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Arps, A.

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# The Fabrics of Home: Remembering the Indo-European Repatriation in *Contractpensions-Djangan Loepah!*

*Arnoud Arps*

Department of Media Studies, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam,  
The Netherlands  
*a.s.arps@uva.nl*

## Abstract

When a large group of Indo-Europeans had to repatriate to a country many had never set foot in, they set in motion an unforeseen culture of remembrance. The subsequent narratives of forced migration – or rather narratives of belonging – deal with memories of home. Whereas first-generation repatriates predominantly used literature to document their memories, the second-generation remembers the past in the cinematic field of the cultural imaginary. Focusing on the documentary *Contractpensions* by a second-generation Indo-European, this article explores representations of the repatriate Indo-European experience and the relation between the current country in which they reside and the homeland of earlier generations. Of particular significance are the tensions between geographical attachment, their repatriate identity, and a brittle Dutch nationality. The article argues that the idea of home is central to these tensions, and that place, belonging and citizenship are the threads of home that weave Indo-European repatriate culture and identity into being.

## Keywords

Indo-Europeans – Dutch – home – belonging

### Introduction: Don't Forget

Early\* in the 2009 documentary *Contractpensions – Djangana Loepah!* (Boarding houses – don't forget!), several Indo-European repatriates are interviewed.<sup>1</sup> Shot in talking heads-style in which the viewer sees the interviewees in a medium close-up talking from the chest upwards, the rhetorical form establishes the interviewees as knowledgeable people, persuading the audience 'to adopt an opinion about the subject matter and perhaps act on that opinion.'<sup>2</sup> Their knowledge about the subject matter comes from lived experiences. They tell the stories of their first arrival in the Netherlands, after they were forced to migrate from the Dutch East Indies. An elderly woman dressed in blue explains how after arriving in Amsterdam, she had to travel in haste by bus to Westerbork – a former Nazi transit camp – where she had to live for more than a year in one of the large wooden barracks. Camp Vught, a former Nazi concentration camp, was similarly repurposed for housing repatriates.

Her story is distinctive for that historical time as she was part of one of many Indo-European families who had to move to the Netherlands from what was then the newly declared Republic of Indonesia. Roughly between 1945 and 1968, hundreds of thousands of Dutch citizens were forced to migrate from their homeland (the Dutch East Indies) to their so-called *patria* or fatherland (the Netherlands), a land many of them never had set foot on. After an early migration period (1945–1950), there was a subsequent one after the formal transfer of sovereignty from the Netherlands to the United States of Indonesia in December 1949. The number of repatriates between 1950 and 1963 is estimated at 241,000.<sup>3</sup>

After this independence, Indo-Europeans were given the opportunity by the Indonesian government to stay in Indonesia and become *warga negara asing*, which can be translated as 'foreign nationals' because the Indonesians did not consider them as fully Indonesian. Many did stay as their migration to the

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- 1 Hetty Naaijkens-Retel Helmrich, *Contractpensions – Djangana Loepah!* (Scarabeefilms 2009).
- 2 David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson and Jeff Smith, *Film art: an introduction* (New York 2017) 362.
- 3 Paulien Schuurmans, 'Tussen wal en schip. Ervaringen van Indische Nederlanders bij de repatriëring', *Skript Historisch Tijdschrift* 25:1 (2014) 32–45, 33.

Netherlands was discouraged.<sup>4</sup> Many had initially also stayed because of economic reasons, their unfamiliarity with the Netherlands, misguided colonial ideology, and the hopes of creating a new homeland in New Guinea.<sup>5</sup> After initially receiving Indonesian citizenship, a majority of Indo-Europeans changed citizenship after it became clear that a future in Indonesia was not desirable, as danger and hostility towards them forced them to leave. Tens of thousands of Dutch nationals were expelled by the Indonesian government as an anti-Dutch approach was adopted during the West New Guinea dispute between the Indonesian and Dutch governments at the end of the 1950s. Whilst the Dutch had a vested interest in showing that the indigenous population they still colonised in West New Guinea was underdeveloped and unfit for independence, the Dutch themselves were internationally pressured to decolonise their last colony during this diplomatic stage of the confrontation.<sup>6</sup> On 5 December 1957, Dutch citizens were declared dangerous to the Indonesian state and were given an ultimatum to leave Indonesia. Reluctantly, these *spijt-optanten*, or ‘regretters’ were allowed to arrive in the Netherlands due to a feeling of moral obligation.<sup>7</sup>

Common estimates of the number of repatriates between 1945–1968 stand around 300,000. This is considered the most significant example of repatriation by Dutch citizens in the history of the Netherlands. These forced migrants, or by others described as repatriates, are considered the first-generation of Indies-Dutch people (*Indische Nederlanders*). Their children, some of whom were born in the Indies and then repatriated, are generally considered part of the second-generation.<sup>8</sup> The umbrella term ‘Indies-Dutch’ covers both the white *totoks* and the ethnically heterogeneous Indo-Europeans or *Indos*. The latter group is the focus of this article.

In other contexts, the lives of forced migrants in the country of refuge have been researched thoroughly by focusing on how the government has treated migrants of the arriving nation – such as in terms of care and

4 Gert Oostindie, *Postcolonial Netherlands: sixty-five years of forgetting, commemorating, silencing* (Amsterdam 2011) 51.

5 Liesbeth Rosen Jacobson, ‘The “Eurasian question”. Solved by migration?’, *Transfers* 8:3 (2018) 74–99, 82–83.

6 Veronika Kusumaryati and Ernst Karel, ‘Expedition content and the Harvard Peabody Expedition to Netherlands New Guinea, 1961’, *The Journal of Media Art Study and Theory* 2:2 (2021) 15–25, 17.

7 Oostindie, *Postcolonial Netherlands*, 51.

8 Bert Paasman, ‘“De een draagt een bril en de ander is Indisch”. Inleiding op de literatuur van de Tweede generatie Indisch-Nederlandse auteurs’, *Indische Letteren* 18:4 (2003) 162–169, 164; Marlene de Vries, *Indisch is een gevoel’ De tweede en derde generatie Indische Nederlanders* (Amsterdam 2009) 20.

housing<sup>9</sup> – and the ways in which migrants are represented in news media and politics.<sup>10</sup> Yet, one could argue that Dutch governmental policies in the 1950s for Indies-Dutch repatriates have been understudied, despite dealing with such a significant number of migrants. The documentary *Contractpensions – Djangan Loepah!* contains several moments where this inconsistency comes to the fore. When repatriates compare the differing sums of money they had to repay the government for the travel, shelter and goods they received after repatriation, their feelings of being unwelcome are strengthened. Discourses in non-governmental media, such as popular culture, thus provide insights into the workings of culture as a vehicle for repatriates' sense of home. Rather than focusing on how others see them, this article focuses on how they see themselves. With this it follows a longer tradition of work that spotlights the experiences of the Indies-Dutch migrants' assimilation<sup>11</sup> and the cultural means they adopted.<sup>12</sup> Documentary as a form, at the same time, has a history of being associated with citizenship.<sup>13</sup> The documentary *Contractpensions* lays bare the possibilities and limitations of identity and citizenship that the first-generation Indo-Europeans dealt with (and their second-generation repatriate children), or rather how they remember it. Of particular interest are the tensions between geographical attachment, their repatriate identity and the feeling of a brittle Dutch nationality. I argue that the idea of home is central to the construction of these tensions in the documentary. In this article, I follow the reconceptualised idea of 'home' by Yiu Fai Chow, Sonja van Wichelen and Jeroen de Kloet,<sup>14</sup> who argue that:

... the question of home is closely tied to notions of place, belonging and citizenship. Ideally, these may all come together: home is the place

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- 9 Deborah Philips, 'Moving towards integration: the housing of asylum seekers and refugees in Britain', *Housing Studies* 21:4 (2006) 539–553.
- 10 Terence Wright, 'The media and representations of refugees and other forced migrants', in: Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies* (Oxford 2014) 460–474.
- 11 Topaas de Boer-Lasschuyt, 'Eurasian repatriants in Holland', *REMP Bulletin* 8:2 (1960) 23–45.
- 12 Andrew Goss, 'From tong-tong to tempo doeloe: Eurasian memory work and the bracketing of Dutch colonial history, 1957–1961', *Indonesia* 70 (2000) 9–36.
- 13 Mandy Rose, 'Making publics: documentary as do-it-with-others citizenship', in: Matt Ratto and Megan Boler (eds), *DIY Citizenship. Critical Making and Social Media* (Cambridge 2014) 208.
- 14 Yiu Fai Chow, Sonja van Wichelen and Jeroen de Kloet, 'Introduction: at home in Asia? Place-making, belonging and citizenship in the Asian century', *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 19:3 (2016) 243–256.

you feel you belong to, and that is part of a nation-state that has granted you citizen's rights.<sup>15</sup>

Chow, Van Wichelen and De Kloet say 'ideally' because often such concepts do not come together at all. In the remainder of this article, I will focus on these three key elements – place, belonging and citizenship – and how they are remembered through the narrative form of the documentary. Thus, by analysing the representations of the repatriate Indo-European experience as structured in *Contractpensions*, this article demonstrates that the idea of home is central to their repatriation and is articulated through notions of place, belonging and citizenship. I will ask where home exactly lies for Indo-Europeans and what its fabrics are. I will argue that place, belonging and citizenship are the threads of home that weave Indo-European repatriate culture and identity into being.

