Normalizing urban inequality

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Normalizing urban inequality: cinematic imaginaries of difference in postcolonial Amsterdam

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ABSTRACT

Combining insights from critical urban studies with geographies of race and racism, this article examines the role of spatial imaginaries in normalizing urban inequalities, showing how such imaginaries make the associations between places and populations appear natural. We extend analyses of the interplay between material landscapes and imaginative geographies to examine how these connections feature in processes of gentrification and displacement and emphasize the necessity of an intersectional approach in understanding the cultural underpinnings of urban change. We propose that such analyses of dominant spatial imaginaries benefit from attention to their colonial roots, given the persistence of monomythical explorer-hero narratives and the mapping of reworked colonial imaginative geographies onto contemporary postcolonial cities. Our analysis focuses on Amsterdam, the popular Dutch film *Alleen Maar Nette Mensen* and the spatiality of difference that its 'monomyth' narrative presents. It justifies an unequal urban order by contrasting Amsterdam's city centre, which is depicted as White, middle-class and 'civilized', with the post-war urban periphery, which is cast as a mysterious place of racialized poverty, squalor and pathological behaviour. This culturally essentialist depiction contributes to the depoliticization of state-led gentrification and normalizes changes to the material cityscape.

Normalisation de l'inégalité urbaine: imaginaires cinématiques de la différence dans l'Amsterdam postcolonial

RÉSUMÉ

En combinant les résultats des recherches critiques sur les études urbaines avec les géographies de race et de racisme, cet article examine le rôle des imaginaires spatiaux dans la normalisation des inégalités urbaines, montrant que ces imaginaires présentent les associations entre les lieux et les populations comme allant de soi. Nous élargissons les analyses de l'interaction entre les paysages matériels et les géographies imaginatives pour examiner comment ces connexions figurent dans les processus de gentrification et de déplacement et nous soulignons la nécessité d'une approche multidimensionnelle pour comprendre les piliers culturels du changement urbain. Nous

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proposons que de telles analyses d'imaginaires spatiaux dominants méritent de retenir l'attention sur leurs racines coloniales, étant donné la persistance de récits de héros explorateurs mono mythiques et du transfert des géographies imaginaires coloniales remaniées sur les cités contemporaines postcoloniales. Notre analyse se concentre sur Amsterdam, le film néerlandais populaire *Alleen Maar Nette Mensen* et la spatialité de différence que présente sa narration « mono mythique ». Elle justifie un ordre urbain inégal en contrastant le centre-ville d'Amsterdam, qui est décrit comme blanc, de classe moyenne et « civilisé » avec la périphérie urbaine de l'après-guerre, qui est campée dans le rôle de lieu mystérieux, de pauvreté liée à la race, de misère et de comportement pathologique. Cette description culturellement essentialiste contribue à la dépolitisation de la gentrification menée par l'Etat et normalise les changements survenus sur le paysage matériel urbain.

La normalización de la desigualdad urbana: imaginarios cinematográficos de diferencia en la Ámsterdam poscolonial

RESUMEN
Combinando puntos de vista de estudios urbanos críticos con geografías de la raza y el racismo, este artículo examina el papel de los imaginarios espaciales en la normalización de las desigualdades urbanas, mostrando cómo estos imaginarios hacen que las asociaciones entre los lugares y las poblaciones parezcan naturales. Se extiende el análisis de la interacción entre paisajes materiales y geografías imaginativas para examinar cómo cuentan estas conexiones en los procesos de gentrificación y desplazamiento, y hacen hincapié en la necesidad de un enfoque interseccional en la comprensión de los fundamentos culturales del cambio urbano. Se propone que este tipo de análisis de los imaginarios espaciales dominantes se beneficia de la atención a sus raíces coloniales, dada la persistencia de las narrativas explorador-héroe mono-míticas y el mapeo de geografías imaginativas coloniales revisadas en ciudades poscoloniales contemporáneas. El análisis se centra en Ámsterdam, la popular película holandesa *Alleen Maar Nette Mensen* y la espacialidad de la diferencia que su narrativa 'mono-mito' presenta. Se justifica un orden urbano desigual contrastando el centro de la ciudad de Ámsterdam, que se representa como blanco, de clase media y 'civilizado', con la periferia urbana de la posguerra, que se proyecta como un lugar misterioso de pobreza de carácter racial, miseria y comportamiento patológico. Esta representación cultural esencialista contribuye a la despolitización de la gentrificación dirigida por el estado y normaliza los cambios en el paisaje urbano material.

Introduction

Geographies of race and racism have sought to understand the ways in which race is co-constructed with, and made material through, space and place. Recent scholarship in this field has sought to connect insights from cultural and social geography, connecting discursive analyses to material inequalities and encounters (Dwyer & Bressey, 2008; Nayak, 2011). In this article, we examine how these connections play out in multi-ethnic urban contexts,

where gentrifying cityscapes are normalized by spatial imaginaries that incorporate colonial dichotomies.[1] While significant attention has been paid to the intersections of race and class in urban imaginative geographies, we argue that such analyses must also take into account the role of gender and sexuality. Urban inequalities are rendered normal by spatial imaginaries that depict 'natural' associations between space, race, class and gender, with dysfunctional family life, sexual immorality and danger projected onto 'non-White' neighbourhoods.

Focusing on the Dutch capital of Amsterdam, we highlight the role of cinematic imaginaries in differentiating and ranking urban neighbourhoods and their residents within socio-spatial hierarchies of value. Formerly taken as an exemplar of inclusive, democratic urbanism, in recent years, Amsterdam has been characterized by increasing socio-spatial polarization. In part the result of Amsterdam's state-led gentrification, this polarization involves both socio-economic and ethno-racial differentiation. The historical city centre is increasingly dominated by the residential presence of the White middle class, while non-White and low-income residents are relegated to the urban periphery. The shift away from an explicit ideology of democratic urbanism has met hardly any resistance.

The article argues for increased attention to the role of popular culture in normalizing Amsterdam's increasingly unequal urban order, an argument illustrated through an extensive analysis of a recent Dutch film, *Alleen Maar Nette Mensen* ('Only Decent People', Beker, Van Gestel, Heslenfeld, & Crijns, 2012). This film, which features Amsterdam's landscape prominently, portrays an upper-middle-class White protagonist who transgresses the city's socio-spatial boundaries in his quest to have sex with women of African descent. In this carnal quest – a search underpinned by popular images of hypersexual Black women – he moves from the affluent city centre area of Oud Zuid to the racialized 'ghetto' of the Bijlmer, where he achieves his goals and returns home triumphantly. Parallel to the forms of physical and social displacement caused by current processes of gentrification in Amsterdam, such cinematic representations can be understood as effecting the cultural displacement of low-income, racialized residents from the city centre (cf. Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008).

