with producers, technicians and actors of their choice. This therefore means that the filmmakers can retain some of the regional specificities in their films. In the case of the Dardenne brothers, this occurs with their choice to locate their films in Seraing and cast non-professional actors alongside their usual French technicians and producer, as we saw in Chapter One. Conversely, new talent emerging from the francophone Belgian region (such as Olivier Masset-Depasse) have to make more concessions with the location of the film in a specific landscape in Wallonia, and move the project to an impossible Walloon landscape in France due to the production strings attached to the film.

An important term within Hjort's writings of cinemas in a small nation context is 'visibility' (Hjort, 2005: 4; Hjort and Petrie, 2007: 7). This 'visibility' can refer to filmmakers and people on a national and transnational level. Since the formation of the new national film funds, such as the tax shelter and regional film institutions, films emerging from Belgium have been receiving greater international recognition and acclaim. For example, 2008 witnessed a celebrated presence of Belgian films at the Cannes film festival with the selection of *Eldorado*, *Élève libre*, *Le silence de Lorna*, the Flemish film

Moscow, Belgium (Christophe Van Rompaey, 2008), and *Rumba* (Dominique Adel and Fiona Gordan, 2008) (Sojcher, 2009: 94). In this sense, the 'visibility' of filmmakers and films hence highlight a further overlap between the production and exhibition sectors with the textual nature of a given film.

Linguistic differences within Europe limit the possibilities for greater film distribution and exhibition across national borders, since the perceived success of a film is usually attained only on a national level and within the linguistic confines of the home nation. However, in the case of francophone Belgium, there is the possibility of extending the reach and impact of films by connecting with its linguistic neighbour, France, through finance, distribution and exhibition. This notion of 'visibility' justifies a film project in both economic and cultural terms, since the wide distribution of a film should result in recouping money through ticket, DVD and TV sales in addition to a greater understanding of the film output from the given country. This also emphasizes the benefits to France, since these agreements help with the exporting of the image of French and francophone cinemas around the globe. For France and Belgium, the dissemination of films aids in the distribution of the country's cultural image and preserves 'cultural diversity' according to the UNESCO (2005) mantra, as discussed in Chapter Three.

In the case of francophone Belgian films, there is the risk of a possible conflation with France. The Dardenne brothers are a primary case in point, since their corpus of work appears within academic scholarship focusing upon particular aspects of French cinema, such as *The New Face of Political Cinema: Commitment in French Film since 1995* (O'Shaughnessy, 2007), *Contemporary French Cinema* (Austin, 2008), and *Five directors: Auteurism from Assayas to Ozon (French Film Directors)* (Ince, 2008). These academic writings therefore highlight the transnational at an aesthetic level, since they allow for the possible inclusion of the francophone Belgian filmmakers within the corpus of French cinema. Nevertheless, the films by the Dardenne brothers since the formation of Wallimage in 2001 have taken advantage of the regional film fund for Wallonia, the region in which all of their films are located. Reynaert claims that the regional film institution subsidizes film projects for cultural reasons, and he proposes that films from the region must have their own specificity or 'stand out' in the French market (Reynaert, 2011: Appendix F).

The intervention of the regional film fund is designed to enhance and promote projects that are more distinct and reinforce Walloon specificities. In essence, there is a regional value attributed to a project that celebrates cultural diversity and is circumscribed within regional and topographical particularities.

The existence of internal boundaries in Belgium has thus obscured an absolute sense of identity and sense of belonging to the form of the State. The regionalization of film funding institutions redraws the cultural cartography, and this clearly shows that the national framework is no longer relevant to the population of the federalized State of Belgium. The notion of Walloon specificity and the consideration of topographical particularities coalesce around a codified aesthetic form within the region, or what this thesis refers to as 'Walloon space'. In Chapters Four, Five, and Six, two strands to a regional Walloon space were proposed: (1) in terms of the landscape on the fringes of the city, which extends beyond its inclusion as a predicate for the film's action, and (2) the corporeal movements of the individual that constructs a marginal space.

Within Paasi's (2003) conception of the region and regional identity, the centre and periphery relations and the inclusion of the landscape are salient strands. The focus upon the periphery also fits with the 'culture of self-doubt' (Mathijis, 2004: 4) that is fostered within the dogmas of Belgian cinema and the regional identities of the country, in which there is the existence of an inferiority complex in relation to France – memorably summed up by the Dardenne brothers' assertion 'dessous France' (Dardenne brothers, in Benoliel and Toubiana, 1999: 53). This self-doubt and inferiority emerges through the small nation status of the country beyond mere cinematic terms in addition to the influence that the French regime and language has had in Belgium historically. These sentiments open up a debate concerning Wallonia's position as a peripheral space, since there are complications concerning the location of the region's centre. In the case of Federal Belgium, the notion of the 'centre' is multifarious due to its problematic insularities and its linguistic and historic associations beyond the national borders. The locating of this 'centre' is problematic for Wallonia in the federal State. Is the centre the capital region of Brussels? Or is the centre the Flemish majority in terms of the population demographics and economic prosperity? Or even is it the linguistic motherland of France? In each case, Wallonia pertains to the periphery and is located upon

the margins. The cultural capitals and institutions embedded within the regions become the new centre and hub for cinematic production and policy formation. The national screen culture is removed from the capital, and moulded into the regional framework, which thereby undermines the notion of a national cinema.