### Indo-European Repatriates

The Dutch colonisation of Indonesia resulted in reciprocal flows of cultural influence. An example is the etymology of Dutch words in the Indonesian language (e.g. *kulkas*, *wastafel*) and Indonesian words in the Dutch language (e.g. *senang*, *pienter*), but also the introduction of foreign spices into Dutch cuisine due to the violent spice trade (e.g. nutmeg, cloves) and the introduction of European dishes into Indonesian cuisine (e.g. *kastengel*). Furthermore, the unbalanced social relations between the coloniser and the native Indonesians – there were many mixed relationships and 'social-sexual encounters'<sup>16</sup> – have resulted in what is considered the Indo-European ethnicity. This mixed ethnicity was different to many other European colonies such as Algeria and Angola, where there was little sexual mixing and so no new mixed ethnicity emerged. The repatriates from these colonies were more straightforwardly European.

The Dutch East Indies in essence ceased to exist with the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies in 1942. Yet it was especially after the Japanese capitulation – when Indonesia was declared independent and became the Republic of Indonesia on 17 August 1945 – that the homeland for many Indo-Europeans tangibly vanished. The traumatic years during the Japanese occupation created two lines of experience. On the one hand were the horrid living conditions in Japanese internment camps and on the other the

<sup>15</sup> Chow, Van Wichelen and De Kloet, 'Introduction: at home in Asia?', 246.

<sup>16</sup> Pamela Pattynama, 'Assimilation and masquerade: self-constructions of Indo-Dutch women', *The European Journal of Women's Studies* 7 (2000) 281–299, 281.

harsh life outside of it as *buitenkampers* (out-of-campers). White Europeans were sent to internment camps, but many Indo-Europeans escaped imprisonment. Whether or not they were sent to internment camps by the Japanese depended on the arbitrary distinction of their level of Europeaness. In practice, this meant a decision based on to what extent they could 'give proof of their percentage of indigenous "blood" and their 'Asian complexion and genealogy'.<sup>17</sup> Victimhood followed the occupation, during the violent period known in the Netherlands as the *Bersiap* (Get ready) in which thousands of (Indo-) Europeans were killed as 'Indonesian paramilitary youths prepared themselves (*bersiap*) to engage the enemies of the fledgling Indonesian Republic'.<sup>18</sup> This eventually led to their forced migration from Indonesia, leaving lasting impressions on the Indo-European people.

Dutch attitudes and the reception in the Netherlands this large migrant group experienced, was problematic, in part because the Netherlands was still recovering from the Second World War. Additional difficulties were the differing attitudes and divisions among the repatriates:

It was considered 'natural' that the 'pure' white settlers in the former Dutch colony, the so-called *totoks*, would return to Holland. It was, however, expected that most people of mixed race would give up their claims to Dutch citizenship and opt for Indonesian citizenship.<sup>19</sup>

This precarious situation had very tangible consequences for people of this ethnicity. One of these was the encounter with discrimination in the country of arrival. After their forced migration from Indonesia, a central figure within the repatriates' cultural sphere was the first-generation repatriate and influential writer of mixed ancestry Tjalie Robinson, an alias of Jan Boon. His founding of the magazine *Tong Tong* was a reaction to the feelings of displacement, uprootedness, and homesickness experienced by many repatriates. For Robinson, the Indies-Dutch and their experiences had to stand central in the magazine.<sup>20</sup> As

17 Remco Raben, 'Dutch memories of captivity in the Pacific War', in: Kevin Blackburn and Karl Hack (eds), *Forgotten captives in Japanese-occupied Asia* (Abingdon and New York 2008) 94–110.

18 Remco Raben, 'On genocide and mass violence in colonial Indonesia', *Journal of Genocide Research* 14:3–4 (2012) 485–502, 492.

19 Pamela Pattynama, 'Cultural memory and Indo-Dutch identity formations', in: Ulbe Bosma, *Post-colonial Immigrants and Identity Formations in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam 2012) 175–192, 182.

20 The magazine was founded as *Onze Brug* in 1956 and subsequently renamed *Tong Tong* in 1958. It was then renamed *Moesson* in 1978 by Lilian Ducelle (a pseudonym of Lilly van Zele), Tjalie Robinson's wife. Tjalie Robinson was also the author of several books and a collection of previously unpublished stories about his repatriation, which were made available in 2011: Tjalie Robinson, *Een land met gesloten deuren* (The Hague 2011).

Jeroen Dewulf describes, Robinson ‘considered it his task to look for “a reconciliation, a balance” between both continents and he did this consciously ‘from the margins between two great planes’’.<sup>21</sup> It is this call for acknowledgement and recognition of their hybrid ancestry that permeates Indies-Dutch culture up to today. The denomination ‘Indies-Dutch’ is an umbrella term, born of the manner the repatriation was dealt with culturally. In many ways, Robinson represents the experiences of Indo-Europeans. Still, ‘a clear definition of what it means to be *Indisch* has always been elusive’ as well as whether it relates to cultural practices and/or racial affiliation.<sup>22</sup> As this article will show, not only does racial affiliation matter, it also influences how the past is remembered differently. This can, for instance, be seen in how memories of the Japanese occupation and repatriation almost compete with each other. Not so much in the public sphere, but rather in the formation of a singular identity.

The scholarly interest in Indies-Dutch history has been outlined and critiqued by Vincent Houben, but I want to expand on a statement he made in his concluding observations: ‘To understand the daily life of Indisch people, official sources are of less value than private histories that are transmitted either orally or on paper’.<sup>23</sup> To that I want to add private histories that are transmitted through audio-visual material. In literary representations of the repatriation by the first generation, the heterogeneous and complex *tempo doeloe* nostalgia is the dominant mode of reflection.<sup>24</sup> The photobooks of Rob Nieuwenhuys, collectively titled *Tempo Doeloe – A Sunken World*, literally display this nostalgia through images of a paradise with ‘scenes of “white innocence” with exotic food, beautiful white houses, servants and an overwhelming natural environment’.<sup>25</sup> The difference between the first and second-generation writers can be summarised as moving from a predominant feeling of discontinuity with the homeland to questioning identity. To a great degree these literary

21 Jeroen Dewulf, ‘Op zoek naar een eigen Indo-identiteit. Vincent Mahieu/Tjalling Robinson’, in: Rick Honings, Coen van ’t Veer and Jacqueline Bel (eds), *De postkoloniale spiegel: De Nederlands-Indische letteren herlezen* (Leiden 2021) 351–366, 351.

22 Harald Fischer-Tiné and Susanne Gehrmann, ‘Introduction’, in: Harald Fischer-Tiné and Susanne Gehrmann (eds), *Empires and boundaries. rethinking race, class, and gender in colonial settings* (New York 2009) 1–22, 9.

23 Vincent Houben, ‘Boundaries of race: representations of Indisch in colonial Indonesia revisited’, in: Harald Fischer-Tiné and Susanne Gehrmann (eds), *Empires and boundaries: rethinking race, class, and gender in colonial settings* (New York 2009) 80–100, 80.

24 Sarah de Mul, ‘Nostalgia for empire: “Tempo doeloe” in contemporary Dutch literature’, *Memory Studies* 3:4 (2010) 413–428, 416–418.