In what follows, we start with a section that discusses urban imaginaries as a specific form of imaginative geography. We connect these cultural geographies to the 'monomyth' (Campbell, 1949), a classic – and often problematic – narrative pattern structured around a heroic journey that is central to modern-day popular cinema. Next, we give a short overview of recent shifts in Amsterdam's socio-spatial landscape, discussing how an anxious politics of national belonging intersects with the city's increased spatial polarization. This is followed by an analysis of urban inequalities and contemporary Dutch anxieties in *Alleen Maar Nette Mensen* (hereafter *AMNM*), showing how the film normalizes a specific socio-economic, racial and gendered order.

Urban imaginaries and the monomyth

Colonial imaginaries and the city

As various critical geographers have argued, uneven development and the material-spatial expression of inequalities must be understood within the discursive frames that serve to produce and justify these inequalities. Understanding how inequality is seen as 'normal' requires being attentive to the discursive production of social difference in and through

space. Such 'imaginative geographies' have been explored most closely in relation to colonial discourses of domination (notably Gregory, 1995; Said, 1978). Colonial imaginaries, propagated through representations ranging from travel writing to landscape painting, tended to juxtapose 'East' and 'West', or tropics and temperate zones (see Crang, 1998; Wylie, 2000). The tropics were represented as sensual, dangerous natural spaces that stood in contrast to the urban, civilized, temperate spaces of Europe and North America. European colonizers sought to prove their civilization and superiority by dominating and exploiting both tropical landscapes and those who inhabited them. Nineteenth-century race theories leaned heavily on environmental determinism, claiming that tropical and temperate climes had contrasting effects on their inhabitants, justifying the imperial endeavours and 'civilizing mission' of the 'temperate races' (Livingstone, 1999; Sheller, 2003). The legacy of colonial imaginaries remains evident in the present. Kothari and Wilkinson (2010), for instance, demonstrate how colonial imaginaries of islands in the Indian Ocean mutate and re-emerge in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries to justify development interventions (see also Jaffe, 2016; Power, Mohan, & Mercer, 2006).

Such colonial discourses have always been partial – characterized by internal contradictions and prone to appropriation, subversion and mutation. During the colonial era, imaginaries of the tropics could 'return home' and be remapped onto the European metropole. As Edmonds (2005) has shown, for example, in the nineteenth century, constructions of the tropical colonies as an unhealthy 'torrid zone' informed conceptions of London's slums as pathogenic spaces. In an analogous fashion, reworked colonial imaginaries continue to resurface 'at home', in postcolonial European cities (see e.g. Derderian, 2003; Jacobs, 1996; Lapeyronnie, 2005). While colonial imaginative geographies have been analysed primarily at the global, hemispheric, level, this article seeks to identify rescaled versions at the urban level. To what extent are urban hierarchies of socio-spatial value produced by reconfigured colonial imaginaries?

A key theorist in understanding the relations between discursive and material processes in cities is Lefebvre (1991), who focuses on the unstable, unpredictable trialectic between three 'moments' of social space: imagined space (or 'representational space'), space as conceived by state planners ('abstract space') and everyday experiences ('lived space'). His work emphasizes the importance of historical processes in the production of space, notably the relations of production (1991, p. 46). Current conditions of neoliberal, post-Keynesian capitalism, for instance, have produced new social space in city centres through economic restructuring, urban reinvestment and gentrification (Smith, 2002), as well as new interplays between symbolism, planning and spatiality in urban peripheries and suburbs (see Cowen, 2005; Walks, 2012). In European urban peripheries, these political-economic conditions are expressed in shifts in policies on social housing, economic development and the regeneration of post-war neighbourhoods (Savini, Majoor, & Salet, 2015). In addition to structural changes in the relations of production, Lefebvre's emphasis on historical context also draws our attention to shifts in spatial imaginaries. McCann (1999) contextualizes Lefebvre's framework in the historically produced racialized geography of the U.S. city, studying resistance against dominant imaginations of classed and raced urban public space, specifically the contrast between a wealthy White centre and an impoverished Black periphery. He shows how different forms of imagined space in popular culture, inspired by lived experiences of social injustice, can be understood as resistance, although these moments of 'counter-space' are rare and fragile in the face of the 'abstract space' of the state and capital (McCann, 1999).

While attending to historical specificity, Goldberg (1993) demonstrates the continuities in the intertwining of imagined space, urban planning and lived experience. Comparing cities in Apartheid-era South Africa and the late twentieth-century US, he traces the use of physical and imagined 'fences' from colonial urban planning in Africa to gentrification and urban renewal in the US: 'racialized urban sites in the West are distanced, physically and symbolically, in the master plan of city space' (1993, p. 52). These similarities should not be understood as rigid continuities, but as new conceptualizations of order that rely on spatial confinement and separation. Following decolonization, Goldberg sees such imaginaries as resurfacing in Western cities as 'periphractic marginalization', the process of (re)producing circumscribed spaces of raced and classed marginality that contrast with mainstream norms and practices. Such periphractic spaces are found in the 'idea' of high-rise housing projects such as Amsterdam's the Bijlmer, which 'present a generic image without identity: the place of crime; of social disorder, dirt and disease; of teenage pregnancy, prostitution, pimps and drug dependency; workless and shiftless, disciplined internally, if at all, only by social welfare workers' (Goldberg, 1993, p. 53).

These analyses of the effects of colonial and urban imaginaries on material landscapes have tended to focus on race in relation to class, while underemphasizing the extent to which these categories of difference are co-constituted by gender and sexuality. However, as Razack (2002, p. 6) argues, the geographical study of racial formations should always attend to both class and gender hierarchies: 'Racial hierarchies come into existence through patriarchy and capitalism, each system of domination mutually constituting the other' and a spatial approach offers 'the possibility of charting the simultaneous operation of multiple systems of domination'. In our reading of *AMNM*, we seek to extend the analysis of imaginative geographies, showing how urban hierarchies of place and value are constructed along these intersectional lines.

