Loft, three times a movie

A comparative analysis of the Flemish film Loft and its Dutch and American remakes
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ABSTRACT

*Loft* (Van Looy, 2008) is the first Flemish film to be remade in the Netherlands (*Loft*, Beumer, 2010) and in the United States (*The Loft*, Van Looy, 2014). The main aim of this thesis was to determine whether and to what extent the Dutch and American remakes have been adapted in terms of characters, locations, language and culture. Secondly, we investigated whether these changes can be considered adjustments geared towards the Dutch and American target audiences. In this thesis an empirical research approach was adopted in which we first identified any differences between the films by consulting the visual content and the scripts. Subsequently, we tried to find explanations for these differences in the literature.

We found that, although both remakes are very faithful to the original, a relatively high number of adjustments has been made. One of the differences in terms of characters was that an actor with a different skin colour was cast in the Dutch *Loft* as an attempt to reflect Dutch society. By contrast, no black actor was cast for the leading roles in the American film, despite New Orleans’ predominantly black population. As regards setting, the least number of adjustments have been made. All three lofts were located near water, but in the Dutch film this water played a more prominent role, which could be regarded as an adaptation to the Dutch culture, being deeply influenced by water.

Despite the common language in Flanders and in the Netherlands, many linguistic adjustments have been made in the Dutch remake. Most characteristics of the typically Flemish *tussentaal* have been eliminated and region-specific Flemish words and expressions have been replaced. As regards culture, topics such as sex, nudity and use of drugs were screened most explicitly in the Dutch *Loft*. This could be contextualized within the permissive sexual morality and more open drugs policy in the Netherlands. By contrast, in the American *Loft* the more subtle screening of sex can be explained by the conservative Puritan values that still strongly influence modern-day America, whereas the influence of religion is waning in present-day Dutch society.

We can conclude that both the Dutch and American remakes have undergone a relatively high number of alterations to make them more attractive or suitable for their target audiences.
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1. PREFACE

Over the past few years many Flemish films have enjoyed international success, as for example *Rundskop* (*Bullhead, Tête de bœuf*, Roskam, 2011) and *The Broken Circle Breakdown* (Van Groeningen, 2012). The gained interest in Flemish films was reflected in the rise of a new phenomenon in 2010: the remaking of Flemish films abroad. *Loft* (Van Looy, 2008) was the first Flemish film that was remade in the Netherlands (Beumer, 2010). The film became even more exceptional when in 2014 a second remake was shot in the United States by the same Flemish director, Erik Van Looy. In the history of film remaking it is rather unique that a film is remade twice, especially over such a short period of time.

In this thesis the film *Loft* and its two remakes are studied. This three-film case study belongs to the broader area of study of transnational remakes. Extensive research has been conducted on Hollywood remakes of foreign films (see among others Geysmans, 2012 and Bernburg, 2012). Furthermore, Flemish remakes of Dutch films have been the subject of several master’s theses in the past (see among others Acke, 2013 and Wagensveld, 2014). Goorix (2012) on the other hand, studied a remake that was produced in the opposite direction: the Dutch remake of the Flemish film *Loft*. In our study the second remake is analysed as well. It is the first time an American remake of a Flemish film is studied. The main purpose of this research is to determine whether and to what extent the Dutch and American remakes have been adapted in terms of four specific aspects. We decided to focus on characters, locations, language and culture as Goorix (2012) already discussed the cinematographic and narrative aspects of the Flemish and Dutch *Loft*. The second aim of this research is to determine whether the changes we identified can be considered adjustments geared towards the Dutch and American target audiences. In order to do so, we examined whether these changes could be explained by differences between the Flemish, Dutch and American culture as described in the literature.

In chapter 2, we will present a literature study in which the concepts of remakes, localization and translation are defined. A comparison will advance our understanding of their mutual relationship. Furthermore, we will briefly discuss the history of remakes and examine its classifications. To conclude our literature review we will elaborate on the motivations for remaking a film and provide a critical view. Chapters 3 and 4 present the research questions
and the methodology used to answer these questions and to conduct our analysis. In chapter 5, some background information is given on the three films and on how they came into existence. In the analysis (chapter 6) we will compare the original film to its remakes by focusing on characters, locations, language and culture. Chapter 7 presents some general conclusions.

2. LITERATURE STUDY

2.1. Introduction

Although a considerable amount of research has been conducted on the topic of film, Horton and McDougal (1998, p.1) argue that “the remake has received relatively little critical attention”. This statement is supported by several other researchers (Koos & Forrest, 2002, Verevis, 2004, Quaresima, 2002). Koos and Forrest (2002, p. 26) asserted that the study field of remakes has received too little attention, especially regarding national and cultural traditions. Verevis (2004, p. 100) confirms and regrets this lack of theoretical framework. According to Quaresima (2002, p. 73-75), remakes are widely recognized but remain rather undefined in literature. The reason for this research gap may be that most studies on remakes are limited to simply describing the differences between two films and do not adopt a theoretical approach. Eberwein (1998, p. 15) claims that “many studies of remakes do no go much beyond a superficial point-by-point, pluses-and-minuses kind of analyses”. Furthermore, the generally negative status of remakes, which we will further discuss in Criticism (see 2.6), stimulated few researchers to invest time and effort in the subject (Koos & Forrest, 2002, p. 8).