25 Rick Honings, Coen van ’t Veer and Jacqueline Bel, ‘Inleiding’, in: Rick Honings, Coen van ’t Veer and Jacqueline Bel (eds), *De postkoloniale spiegel: de Nederlands-Indische letteren herlezen* (Leiden 2021) 9–27, 11.



representations, particularly the work of Tjalie Robinson, have remained the template for the narratives of Indies-Dutch of mixed ancestry.

The different generations that followed the last line of first-generation Indo-Europeans, expressed their ideas about identity, a homeland and belonging through various practices so as to not forget their origins. Although many started by expressing themselves through literature, later generations increasingly began expressing themselves through film. In multiple ways, the personal stories presented in *Contractpensions* dovetail into earlier narratives initiated by Tjalie Robinson and those manifested in literature. Yet they differ in how their narratives are constructed through the input of others, thus underscoring a participatory form of citizenship. This article focuses on second-generation Indo-Europeans who have expressed themselves through film. *Contractpensions* is an example of this cinematic expression.

### Contractpensions

*Contractpensions* was the debut film of Hetty Naaijkens-Retel Helmrich and was awarded with a *Kristallen Film* (Crystal Film) as it attracted more than 10,000 cinema viewers. The 80-minute documentary (Dutch spoken, English subtitles) premiered during the 28th Netherlands Film Festival in 2008.<sup>26</sup> The significance of the documentary, more than a decade after its release, begins with the oeuvre of its director, a second-generation Indo-European, who was born in Indonesia and moved with her family to the Netherlands at the age of two. The generational familial relationship between film and memory is particularly emphasised because the cinematography of the documentary is done by her brother Leonard, and the editing by her son Jasper Naaijkens. In that sense, her documentary can be considered a true intergenerational 'postmemory' work.<sup>27</sup> Naaijkens-Retel Helmrich is considerably influential in the Dutch culture of remembrance concerning the Dutch East Indies, as her documentaries occupy a large portion of Dutch East Indies cinematic memories.

Following her debut film, *Contractpensions*, Naaijkens-Retel Helmrich made *Buitenkampers – Boekan main-boekan main!* (2013) about Indo-European people who survived the Japanese occupation outside the internment camps, and

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.contractpensions.nl/Djangan\\_Loepah/VERTONING.html](https://www.contractpensions.nl/Djangan_Loepah/VERTONING.html)

<sup>27</sup> Marianne Hirsch, 'Family pictures: *maus*, mourning and post-memory' *Discourse* 15:2 (1992) 3–29; Marianne Hirsch, *The generation of postmemory: writing and visual culture after the Holocaust* (New York 2012).



*Klanken van Oorsprong* (2018) (Sounds of origin), focusing on Indo-European musicians, such as the Indorock legends The Tielman Brothers and their impact on (Dutch) popular music. In addition, Naaijens-Retel Helmrich has worked as a screenwriter and producer on her brother's award-winning trilogy

*Stand van de zon* (Eye of the day) (2001), *Stand van de maan* (Shape of the moon) (2004), and *Stand van de sterren* (Position among the stars) (2010). The trilogy focuses on a Javanese family in a changing Indonesia. Her directorial productions, the three documentaries, all deal with forced migration. In recent years these documentaries have become more accessible to a broader Dutch audience through Netflix and broadcasts on national television around the times of national remembrance for the victims of the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies. *Contractpensions* deals more explicitly with repatriation than her other documentaries as it focuses on the reception and arrival of Indo-Dutch repatriates.

The full title of the documentary is *Contractpensions – Djangan Loepah!* (Boarding houses – don't forget!), where *Contractpensions* refers to the boarding houses where the Indo-European repatriates were housed after their arrival, and *Djangan Loepah!* refers to the monthly booklet that repatriates received with 'household hints for repatriates'.<sup>28</sup> The documentary recounts the experiences of repatriates through interviews with them. Shot in the single-shot cinema style that Hetty Naaijken-Retel Helmrich's cinematographer brother Leonard Retel Helmrich is known for, this style grants the camera a flow that allows an unabashed recording of people without objectifying them.<sup>29</sup> In the documentary, Indo-Europeans are presented as victims and refugees since they were forced through violence out of the Dutch East Indies. This is prominently represented in *Contractpensions* through the use of intertitles. The documentary opens with black and white archival footage of life in the Indies before 1942. Shots of natural landscapes, vehicles, city life, parades, and colonists' daytime and leisure activities establish a peaceful and modern setting for the documentary's exposition, to be mirrored by the events that follow. Calm music and a natural soundscape accompany these images until an intertitle reads: 'After 350 years of colonisation, Japan attacked the Dutch East Indies in 1942.'<sup>30</sup> Up-tempo music is started when images of war are shown. A subsequent intertitle reads: 'The Japanese interned most white Dutch (Totoks) and many mixed-blooded "Indos"'. Images from the internment camps are emphasised by the dramatic music accompanying them.

28 Centraal Comité van Kerkelijk en Particulier initiatief voor Sociale Zorg t.b.v. gerepatrieerden, *Djangan Loepah! huishoudelijke wenken voor gerepatrieerden* (Den Haag 1960–1961) booklet cover.

29 Pamela Pattynama, *Bitterzoet Indië. Herinnering en nostalgie in literatuur, foto's en films* (Amsterdam 2014) 156.

30 The translations of these texts are taken directly from the English subtitles of the DVD of *Contractpensions*.

After Indonesia's declaration of independence in 1945 (which was not legally recognised by the Dutch government), as an intertitle explains, 'A chaotic and very violent period ensued: Bersiap. Many Indonesians turned on the (Indo) Dutch.' This is followed by images of the Indonesian War of Independence, leading to the official recognition of Indonesia by the Netherlands on 27 December 1949. The last two intertitles before the documentary shifts to interviews reads: 'After the transfer of sovereignty, Dutch-Indo people faced a difficult choice: maintain their Dutch citizenship and leave the country or stay in Indonesia and accept (second-class) citizenship: Warga Negara Asing (WNA).' Until finally, 'The impossible situation led 300,000 Dutch Indos to leave for the Netherlands.'

By beginning with images of the late colonial period underscored by calm music and natural soundscapes, an image of the Indies is presented in which colonialism is passed over. This temporal and visual starting point does not question the Dutch presence in the Dutch East Indies and presents it as a status quo to be disrupted by external events.

Although Indo-Europeans are thematically constructed as victims and refugees, narratively *Contractpensions* omits any depiction of flight. The depiction of movement is a crucial element of the 'refugee' as they deal with the relationship between mobility and stasis. The story of a refugee is a story of flight as movement signifies agency and purpose.<sup>31</sup> *Contractpensions*, however, shows people boarding the boats to the Netherlands, but not the journey itself. In doing so it omits elements of the refugee experience, thus emphasising the tensions in the Netherlands, rather than the situation in the Dutch East Indies. Because of this, the narrative of the documentary ignores how the Indo-Europeans were part of the colonial ruling class. Similar to the rhetoric in France where the repatriating *pieds-noirs* were condemned as colonisers and racists,<sup>32</sup> in the Netherlands an image emerged at the end of the 1960s that saw the Indies-Dutch as a 'pre-eminently privileged class of the "wrong" colonial kind'.<sup>33</sup> *Contractpensions* is strikingly uncritical of the 'uncomfortable split' that followed in the years after the repatriation:<sup>34</sup> 'Where there was talk of discrimination, the Indisch Dutch were the victims of Dutch racism with little being said about their pre-war attitudes to the "natives"'.<sup>35</sup>

31 Bishopal Limbu, 'Narrative Strategies and post-migration identities in *Dheepan*', conference paper, *Narratives of Forced Migration in the 20th and 21st Centuries Conference*, University of Stirling, Scotland (16 September 2019).

32 Fiona Barclay, 'Remembering Algeria: melancholy, depression and the colonizing of the *pieds-noirs*', *Settler Colonial Studies* 8:2 (2018) 244–261, 245–246.