Problematizing the monomyth narrative

Imaginative geographies are produced through visual images such as paintings, photographs or maps, but also through popular narratives. Cinematic representations combine such visual and narrative elements (Caprotti, 2009; Lukinbeal & Zimmermann, 2006; Shiel & Fitzmaurice, 2001). Here, we focus on the role of the monomyth framework, an elementary plot structure identified by Campbell (1949) that is featured in myths, legends, fairytales and rituals across the world. This classic narrative pattern portrays a hero's journey. The typically male hero goes through a three-part cycle of departure, initiation and return: 'departure' deals with the hero's life and the start of a quest; 'initiation' chronicles the hero's adventures; and 'return' sees the hero come home with newly acquired power or knowledge. Within this three-phase structure, Campbell specified seventeen stages, although the exact number, order and prominence of stages may vary.[2] While the length of this article precludes an in-depth discussion of these stages, our analysis below draws attention to a few stages relevant to *AMNM*.

This archetypical plot structure is still relevant to cultural analyses of modern-day storytelling, particularly in popular cinema (e.g. Doty, 1991; Indick, 2004; Palumbo, 2013). The prevalence of the monomyth in contemporary cinema is not necessarily unconscious or accidental: the influence of Campbell's work is evident in screen-writing manuals that rely on it as a technical template for narrative structure (e.g. Alexander, 2011; Vogler, 2007). The

monomyth has an obvious spatial dimension: it is structured around a hero's journey through mythical and social space. Notwithstanding this evident spatiality, its implications for cultural geographies have not been explored in any detail. Campbell's monomyth involves a clear spatial duality that relates to inside/outside, self/other, home/away juxtapositions. The hero's journey starts and ends in the 'common lands', the known home-world which signifies normality. His quest leads through a mysterious other-world where he encounters the magical, the demonic or the divine. These encounters are key to the hero's transformation and atonement, and the power and knowledge he acquires serve to regenerate his home-world (see Campbell, 1949, pp. 56, 377–378, 386).

The monomyth has an apparent paradox. On the one hand, the narrative emphasizes the stark difference between home and away, the known and the unknown world. On the other hand, the home-world and the mysterious other-world will share one or more important traits and are two parts of one larger universe. The hero's recognition of these shared traits is the insight that he can bring back in order to invigorate the home-world. Modern-day myths, epic tales or movies tend to focus on a specific (social) home-world problem that the hero can rectify: shallow materialism, lack of spiritual consciousness, joylessness and social prejudice. The morality implicit in these quests connects to colonial imaginaries – some landscapes are imagined as civilized but joyless or spiritually barren, while others are dangerously wild but also more free and pure. By emphasizing the spatiality of the monomyth and its connection to urban imaginative geographies, we seek to demonstrate the role of this narrative in normalizing the spatial order.

Campbell (1949, p. 121) discusses the hero's journey as a general pattern that applies to both male and female protagonists, and indeed contemporary literature and cinema have seen an increase in female journeys (Marlina, 2015; Palumbo, 2008). Nonetheless, critics point to the predominance of male heroes in the monomyth, and to the portrayal of the journey itself – a quest necessary to achieve self-knowledge and maturity – as a masculine endeavour (Indick, 2004; Turner, 2015). Despite Campbell's inclusion of examples of heroines and his intentional use of gender-inclusive language (Nicholson, 2011), feminist theorists have noted that Campbell's outline is highly gendered – heroes encounter mothers, goddesses and temptresses (Pearson & Pope, 1981). Beyond Campbell's own undertheorization of gender, the monomyth's masculine elaboration is shaped primarily by broader societal constructions of 'the hero'. With contemporary societies saturated with 'images of valorized male bodies and heroic conceptions of male leadership', the widespread use of the monomyth in screenwriting both facilitates and amplifies 'hegemonic masculinity' in blockbuster film-making (Turner, 2015, p. 701).

While Campbell's original monomyth framework has, more broadly, been criticized as reductionist and ahistorical, its general nature has allowed later generations of scholars to apply and reinterpret it towards various more specific readings of myth (Nicholson, 2011). For Campbell, the hero's journey is essentially an inquiry into human subjectivity and spiritual experience: a journey of the self. He emphasizes that this transformation of the self is made possible through the insights and knowledge that the hero gains through encounters with the unknown. While for Campbell, this transformative voyage to the 'unknown' may be constituted by encounters with the divine, with nature or with the social 'Other', it is this third type of confrontation with social alterity that lends itself most closely to a postcolonial analysis. Indeed, the monomyth has often been employed in narratives which evoke colonial imaginaries, as Barnes (2014, p. 84) shows in relation to the figure of the colonial hero in

French literature: 'an empire builder, this man of purpose, and his productive labor not only results in the spread of civilization … but breathes new life into a tired, unwholesome French society'. Such narratives familiarized readers with an image of colonial empire, while the monomyth structure firmly emphasized exotic difference. The colonial journey confronts the male hero with the 'Other' within himself, reaching existentialist enlightenment: 'The space of the Other serves as one in which the hero is pushed to his [sic] limits, both physically and psychologically, and either succumbs or emerges with renewed strength and purpose' (Barnes, 2014, pp. 80–81).

Amsterdam: socio-spatial polarization and ethnonational anxieties

As noted above, Amsterdam's spatial order is undergoing significant change. While the city has been experiencing considerable economic growth, recent years show an increasing disparity between the urban core and more peripheral neighbourhoods in terms of class and ethnicity, mirroring developments in other European capital cities such as London, Berlin and Paris. Although still boasting comparably low levels of segregation, Amsterdam is witnessing increasing socio-spatial polarization, which can be characterized in broad terms as the opposition between a White middle-class centre and a lower-class periphery with a higher concentration of non-White migrants and their descendants (both postcolonial migrants from former Dutch colonies in the Caribbean and former labour migrants from countries such as Morocco and Turkey, see Van Gent & Musterd, 2016).

In particular, the nineteenth-century neighbourhoods around the seventeenth-century urban core have been transformed by state-led gentrification. The sale of affordable social housing in this more central zone has produced a demographic shift, with former working-class and migrant neighbourhoods becoming areas with more affluent, predominantly White residents. Table 1 shows how the nineteenth-century neighbourhoods have moved from an under-representation of high-income households in 2000 to an over-representation in 2011. Meanwhile, in the post-war periphery, low-income households have become over-represented, while the share of high-income households has decreased. Looking at ethnonational statistics, we see a decline in this central zone in the absolute and relative presence of residents of Caribbean descent (as with other groups of non-Dutch descent, data not shown, see also Boterman and Van Gent [2014, 2015]).