The aesthetic manifestation of the films from Wallonia takes into account both 'regional' and 'transnational' elements, primarily in terms of how the space is filmed. In *Eldorado* and *Ultranova*, the filmmaker utilizes long takes of the rural environment to convey an antecedent form of 'regional' identity. The inclusion of the countryside chimes with one of the formative filmmakers of a Walloon film culture in the form of Jean-Jacques Andrien. As Mosley notes, 'a Walloon cinema, purposely expressive of its own history and culture, did not emerge until the mid-1970s, later reaching its apogee in the work of Jean-Jacques Andrien, Thierry Michel, and the brothers Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne' (Mosley, 2001: 105). What is particularly interesting in terms of the early films of these directors in Wallonia is their consideration of the shifting economic patterns in the region, from an agrarian background in *Le grand paysage d'Alexis Droeven* (1981) to the increasingly atrophied industrial landscape of Charleroi and Seraing in the documentaries of Thierry Michel and the Dardenne brothers.

Eldorado, in particular, references this agrarian space as part of a journey towards the hometown of one of the characters, and the countryside is utilized as a conduit to memories of childhood. The rural environment is also a peripheral space on the fringes of the towns and the cities, and the situation of the characters within such a space elides their sense of identity with the margins. The concept of the 'regional' hence exists as a means of observing the local and the marginal issues, thereby developing regional particularities and depicting the regional social consciousness. In *Eldorado* and *Ultranova*, the rural environment therefore heightens the characters' disaffection with the current community and posits a distance from a sense of community. The use of the "still" shot in combination with the rural milieu is not specious to the works of Bouli Lanners within the context of a Walloon film culture, since *Nue propriété/Private Property* (Joachim Lafosse, 2006) also combines these two elements. Vincendeau writes that the film 'unfolds in a series of very long and often handheld takes – several of them depicting mealtimes – punctuated by

snapshots of almost still life' (Vincendeau, 2008: 52). These long takes depict a de-stabilized family unit with two sons who cannot obtain employment. Lafosse's film bears similarities to the works of Andrien and Lanners in the rural milieu, and further emphasizes the countryside as a marginal space that has suffered from the economic transformation of the Walloon region.

Lanners' two films are also part of the 'transnational regional' dynamic by virtue of the filmmaker's open acknowledgement of the transnational and regional co-production in terms of the film's aesthetic construction, since he acknowledges the importance of the Walloon landscape alongside his preference for American influences. This is clearly referenced in the titles of his two films under consideration in this thesis. The American influences, which Lanners outlines in relation to his films (Lanners, in Van Hoeij, 2010: 45), pose important questions that surround the transnational and the regional within a film. Lanners' films allude to wider European and American influences from the road-movie genre. However, Lanners uses this genre to show and contemplate the various urban and rural Walloon landscapes. The connections to France also remain within the modes of funding, the subsequent casting of certain actors and the inclusion of producers and technicians, the evident use of the French language, and the presence of the Ardennes. However, this space can also sit outside the confines of the devolved region of Wallonia, and is a region in itself, which transcends the national borders and incorporates parts of France geographically. The characters thus pass through a natural border of the forest rather than a customs check point or border-crossing, thereby questioning the significance of artificially created geo-political national boundaries.

However, Masset-Depasse's film highlights the geographical markers that exist within the visualization of the landscape, from the Walloon atrophied industrial landscape to the oneiric coastline of Nord-pas-de-Calais. The intended inclusion of the *terril* as symbolic within the film is also connected to the history and culture of the Walloon region. The slagheap is viewed as a marginal and peripheral space by virtue of its geographical situation on the fringes of the urban environment, and also due to the deterioration of heavy coal and metallurgic industries in the region. In the films and photographs from Wallonia considered in Chapter Five, the *terril* is depicted as a marginal site and one of abandonment, which chimes with the sentiments of the inhabitants of the

area in terms of the breakdown of the community. This image of social fracture is engendered through the inclusion of unemployed characters, a destabilized family environment, and social deprivation. The shift in the location to the French region removes the topographical particularities of Charleroi and the possible inclusion of the socio-economic realities of the city, all of which are included in Mariage's *Les Convoyeurs attendent*. There are certain themes that filter across the border between France and Wallonia in particular, such as social exclusion, marginality, and socio-economic hardships in a manner that chimes with French New Realism. There is a surface resemblance of the films created across the French and Belgian border in terms of the stylistic and thematic context. Nevertheless, filmmakers such as Mariage and the later films by Bouli Lanners engage with particularities that determine a film's location in Wallonia or in Nord-pas-de-Calais.