33 Oostindie, *Postcolonial Netherlands*, 90.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

Like the attitudes of the first-generation this quote refers to, Hetty Naaijkens-Retel Helmrich as a second-generation Indo-European focuses on the, undeniable, victimhood of this generation, but leaves out any accountability or reflection on their involvement in colonialism. Emphasis on the first does not have to exclude the latter, but the documentary does. Regardless of whether these members of the first-generation are perpetrators of colonial injustices, they can at least be considered as 'implicated subjects', who 'occupy positions aligned with power and privilege without being themselves direct agents of harm; they contribute to, inhabit, inherit, or benefit from regimes of domination but do not originate or control such regimes.'<sup>36</sup> A reflection on this 'implication', however, is absent.<sup>37</sup> Instead, the reason why the Indo-Dutch became forced migrants is explained briefly, further affirming a narrative of victimhood. They were forced out of the land that they considered their home, namely the Dutch East Indies.

As the documentary constructs, after this forced migration to the Netherlands the Indo-Europeans had to live in *contractpensions* or boarding houses. In the narrative form of the documentary the focalisation lies with the first-generation Indo-Europeans, their children and their hardships. The interviews in which they tell of these struggles are juxtaposed with interviews with people associated with former boarding houses, who were known amongst the Indo-European community as exploiters. Some were children when the Indo-Europeans had to repatriate and they answer questions about the hardships of others through their memories as children. Pamela Pattynama interprets the juxtapositions of Indo-Europeans and people associated with boarding houses, and the contradicting interviews between repatriates themselves, as avoiding a black-and-white image of the collective memories of the repatriates.<sup>38</sup> Regardless, the constructed narrative emphasises how, after arriving in the Netherlands, this group of Indo-Europeans did not have a choice other than paying a large amount of money for basic housing, calling images of refugees to mind. Although not using a voice-over, the director of the film is occasionally heard confirming the answers of the repatriates. The director's off-screen role is not that of a critical interrogator nor of an editor as such. The cultural memories of the repatriation created by the documentary thus heavily lie with the experiences of the first-generation and their pain, grief, victimhood and not belonging.

36 Michael Rothberg, *The implicated subject. Beyond victims and perpetrators* (Stanford 2019) 1.

37 Rothberg, *The implicated subject*, 1–2.

38 Pattynama, *Bitterzoet Indië*, 156.

Memories of this historical example of forced migration – the repatriation of Indo-European inhabitants of the Dutch East Indies (1945–1968) – inform the creation of the idea of ‘home’ in forced migration cinema. One of the most prevalent media forms in which this home is remembered intergenerationally is in, and through, documentary.

### The Idea of Home

In a scene from *Contractpensions*, an Indo-European explains how they did not feel safe at home in Indonesia and had to move to the Netherlands. They were exiled to the Netherlands, which they had to consider as their new homeland. Since Indo-Europeans were Dutch citizens, their nationality was linked to the Netherlands, although their identity was linked to the geographical location of the Dutch East Indies. Another scene shows this when a repatriate explains that their father told them to be happy to arrive in their new homeland although they felt confused, because, for them, the Dutch East Indies was their homeland. Notably, the idea of home for Indo-Europeans is intrinsically linked to a geographical and imaginary space. It is as much about tangibility as it is about imagery. For them ‘home’ is not merely a space<sup>39</sup> but also an ambiguous concept that is defined as what it is not, the ‘unhomely’.<sup>40</sup> It is about what Mary Douglas has called ‘having control in a space’.<sup>41</sup> She sees ‘home’ as located in space, although not necessarily fixed in space.

The Dutch East Indies remains a localisable idea with a spatial element (the geographical location of Indonesia). Still, it is simultaneously out of reach as a place that lies in the past. Thus, it is also what Homi Bhabha has called ‘the unhomely’, which ‘relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence’.<sup>42</sup> In other words, it functions as a displacement in time in which personal and psychic histories intersect with dislocations of colonialism.<sup>43</sup> As a post-colonial experience, the forced migration of Indo-Europeans creates for them an unhomely moment. It is in the cultural imaginary where an Indo-European home is located, and which offers its fabrics and assemblage. To determine what home means and

39 Mary Douglas, ‘The idea of a home: a kind of space’, *Social Research* 58:1 (1991) 287–307.

40 Homi Bhabha, ‘The world and the home’, *Social Text* 31 (1992) 141–153.

41 Douglas, ‘The idea of a home’, 289.

42 Bhabha, ‘The world and the home’, 144.

43 Clare Bradford, ‘There’s no place like home: unhomely moments in three postcolonial picture books’, in: John McKenzie et al. (eds), *Cinderella transformed: multiple voices and diverse dialogues in children’s literature* (Christchurch 2003) 104–109.

how it is constructed, Chow, Van Wichelen and De Kloet explain that place, belonging and citizenship are central:

...the three terms articulate different dimensions of the idea of home: *place* refers to the locality and materiality of home, *belonging* refers to the affective investment in the idea of home, whereas *citizenship* points at the legal dimensions of being at home.<sup>44</sup>

*Contractpensions* shows how first and second-generation Indo-European repatriates had to adapt to the society in the Netherlands and how the Dutch people from the Netherlands looked at their fellow countrymen from the Dutch East Indies. When they arrived in the Netherlands they were initially considered to be temporary immigrants, but both their emotional ties to the Netherlands and their legal position as Dutch citizens proved to be solid arguments for the 'resocialisation and assimilation of the group'.<sup>45</sup> Yet they were never fully able to express their experiences and memories of the Second World War in the Dutch East Indies as they 'found themselves both a problem to a nation recovering from German occupation and an unwelcome reminder of a colonial past the Dutch were eager to forget'.<sup>46</sup> For some this barrier proved to be irreconcilable, as the interviews in *Contractpensions* illustrate. As several repatriates explain, after having repatriated to the Netherlands many subsequently left again as they did not feel at home there. The interviews in the documentary are therefore also conducted with repatriates in California, Hawaii and parts of New Zealand.

As this short description already illustrates, the idea of home is particularly apposite for understanding how the end of Dutch colonial rule in the Indies produced contested conceptions of citizenship, as the fabrics of home – the underlying structure of it – reveal the limitations of citizenship. To do so, home must be conceptualised as what Chow, Van Wichelen and De Kloet understand as part of 'an intricate politics of inclusion and exclusion':

Home can refer to a material place, a locality, an imagined place, a structure of feeling, a geopolitical metaphor, an affective state of being, a complex set of sensibilities and a set of legal rights – and all these gestures towards an intricate politics of inclusion and exclusion – poles of what we like to see as a continuum rather than a dichotomy.<sup>47</sup>

44 Chow, Van Wichelen and De Kloet, 'Introduction: at home in Asia?', 246.

45 Pattynama, 'Cultural memory and Indo-Dutch identity formations', 182.

46 Pattynama, 'Cultural memory and Indo-Dutch identity formations', 183.

47 Chow, Van Wichelen and De Kloet, 'Introduction: at home in Asia?', 254.

As *Contractpensions* confirms: place, belonging and citizenship are deeply intertwined. I will address these terms through key aspects of the documentary to unpick what makes 'home'.

'Place', the first thread of home, has to be understood in the Indo-European case as a consequence of mobility, and is both attached to the physical and imagined homeland of the Dutch East Indies, and is initially attached to the spatiality of the home in the boarding houses in the Netherlands. Crudely stated, the thread of 'place' concerns home in the Dutch East Indies versus home in the Netherlands. The disillusionment of living in the boarding camps is not the main incentive of not feeling at home in the Netherlands. 'Where home is matters not just geographically, but also historically, politically and culturally' explain Chow, Van Wichelen and De Kloet.<sup>48</sup> In a highly discriminatory colonial society, the Indo-Europeans occupied an in-between position that was considered more privileged than the native inhabitants. Framed by a colonial discourse, any connections to a native background were obfuscated by Indo-Europeans. In *Contractpensions* it is both being of an ethnic minority and their 'migration' within social class, which led to the discrimination of Indo-Europeans, resulting in them not feeling at home in the Netherlands. This is confirmed in a scene from the documentary which illustrates a fluidity between ethnic and class connotations with the derogatory term 'brownie' or *bruintje*.

As one of the interviewed repatriates says in the documentary from his new hometown of San Francisco:

In Holland my father was discriminated against. The butcher called him brownie ("*bruintje*") and he got so mad he picked up one of the large butcher's knives and threw it at the man, nearly cutting off his ear. The white man got even paler faced.