Table 1. Representational indices of low- and high-income households (lowest and highest quintile) and of Caribbean-descent and 'autochtoon' Dutch population per housing-market area in the municipality of Amsterdam (share of group in housing-market area divided by share of group in city; >100 signifies over-representation, <100 under-representation).

	Lowest income quintile		Highest income quintile		Caribbean-descent		Autochtoon Dutch	
	2000	2011	2000	2011	2002	2013	2002	2013
Seventeenth-century core	106	108	123	122	42	41	121	125
Nineteenth-century ring	113	104	89	109	83	68	100	110
Early twentieth-century ring	100	101	99	105	58	51	105	114
Northern district	95	97	83	70	88	98	114	104
Post-war periphery	95	103	91	70	180	191	77	66
Post-1990s periphery/rural areas	37	57	227	185	80	102	128	112
Share of population Amsterdam	31%	30%	14%	16%	16%	10%	53%	49%

Sources: Research, Information and Statistics Amsterdam 2015, Boterman and Van Gent (2015).

These changes are the result of the neoliberalization of housing and urban policies, which have transformed the erstwhile socially 'just city' of Amsterdam (Uitermark, 2009; Van Gent, 2013). In contrast to other European cities, these policies have not led to significant protest, and the gentrification of Amsterdam's more central areas has remained relatively depoliticized (Hochstenbach, 2015; Sakizlioglu & Uitermark, 2014). This is perhaps because of the absence of a political or media discourse on class (Van Eijk, 2013). While a more explicitly racialized discourse has become increasingly prominent throughout the Netherlands, there has been little evidence of an ethno-racially inflected mobilization in opposition to gentrification.

In the last decade, several European countries have been experiencing social and political crises related to national identity and the status of racialized Others (see e.g. Modest & de Koning, 2016). In the Netherlands, these crises are apparent in the rise of radical right-wing populist parties and the confrontational and even vitriolic discourse in public debates on integration of post-migrant communities. Concepts of 'Dutch identity' have become more exclusionary. This makes it harder for post-migrants to identify with Dutchness, even as they are increasingly pressured to assimilate (Duyvendak, 2011).

The difference between White 'native' Dutch and non-White others is commonly expressed as the difference between *autochtoon* and *allochtoon*. These neologisms (derived from classical Greek, meaning 'from same land' and 'from other land') are used in popular and political discourse as well as in official statistics and academic studies. *Autochtoon* refers to 'native Dutch' citizens, and glosses as 'White', although some social groups whose claims to Whiteness or nativeness were seen as more tenuous before WWII are now classified as *autochtoon*. Notably, the Jewish-Dutch community, seen as exogenous before WWII, is no longer considered to be 'other' – for all intents and purposes, they have become White. While the official statistical use of *allochtoon* refers strictly to non-racial categories of first- and second-generation immigrants and is differentiated into 'Western' and 'non-Western' *allochtoon* subcategories, it is used colloquially as shorthand for non-White. With these (birth)place-based categories forming the basis for policy interventions, their official use can be understood as a form of institutional othering (Yanow & Van der Haar, 2013). Beyond the broad racialization of these officially non-racial categories in everyday and political discourse, popular vernacular has also seen the reintroduction of the derogatory racial term *neger* ('negro') to refer to people of African descent. In addition, racial discourse is apparent in the widespread use of terms such as 'Black schools' and 'Black neighborhoods' to describe (negatively valued) over-representations of non-Western immigrant groups in these schools or neighbourhoods (see also De Koning, 2015; Essed & Hoving, 2014).

The combination of a gentrifying city centre and increasingly racialized discourse has led to the urban periphery being cast as 'non-White' territory. In Amsterdam, post-WWII neighbourhoods on the city's western and south-eastern fringes are often seen as 'bad' areas, with the Bijlmer featuring as one of the most stigmatized racialized urban areas (Aalbers, 2011; Balkenhol, 2014). This area was constructed in the 1970s as part of a modernist extension plan for the south-east of Amsterdam. Although its social rental housing was originally intended for the middle class, the area was occupied by low-income and immigrant households, notably by Surinamese households who moved to the Netherlands around the time of Suriname's independence in 1975. In the 1980s, the area was plagued by faulty urban design, management issues, vacancy and poverty, while also attracting vulnerable migrant groups such as refugees and undocumented immigrants. Increasingly, the Bijlmer was

considered a 'quintessential symbol of urban decline' and a Dutch Black ghetto, although more recently urban renewal, replacing much of the harsh modernist architecture with middle-class housing, has been accompanied by 'Black gentrification' (Aalbers, 2011, p. 1698). While these renewal efforts have effected a social and physical transformation, the Bijlmer's reputation remains largely negative. The film *AMNM* depicts the area as existing almost exclusively of aged modernist architecture, tapping into the familiar symbolism of urban decline and reproducing existing territorial stigmatization.

Alleen Maar Nette Mensen: a hero's journey to the Dutch 'ghetto'

A comedy of manners released in 2012, *AMNM* is based on a satirical novel with the same name. The source novel by Robert Vuijsje, published in 2008, became a Dutch bestseller and won a number of literary prizes. The film rights were quickly bought up by a major production company and the film (produced and marketed more as a comedy than as satire) came out not long after.[3] Both the book and the film stirred up considerable controversy, with various critics arguing that it was replete with harmful stereotypes and was particularly degrading to women of African descent (e.g. Jensen, 2010; Van het Reve, 2012). One commentator called the film version a 'racist spectacle', stating that it was 'an 89-minute attack on the Bijlmer, the Surinamese-Dutch and the Caribbean-Dutch communities and their cultures. The racist and sexist scenes are battering' (Gario, 2012; our translation). Other critics acknowledged the stereotypical depiction of the low-income Black population but felt that this was not problematic because middle-class White intellectuals were portrayed in a similarly stereotypical fashion (Etty, 2008; Fretz, 2012). In addition to presenting an obvious fallacy of reference (i.e. two wrongs do not make a right), this justification overlooks the extent to which the film presents a socio-spatial hierarchy of value.