The Dardenne brothers operate within a different context in relation to these themes and aesthetic similarities due to the proximity of the mechanical reproduction to the individual. The individual instead creates the marginal space as opposed to the use of the topography and the landscape to frame the disaffection with a sense of community and to highlight the individual's marginality. As has been argued in this thesis, the use of the term 'transnational regional' functions in a more efficient manner for engaging with the transnational similarities, but also the regional particularities that are framed within the films produced within a given region.

The Dardenne brothers engage with a specific place in Wallonia, Seraing, and their films outline the issues of social marginalization, difficulty in retaining employment, and social deprivation. This view of social fracture connects the four films that are considered in this thesis. In *Le gamin au vélo* (2011), the absence of the father for the child exists as part of the socio-economic realities of the post-industrial society in Wallonia. The loss of the traditional industrial base in Wallonia has subsequently led to issues concerning working-class (particularly male) senses of identity. The disappearance of the working-class community as part of the de-industrialization of the town has led to an atomized society. As a result, individual isolation is depicted through the abandonment of Cyril in the youth-care centre by his father. The young boy is restricted to a marginal existence, which is not constructed through the

landscape that situates the individual on the margins, but is alluded to through the fact that the body moves through different spaces in the narrative. The camera is first and foremost preoccupied with the corporeal presence of the boy, and this is used to construct a centre-periphery dynamic that marginalizes the individual from conforming to social norms, and heightens the individual's sense of social exclusion. The focus on the disenfranchised and abandoned figure of the child in *Le gamin au vélo* is compounded through the fluid use of the camera and the mechanical reproduction's proximity to the body of the child to track and therefore map a peripheral Walloon space. The way in which the camera is used to film the body is consistent with Jeancolas' notion of the 'réel de proximité' (Jeancolas, 1997: 57), which is often linked to so-called French New Realism. The focus on isolated individuals in a fragmented and uncertain society alongside the fluid use of camera allows for a common ground to be seen between films created at the time of French New Realism and the films of the Dardenne brothers. However, it is, of course, necessary to acknowledge the gap in time between French New Realism of the late 1990s and early 2000s and *Le gamin au vélo* (2011).

Moreover, the Dardenne brothers are viewed as both European auteurs and as the main filmmakers of contemporary Belgian cinema to cinephiles. This is first born out of the Dardenne brothers' presence at film festivals and the validation of their films through festival prizes, such as the Palm d'Or of the Cannes film festival. The Dardenne brothers were the first Belgian filmmakers to win the aforementioned award for the film *Rosetta* (1999), and are one of the select few to have picked up the award for a second time with *L'enfant* (2005). The filmmakers are seen not only as transnational auteurs in terms of how their films are produced and received, since they acknowledge the influences of earlier periods of film history in their aesthetic and stylistic choices, such as Italian neo-realism of the 1940s (L. Dardenne, 2008: 33). This is particularly the case for their most recent film, *Le gamin au vélo*, and its comparisons to *Bicycle Thieves* (1948) in terms of dealing with social issues, framing a centre-periphery in the city, and the inclusion of the young boy and the bicycle. The 'transnational regional' dynamic, in this case, emerges through the local and regional connections that are forged through the consideration of the filmmakers' as European, French, Belgian and Walloon at the same time. This

idea of the 'transnational regional' accounts for the inclusion of the filmmakers in the enlarged 'region' of Europe and as belonging to a francophone cinema, but it allows for the engagement with local and 'regional' specificities and social issues on a devolved level.

This thesis proposes the idea of the 'transnational regional' as a way of better understanding both the particular regional-national-transnational dynamic of contemporary Belgian cinema, as well as broader debates in film studies concerning questions of national/ transnational cinema and the idea of a cinema of small nations as first proposed by Hjort and Petrie (2007). It highlights that scholarship within the parameters of national cinema is not a sufficient way of engaging with the industrial practices and the representations offered within Belgian cinema. The idea takes into consideration the global and the local, since it is the tension between the two notions that lies at the heart of the 'transnational regional'. It accounts for the use of transnational and regional sources of funding for a film project and their requirements, how the films reach their audiences, where the films are located and shot and the regional and transnational themes that are incorporated. This thesis is a combined analysis of how, at times, issues of production are closely linked to the issues of representation in a given (trans-)national cinema.

Appendices

Appendix A: Exhibition figures for French language Belgian feature films within and beyond Belgium (1996-2010)¹⁶⁵