As a consequence of these limited scientific resources on remakes, several authors who have significantly contributed to the research field of remakes will often be referred to in this literature study. First of all, Druxman (1975) made an early survey on film remakes. More recent theoretical framework was provided by Horton and McDougal (1998). Koos and Forrest (2002) published an anthology on the subject. Finally, Verevis (2006) theorized the phenomenon of cinematic remaking. It should, however, be mentioned that this list of authors is by no means exhaustive and many other sources will be referred to in this thesis.
2.2. Defining the concepts of remakes, localization and translation

2.2.1. Remakes

Remakes pertain to the broader area of enquiry of imitation studies. Most literary works roughly distinguish two broad subcategories in film imitation: adaptations and remakes. According to both Verevis (2006, p. 82) and Mazdon (2000, p. 2), remakes typically seek their inspiration in the same medium, whereas adaptations tend to move between different media. Consequently, a remake is a film based on another film while an adaptation is based on sources belonging to a different medium, for instance a film based on a book.

Due to the limited research on remakes no general consensus has been achieved on its definition. Eberwein (1998, p. 15) describes a remake as “a kind of reading or rereading of the original [film]”. He focuses on the process of remaking a film. Concentrating on the result, Leitch (2002, p. 37) and Mazdon (2000, p. 2) define remakes as “new versions of old movies” and “films based on an earlier screenplay” respectively. Summarizing, it could be stated that remakes are new versions of previously produced films. These new versions often require “updated dialogues, characters, setting, design and themes…” (Rachlin, 1991, p. 249).

In spite of these straightforward definitions, the decision whether a film is a remake or not can be hard to make. Van den Vonder (1997, p. 5) states that remakes require a consensus in film literature before they can be recognized as such. Nevertheless, achieving this consensus is rendered more difficult as “remakes often do not accredit their sources” (Koos & Forrest, 2002, p. 5). These unacknowledged remakes are called disguised remakes by Druxman (1975) and Greenberg (2002), and will be further discussed in Types of remakes (see 2.5). Another reason that complicates the acknowledgement of remakes is that the audience is not always familiar with the original film (Verevis, 2006, p. 145).

2.2.2. Localization

The concept of localization is derived from the English word locale, the “specific combination of language, region, and character encoding” (Esselink, 2000, p. 1). For example, we can say that the Dutch language spoken in Flanders belongs to a different locale than the language
spoken in The Netherlands. Localization experts Cadieux and Esselink (as cited in Dunne, 2006, p. 4) suggest a definition for localization based on the *Localization Industry Standards Organization*: “the processes by which digital content and products developed in one *locale* are adapted for sale and use in another *locale*”. Cardieux and Esselink thus see localization as taking the necessary steps to be able to sell a product from one *locale* to another. According to the *Free On-line Dictionary of Computing* these necessary steps involve linguistic and cultural adjustments to the target market or *locale*.

### 2.2.3. Translation

House (2009, p.4) defines *translation* as the “process of replacing a text in one language by a text in another”. If we compare translation to localization we find that the difference is not so obvious, as the two terms show overlap and are defined and categorized differently depending on the author. In this thesis we will adopt Dune’s (2006, p. 4) claim that translation is an activity in the localization process. Esselink (2000, p. 2) confirms that localization involves more activities to adapt a product to a specific target market than translation only. The Free On-line Dictionary of Computing also suggests that “localization includes translation”. Mandilberg (2008, p. 5), who wrote a thesis on translation and remakes, describes localization as “the concept of tailoring a translation so that it fits with either source or target culture”. Consequently, we can summarize that translation forms part of localization, but that localization involves more activities to adapt a product to the target culture.

A consultation of the localization literature teaches us that the digital content and products that are localized in general are websites, software and video games. Esselink (2000, p. 1) suggests that localization is the “translation and adaptation of software or web products”. Moran (2009, p. 52) extends this definition by referring to imported television programmes which have to be localized in order to be successful with their target audience. However, in the specific context of film remakes localization is rarely used. Mandilberg describes remakes as a strategy of adapting the culturally specific elements “to avoid difficulties of understanding, tolerance and ultimately, sales” and allow a “more easily transferred product into a target system” (2008, p. 23). This description is very similar to the concept of localization. In conclusion, it could be argued that a remake is in fact an act of localization in the context of film, including but not limited to translation.
2.3. Brief history

Remakes are not a recent phenomenon. Mazdon (2000) and Lütticken (2004) argue that remakes were born together with the first films. Early cinema made use of repetitions and combined these with attractive new elements (Quaresima, 2002, p. 74). Verevis (2006, p. 96) subdivides film history according to the different transformations that remakes underwent:

1. The early cinema (pre-1917);
2. the classical Hollywood era (1917–60);

During the early cinema remakes went from a low status to achieving more popularity and a higher status. At the time, remaking existed alongside duping. Duping entailed producing identical film copies, whereas remaking involved shooting the films again. In the beginning, duping was far more popular than remaking (Van den Vonder, 1997, p. 21). Nevertheless, as the copyright law imposed stricter rules and the production of illegal copies became more difficult, the duping practice decreased in favour of remaking. Remaking acquired a higher status becoming Hollywood’s mode of representation (Verevis, 2006, p. 96-98).