The interviewee explains how his father was derogatorily called a *bruintje*, a term which has postcolonial connotations as it was disrespectfully used in the Netherlands to address repatriated Indo-Europeans, but it also has colonial connotations as it was degradingly used in the Indies to describe native inhabitants. The reason why the man feels at home in San Francisco, he says, is because there are a lot of *bruintjes* there. What the scene illustrates is that the use of *bruintje* by the white Dutchman is understood through the colonial connotation of the term, that is, to describe someone from a lower social

48 Chow, Van Wichelen and De Kloet, 'Introduction: at home in Asia?', 250.



class: a native. By being addressed as a *bruintje*, the interviewee's father feels like the Dutchman has declassified him. This is intrinsically linked to the ethnic and class distinctions made in the Dutch East Indies, which had a legal basis and to which I return later. Simultaneously, however, the term becomes a distinguishing symbol when the Indo-European interviewee connects it to the place he now calls home. The fluidity between ethnic and class differences illustrated in the encounter above stands in the way for the repatriates to call the Netherlands their home. This shows how 'belonging', the second thread of home, can be impeded because of the absence of affective linkages.

Another repatriate, now living in New Zealand, explains how ethnicity also stood in the way for him to call the Netherlands home, but similarly shows how he distinguishes himself from other migrants. Moluccans, of whom many were loyal to the Dutch and were part of the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army, also migrated to the Netherlands after the declaration of Indonesia's independence. They are generally not considered to be part of the Indies-Dutch repatriates as they have a differing migration history, although there were Moluccan individuals who were part of the colonial elite.<sup>49</sup> In the Netherlands, however, the groups seemed difficult to distinguish on the basis of skin tone and appearance:

I felt more discriminated against in Europe. Especially during the Moluccan hijack crises. That was terrible. You just get...You aren't, but they think you must be Moluccan if you come from Indonesia. That makes you wonder. You think the people are educated...but they're so...so bloody old-fashioned. So very narrow-minded. It's terrible. Maybe that happens everywhere. That happens in New Zealand too, but not as bad as in Europe. At least that's my experience. I don't know if it is true. I'm speaking from my own experience, my own experience...

Just as with the first interviewee, a politics of inclusion and exclusion reveals itself through ethnicity. This demonstrates a fundamental issue with 'citizenship', the third thread of home: citizenship becomes insufficient when ethnic markers stand in the way. As the repatriate in New Zealand explains: 'And that may be the reason also why I wanted to leave there. You are nowhere at home anymore.' The solution then becomes mobility, through which a new place is found that upsets these politics. The repatriate in San Francisco states that the reason many left for California was that it is more like Indonesia 'it is warmer

49 Fridus Steijlen, *Een Indische skyline. Indische organisaties in Nederland tussen 1980 en 2010* (Amsterdam 2018) 14.

and there are more brownies; 60 per cent of California is brown. We are the majority, not the minority.'

After they repatriated, the relationship between ethnicity and social class in the Netherlands mirrored the situation in the colony. Indo-Europeans were confronted with how the association between ethnicity and social class was back in the Dutch East Indies. Referring to the Dutch East Indies when she says Indonesia, a repatriate recalls:

In Indonesia, the policeman is Indonesian. The people who clean the roads are Indonesian. When I got to Holland, I thought hey! In Holland, Dutch people clean the ponds in the Vondelpark. They clear out all the weeds. That was a strange sensation for me. To see a white man doing work like that. In the Dutch East Indies it was only done by Indonesians. But of course, I was in Holland and there weren't any brown workers to do that work.

To see a white Dutchman clean ponds was unthinkable in the Dutch East Indies. In the documentary, the views that the repatriates themselves bring up on colonial social class are uncritically presented through the way the scenes are edited. The scene in which the interviewee has the above-described recollection shows her laughing about it, implying she realises the distinct differences between colonial social class and class differences in the Netherlands. Directly after her realisation, however, a cut abruptly transitions the documentary to the subject of her migration to the United States. In doing so the documentary glosses over the meaning of the interviewee's social class realisation and presents it without reflecting on it. These clashing perceptions of social class are further emphasised in a scene where archival footage of an upscale house in the Indies with a modern car in front of it is alternated with the footage of an interviewed repatriate who recounts his astonishment when his landlady in the Netherlands asked him: 'Jack, you must be really happy you live in a brick house at last.' He explains that back in the Indies 'The house we lived in was three times the size of this. I was dumbfounded.' The idea that Indo-Europeans and life in the Indies was backwards compared to the Netherlands, is a recurring grievance for the repatriates in the documentary.

More than the geographical place, these scenes illustrate how the fact that many Indo-Europeans did not feel at home in the Netherlands is intrinsically linked to issues of belonging: 'Place-making, as part of the construction of home, is, as mentioned earlier, a profoundly sensory enterprise, it involves a structure of feeling, an affective mode of belonging that requires constant

maintenance and that remains perpetually fragile'.<sup>50</sup> As well as ethnicity it touches on social class. The documentary shows how issues of belonging and not-belonging exist on several levels for the Indo-European repatriates. Not only in relation to ethnicity and social class, but on another level; it is also bound to citizenship and finds its origin in Dutch East Indies colonial society.

### Belonging and Citizenship

Despite Indo-Europeans having Dutch citizenship, the thread of belonging shows how citizenship in itself is limited in creating the idea of home. Although the Dutch East Indies consisted of people originating from various countries, the Dutch made loose legal categorisations based on ethnicity.<sup>51</sup> From the 1920s onwards three categories were created:<sup>52</sup> *Europeanen* or Europeans, consisting of the Dutch and other Europeans; the now contested colonial term *Inlanders* or natives, also called 'native natives' by Benedict Anderson;<sup>53</sup> and *Vreemde Oosterlingen* or foreign Orientals, or 'foreign natives'.<sup>54</sup> Three subdivisions are of importance here: the Dutch *totok* (white, Dutch people who were mostly born in the Dutch East Indies) and other white Europeans; the Indo-Europeans or Indo-Dutch (people of Dutch or European and native Indonesian descent) and the native Indonesians. 'In the former colony, under very rigid colonial rule, the Indo-Dutch had taken up an ambiguous in-between position, distinct from and above the "natives", but also subordinated in a dominant, white society'.<sup>55</sup>

In this society, the Indo-Europeans thus had a specific social status. If a child of a Dutch colonist and a native Indonesian was acknowledged by the Dutch father, it would have the same rights as a Dutch or European person.<sup>56</sup> Were the father to not acknowledge the child as his own, it would have the

50 Chow, Van Wichelen and De Kloet, 'Introduction: at home in Asia?', 251.

51 Gijs Beets et al., *De demografische geschiedenis van de Indische Nederlanders* (Den Haag 2002) 8.

52 Patricia Tjiook-Liem, 'De rechtspositie van de verschillende bevolkingsgroepen in Indië tot 1942. Over de classificatie, gelijkstelling en het onderdaanschap van de bevolkingsgroepen van Nederlands-Indië', *De Indische School* 2 (2009) 1–2; Susi Dwi Harijanti, 'Report on citizenship law: Indonesia', *Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies/GLOBALCIT Country Report* (San Domenico di Fiesole 2017) 1.

53 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London/New York 1991/2006) 123.

54 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 122.

55 Pattynama, 'Assimilation and masquerade', 281.

same rights as a native Indonesian. Since a vast number of children with such mixed ancestry were acknowledged, it created a new ethnic group with particular social rights: the Indo-Europeans. In his analyses of legal classifications in late colonial Indonesia, Bart Luttikhuis engages with 'the primacy of race over class or vice versa'.<sup>57</sup> He proposes that 'it is significant that in a space so central to the construction of "Europeanness" more broadly, "race" in the sense of ancestry or somatic features cannot be said to take precedence over class and cultural aspects'.<sup>58</sup> Yet 'the hierarchy of colonial imagination', he argues, 'was designed from the very start to be highly layered, with vague and slippery transitions between said layers'.<sup>59</sup> According to Gert Oostindie, these colonial boundaries disappeared somewhat over time between the repatriates:

Depending on their class, many had a degree of knowledge of the Dutch language and culture, but only a small minority had any firsthand experience of the Netherlands. Their more-or-less Asian appearance made them visibly 'different'. In the colony, class and colour distinctions had divided the 'Europeans' – the *totoks* versus those who were 'rooted in the East Indies', and had resulted in subtle subdivisions within the *Indo* group. In the Netherlands, such distinctions would over time become somewhat erased by the memory of a shared past and resentment about decolonisation and the 'chilly' reception all had received in the Netherlands.<sup>60</sup>

The screening of *Contractpensions* on 11 January 2009 was combined with that of the documentary *Het jaar 2602* (The year 2602), in which mainly white interviewees, who were interned as children during the Japanese occupation, told their stories.<sup>61</sup> The divisions in the Indies-Dutch community became visible when, after the break a large part of the *totoks* present did not return for *Contractpensions*. By programming these two films back-to-back, the organisers' intent was to create a form of 'multidirectional memory' about Indies-Dutch experiences, in which memories do not compete with each other, but rather create a relationship to further engagement.<sup>62</sup> As Michael Rothberg puts it, 'memory's multidirectionality encourages us to think of the public sphere as

56 Beets et al., *De demografische geschiedenis van de Indische Nederlanders*, 22.

57 Bart Luttikhuis, 'Beyond race: constructions of "Europeanness" in late-colonial legal practice in the Dutch East Indies', *European Review of History* 20:4 (2013) 539–558, 551.