<i>Year of Exploitation/ Circulation</i>	<i>No. of BE films with admissions</i>	<i>Admissions to BE films in BE</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Netherlands</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>Spain</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>
1996	6	54.789	126.132	0	9	0	0	4.338	0
1997	6	10.935	76.988	5.602	29.538	0	0	26.961	7.821
1998	8	33.811	12.492	311	0	2.337	0	220	0
1999	8	260.534	843.536	0	241.949	583	937	48.957	28.222
2000	11	9.664	146.404	18.212	118.391	108.681	63.521	144.432	55.426
2001	10	241.106	286.791	14.053	202.886	8.402	286	38.503	3.464
2002	16	115.808	308.834	20.229	167.968	0	3.147	16.070	196.559
2003	13	90.301	278.441	13.485	2.678	3.573	7.703	4.024	3.706
2004	16	46.696	104.098	144	2.298	1.210	425	1.969	7.534
2005	16	171.170	389.519	14.989	89.578	95.958	722	18.254	20.871
2006	27	252.808	138.485	11.157	93.152	6.439	25.991	4.368	16.454
2007	24	164.688	441.358	40.522	180.695	417.667	0	46.949	71.093
2008	26	130.457	626.025	18.327	108.590	36.396	11.647	1.523	7.579
2009	23	21.645	53.988	21.449	10.038	41.283	3.727	1.661	13.789
2010	22	37.878	106.678	13.767	3.747	33.008	0	26.231	289
Cumulative total 1996-2010	232	1.642.290	3.939.769	192.247	1.251.517	755.537	118.106	384.460	432.807

¹⁶⁵ Compiled by author of this thesis, (Source: EAO, 2011)

Appendix B: Exhibition figures for Flemish language Belgian feature films within and beyond Belgium (1996-2010)¹⁶⁶

<i>Year of Exploitation/ Circulation</i>	<i>No. Of BE films with Admissions</i>	<i>Admissions to BE films in BE</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Netherlands</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>Spain</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>
1996	5	146.460	0	1.306	11.273	0	0	8.406	7.359
1997	5	691.715	0	169	433	0	0	0	1.392
1998	3	57.800	0	1.082	0	0	0	0	0
1999	6	266.056	5.030	289.822	679	13.989	0	0	0
2000	10	586.567	14.698	138.233	0	3.259	0	0	0
2001	8	243.720	6.571	138.269	6.371	0	0	12.626	28.074
2002	9	206.484	0	0	15.000	6.401	0	16.070	19.659
2003	12	884.912	0	9.415	1.200	3.100	0	61	0
2004	17	337.629	55.083	8.022	0	2.299	0	2.459	2.585
2005	13	421.482	187	283.813	0	224	0	238	0
2006	19	836.572	144	717.362	0	0	0	455	0
2007	19	865.641	0	287.520	0	0	212	0	1.059
2008	21	1.538.837	52.110	244.361	16.425	80.317	1.994	0	3.406
2009	19	1.436.787	0	692.223	6.315	2.975	148	1.343	9.931
2010	17	208.638	116.262	656.047	3.747	35.991	0	0	159
Cumulative total 1996-2010	183	8.729.300	250.085	3.467.644	61.443	148.555	2.354	41.658	73.624

¹⁶⁶ Compiled by the author of this thesis, (Source: EAO, 2011)

Appendix C: Exhibition figures for Belgian feature films within and beyond Belgium (1996-2010)¹⁶⁷

<i>Year of Exploitation/Circulation</i>	<i>No. of BE films with admissions</i>	<i>Admissions to BE films in BE</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Netherlands</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>Spain</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>
1996	13	201.249	132.515	1.306	11.282	0	0	67.433	7.359
1997	12	694.995	76.988	5.602	29.971	0	0	30.121	9.213
1998	11	70.268	12.492	1.393	0	2.337	0	2.292	0
1999	16	526.590	849.583	290.668	244.105	14.572	937	50.467	28.222
2000	22	596.256	161.102	156.545	118.931	111.940	63.521	145.789	55.486
2001	18	257.997	290.384	140.691	210.257	8.402	286	52.586	31.538
2002	24	310.876	308.834	15.203	182.968	6.401	3.147	16.070	19.659
2003	25	902.016	278.411	21.380	3.878	6.673	7.703	4.147	3.706
2004	30	380.044	200.625	20.313	2.298	3.509	4.373	4.420	10.962
2005	30	592.652	389.706	300.533	89.578	96.182	722	60.189	20.871
2006	44	981.594	138.629	108.116	93.152	16.085	25.991	6.568	16.454
2007	50	998.830	441.358	477.964	180.695	420.726	212	47.110	74.835
2008	51	1.674.169	694.410	264.676	345.406	138.655	14.824	61.178	18.763
2009	46	1.456.371	53.988	715.429	10.038	44.258	4.406	3.004	24.406
2010	42	246.516	225.450	660.887	4.066	72.443	0	26.231	521
Cumulative Total 1996-2010	434	9.890.423	4.254.475	3.180.706	1.526.625	942.183	126.122	577.605	321.995

¹⁶⁷ Compiled by the author of this thesis, (Source: EAO, 2011)