Although the film's narrative fits neatly in the monomyth framework, we refrain from discussing all stages, but focus on those where geography is important and show how the larger monomyth structure is important in understanding the film's main moral argument. Our analysis shows that the representations of space essentially rescale colonially derived dichotomies to the urban level, distinguishing dangerous-but-sensuous spaces of poverty from safe-but-dulling 'civilized' wealthier areas. The film's imaginative geography casts both the Bijlmer and its residents as distinct from, and inferior to, Amsterdam's central areas such as Oud Zuid. While these neighbourhoods present two extremes in the material landscape of the city (see Table 2), the film offers a culturally essentialist framework that normalizes urban inequality. Before discussing the *AMNM*'s colonial explorer theme, the connections it makes between place and pathology, and the implications of the monomyth structure for the film's morality, we provide a short summary of the film's plot.

Plot summary

The film portrays the three-part journey of its main protagonist, David Samuels, a young man on the brink of adulthood. David lives with his affluent Jewish-Dutch parents in a town house in Oud Zuid, a privileged neighbourhood in the centre of Amsterdam. Despite being upper-middle-class and socially White, he looks 'Moroccan' and is often treated as 'un-Dutch', making him feel like something of an outsider in his own social circles. Having just completed high school, David is unsure what his next step in life should be. Despite parental and peer

Table 2. Demographic and housing characteristics of Bijlmer and Oud-Zuid in 2012.

		Bijlmer	Oud Zuid	Amsterdam
Population	Total	26,520	47,905	790,110
	Caribbean-descent	41%	2%	11%
	Autochtoon	19%	65%	49%
Disposable Income	Poverty households (benefit level)	24%	9%	17%
	Low-income households (bottom 2 quintiles)	63%	30%	52%
	High-income households (highest quintile)	8%	42%	16%
Households	Single-person	52%	50%	53%
(2015 data)	Households without children	14%	23%	20%
	Households with children	14%	18%	16%
	Single-parent households	17%	7%	9%
	Other	2%	1%	1%
Housing stock	Average housing value (× €1000)	154	637	250
Tenure	Owner-occupied	23%	39%	25%
	Social rental	61%	5%	45%
	Private rental	11%	55%	27%
	Tenure unknown	4%	2%	2%

Sources: Statistics Netherlands and Research, Information and Statistics Amsterdam, calculation by authors. Please note Bijlmer is a combination of statistical areas 'Bijlmer Centrum' and 'Bijlmer Oost'; Oud Zuid is a combination of 'Museumk-wartier', 'Willemspark', 'Apollobuurt' and 'Duivelseiland'.

pressure, he has no concrete plans to go to university, and while his indecision is tolerated, it is slowly turning him into a social misfit. David's travels outside his bourgeois, White home environment of Oud Zuid – a journey consisting of his departure, exile and return – is the central narrative that structures the film.

No longer content with his long-time girlfriend, he makes it his mission to find a Black woman. This quest takes him to the Bijlmer, a low-income neighbourhood in Amsterdam's post-war periphery. Here, he meets the Afro-Surinamese Rowanda, who becomes his new girlfriend. Through Rowanda and her family, David is introduced to a new social and built environment that is markedly different from his middle-class home environment. The relationship ends when he starts hanging out with Ryan, Rowanda's cousin, and begins to pick up other Black women. During his time in the Bijlmer, David becomes estranged from his former friends and family. However, after realizing that casual sex will not bring him redemption, and having witnessed the 'dark side' of this new world, he returns to Oud Zuid. While his homecoming is initially difficult, in the end, David is triumphant, as he wins the heart of Sherida/Rita, a Bijlmer resident who is doing an internship with his father and as such is also comfortable in his bourgeois world.

A colonial-style explorer-hero

David's 'heroic' adventures outside of Oud Zuid are very much in the tradition of colonial explorers, whose travels to faraway lands allowed them to attain or prove their manhood through enduring various trials and tribulations (see Phillips, 1997). Farley (2005) discusses the hegemonic imaginary of the 'heroic explorer', an embodied subject position entwined with the project of empire. The romantic figure of a manly White adventurer is 'associated with danger, endurance of hardship and triumph over harsh physical conditions through self-reliance' (Farley, 2005, p. 245). While rooted in colonialism, she demonstrates that this imaginary of a strong and courageous explorer continues to be invoked to legitimize White men's leadership. While Farley emphasizes the trials posed by unknown physical

environments, representations of colonial explorers – many of whom were geographers – also construct their heroism in relation to their ability to contend with exotically dangerous 'native' others (see e.g. Genoni, 2009). The racial character of the heroic explorer lies not only in his own Whiteness, but also in the non-Whiteness of his antagonists.

Casting David as such an adventurous explorer requires emphasizing the racial, cultural and environmental contrasts between Amsterdam's city centre and its periphery. As David explains in a voiceover: 'In Amsterdam Zuid, there are no people they call *allochtoon*. No *negers*, no Turks, and certainly no Moroccans live here. As my mother says, only decent people live in Oud Zuid.'[4] His father, the editor-in-chief of an intellectual news programme, is influential within the Dutch cultural elite. An early scene, scored to Baroque classical music, portrays the father reading a Dutch 'quality' newspaper while drinking champagne in his designer chair. He speaks disapprovingly of Jewish-Dutch acquaintances with a taste for flashy cars, a derision of the *nouveau riche* that serves to underline his cultural power, but also points to the arrogance and shallowness of his own circles – an affliction that proves to be the main problem plaguing the hero's community.

As a resident of Oud Zuid, David is only vaguely aware of the existence of the Bijlmer and its residents. The film underlines this by showing us his transition into an explorer-hero. Early in the film, on a shopping trip with his long-time White girlfriend in an exclusive area in Oud Zuid, David is distracted by a voluptuous Black woman passing by, wearing tight clothing, heavy make-up and gold jewellery. A sudden burst of soul music and David's attentive gaze suggest the revelatory nature of this sighting. As the anonymous woman walks away, turning her head to David and smiling, her gold tooth twinkles briefly, with post-production digital and sound effects underlining the significance of the moment. This alien sighting rouses David's sexual desire for voluptuous lower-class Black women, and for the first time, he becomes aware of the existence of another world, where these mysterious women dwell.

While the quest is now set, the social–geographical cleavages remain daunting. David fails to connect to Black women and only makes it as far as the platform of a Bijlmer train station. Following the monomyth structure, he manages to cross the boundary into the 'other world' of racial and geographic difference through 'supernatural aid' (a crucial monomyth stage). He receives this aid from his former classmate Reginaldo, the only 'neger' in his elite high school. David meets up with Reginaldo and a Dutch-Surinamese friend of his in an ethnically mixed bar in the city centre, asking them to help him in his quest for a Black woman. The conversation highlights the colonial discourse of 'shadism' as the three men discuss women and their bodies. David explains why he lusts after dark-skinned women – 'The darker she is, the closer to nature' – while the two Dutch-Surinamese men state their preference for light-skinned women, dismissing women with darker complexions as 'hard and rough'. Despite the emphasis on racial difference, the shared heteromasculinity and misogyny that the three men display in their ranking of racialized women's bodies allows them to bond.