During the classical Hollywood era film industry became more organized in different studios. Hollywood’s popularity soared, which caused film demand to increase significantly. In order to be able to respond to that growing demand, many film studios recycled films that they had produced earlier (Druxman, 1975, p. 13). Re-using their own property instead of material of other studios was both cost and time efficient since they already held the rights (Eberwein, 1998, p. 18). Hollywood films were being remade on a wide scale. Due to this accelerated production process, remaking became routine work and consequently these remakes were generally very faithful to the original films. With the introduction of sound, the 1930s saw the heyday of the remake. This provoked a wave of sound remakes of silent films (Van den Vonder, 1997). These sound films lost the international character that silent remakes enjoyed, being understood in every language. As a result of this new language barrier many films were remade.
simultaneously in different languages. These sound remakes mark a milestone in the history of remakes as the aspect of language was introduced.

From the 1960s onwards the number of remakes decreased considerably. The remake as a genre suffered misfortune, among other things because of the reduced number of cinemagoers following the introduction of the television film (Cook, 2004). The late 1980s, however, saw the revival of the remake, especially of foreign (non-American) films (Koos & Forrest, 2002, p. 6). These remakes were characterized by expressing the director’s individual style and focusing on new elements. In comparison to the classical Hollywood remakes, which typically copied the original script, the 1980s remakes deviated significantly from the original (Verevis, 2006, p. 96-97).

From this brief history account, we can conclude that the remaking activity has always formed part of film history with periods of varying success. Its purpose and techniques have changed over time. After outweighing the duping practice, the remake genre shifted from a faithful period during the Classical Hollywood era to a more original and experimental period in the 1980s. A historic landmark in the history of remakes was the introduction of language as a consequence of sound innovations.

2.4. Types of remakes

Within the broad category of remakes, different types can be distinguished. In the introduction (see 2.1) we have already explained that due to the limited research on remakes no general consensus has been reached on its definition. The same applies to the classification of remakes: several authors have attempted to identify the different types of remakes, but no uniform classification has been defined yet. We will discuss the taxonomies introduced by Druxman (1975), Greenberg (2002) and Leitch (2002). They were the first three researchers to develop classification systems and are therefore cited very often in the – limited – literature on remakes. Nevertheless, we must bear in mind the existence of other classification systems as well.

Druxman (1975, p. 13-15) defines three types of remakes: disguised remakes, direct remakes and non-remakes. The disguised remake, as the name suggests, tries to avoid drawing attention
to the fact that it is a remake. The original film undergoes minor alterations and can be retitled to disguise its origin, as is the case with the disguised Western remake *Colorado Territory* (Walsh, 1949) of the crime film *High Sierra* (Walsh, 1941) (Verevis, 2006, p. 7). The *direct remake* on the other hand, does not try to hide its resemblance to the original film. Some alterations can be required and in some cases the remake is retitled, but in general the remake is very faithful to the original. An example is Vidor’s 1957 remake of the same name of *A Farewell to Arms* (Borzage, 1932). The final category is the *non-remake*. Although an entirely new plot is introduced, the remake carries the same title as the film it is based on, as does the 1961 remake of *The Thief of Bagdad* (Korda, 1940). Druxman acknowledged that his classification is not absolute and that it may show overlap or exclusion. Therefore, we will discuss other author’s classification systems as well.

Greenberg (2002, p. 152) was inspired by Druxman’s classification. He also distinguishes three different types of remakes: *close, transformed* and *disguised remakes*. The first two categories acknowledge the original film, whereas the third one seeks to hide it. The *close remake* copies the original film with little to no change to the narrative and can be compared to Druxman’s *direct remake*. By contrast, the *transformed remake* introduces substantial changes of characters, time and setting. Finally, the *disguised remake* undergoes major alterations to the original film, of which the audience is not informed.