Appendix D: Cinema Attendances in Belgium by Region (%)¹⁶⁸

Region	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Flanders	10.925.868 (49.96%)	11.487.516 (48.78%)	11.588.078 (48.21%)	11.671.819 (47.87%)	11.157.313 (49.12%)	11.641.621 (48.27%)	10.640.291 (48.15%)	11.657.279 (48.72%)	11.235.858 (49.54%)	10.844.070 (49.47%)	10.462.437 (48.95%)	10.223.99 (47.97%)
Wallonia	6.198.429 (28.34%)	7.268.912 (30.87%)	7.481.290 (31.13%)	7.625.987 (31.28%)	6.967.571 (30.68%)	7.868.590 (32.62%)	7.371.852 (33.36%)	7.949.501 (33.22%)	7.417.061 (32.70%)	7.130.976 (32.53%)	7.189.493 (33.63%)	7.302.434 (34.26%)
Brussels-Capitale	4.745.114 (21.69%)	4.791.959 (20.35%)	4.965.369 (20.65%)	5.081.155 (20.84%)	4.587.850 (20.20%)	4.606.013 (19.09%)	4.084.643 (18.48%)	4.322.277 (18.06%)	4.023.630 (17.74%)	3.947.458 (18.01%)	3.720.325 (17.41%)	3.787.573 (17.77%)

(‘Exploitation’, 2001: 89) (‘Exploitation’, 2001: 6) (‘Exploitation’, 2003: 20) (‘Exploitation’, 2004: 25) (‘La demande cinématographique: public et fréquentation’, 2007: 453-454) (‘Exploitation’, 2010: 9) (Statbel, 2013)

Appendix E: Cinema Attendances in Belgium by Region per inhabitant

Region	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Flanders	1.93	1.94	1.94	2.1	1.9	1.8	1.9	1.8	1.76	1.7
Wallonia	2.17	2.22	2.26	1.9	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.1	2.07	2.1
Brussels-Capitale	4.97	5.07	5.12	4.6	4.6	4.0	4.2	3.8	3.77	3.4

(‘Exploitation’, 2001: 89) (‘Exploitation’, 2001: 6) (‘Exploitation’, 2003: 20) (‘Exploitation’, 2004: 25) (‘La demande cinématographique: public et fréquentation’, 2007: 453-454) (‘Exploitation’, 2010: 9) (Statbel, 2013)

¹⁶⁸ The author created the percentages from the data provided from the listed sources.

Interviews

Appendix F: Entretien avec Philippe Reynaert – June 2011

1. Qu'est-ce que le cinéma belge pour vous ?

Un élément constitutif très important de l'identité belge, un miroir de ce que nous sommes et de ce que nous devenons, un pilier de la culture belge. Mais aussi le vaisseau amiral d'une industrie audiovisuelle qui ne demande qu'à se développer et pourrait constituer dans les années qui viennent un gisement d'emplois alternatif aux secteurs industriels déclinants.

2. Qu'est-ce qui distingue les deux cinémas de la Belgique (le cinéma Flamand et le cinéma Francophone)?

Enormément de choses ! A commencer par le contexte concurrentiel. Les études de l'Observatoire Européen de l'Audiovisuel montre que partout en Europe (à l'exception occasionnelle de la France), c'est le cinéma américain qui occupe majoritairement les écrans des salles de cinéma. Mais les mêmes études montrent qu'il est partout suivi en taux d'occupation des écrans par le cinéma national. En Italie : n°1 le cinéma US, n°2 le cinéma italien, en Suède n°1 le cinéma US, n°2 le cinéma suédois... Deux territoires font exception à cette règle générale : l'Autriche et la Belgique francophone ! Qu'ont-ils en commun ? Un grand voisin avec qui il partage leur langue ! La pénétration du cinéma français en Belgique francophone est énorme et brouille les cartes identitaires. Ce n'est que depuis quelques années que le spectateur wallon identifie comme compatriotes quelques comédiennes et comédiens (mais il lui arrive alors de croire que leur présence au générique d'un film français en fait un film belge...). Le cinéma belge ne dispose pas d'un marché intérieur suffisant pour amortir sa production et encore moins la rentabiliser. Son vrai marché intérieur, c'est la France où, pour exister, il n'a d'autre choix que de se singulariser par sa pertinence (ou son impertinence). Au Nord du pays, les choses sont très différentes. Les spectateurs flamands boudent le cinéma hollandais et attendent avec impatience les films interprétés par des acteurs flamands qu'ils connaissent et apprécient dans d'innombrables séries télévisées

diffusées sur toutes les chaînes flamandes (encore une énorme différence avec la partie francophone où seule la chaîne publique produit une série par an !). Une plaisanterie dans le milieu du cinéma belge affirme que, lorsqu'un film belge sort en Belgique et qu'il fait 50.000 entrées, s'il s'agit d'un film francophone, on débouche le champagne tandis que s'il s'agit d'un film flamand, le réalisateur se pend...

Partant de ce constat économique, on observe que le cinéma belge francophone relève plus souvent de l'Art et Essai là où le cinéma flamand n'évite pas les films de genre plus mainstream. Et même si les tendances peuvent évoluer, on peut dire que le cinéma belge francophone ne fait pas recette sur son territoire mais s'expose très bien dans les Festivals ce qui entraîne souvent des ventes internationales importantes. Ce qui est le symétrique inverse d'un cinéma flamand apprécié chez lui mais qui s'exporte très difficilement.