At this point, the film is most explicit in its colonial imaginary. David explains in the language of the explorer that he wants a Black woman who has never been with a White man: 'She has to be pure, unsoiled. I want to be the first who breaks open the gate.' Reginaldo and his friend provide aid by guiding David into unknown territory. They take him to a dance party in the Bijlmer, enabling 'the hero's crossing of the first threshold' (another classic monomyth phase) when he spots Rowanda, his first Black girlfriend, whom he describes as ferocious and dangerous compared to 'Dutch cheese women'.

Place and pathology

David's journey is one of White male identity-making. As Razack (2000, p. 95) details in her examination of sexual violence in the urban spaces of settler colonies such as Canada, this identity is confirmed through 'journeys of transgression' between middle-class White 'respectable space' and impoverished, non-White 'degenerate space'. This remains a colonial journey:

> the subject who must cross the line between respectability and degeneracy and, significantly, return unscathed, is first and foremost a colonial subject seeking to establish that he is indeed in control and lives in a world where a solid line marks the boundary between himself and racial/gendered others. (2000, p. 107)

When David first travels to the Bijlmer, the film's engagement with Amsterdam's urban geography is made explicit. David explains their destination in a voiceover: 'The underground connects the city centre with the Bijlmer, a neighbourhood that was built as far away as possible. Why did all these Black Amsterdammers go and live together in this place?' By having David pose this question, the film depicts segregation as the outcome of preferences rather than disposable income or discrimination. Furthermore, we are presented with a picture of the city as racially dichotomous, exemplifying the film's repeated insinuations that all Black Amsterdammers dwell in the Bijlmer.

More importantly, David's arrival introduces the audience to one of the film's recurring visual and narrative themes: the juxtaposition between Oud Zuid and the Bijlmer. While the image of Oud Zuid as a site of arrogance and superficiality may not be particularly flattering, its caricatural middle-class sophistication, respectability and social hierarchies serve as a counterpoint to the Bijlmer as a mysterious place of cultural difference, depravity and social disorganization. Loïc Wacquant, Tom Slater, and José Pereira (2014) discuss these imaginaries of urban pathology through the concept of territorial stigmatization. Invoking Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power, territorial stigmatization 'affects how myriad agents feel, think and act as it percolates down and diffuses across the social and spatial structures of the city'. These agents – who range from residents to street-level bureaucrats, commercial operators, state officials and 'specialists in symbolic production'[5] – both feel the effects of, and reproduce, the stigma of place (Wacquant et al., 2014, p. 6.). Such areas are often racialized and juxtaposed with organized and respectable society. Their social 'disorganization' is located in 'deficient' forms of family life, employment, education and community, which in turn are depicted as the cause of criminal and immoral behaviour. Residents' cultural differences from a purported norm are exaggerated and reinforced by sensational media reports of violence and moral deviance, while structural social-economic factors are largely ignored. While most middle-class White people fearfully avoid such apparently pathogenic areas, David's attraction to their exotic danger allows him to take on the role of a colonial trailblazer in his own city.

Mismatched manners

Throughout the film, the disparity in income between Oud Zuid and the Bijlmer is highlighted. Indeed, average income differs significantly between these two areas. Rather than focusing explicitly on class relations, however, the film constructs a culturalist narrative, presenting these two areas as separate worlds inhabited by culturally distinct populations.

Essentialist portrayals of ethnic difference, which come out most clearly in the context of 'manners', largely overshadow the role of class distinction. Early on in the film, the social cleavage between the two places is underscored by several comedic 'cultural clashes'. One such clash takes place in Oud Zuid, when a scantily clad Rowanda attends the birthday party of David's mother Judith. Judith is dismayed and expresses concern that 'Rwanda' is not of the 'same intellectual level' as her family. Ignored and patronized, Rowanda feels out of place and leaves, upset. Trying to patch things up with an angry David, his parents visit Rowanda's family in the Bijlmer for dinner. This visit too serves to highlight the classed and ethno-racial distance between the two 'worlds'. Attempting to make 'polite' conversation, Judith asks various questions that draw attention to Janine's lack of a middle-class aesthetic disposition: 'Is this a Surinamese habit? Eating in front of the television?'

Authors such as McClintock (1995) have emphasized the role of gender and bourgeois domestic space in the project of imperialism. Judith's role here underscores the continuities: in the context of postcolonial Amsterdam, she serves as a gendered exemplar of normative White bourgeois domesticity and the counterpoint to Janine and Rowanda's 'deviant' femininity. The contrast between their non-normative geographies of eating and Judith's normative domesticity highlight the raced and classed politics of gender and sexuality. Following Cohen's (1997) conception of queer politics, a queer perspective on sexuality and gender relations should complicate a simplistic, monolithic understanding of undifferentiated heterosexual privilege. Questioning 'the unchallenged assumption of a uniform heteronormativity from which all heterosexuals benefit' (1997, p. 452), she draws our attention to those forms of heterosexuality deemed non-normative. Specifically, she points to the raced and classed figure of the 'welfare queen' as a key way in which non-normative heterosexuality is stigmatized. As (low-income, Black) single mothers, Janine and Rowanda similarly represent 'abnormal' procreation patterns and family structures.

The film's inflection of spatial dichotomies with racial, class, gendered and sexual meaning is also apparent when David meets another Surinamese-Dutch woman at one of his father's 'cultured' soirees in his home in Oud Zuid. Rita, a conservatively dressed Black woman, works with his father as an intern. While she is studying Eastern European migration, towards his father has her researching 'Black items' for his television programme. Oblivious of his own attitude towards Black women, David criticizes his father's stereotypical response to Rita. During the soiree, the father solicits Rita's opinion on politics in the Middle East, and her well-formulated response literally draws applause from the older White middle-class men present. While David finds Rita physically attractive, he dismisses her as a 'Bounty' (dark on the outside, white on the inside, like the chocolate bar) and accuses her of mimicking the older men in order to climb the social ladder. His criticism of her conduct as strategic and inauthentic serves to reinforce what Gupta and Ferguson (1992, p. 7) call the 'assumed isomorphism of space, place and culture': the association of certain – raced, classed, gendered, sexualized – people and places with appropriate or authentic behaviour. The film's nexus of race, class, gender, sexuality and space is underlined when we find out later that Rita's real name is Sherida and that she dresses provocatively when in the Bijlmer. However, Rita/Sherida's character and her story are largely undeveloped, even though her 'exceptional' journey is the mirror image of David's. She does not feature as a desiring subject – the fact that the film leaves her attraction to David unexplained contributes to the flattening of her sexuality, which serves only to fulfil his journey.