Leitch (2002, p. 47-50) deviates from the dual relationship between the original and the remake suggested by Druxman and Greenberg by adding a third dimension: the inspiration for the original film, often a literary work. He distinguishes four different categories: *readaptations, updates, homages* and *true remakes*. In the case of a *readaptation*, previous adaptations (films) based on the same literary work are ignored. Its aim is to go back to the true meaning of the original literary work, as did Welles (1948) by readapting Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and ignoring the less faithful adaptations by Blackton (1908) and Emerson (1916). Similarly to a *readaptation*, an *update* starts from the original literary work. Nevertheless, it also refers to earlier films and criticises the literary work as “dated, outmoded, or irrelevant” (Leitch, 2002, p. 47). The *update* wishes to be considered an improvement. An example is Luhrman’s *Romeo + Juliette* (1996) which updated the more faithful film version *Romeo and Juliette* (Cukor, 1936) based on Shakespeare’s play of the same name. Whereas the *readaptation* is faithful to its inspiration, the *update* moves further away from it. *Homages*, like *readaptations*, heavily rely on the original literary work. Its foremost purpose, however, is to pay tribute to an earlier
film, as did for example De Palma’s *Obsession* (1975) to Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (1958). In contrast to the *update*, the *homage* does not claim to be better than the original. Finally, the *true remake* is rather paradoxical. On the one hand, it goes back to the original literary work and honours it as does the *homage*. On the other hand, it tries to destroy the original by replacing it. An example of such a *non-remake* is Rafelson’s 1981 remake of *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (Wilder, 1944).

Strictly speaking this classification by Leitch refutes the definition of remakes formulated by Mazdon (2000, p. 2, see 2.2.1). Mazdon claimed that remakes are typically based on the same medium: films. Consequently, remakes in general do not seek inspiration in literary works as suggests Leitch. Leitch thus views the concept of remakes in a broader perspective than Mazdon. This difference in interpretation illustrates that no consensus has been reached on defining remakes as we suggested at the beginning of this section.

2.5. **Motivations**

The reasons for remaking a film can be very diverse. Firstly, producers can remake a film for commercial purposes. Especially the Hollywood industry is a business where “millions are at stake with each new movie deal” (Koos & Forrest, 2002, p. 6). From a financial viewpoint remakes are a safer bet as they contain a “financial guarantee”, having already proved their success with an audience (Verevis, 2006, p. 3-4). Moreover, Verevis (2006, p. 3) sees remaking as a marketing strategy of Hollywood trying to preserve its imperialism by blocking foreign original films from the American theatres. Waxman (as cited in Koos & Forrest, 2006, p. 3) shares this commercial perspective: “Why release a foreign original […] when they [American filmmakers] can make much more money remaking it with American stars and to American tastes?”

Nevertheless, it would be too simplistic to conclude that remakes are only produced for financial gain. Another motivation for remaking films, which we briefly discussed in the history section (see 2.3), is the arrival of technological innovations. The introduction of for example sound, colour and special effects stimulated the film industry to produce modernized remakes of earlier films (Koos & Forrest, 2002, p. 3). Straubhaar (2003, p. 273) explains
remakes by his theory of proximity, which argues that people have a strong preference for media products that are closest to their own culture as they can identify more easily. Furthermore, possible budgetary restrictions imposed on the original film could provide a motivation for remaking the film with a bigger budget (Koos & Forrest, 2002, p. 4). Eberwein (1998, p. 18) states that directors can also remake a film for personal reasons. A director can have a personal connection with the original film and may want to add extra elements such as personal memories and reflections. Finally, Konigsberg (as cited in Horton & McDougal, 1998, p. 328) says that remakes can sometimes be seen as a second chance to improve the original. It can be concluded that there are several possible motivations for remaking a film, including but not limited to financial, technological, cultural and personal reasons.

2.6. Criticism

Remakes in general are granted a rather negative status by the popular press and film critics. Koos and Forrest (2002, p. 8) talk about a “widely accepted notion that all remakes are parasitical and not worth any critical consideration”. Mazdon (2000, p. 5) confirms that reviewers hardly always conclude that remakes are inferior to their original. The two main objections that are raised most frequently are that remakes lack creativity and are a quick way of making money (Murray, 2001, p. 64). According to Horton and McDougal, (1998, p. 4) remakes “problematize the very notion of originality”. A reason for that popular condemnation may be found in the contradictory expectation that remakes will be “just like their original, only better” (Leitch, as cited in Koos & Forrest, 2002, p. 45). The original film has become the norm and will always enjoy greater nostalgic power (Oosterom, 1999, p. 21). Mazdon (2000, p. 5) claims that many critics describe remaking as an “act of violence” against the original film. Greenberg (2002, p. 141) for example considers remakes as “shallow attempts to trade on an original's smash success”.

Nevertheless, several authors bring nuance to the general disapproval of remakes. Mazdon (2000, p. 151) discards the notion of original film: “all films can be seen as diffuse, hybrid, signifying systems, which by extension means that all films can be seen as ‘remakes’ or equally original”. According to her, “films are made to be reproduced”. Koos and Forrest (2002, p. 3) acknowledge remakes as an important part of film history that should be taken more seriously.
For that reason they dedicated a book to the remaking practice. Biltereyst and Stalpaert (2007, p. 130) refute the popular objections stressing the hard work and creative reflection that form part of the process of remaking. Although Greenberg (2002, p. 141) opposes to remakes that pursue financial gain, he makes an exception for remakes with an artistic purpose as for example satires and homages, because they add an extra dimension to the original film.