3. Y-a-t-il des réalisateurs belges francophones qui déménagent vers la France? Est-ce que c'est pour des raisons financières? Y-a-t-il des avantages fiscaux qui provoquent ce déplacement?

Depuis les années '30, nous avons toujours connu une fuite des talents vers Paris. Aujourd'hui, ce mouvement se ralentit même si, en ce qui concerne les acteurs, leur statut fiscal est beaucoup plus intéressant s'ils s'établissent en France. Ce n'est que très indirectement pour des raisons financières que nos réalisateurs s'exilent. Il s'est le plus souvent très prosaïquement agi de ... trouver du travail à une période où le cinéma ne nourrissait pas son homme chez nous !

4. Quelle est l'importance des relations avec la France pour la survie du cinéma francophone belge?

Considérables ! André Delvaux, que nous considérons comme le père du cinéma belge moderne a réussi à exister sur la scène internationale grâce à un premier film quasi expérimental tourné en néerlandais (« De man die zijn haar kort liet knippen ») mais, dès son deuxième long métrage, il avait compris qu'il n'entrerait jamais dans un schéma

économique satisfaisant sans pénétrer le marché français. C'est ainsi qu'il « inventa » la coproduction franco-belge en engageant pour les rôles principaux de « Un Soir, un Train », deux vedettes françaises (Yves Montand et Anouk Aimée). Depuis ce modèle est pratiquement devenu la règle et sur 20 films francophones d'initiative belge, 1 ou 2 seulement peuvent prétendre se passer d'une coproduction avec notre grand voisin.

5. Quelle est l'importance des institutions régionales et des fonds régionaux pour attirer l'investissement extérieur en Belgique et pour attirer les réalisateurs étrangers en Belgique?

La longue tradition des coproductions (voir le point précédent) mais aussi un rôle précurseur de notre pays en matière de Hautes Ecoles cinématographiques comme l'IAD ou l'INSAS (créée par ... André Delvaux !), permettent d'offrir aux producteurs internationaux de bâtir des partenariats de qualité avec la Belgique. Depuis une dizaine d'année, aux aides culturelles dispensées par les Communautés, sont venues s'ajouter des aides économiques régionales et une aide fiscale fédérale. Vu la progression spectaculaire des coproductions dans la partie francophone du pays durant ce laps de temps, on peut inférer un réel impact de l'instauration des fonds régionaux.

6. Bruxelles est le centre métropolitain de la Belgique, le centre de l'Europe, le centre du gouvernement, le centre d'entreprise, et le centre du pouvoir. Pourtant, jusqu'à quel point croyez-vous que la Wallonie est le pôle de lumière pour le cinéma belge? Où croyez-vous que le centre du cinéma belge est situé?

Question difficile ! Bruxelles a toujours été ce centre mais ces dernières années, le dynamisme wallon a imposé Liège, patrie des frères Dardenne, comme un véritable Pôle de l'Image tandis que le Hainaut (Mons et Marcinelle) se spécialisent dans les nouvelles technologies du broadcast. Ceci dit, nous menons le plus souvent nos opérations marketing de manière conjointe et sous les labels cousins de « Cinema made in Wallonia » et « Cinema made in Brussels »...

Appendix G : Entretien avec Eric Van Zuylen – 05/02/2012

1. Qu'est-ce que le cinéma belge pour vous?

Selon moi, c'est un cinéma « *atypique* », parce que situé à l'intersection des deux grandes sous-cultures européennes, latine et germanique (unique en Europe, excepté la Suisse). Le cinéma belge est le fruit de ces deux univers culturels différents, mais sans appartenir à l'un ou à l'autre. Les francophones belges ne sont pas français, et les flamands ne sont pas allemands, aucun artiste chez nous ne le souhaiterait, il y perdrait sa belgitude dont le surréalisme, notamment, fait partie de notre quotidien et de notre culture.

2. Qu'est-ce qui distingue les deux cinémas de la Belgique (le cinéma Flamand et le cinéma Francophone)?

Le cinéma flamand est selon moi plus direct, plus carré, alors que le cinéma francophone a davantage une dimension poétique (cfr. le réalisme poétique d'André Delvaux). Par ailleurs, les flamands sont très isolés (par la langue), contrairement aux belges francophones qui doivent se démarquer du cinéma français

3. Y-a-t-il des réalisateurs belges francophones qui déménagent vers la France? Est-ce que c'est pour des raisons financières? Y-a-t-il des avantages fiscaux qui provoquent ce déplacement?

Pas à ma connaissance. Tous nos bons réalisateurs restent en Belgique. Pour les flamands, la tentation d'aller à Hollywood est plus réelle parce que leur mentalité (et leur maîtrise de l'anglais) les rapprochent davantage des anglo-saxons. Fiscalement, mieux vaut rester en Belgique (qui reste un paradis fiscal....)

4. Quelle est l'importance des relations avec la France pour la survie du cinéma francophone belge?

La France est incontournable pour le financement de nos fictions vu la petitesse de notre marché francophone.