58 Luttikhuis, 'Beyond race', 551.

59 Ibid.

60 Oostindie, *Postcolonial Netherlands*, 27.

61 <http://hetjaar2602.nl/portal/site/hetjaar2602/>.

62 Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional memory. Remembering the Holocaust in the age of decolonization* (Stanford 2009).

a malleable discursive space in which groups do not simply articulate established positions, but come into being through their dialogical interactions which each other'.<sup>63</sup> The departure of the *totoks* illustrated an underlying tension between the differing experiences during the Japanese occupation. The interpretation by third generation blogger Kirsten Vos garnered approval when she stated that this laid bare a 'sharp dichotomy' between the 'white' repatriate *totoks* who had barely lived in any boarding houses and the 'brown' repatriate Indo-Europeans whose story was told after the break in *Contractpensions*.<sup>64</sup> The narratives of forced migration thus showed how the subtle subdivisions from the colony travelled with the repatriates to the Netherlands. Even within the Indies-Dutch repatriate community, boundaries existed which enforced feelings of belonging and not-belonging.

Dutch citizenship was also insufficient to move beyond the hierarchy of colonial imagination when in contact with Dutch citizens in the Netherlands. The vagueness and slipperiness of this imagination are what repatriates encountered when they migrated from the colonial society of the Indies to the former centre of the Dutch colonial empire. The tension between their Indo-European identity and Dutch citizenship is best described through the attitudes towards, and emotional attachment of, the first and second-generation Indo-European repatriates. In her work on the investment by second and third generation Indo-Europeans in their Dutch East Indies heritage, Marlene de Vries contrasts the two main scholarly views on the attitudes related to the repatriation of the first generation. On the one hand, there is the feeling of having received a cold reception when arriving in the Netherlands, which is so often shared between people of Indo-European descent. This feeling is at odds with reality according to the Dutch historian Wim Willems, as the repatriates were supported by extensive public administration and civil services when they arrived in the Netherlands.<sup>65</sup> Thus Willems attributes their feeling of being misunderstood rather to the fact that people in the Netherlands ignored the repatriates' Dutch East Indies past.<sup>66</sup> In addition Willems, together with Ulbe Bosma and Remco Raben, states that this feeling of misunderstanding, or rather not feeling at home, should not be simply ascribed to incomprehension or cold-heartedness, but that 'a much deeper cause was that the Dutch

63 Rothberg, *Multidirectional memory*, 5.

64 Kirsten Vos and Ed Caffin, 'Filmmiddag maakt Indische spagaat zichtbaar', *Indisch* 3.0, 12 January 2009, <https://www.indisch3.nl/2009/01/12/filmmiddag-maakt-indische-spagaat-zichtbaar/> (6 November 2020); Pattynama, *Bitterzoet Indië*, 151.

65 De Vries, '*Indisch is een gevoel*', 392.

66 *Ibid.*

East Indies identity moved between Europe and Asia, and knew no part of an Indonesian or Dutch national identity status.<sup>67</sup> The discussion on these views illustrates the tension between governmental efforts and affective responses to forced migration. It is a tension which became the inspiration for a large body of cinematic products.

For second-generation Indo-Europeans, the construction of home became a project to which they could have a valuable contribution. The imaginary, here, plays a central role. Pamela Pattynama considers second-generation documentaries therefore as a 'do-it-yourself practice' of identity discovery, similar to how film has been used as a do-it-yourself practice for shaping the ideal family.<sup>68</sup> This is largely true for the individual and homemade character of these documentaries, yet when placed in a broader context *Contractpensions* should rather be considered a 'do-it-with-others' documentary, as this better reflects the dynamics between the participatory repatriate interviewees and the second-generation off-screen interviewer. Taken from Mandy Rose's definition of the documentary as 'do-it-with-others citizenship', the role of *Contractpensions* in the public sphere functions 'as an open space for dialogue and a stage for the performance of citizenship'. But unlike the examples given by Rose, co-creation, dialogue and contributing to understanding and change, have a much narrower meaning for citizenship here, as the documentary is driven by other factors. It is especially the interrelatedness between place, identity and belonging which emerges in second-generation cinema.

### Place, Identity and Belonging in Second-Generation Cinema

Through their films, second-generation Indo-Europeans constitute affiliations to a homeland that is not there anymore. As a form of migration cinema they are part of a cultural imaginary, taken and expanded from what Arjun Appadurai has set out as the 'social imaginary'.<sup>69</sup> Following Appadurai, the imaginary is seen as an organised field of social practices which functions as a site of negotiation. It is within this field of the imaginary where the idea of home is manifested and negotiated. As Pamela Pattynama has written, 'the

67 Ibid, 392–393; Ulbe Bosma et al., *De geschiedenis van Indische Nederlanders* (Amsterdam 2006) 10.

68 Pattynama, *Bitterzoet Indië*, 180, 243.

69 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization* (Minneapolis 1996) 27–47.

literature produced by the first generation voices the feeling of being lost in Holland (*kesasar*) that many Indo-Dutch migrants share, a yearning for a homeland that is forever fixed in a “there” and “then”;<sup>70</sup> The second-generation, on the other hand, showed a different kind of relation to the home, one that is directed outwards. As said before it was not literature anymore that became the main vehicle to articulate feelings and desires of home, but cinema. Pattynama writes:

Revealing more doubt about Indo-Dutch identity and home, the second generation of Dutch-Indo authors rewrite Indo-Dutchness through a transnational sense of self. Born in an upfront Dutch culture, they grew up with their parents’ bitter stories about racial inequality and Dutch ignorance, as well as their silenced memories. Shaped by traumatic events that took place before they were born, these narratives have framed their ‘post-memories’.<sup>71</sup>

Memories are not fixed as they are malleable, subject to change and influenced by our readings of the present. As Jonah Lehrer points out, Marcel Proust explored how time mutates memory as he believed that our recollections were phony: ‘It is a labor in vain to attempt to recapture memory [...]’.<sup>72</sup> Yet films become more and more important for second-generation Indo-Europeans and the generations thereafter. They use it to construct and remember a land that is not there anymore, thus it becomes the main vehicle to create memories. In the future, the homeland will only exist in visual images.

Pattynama has previously illustrated the rich legacy of second-generation Indo-European documentaries.<sup>73</sup> These documentaries share common traits, such as searching what the meaning is of the Dutch East Indies in the Netherlands; focusing on a specific historical aspect of Indo-European history; pointing out the different approaches to history between different generations; embracing an autobiographical aspect in which individuals rediscover their identity through filmic practices; and, lastly, emphasising the inconsistency of memory.<sup>74</sup> Pattynama argues that the documentaries of this generation push the boundaries of this community, and that it is precisely for that reason that they are needed to keep the past alive among the following

70 Pamela Pattynama, ‘Memories of interracial contacts and mixed race in Dutch cinema’, *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 28:1 (2007) 69–82, 79.