3. RESEARCH QUESTION

This paper seeks to provide an answer to the following research questions:

- Have the Dutch and American remakes of the original Flemish film Loft been adapted in terms of characters, locations, language and culture? And if so, to what extent?
- Can these changes be considered adjustments geared towards the Dutch and American target audiences?
- Can these changes be explained by differences between the Flemish, Dutch and American culture as described in the literature?

4. METHODOLOGY

These research questions will be answered by analysing the Flemish film Loft and its Dutch and American remakes. Our visual reference material consists of the three films. An analysis of the original scripts allowed us to examine the dialogues into more detail. These scripts were provided by Erik Van Looy, director of the Flemish and American versions. In this thesis an empirical research approach was adopted. In a first step, we examined the visual content of the films to identify any differences between the three films. Secondly, we further compared the films by analysing the scripts. As previous research on the Flemish film Loft and its Dutch remake (Goorix, 2012) focused on cinematographic and narrative aspects, we decided to concentrate on the following four aspects: characters, locations, language and culture. In order to find explanations for our observations the literature was consulted.
5. **BACKGROUND**

5.1. **Story**

*Loft* tells the story of five married male friends who share a loft where they can steal time and secretly meet their mistresses. However, when the dead body of an unknown woman is found in the loft one morning, suspicion starts to strain their relationship. *Loft* is a classic whodunit which revolves around five characters. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that the story is plot-driven and not character-driven. This means that the focus is on action and plot changes rather than on character layering. According to Dancyger and Rush (2007), this is logical for a thriller, as too much attention on the characters would make it too difficult for the audience to follow the quick rhythm.

5.2. **Three times a movie**

The original idea for the scenario of *Loft* was developed by the Flemish television maker and script writer Bart De Pauw, who worked on it for four years (interview, Goorix, 2012). The expectations for director Erik Van Looy’s second big film were very high after his successful action thriller *De zaak Alzheimer* (2003). In 2008, the film was released in Flanders. With its 1.2 million cinemagoers *Loft* broke box office records. The film surpassed all expectations and became the most successful Flemish film ever, breaking Stijn Coninx’s 19-year-old record (*Koko Flanel*, 1990). Both the audience and the press were full of praise and to date the film is engraved in the Flemish collective memory (Vandemaele, 2014).

Incited by the overwhelming success of the Flemish film, the Netherlands were interested in remaking the film (Van Den Berg, 2010). The question could be raised why a film would be remade in the same language. One of the factors which helped to create the Flemish-Dutch
remake phenomenon\(^1\) (Ekker, 2010) is the disappointing figures\(^2\) of Dutch film releases in Flanders. This remake phenomenon should be contextualised within the linguistic and cultural gap between Flanders and the Netherlands. Stroop (2010, p. 121) explains that the rise of *tussentaal* in Flanders and *poldernederlands* in the Netherlands, two supra-regional colloquial languages that deviate from standard Dutch, made it more difficult for the Flemish and the Dutch to understand one another. This resulted in reciprocal subtitling. Moreover, according to Gunst (2004, p. 92-93) Flanders and the Netherlands have culturally grown apart since the rise of the commercial channel VTM. From then onwards the Flemish had their own commercial programmes and watched the Dutch television less and less.

Since 2000 several Dutch films had been remade in Flanders. However, this had never occurred in the opposite direction. *Loft* (2010) was the first remake of a Flemish film in the Netherlands. Originally the Flemish director Erik Van Looy planned to direct the Dutch remake as well. Nevertheless, when the American producer Steve Golin seemed interested in an American remake he advised Van Looy against it (Vandemaele, 2014). In the end, the film was directed by the Dutch Antoinette Beumer. The film was less successful than in Flanders, but did receive *platinum*, which equals more than 400,000 cinemagoers (interview, Goorix, 2012).

In 2014, the American remake of *Loft* was released, titled *The Loft*. Three years after it was shot, the long-awaited film was first released in Flanders at the Ghent Film Fest before being screened in the American theatres in January 2015 (De Ruyck, 2015). The film was directed by Erik Van Looy and the Flemish actor Matthias Schoenaerts had the chance to repeat his role. *The Loft* is the first American remake of a Flemish film (Duynslaegher, 2014).

5.3. **Reception of the American remake**

Contrary to the high expectations in Flanders, *The Loft* received largely negative reviews in the United States by both the popular press and renowned film critics. *L.A. Times* described the film as a “cheap knock-off” which reduces the characters, especially the women, to caricatures.

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\(^1\) This recent phenomenon first occurred in 2000 when Jan Verheyen directed *Team Spirit*, a remake of the Dutch film *All Stars* (Van de Velde, 1997). Verheyen continued remaking Dutch films: *Buitenspel* (2005) was based on *In Oranje* (Lürsen, 2003) and *Zot van A* (2010) was a remake of *Alles is liefde* (Lürsen, 2007).