5. Quelle est l'importance des institutions régionales et des fonds régionaux pour attirer l'investissement extérieur en Belgique et pour attirer les réalisateurs étrangers en Belgique?

Pour rappeler, le Tax Shelter (disposition fédérale) est une excellente mesure. Il faut le renforcer en évitant toutefois les dérives de certains intermédiaires qui n'y voient qu'une opportunité de gains financiers, alors que l'argent récolté doit essentiellement servir au cinéma belge.

Au point de vue régionale, la Communauté française est évidemment incontournable. Mais faute de moyens, il devient de plus en plus difficile pour les jeunes cinéastes (et les autres...) d'obtenir une aide vu la pléthore de demandes !!!

Le rôle de Wallimage est une incontestable réussite grâce notamment à Philippe Reynaert qui est un vrai professionnel du cinéma. Bruxelles Image, son pendant bruxellois, est nécessaire et complémentaire vu que nombre de nos producteurs, techniciens et réalisateurs vivent à Bruxelles.

Tous soutien régional est bien sûr le bienvenu vu la précarité de ce secteur peu rentable vu la petitesse de notre marché.

Il faut aussi souligner le rôle majeur du VAF en Flandre qui a fait un travail remarquable en peu d'années (Mr. Drouot) en concentrant ses moyens financiers sur quelques réalisateurs de talent pour éviter le saupoudrage sur un trop grand nombre de projets comme en Wallonie. Sans le VAF, il n'y aurait pas le cinéma flamand de qualité d'aujourd'hui. Sa démarche est plus ciblée. Tout le monde ne peut pas faire du cinéma....

6. Bruxelles est le centre métropolitain de la Belgique, le centre de l'Europe, le centre du gouvernement, le centre d'entreprise, et le centre du pouvoir. Pourtant, jusqu'à quel point croyez-vous que la Wallonie est le pôle de lumière pour le cinéma belge? Où croyez-vous que le centre du cinéma belge est situé?

Arrêtons de rêver ! Vu la petitesse et le coût élevé de l'industrie du cinéma, elle a toujours eu tendance à se concentrer en un seul lieu (Hollywood pour les USA, Paris pour la France, Londres pour la GB, Rome pour l'Italie, etc.... Bruxelles reste incontournable et je ne crois pas à la viabilité d'un émiettement régional qui ne flatte en réalité que l'égo de quelques responsables politiques locaux. La Belgique est un mouchoir de poche. Les investissements techniques sont très coûteux et il est souhaitable de ne pas trop les multiplier, mais au contraire de les concentrer à Bruxelles bien située et facile d'accès (pour les flamands et les francophones) afin d'avoir les outils les plus performants avec la rentabilité qui conditionne leur viabilité.

Appendix H: Entretien avec Giles Daoust – 03/03/2012

1. Qu'est-ce que le cinéma belge pour vous?

Un cinéma très riche d'audace et de créativité, souvent expérimental, et pas toujours tourné vers le grand public. Souvent subsidié, c'est aussi ce qui peut lui permettre d'être si original et audacieux. Unique, diront certains.

2. Qu'est-ce qui distingue les deux cinémas de la Belgique (le cinéma Flamand et le cinéma francophone)?

Le cinéma flamand est plus tourné vers le public que le cinéma francophone, qui se veut plus « culturel ». La Flandre dispose d'un bon nombre de films ayant réalisé plusieurs centaines de milliers d'entrées en Belgique (ce qui est beaucoup pour notre pays). Ce n'est pas le cas de la partie Francophone, qui dépasse rarement les 100.000 entrées.

3. Y-a-t-il des réalisateurs belges francophones qui déménagent vers la France? Est-ce que c'est pour des raisons financières? Y-a-t-il des avantages fiscaux qui provoquent ce déplacement?

Oui bien sûr. Le cinéma Français dispose de plus de financement (télévisions, aides publiques, nombre de spectateurs en salles), et il est donc logique que les réalisateurs (francophones) se tournent souvent vers elle une fois qu'ils ont démarré leur carrière en Belgique. Ils n'y trouvent pas toujours leur public cependant.

4. Quelle est l'importance des relations avec la France pour la survie du cinéma francophone belge?

Indispensable : en terme de nombre de films, la majorité du cinéma Belge francophone est composée de coproductions avec la France. Souvent minoritaire, où les producteurs français viennent en Belgique pour y profiter des incentives (tax shelter, wallimage, etc.) C'est financièrement intéressant pour les producteurs belges, qui sont payés pour leur travail sur ces coproductions. Cela permet à de nombreuses sociétés de production de survivre, ce qu'elles

ne pourraient pas faire uniquement avec des films majoritaires belges ou d'initiative belge.

5. Quelle est l'importance des institutions régionales et des fonds régionaux pour attirer l'investissement extérieur en Belgique et pour attirer les réalisateurs étrangers en Belgique?

Essentielle. Les fonds et incentives profitent majoritairement aux films d'initiative étrangère. Cela n'est pas à voir de manière négative, car cela fait vivre toute l'industrie technique et artistique belge (comédiens, techniciens, sociétés, post-production, etc.)