71 Pattynama, ‘Memories of interracial contacts and mixed race in Dutch cinema’, 79.

72 Jonah Lehrer, *Proust was a Neuroscientist* (Boston 2008) 81.

73 Pattynama, *Bitterzoet Indië*, 137–183.

74 Pattynama, *Bitterzoet Indië*, 180.

generations.<sup>75</sup> Not only do these documentaries construct memories of home, but in addition their representations function as markers for the socio-cultural position that Indo-Europeans occupy in the Netherlands through their repatriate identity. Documentaries such as *Contractpensions* define and broaden what Indo-European repatriate identity means through their representations. The concepts of transnational cinema, postcolonial cinema and accented cinema, are productive ways to engage with the representations of diasporic culture in *Contractpensions* that draw on multiple influences and traverse national boundaries. These concepts highlight the tension between understandings of the 'nation' on the one hand and citizens who belong to the nation but are not part of the national imaginary on the other. Thus, even when Indo-Europeans belonged nationally to the Netherlands, their belonging was directed elsewhere.

Of particular relevance for the case of Indo-European filmmaking is the 'view of national identity as hybrid, unfixed, and heterogeneous' that is embodied in transnational cinema as a critical term.<sup>76</sup> Although Hamid Naficy seemed reluctant to adopt the term transnational cinema, I approach Hetty Naaijkens-Retel Helmrich through the same lens as Naficy when he analysed diasporic and postcolonial filmmakers in his work on 'accented cinema'.<sup>77</sup> In discussing his conception of 'accented cinema', Naficy introduces the term 'politics of the hyphen'. This term aptly illustrates that Indo-European ethnicity is necessarily linked to the cultures of two nations, namely to the Dutch and Indonesian national culture. Discussing representations of migrant, exilic and diasporic experiences, Sandra Ponzanesi and Verena Berger state: 'located between national, transnational and global modes of production, distribution and reception, these films not only rely on the colonial heritage of Europe's past, but also on its present-day socio-political and cultural influences.'<sup>78</sup> Accented cinema, or similarly the category 'migrant cinema', has alliances with the concept of postcolonial cinema, yet 'the term "postcolonial cinema" not only addresses the question of mobility and uprooting, but also wider issues of visual hegemony and aesthetic counter-discourses'.<sup>79</sup>

75 Pattynama, *Bitterzoet Indië*, 181.

76 Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell, *A dictionary of film studies* (Oxford 2012) 432.

77 Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim, 'Concepts of transnational cinema: towards a critical transnationalism in film studies', *Transnational Cinemas* 11 (2010) 7–21, 13.

78 Sandra Ponzanesi and Verena Berger, 'Introduction: genres and tropes in postcolonial cinema(s) in Europe', *Transnational Cinemas* 7:2 (2016) 111–117, 111.

79 Ponzanesi and Berger, 'Introduction: genres and tropes in postcolonial cinema(s) in Europe', 111–112.



*Contractpensions* not only engages with mobility and uprooting through its narrative form, but also functions as cultural memory of the Indo-European repatriate experience that ‘unframes history’, meaning that it tries to undo dominant discourses in the Netherlands of the repatriation.<sup>80</sup> The documentary particularly engages with the persistent trope that the Indo-Europeans smoothly integrated into Dutch society. The testaments of the first and second generation in which they express the resentments of their reception and the experiences of discrimination, underscore this. Moreover, the paternalistic views towards their integration are encapsulated by the tips in the booklet *Djangan Loepah!* In reaction to a household tip on peeling potatoes, one repatriate states ‘Do they think we’re so backward they have to teach us how to peel potatoes?’ Another remarks that ‘When we came to the Netherlands we were told that as soon as possible you have to assimilate. We are assimilated. We speak Dutch and have a Dutch education. We know all about the Netherlands, they know nothing about us.’

The examples of Indo-Europeans who migrated to, for example, the United States and New Zealand, further testify to the struggles with integration. This unframing of dominant narratives simultaneously shows how images and filmmaking are an important part of creating a collective memory for the Indo-Europeans. Films are being used to create a belonging to the same homeland and to create a sense of unity, which is important for replacing what is lost, especially when citizenship does not create unity. The idea of Hamid Naficy’s accented cinema provides more structured insights into the role of the national imaginary in relation to the threads of place and belonging. What can be recognised in the films of Indo-Europeans is that there is a desire for a homeland, for a feeling of unity, but importantly it is for a homeland that does not exist anymore. Spatially it is not about the futurity of a homeland yet to come,<sup>81</sup> but the memory of a homeland that once was. This is emphasised in scenes where interviewees explain how they felt like they did not fit in when they arrived in the Netherlands – often resulting in a subsequent migration – but also made apparent in the objectives of the many documentaries made by (second-generation) Indo-Europeans. That is to say: finding a place in society through the history of Indo-European parents or the generations before them.<sup>82</sup> All address notions of place, identity and belonging.

80 Sandra Ponzanesi and Marguerite Waller, *Postcolonial cinema studies* (London and New York 2012) 1–16.

81 Hamid Naficy, *An accented cinema: exilic and diasporic filmmaking* (Princeton 2001) 15.

82 A notable example is Marion Bloem, *Het land van mijn ouders* (1983).

As stated, in discussing his conception of 'accented cinema', Hamid Naficy introduces the term 'politics of the hyphen' which marks a resistance against homogenisation.<sup>83</sup> In the case of the Indo-Europeans, the hyphen marks the necessary link between the Dutch and Indonesian national culture. What is at first problematic here, is the question of what is 'the' Indonesian or Dutch national culture? Second, cultural belongings in the Dutch East Indies have always been related to different ethnicities, such as the Dutch, Indo-European, Javanese and Chinese *peranakan*. These different angles of belonging are constructed in *Contractpensions* as a feeling of otherness. One of the repatriates remembers:

I was once allowed to play at the house of a Dutch girlfriend. I was placed on a chair in the middle of the room and the whole family walked around me like I was an alien. When I asked my girlfriend something the whole family was stunned: 'Look, the little monkey can speak too!'<sup>84</sup>

Naficy writes that there are some negative connotations to the hyphen, for example that the hyphen may imply a lack of, or a divided, allegiance.<sup>85</sup> I, however, want to imply that the hyphen between Indo and European is a necessary one since both the Indo and European identities are almost equally as important for the Indo-European in constructing their repatriate identity. Therefore, I want to follow a contestatory adoption of the hyphen in which the hyphen can 'operate horizontally, highlighting consent relations, disruption, heterogeneity, slippage and mediation [...]'.<sup>86</sup> The hyphen functions as a new space that Indo-Europeans can occupy, creating an identity for themselves. As Tjalie Robinson explains:

I did not care that people wanted to call me 'neither fish nor fowl', and wanted to label me, an Indo, either Indonesian or Dutch. For them I just had to choose between the two, right? Nevertheless, I stubbornly named the turtle as 'neither fish nor fowl', and praised this animal as a unique, land-and-sea-lover who lives to very old ages, whose meat has an excellent taste, and who cuts through oceans from continent to continent. I

83 Naficy, *An accented cinema*, 15–16.

84 All translations by the author.

85 Naficy, *An accented cinema*, 15–16.

86 Naficy, *An accented cinema*, 16.

said, just as I do not find the turtle inferior, although he is neither fish nor fowl, I do not think the Indo inferior. And that is the end of it!<sup>87</sup>

*Contractpensions* similarly shows how the Indo-Europeans do not feel as if they belong simply to a generalised Dutch culture or to what is now called the Indonesian culture. The topic of food is of particular importance in this regard, as it functions as a means to show a belonging to other Indo-Dutch repatriates, but it also structures the Indo-European repatriates as different from the Dutch.

A scene in the documentary that illustrates the importance of food to the repatriate culture is filmed in Southern California, where once a week on Saturdays from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. a food court opens on a parking lot in Duarte. The improvised food court is a place where first-generation repatriates and later generation Amerindo's – as the Indies-Dutch community in the United States is often called – are able to organise a *kumpulan*, a social gathering.<sup>88</sup> One of the organisers explains that after the food court opens: 'Then we have great Indo food here and speak our mother tongue from Indonesia. We all come here for a chat. They come from all over, some even from Las Vegas.' Belonging here is a thread of home that is directed towards fellow Indo-European repatriates through the Indonesian language and food.