\(^2\) An example is the film *Komt een vrouw bij de dokter* (Oelemans, 2009), which was a box-office hit in the Netherlands with no less than 1.2 million cinemagoers. In Flanders, on the other hand, a mere 16,000 went to see the film in the cinema (Ekker, 2010, p. 18).
The *Hollywood Reporter* called the plot “convoluted”, the dialogues “laughably silly” and generally criticized the film for “encouraging extramarital affairs”. A rare positive voice was the *Huffington Post*, which rates the film “above average” thanks to its “logical and difficult to anticipate ending”. The generally fierce criticism and low rate of cinemagoers, however, caused the film to be removed from 1,600 cinemas on average after only three weeks’ time, leaving a mere 250 cinemas to continue screening the film (De Wolf, 2015).

We could wonder why Flanders’ most successful film is a moderate success in the Netherlands, and completely unsuccessful in the U.S. According to Druxman, (1975) remakes hardly ever are the successes hoped for. Director Erik Van Looy explains that the critics may have been more suspicious and biased due to the three years’ delay of the American remake (Dumon, 2015). Furthermore, *The Loft* was launched with limited press showings to ensure that nothing of the plot would be revealed beforehand. According to Van Looy, this may have irritated the press (Van Alboom, 2015). Another reason could be that *The Loft*’s opening weekend was badly timed during the traditionally low-performing *Superbowl Weekend* for cinemas and together with the release of the immensely popular *American Sniper* (Eastwood, 2014). In terms of the film’s content, it could be argued that the theme of adultery was too touchy for the American audience. According to Van Looy, American film studio Paramount was enthusiastic about the scenario but would have preferred the five men to share a *Loft* to watch ice hockey or American football instead of committing adultery (Huyghebaert, 2015). This general rejection of extramarital affairs in the United States is illustrated by a recent survey (Gallup, 2013), which indicated adultery as one of the least accepted moral issues in the U.S. Lipset (1996, p. 274) talks about an overwhelming rejection and taboo on marital infidelity in the U.S. which has not changed since the seventies.

5.4. **Classification of the remakes**

In the literature study we described among others the different types of remakes (see 2.4), motivations for remaking a film (see 2.5) and criticism on remakes (see 2.6). We will now briefly discuss these topics in relation to the Dutch and American remakes of *Loft*.

Although we should bear in mind that the classification systems we studied are based on Hollywood productions instead of on small film circuits such as The Netherlands, two of the
three taxonomies can be applied to the Dutch and American remake. In regard to Druxman’s (1975) classification both remakes could be defined as direct remakes considering that they are very faithful to the original film, leaving plot and title unchanged. In Greenberg’s (2002) taxonomy both remakes can be classified as close remakes, limiting the number of adjustments to the original. As the films are not based on a literary work, Leitch’s (2002) classification system is less applicable.

In terms of motivation for remaking Loft, the Dutch director Antoinette Beumer found that the Flemish scenario by Bart De Pauw had great potential and was the ideal opportunity for her to reach a wider audience (Melchers, 2010). The Dutch and American director Erik Van Looy had several reasons for the American remake. Firstly, he thought that the incredible screenplay deserved to be seen on a wider scale, which could be reached by remaking the film in English (Temmerman, 2014). Secondly, Van Looy confirms Koos and Forrest’s (2002, p. 4) suggestion for remaking a film: the bigger budget for the American remake offered more possibilities and made it more appealing (De Rouck). Moreover, Van Looy saw the remake as a chance to improve the original, a typical desire of directors according to Konigsberg (as cited in Horton & McDougal, 1998).

Finally, in the critical view on remakes we concluded that remakes in general are granted a rather negative status. Although both the Dutch and American remakes do not disguise their remake status, mentioning the original film in the credit lines, Van Looy explains that he certainly did not use this as a promotion strategy, being well aware of the ingrained prejudices against remakes (interview, Goorix, 2012).

6. ANALYSIS

6.1. Characters

In this section we will discuss some specific elements that were treated differently in the three films: age, naming, race and women’s representation.
Figure 1: in the Dutch and American remakes the male characters have grown younger

A first adjustment we observed is the age of the male protagonists. Whereas in the Flemish original, the five friends’ ages range from early thirties to late forties, they are all in their thirties in the Dutch and American films. The women in general are younger than the men, but the age gap is less pronounced in the remakes, as the men have grown younger (see figure 1). This was a localization strategy by the Dutch distributor Rachel Van Bommel who thought it more acceptable for the Dutch audience that a younger man would be able to seduce all these young women (interview, Goorix, 2012). Analogously, the choice for a younger American cast was a localization strategy by the Dutch/American director Erik Van Looy, but for a different reason. He found that a smaller age range would make the friendship bound between the five friends seem more credible to the American audience. In the Flemish Loft he opted for an older cast because he considered Koen De Bouw and Filip Peeters – who were older than scripted – the ideal actors for the Flemish film (interview, Goorix, 2012).