Dysfunctional families, sex and violence

More so than class differences, the film emphasizes the Bijlmer as a place of culturally produced social disorganization and in particular 'dysfunctional' family life, which are framed as the root causes of immoral behaviour and violence. When David first meets Rowanda's family, he is visibly struck by the living conditions in their noisy and overcrowded apartment. He meets Rowanda's two children, who share a small bedroom. Her two younger brothers are playing video games in the living room. The absence of fathers and father-like figures in Rowanda's family is highlighted and is attributed to the attitudes of Black men. Rowanda repeatedly indicates that she has been hurt by lying and cheating men. The reason for the men's behaviour is directly addressed in one scene, where Rowanda's teenage brother Clifton explains that his inability to remain faithful is a legacy of slavery. Just like his father, he is incapable of monogamy and has two children with two different women – this, he claims, is because of the separation of men and women during slavery. The film makes his speech come off as self-serving, but his mother agrees with him, effectively excusing his behaviour. Her parenting is further questioned when she slaps Clifton and screams at him for drinking Coke straight from the bottle.

The issue of Black male infidelity is brought up again when David hangs out on the balcony with a group of men during a Bijlmer party. They discuss the various tricks they rely on to hide their affairs with other women. They laugh hysterically when David tells them that he is faithful to Rowanda. Ryan, one of Rowanda's cousins, promises to take him out and teach him how to womanize. On his night out with Ryan, David begins to lose respect for Rowanda, now viewing her as part of a racialized culture characterized by sexual deviance, associated with the people and the place of the Bijlmer. As he dances intimately with an Antillean woman, Rowanda enters the club and spots them. She physically attacks David and the woman, while shouting that Antilleans are like animals. Leaving the club, David tells Rowanda that he does not understand why she is upset, given that all the men in her life have multiple women. Hurt, Rowanda says: 'You take on all their bad habits. I know what to expect from a *neger* but you are much more dangerous … I thought you had respect for me.'

The dysfunctionality of families is directly tied to moral depravity. The Black residents of the Bijlmer are depicted as sexually uninhibited. When David and Rowanda first have sex, it occurs in the apartment with the rest of the family close by. While there is considerable noise and ruckus, the family, including Rowanda's children, act as if nothing is out of the ordinary. More moral degeneracy comes to the fore in a monomyth stage termed 'magic flight'. David's return journey becomes darker as he makes his way through what is portrayed as the danger, filth and decay of the racialized urban other-world. Hanging out with David, Ryan spots a curvy Antillean acquaintance pushing a baby stroller and offers her phone credit to have sex with him and David. As they head towards a Bijlmer apartment building, garbage is thrown off a balcony, landing on the baby. Moving into a dimly lit storage room, the woman allows Ryan to have sex with her while the baby sucks on a lollipop. David participates, but afterwards he feels distressed and ashamed. Next, Ryan leads David to a gathering of men in an apartment where a Surinamese girl is tricked into having sex with all of them. Aghast at this sexually deviant behaviour, David flees the scene. Trying to find a ride home at an illegal taxi stand, he is robbed and badly beaten by two men who speak broken Dutch.

In addition to this seemingly random act of violence, David is exposed to violence in the Bijlmer multiple times. Rowanda's assault on the Antillean woman and Janine slapping her son have been mentioned. Late in the story, when David is at a low point and tries to patch things up, Rowanda curses David and starts to savagely hit, bite and kick him. Her brothers join the attack as Rowanda declares her intent to castrate him, a fate he only narrowly escapes. It is significant that the audience is in no way encouraged to empathize with Rowanda's grief or anger. She and her brothers are portrayed as feral animals, left behind by David in his flight from the urban wilderness.

These various scenes, which wallow in sleaze and gore, serve to articulate the difference between the 'decent people' of the city centre and the 'un-Dutch' deviants in the periphery. This duality, which we argue is central in rendering Amsterdam's increasing polarization natural, is maintained throughout the film. It makes racial and class difference legible through 'pathological' gender and sexual relations, reinforcing Cathy Cohen's argument, elaborated above, about non-normative heterosexuality.

The discovery that heals bourgeois Amsterdam

The hero's journey is not only a personal quest but also serves to rectify a larger problem in the protagonist's home-world. In *AMNM*, the problem that is presented is not greater Amsterdam's increasing segregation and gentrification. Rather, the 'known world' is restricted to the city's bourgeois central areas such as Oud Zuid, and the larger problems David sees here are the lack of freedom and sensuality, and the arrogance and prejudice that his parents and friends display. This prejudice is most evident when, late in the narrative, David visits his Oud Zuid friends at an apartment in a gentrified neighbourhood. Having drifted away, his middle-class friends accuse him of having acquired bad manners, and disparage his desire for Black women as a 'second-rate option for losers who can't get a White girlfriend.'

David's journey to the Bijlmer, which is presented as Amsterdam's mysterious and dangerous netherworld, is a successful personal quest: in addition to fulfilling his sexual fantasies, he finds true love in Sherida (introduced as Rita). She is an intelligent but also sensual Black woman, an exceptional combination in the universe of this film and therefore a 'prize', or 'boon'. The film ends with a montage in which David (wearing a baseball cap) and a provocatively dressed Sherida visit David's parents in Oud Zuid. Having returned from 'the mystic realm into the land of common day' with his boon, the hero is now the 'master of two worlds' (Campbell, 1949, p. 216). The couple is welcomed warmly and David is accepted back into the safe home-world of Oud Zuid. The family merrily eats chicken without cutlery and David's mother is taught how to dance like Surinamese women, while his father looks on approvingly and toasts David's return. At the heart of David's mastery of both civilized home and sensual elsewhere is his 'freedom to pass back and forth across world divisions' (Campbell, 1949, p. 229). Meanwhile, Rowanda, left behind, heartbroken, is never seen again and forgotten.