Food has always been of significance in the Dutch East Indies as 'the colonial table was not simply a site of exchange between European and Asian foodways, but one at which Dutch colonists reflected upon, developed and sometimes attempted to regulate what it meant to be European.'<sup>89</sup> Balancing between 'preserving natal foodways' such as steak, vegetables and potatoes and 'behaving as befitted a colonial ruling class' through the copious *rijsttafel* (rice table), where the table was set with an elaborate number of side dishes, 'appropriate eating [...] was crucial to the recognition of a European identity in the Indies'.<sup>90</sup> The relation between food, racial and cultural identity was of further importance during the Japanese occupation and in particular for the *totoks* in the internment camps, where the orientation towards European dishes dominated in the recipes collected by internees and became a sign of civilisation.<sup>91</sup>

87 Tjalie Robinson, 'Op zoek naar identiteit. Waar staat de thuisgekomen Totok?', *Tong Tong* 15 (1971) 10–11.

88 Jeroen DeWulf, 'Amerindo country. De stem van de Nederlands-Indische gemeenschap in de Verenigde Staten', *Biografie Bulletin* 20:3 (2010) 21–28.

89 Susie Protschky, 'The colonial table: food, culture and Dutch identity in colonial Indonesia', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 54:3 (2008) 346–357, 346.

90 Protschky, 'The colonial table', 349.

91 Esther Captain, 'Sambal Bello en oesters met champagne. Over de rol van voedsel als teken van beschaving in de Japanse interneringskampen', in: Marieke Bloembergen and

When the Indo-Europeans repatriated to the Netherlands, food was also used as an important identity marker in the boarding houses. Contrary to *totoks* in the internment camps who showed an orientation to European food, Indo-Europeans added Indonesian influences to their cuisine as these were absent in the Netherlands. In doing so this practice of customising their food became a sign of their Indo-Dutch repatriate identity. Various interviewees explain that they had to get used to Dutch food in the boarding houses. They disliked the tradition of eating potatoes, vegetables and meat every day, but did not have access to a kitchen for themselves. Their need for Indies-Dutch food was so great, as the narrative constructs, that only through improvisation did they manage to cook satay on an inverted iron, and rice and *sambal* (chili sauce) on a small electric burner. Similarly, they added *sambal* to traditional Dutch *snert* (pea soup) to create their own fusion. This illustrates how the Indo-European identity occupies an in-between position.

The politics of the hyphen is for the Indo-Europeans in the documentary a politics of identity, with a special emphasis on social class. As a former social worker recalls, the many complaints about the food were either about the taste or about the quantity. It was often not on par with what they were used to. Soup had the consistency and flavour of ditch water, they complained, whilst comments were made when one received three and the other five meatballs in their soup. The repatriates, on the other hand, talk about half cooked rice, leftovers and how they received insufficient food. The documentary spotlights that for the first and second-generation repatriates, social class was part of their identity. This repatriate identity is woven together by threads of place, belonging and citizenship.

### Conclusion: the Fabrics of Home

The second-generation filmmaker Hetty Naaijkens-Retel Helmrich created a generational 'postmemory' that circumvents the once silenced memories of the first-generation by utilising their lived memories. Pamela Pattynama approaches the documentary through the 'laughing second generation', embodied in *Contractpensions* by well-known art specialist Frans Leidelmeijer, articulating how many of the second-generation can only bring to mind 'fun stuff' from the Japanese internment camps, as their traumatised parents could not put into words the harrowing events.<sup>92</sup> Looking alongside the self-aware

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Remco Raben (eds), *Het koloniale beschavingsoffensief. Wegen naar het nieuwe Indië 1890–1950* (Leiden 2009) 236.

92 Pattynama, *Bitterzoet Indië*, 158.

second-generation, *Contractpensions* does not linger on the obligatory outrage over suffering inflicted on the first-generation, she states.<sup>93</sup> Nostalgia is thus, according to Pattynama, avoided.<sup>94</sup> Although certainly not a nostalgic documentary, this article has shown how *Contractpensions* does heavily linger on the negative experiences and suffering of the repatriates. The documentary perpetuates and enforces their memories and experiences. It is at its core functioning as a mouthpiece for these first-generation voices – the majority of the repatriates interviewed – the documentary does not offer any critical stances towards the role of the Indo-Europeans in colonial society as implicated subjects. The film is thus a ‘post-colonial’ rather than a postcolonial product.<sup>95</sup> As Pattynama says about the second-generation, ‘however established they themselves may be, the stories of the first generation guide their lives.’<sup>96</sup> This is certainly true for *Contractpensions*, where Indo-European migration is remembered through the experience of repatriates. The documentary is informed by their memories, and functions like a tribute to the older generations. More than being exemplary of second-generation memory-making, the film is an instance of *beri hormat*, or giving respect, to the first-generation.

As the synopsis on the official website of *Contractpensions* describes ‘Based on their common history, such as the horrors of the war and the frightening Bersiap period, repatriates talk freely for the first time about how they were welcomed in postwar Netherlands.’<sup>97</sup> As the repatriates consists of both first and second-generation Indo-Europeans, the documentary demonstrates that this diffuse group of repatriates is not easily categorised by memory discourses based on generational differences. Crucially, aspects such as memories, affective investments and imaginations inform the representations of the repatriate experience and what they call home.

*Contractpensions* has been shown to deal with three questions of home related to their forced migration: where is the place called home for Indo-Europeans? What are its fabrics? How is it assembled? The answer to the first question is the cinematic field of the cultural imaginary. For a new generation of documentary makers in the Netherlands, documentary became their medium of choice to distance themselves from familiar depictions of the Dutch

93 Pattynama, *Bitterzoet Indië*, 159.

94 Pattynama, *Bitterzoet Indië*, 159.

95 Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial studies. The key concepts* (Abingdon 2013) 204–209.

96 Pattynama, *Bitterzoet Indië*, 159.

97 [https://www.contractpensions.nl/Djangan\\_Loepah/HOME.html](https://www.contractpensions.nl/Djangan_Loepah/HOME.html) (last accessed 29 July 2022).

East Indies. These filmmakers were the descendants of first-generation repatriates and grew up in a culture in which images were increasingly becoming the medium of communication.<sup>98</sup> Not only do visual images take centre stage in how we represent, identify and make memories of the world today, media and memory are further considered inseparable in cultural memory making. How the Dutch colonial past is remembered by Indonesian filmmakers is a case in point.<sup>99</sup> This is no different for second-generation Indo-European filmmakers.

The fabrics of home, to answer the second question, consist of place, belonging and citizenship. Together these threads of home weave Indo-European repatriate culture and identity into being. The tensions between geographical attachment, repatriate identity and Dutch nationality structure their relationship with the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies. Through an intricate interplay between the threads of place, belonging and citizenship, the documentary constructed 'home' as dealing with discourses on ethnicity, social class and the cultural imaginary.

The third question was answered through the narrative form of the documentary. Citizenship proved to be insufficient to overcome differences in ethnicity and the hierarchy of the (post-)colonial imagination. Geographical attachment and Dutch nationality proved to be less important than a sense of home through the repatriate identity. Second-generation cinema furthermore proved to inhabit a prominent position in the creation of a visual memory of home. The documentary illustrated that more than ever, place and belonging find their definition and outlet in the cinematic memories created by second-generation Indo-European filmmakers. In doing so, these filmmakers include the repatriates as Dutch citizens into the national imaginary. As the examples from *Contractpensions* showed, however, citizenship becomes insufficient when ethnic markers stand in the way. Citizenship is fundamental to the Indo-European's sense of self, as citizenship is responsible for their repatriation to a homeland many of them had never set foot in. The shared experiences of repatriation shaped the Indo-European group identity after they arrived in the Netherlands. However, the decision by some of the repatriates to emigrate elsewhere is a testament to how 'home' exceeds any legal definitions of identity.

In *Contractpensions* the idea of home existed as a material location in the past; as a country found after a new emigration; as a construct in the cinematic imaginary; as a repatriate community bound by skin colour; as a food court in

98 Pattynama, *Bitterzoet Indië*, 146.

99 Arnoud Arps, 'An animated revolution: the remembrance of the 1945 Battle of Surabaya in Indonesian animated film', *Southeast Asian Media Studies* 2:1 (2020) 101–117, 102–103.

a parking lot; as the addition of *sambal* to *snert*; as being a Dutch citizen; as the right to repatriate to the Netherlands; as the idea that the Netherlands is the fatherland; and so forth. In conclusion, *Contractpensions* has exemplified how home is a patchwork fabric made up from the threads of place, belonging and citizenship. The Indo-European repatriate culture and identity is continuously and gradually woven together by these threads.