A second aspect that was adapted in the remakes is the naming of the characters. The majority of the names were changed in the Dutch Loft. Sometimes only the first name was changed (e.g. Vincent Stevens became Matthias Stevens), but in most cases the entire name was altered (e.g. Chris Van Outryve became Bart Fenekker). Flemish names with a French origin, such as Delpoorte and Tyberghein, were changed to Lunter and De Nijs. This could probably be explained by the historically more profound French influence in Flanders than in the Netherlands (Van der Sijs, 1996). It is noticeable that although a different language is spoken in the United States, the names were adapted less radically than in the Dutch remake, and some names even remained unaltered (e.g. Vincent Stevens). All names were adapted to the English spelling, but the majority is still very recognizable (e.g. Chris Van Outryve became Chris
Vanowen, Luc Seynaeve became Luke Seacord). In both remakes the name adjustments can be considered localization strategies aimed at increasing familiarity with the target audience.

Figure 2: in the Dutch remake an actor with a different skin colour was cast

![Dutch remake actors with different skin colours](image)

An eye-catching difference is that in the Dutch Loft one of the five friends, Tom Fenneker, has a different skin colour, whereas in the Flemish and American Loft all five characters are white. (see figure 2). The Dutch director of Loft, Antoinette Beumer, explains:

*I had a discussion with Erik [Van Looy] about that choice, because he said that he wouldn’t dare doing that. He would have gotten into trouble for letting an immigrant play that specific role. With us [in the Netherlands] that matters a lot less. I dare to take that decision because it is a representation of our society. A society where immigrants are integrated on all levels, so also in a white friend group.*

(Interview, Goorix, 2012, own translation)

Van Tubergen and Maas (2006, p. 101-102) argue that the Netherlands are regularly associated with tolerance regarding minorities and refers to a European social survey (Coenders, Lubbers, & Scheepers, 2002) that researched to what extent ethnic minorities were perceived as a threat by eighteen European countries. Whereas the Netherlands scored below the European average, Belgium scored above. This seemingly positive result for the Netherlands and the statement by Beumer that the Netherlands are a racially highly integrated society should, however, be balanced by the annual report of integration in the Netherlands (Gijsberts & Dagevos, 2009). This report found that immigrants have very little contact with native Dutch inhabitants. According to Sleegers (2007, p. 67), the Netherlands were unjustly seen as the ideal multicultural society before 2000, keeping dark on many integration issues. From 2000 onwards, the situation worsened with the success of populist right-wing and nationalist right-wing parties which caused the intolerance towards minorities to increase. We can conclude that
Dutch society may not be as tolerant and integrated as Beumer claims, but that casting an actor with a different skin colour was an idealistic attempt to reflect Dutch society.

In the American remake, however, none of the five friends have a different skin colour. This is not a representative choice given that the American *Loft* is located in New Orleans, a city that is among the ten blackest cities in the United States with a population of no less than 61.2 percent of Afro-Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). On the basis of demography, we could therefore expect more than half of the actors to be Afro-Americans. Nevertheless, only one black actor is cast in the supportive role of detective *Cohagan*. Moreover, during the scenes filmed on the streets of New Orleans, very few black people are screened. The American director, Erik Van Looy, explained that he considered casting an Afro-American actor, but was hesitant to cast him in the role of the bad guy (interview, Goorix, 2012). Manchel (1990, p. 854) confirms that in film history black people have very often been stereotyped in popular American films, being typecast in inferior roles. Nevertheless, the American filmmakers could have cast black actors for other roles. A recent study (Smith, Choueti, & Pieper, 2013) which examined ethnic diversity in six hundred popular American films showed that *The Loft* is no exception. It argued that racial minorities are clearly underrepresented in comparison to the audiences that they target. In conclusion, it can be stated that the American *Loft* is not adapted to the demographic reality of New Orleans and therefore toes the line of popular American motion picture content limiting ethnic diversity.

As we explained in the background section (see 5.1 *Story*) the focus of the films is on the plot instead of on the characters. We particularly noticed this in the female roles, which are in all three films in the background. In the Dutch *Loft*, however, the women receive more screen time than in the Flemish and American versions. In addition, we had the general impression that the female characters are represented in a friendlier and warmer manner. An example of this is the character of Eva, who is characterised in the original script as cool and gloomy (*afstandelijk en somber*). In the Flemish and American versions she is distant, hardly smiles and does not cook herself, but has personnel to do this for her. By contrast, in the Dutch *Loft* she smiles more often, laughs at jokes, gives her husband a spontaneous kiss and cooks for his friends. According to the Dutch director, Antoinette Beumer, representing the women as more amiable was a deliberate choice, because she found that the women in the original were represented as an excuse for committing adultery, which the Dutch audience would not accept (interview, Goorix, 2012). We also found that the women in the Dutch *Loft* are more assertive. For
Example, Tom’s younger sister Linda who is in love with Mathias takes the initiative to try to kiss him in public. In the Flemish and American *Loft*, however, she is far more shy and timid. Example 1 illustrates the women’s generally negative attitude in the Flemish and American *Loft*, whereas in the Dutch *Loft*, the female characters are less rejecting.