6. Bruxelles est le centre métropolitain de la Belgique, le centre de l'Europe, le centre du gouvernement, le centre d'entreprise, et le centre du pouvoir. Pourtant, jusqu'à quel point croyez-vous que la Wallonie est le pôle de lumière pour le cinéma belge? Où croyez-vous que le centre du cinéma belge est situé?

Le centre du cinéma belge est situé là où il y a le plus de subsides et d'incentives. Pour l'instant il s'agit de la Wallonie, qui combine le tax shelter, Wallimage, ainsi que tous les clusters locaux, pôles images, etc. Peut-être ce centre de gravité se déplacera un jour à Bruxelles, qui offre l'avantage d'être central, mieux connecté au niveau transports venant de l'étranger (Thalys, Eurostar...), etc. C'est avant tout une décision politique.

A noter que la Flandre est également très active, mais comme elle est peu / moins tournée vers l'international, je ne dirais pas que c'est le pôle du cinéma belge.

Appendix I: Entretien avec Olivier Masset-Depasse – 30/09/2013

1. Dans le commentaire du film vous évoquez le fait que vous pensiez filmer le personnage d'Eve sur un terril plutôt que sur les falaises du Nord pas de Calais. Quel aurait été la signification du terril pour le personnage d'Eve si vous aviez finalement décidé de tourner ces scènes dans un tel lieu?

Au départ, j'avais imaginé l'histoire de CAGES dans ma ville natale qui est CHARLEROI, ville industrielle "monstre" délabré, ancienne ville minière déchue du sud du pays. Avec six grands terrils entourant la ville... Pourquoi? Tout simplement parce que je voulais implanter cette histoire surréaliste dans ma ville natale, elle-même surréaliste. Quel aurait été la signification du terril pour le personnage d'Eve? Les terrils sont des collines de la misère. Eve sur son tas de misère, voilà ce qu'aurait représenté le terril pour son personnage.

2. Le terril est-il un moyen de localiser le film dans un paysage wallon ou belge? Ou le terril aurait-il être choisi pour signifier la séquestration d'Eve?

Comme je viens de l'écrire précédemment, le terril représentait le tas de misère d'Eve. Le fait qu'il soit l'emblème d'un certain " pays noir" wallon est fortuit. Nous avons délocalisé dans le Nord-Pas-de-Calais pour des raisons économiques et artistiques. D'abord économiques car la région nous offrait une aide substantielle. Ensuite, artistique car il m'est vite apparu que le romantisme de la côte d'opale, de ses falaises seyait mieux à mon histoire de désamour que les terrils déprimants de ma ville natale.

3. Pendant l'écriture du film, aviez-vous pensé réaliser le film dans un lieu spécifique en Wallonie ou en Belgique?

Comme expliqué ci-dessus, au départ, je voulais implanter l'histoire dans le paysage industrielle et surréaliste de ma ville natale.

4. Pensez-vous que le déplacement de la réalisation de Cages a compliqué l'appréhension du film dans un cadre belge?

Pas du tout. Ce déplacement a même été salvateur car, grâce à l'aide de la région Nord-Pas-de-Calais, le film a été plus simple à réaliser, avec une vraie plus-value au niveau artistique via les décors et paysages.

5. Quelle est l'importance, selon vous, des relations avec la France pour la survie du cinéma francophone belge?

La majorité des films belges ont besoin de la France pour se financer, pour avoir une visibilité. La francophonie, cela reste avant tout la France. Tous les réalisateurs belges ont envie, espèrent ardemment être reconnus en France, pays de la culture. Mais, aujourd'hui, ma force en tant que réalisateur belge est que je peux faire mes films sans la France. Mon dernier film ILLEGAL a été financé essentiellement en Belgique et au Luxembourg. Et il a connu un vrai succès d'estime en France (un prix à Cannes, une nomination aux César).

6. Pensez-vous que la notion de « cinéma belge » ait un certain sens? Peut-on parler d'un style cinématographique belge ou wallon? Pensez-vous que vos films et votre méthode de cinématographie correspondent à un tel style?

La notion de "cinéma belge" est compliquée. Car elle englobe le cinéma francophone et flamand, qui n'ont rien à voir entre eux. Pour moi, il n'y a pas de style cinématographique belge ou wallon ou flamand, mais bien un "esprit" qui irrigue toute la culture de notre pays. Il est vrai que le cinéma belge est très riche et très énergique pour un si petit pays, mais il n'y a pas "d'école". Et c'est même là l'intérêt: il y a autant de cinéma que de cinéastes belges. il y a simplement une certaine forme d'esprit qui les relie entre eux, voilà tout, à mon humble avis.

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Belgium

Podium, 2004 [Film] Directed by Yann Moix, Belgium: Fidélité Productions

Regarde Jonathan/ Consider Jonathan, 1983 [Film] Directed by Jean-Pierre and Luc
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Pathé

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