Beyond this personal mission, David's journey heals bourgeois Amsterdam in two ways. First, through Sherida, he brings cultural regeneration and new energy: they revitalize Oud Zuid by introducing sensual dancing, new foodstuff and liberation from civilized table manners – practices that apparently characterize the city's periphery. In addition, David's journey presents a larger insight with regard to Oud Zuid's arrogance and prejudice. An important element in the monomyth is the hero's revelation that the known and the unknown world, distinct as they are, share one or more important traits. David's journey reveals to himself

(and to the film's viewers) that the two worlds of Oud Zuid and the Bijlmer are one in that they are both ridden with racism and prejudice.

This discovery is arguably the main message of the film and its moral argument. The film is littered with racist or prejudiced remarks from Black Bijlmer residents aimed at other non-native-Dutch ethnic categories, for instance when David first meets Rowanda's family. As an intrigued explorer, he notices with naïve surprise that the non-White 'other-world' is also characterized by racism and prejudice. Clifton rants against the Moroccan-Dutch appropri-ation of Black popular culture, while mother Janine criticizes Surinamese Jews who 'act like they're the boss'. Rather clumsily, David tries to claim sameness: he assures Janine that Jews are not in charge and are just like 'them', offering as proof the fact that Jews and *negers* worked together in the US Civil Rights Movement. Janine reacts vehemently to this choice of words: 'We are not *negers*! I am a Surinamese Black woman with African roots. The Hollanders are still in debt to the Afro-Surinamese people because of slavery.' Having braved her family, David takes Rowanda shopping and is again surprised to learn of the hostility between Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese-Dutch.

This 'deeper' understanding of humanity – that prejudice and racism are everywhere, but that this should not prohibit cultural exchange – serves as a salve for the White middle class. This 'insight' exposes the film's racial and spatial politics: segregation and prejudice are pre-sented as 'normal' and not overly problematic. It effectively excuses social disparities and spatial inequalities. Meanwhile, the bourgeoisie's 'consuming the other', most evident in their enthusiasm for exotic ethnic food and shops in gentrifying neighbourhoods (Zukin, 2008), is depicted as invigorating cultural exchange. By maintaining that all people are racist, the film seeks to justify its own highly problematic stereotyping.[6]

While the film may be a rather extreme example of an explicitly racialized narrative, it is typical of contemporary popular culture representations of Amsterdam. Films, television programmes and popular music glamourize its gentrifying centre and normalize city centre Whiteness, while peripheral neighbourhoods and their inhabitants are visualized and stig-matized as underworld spaces of vice and squalor. More generally, such cultural expressions resonate with wider European urban anxieties, and the rise in ethno-nationalism that fol-lowed postcolonial immigration to Western Europe's metropolitan centres. While separated by no more than a short metro ride, White European 'natives' and non-White Others are still imagined as worlds apart.

Conclusion

Amsterdam, the former 'just city', is increasingly polarizing along lines of class and ethno-national descent. In the context of current anxious politics around changing demographics, films such as *Alleen Maar Nette Mensen* offer viewers a moral reading of these socio-spatial shifts that both normalizes and justifies urban inequality. The film presents the city's socio-economic disparities through a culturally essentialist lens that relies on raced and gendered clichés and references a spatial imaginary that reflects and reproduces the city's hierarchies of place and value. It contributes to the depoliticization of state-sponsored gen-trification by representing the city centre as a space of middle-class consumption and leisure, and further normalizes these changes to Amsterdam's material landscape by depicting the social and cultural distinction between Oud Zuid and the Bijlmer as essentially unbridgeable (except by explorer-heroes such as David).

We suggest that analyses such as the one we have presented in this article – combining insights from critical urban studies with geographies of race and racism – can contribute to current debates in a number of ways. Building on Lefebvrian approaches to the social production of urban space, which explain urban inequalities by exploring the interplay between material landscapes and imaginative geographies, we extend these to examine gentrification and displacement. While the political-economic drivers of these recent processes of urban change have been analysed in much detail, their cultural underpinnings have been subject to much less scrutiny. Where authors such as McCann underline the role of popular culture in producing subaltern counter spaces, our analysis emphasizes that these cultural expressions can also serve hegemonic interests. Specifically, we show how the film's 'imagined space' complements rather than contradicts space as conceived by state planners and bureaucrats. In their interaction with residents' everyday experiences, these forms of space normalize the materiality of inequality. In terms of gentrification, this highlights the role of popular culture, whether film or other mass media, in processes of material and symbolic displacement in the centre, and in stigmatizing low-income areas as racialized underworlds.

Building on the work of authors such as McCann and Razack, we have sought to elaborate the anti-racist, feminist and queer potential of Lefebvre's framework in our film analysis. Where earlier work on the social production of space tended to privilege class and to a lesser extent race, we underscore the extent to which these categories of difference are co-constituted by gender and sexuality in dominant spatial imaginaries. Beyond emphasizing the necessity of an intersectional approach, we have argued for incorporating insights from postcolonial studies that highlight the historical roots of spatial imaginaries in colonialism. The persistence of monomythical explorer-hero narratives and the mapping of reworked colonial imaginative geographies onto contemporary postcolonial cities in Europe suggest the need for engaging a broader historical framework.

Notes

1. We understand spatial imaginaries to be a specific, geographically oriented type of social imaginary, which Taylor (2002, p. 106) defines as 'the way ordinary people "imagine" their social surroundings … carried in images, stories, and legends … it is shared by large groups of people, if not the whole society … the social imaginary is that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy'.
2. The departure phase includes the stages The Call to Adventure, Refusal of the Call, Supernatural Aid, Crossing the Threshold and Belly of the Whale. The second phase of initiation includes the stages The Road of Trial, The Meeting with the Goddess, Woman as Temptress, Atonement with the Father, Apotheosis and The Ultimate Boon. Finally, the return phase includes the stages Refusal of the Return, The Magic Flight, Rescue from Without, The Crossing of the Return Threshold, Master of Two Worlds and Freedom to Live.
3. While the film and the novel are similar in many ways, the narrative structure of the film is significantly different from that of the novel, with additional characters, notably Sherida/Rita, and a different ending. Also, themes of atonement and regeneration have been added. Arguably, these changes give the film a more pronounced monomythical structure.
4. All quotes from the film are translated from Dutch by the authors.
5. Notably, this last category includes scholars, journalists and politicians, yet those working in cultural industries remain unmentioned.
6. This message has largely shielded the film from criticism; as noted previously, various critics excused its stereotyping on the basis that it also ridicules middle-class manners.

Acknowledgements

Disclosure statement

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