Example 1: Attitude of the female characters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Flemish</th>
<th></th>
<th>Dutch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barbara: Polyamorie… Dat ge meerdere relaties kunt hebben met meerdere personen…</td>
<td></td>
<td>Annette: <em>Ik zou best een affaire willen maar ik vind het zoveel gedoe.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miriam: <em>En uw baas doet da?</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barbara: <em>Ja, die heeft én een vrouw én een vriendin en die weten dat van elkaar… Hij ziet zowel zijn vrouw als zijn vriendin graag, zegt hij, dus waarom kiezen?</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miriam: <em>En die zijn vrouw gaat daar mee akkoord, ofwa? Wa voor een dwaze kalle is da?</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An explanation for this difference in attitude could be found in the more masculine Flemish and American societies where social gender roles are distinct and men are supposed to be tough and assertive, whereas women are expected to be modest and tender (Hofstede, 2001, p. 297). Dutch society on the other hand, is far more feminine. This means that these gender role tend to overlap more frequently and women are expected to be assertive as well. Wouters (2005, p. 17-18) states that in general the Dutch women are more emancipated than the Flemish women. However, if we place this in a global perspective, we must acknowledge that in all three countries women are fairly emancipated. The Global Gender Gap Index (Hausmann, Tyson, &

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3 In the Dutch *Loft* this scene was completely rewritten.
Zahidi, 2012), which is designed to measure gender equality, showed that the Netherlands belong to the world top regarding women’s emancipation, followed by Belgium. The United States is listed lower, but the American women are still among the top twenty of most emancipated women in the world.

We can conclude that in terms of characters several adjustments have been made geared towards the Dutch and American target audiences. First of all, the age gap between the characters was bridged to gain more credibility and the names were adapted to increase familiarity with the target audiences. Secondly, in the Dutch Loft an actor with a darker skin colour was cast for a leading role, which was intended to mirror Dutch society. By contrast, the ethnically less diverse American film was not adapted to reflect the predominantly black population of New Orleans. Finally, representing the Dutch female characters as more amiable and assertive could be seen as a localization strategy to a more feminine Dutch culture.

6.2. Locations

The most significant difference in location is the city where the films are shot. The original Loft is located in Antwerp, whereas the Dutch remake is situated in Amsterdam and the American remake in New Orleans. It is noticeable that all three settings are crowded and urban, which are typical elements of a thriller story (Dancyger & Rush, 2007). Both the original and the remakes thus confirm that prescribed pattern. Another similarity between these three cities is that they are well-known harbour cities. The Antwerp harbour is the second largest in Europe. In that regard we could argue that Rotterdam, which has the largest harbour in Europe, may have been a more logical choice for the Dutch remake than Amsterdam. Moreover, Rotterdam is more modern than Amsterdam, which is more suitable for a thriller (Dancyger & Rush, 2007). The Flemish producer Hilde De Laere confirmed that Van Looy would have preferred Rotterdam for the Dutch remake given its modern architecture and resemblance to Antwerp, but the Dutch distributor and director chose Amsterdam because it would be more familiar to the Dutch audience (interview, Goorix, 2012). This motivation explains why Amsterdam is visualized more clearly than Antwerp or New Orleans. Although the majority of the film scenes is shot indoors, during the few outdoor scenes Amsterdam’s typical waterways, small shopping
streets and *het IJ*, a new modern upcoming area, are shown. In the Flemish and American versions the cities hold a less prominent place and are shot from a more anonymous angle.

The loft, as the title of all three films suggests, is the most important location where the majority of the scenes are filmed. In the original Flemish script the loft is described as the *sleeping monster of steel*. This ominous atmosphere that script writer Bart De Pauw had in mind is visible in all three industrial-type condo buildings with their sharp edges and sleek, minimalist architecture. All three lofts are located in the vicinity of water. According to the Flemish producer De Laere, the water surroundings symbolise the feeling of inviolability that these five men experience sharing an apartment to commit adultery (interview, Goorix, 2012). In the Dutch *Loft* this is illustrated most clearly as the loft can only be reached by boat. In general, water takes a more prominent position in the Dutch film than in the other versions. We could argue that this is an adjustment to the Dutch audience as The Netherlands have always had a close connection with water bearing in mind for example their numerous water works (Huisman, as cited in Van Engelen, 2005, p. 28). All three lofts are located on one of the top floors of a *lofty* apartment block in a desolate part of the city, which may as well symbolize the five friends’ inviolability. Interesting to know is that the interior of all three *Lofts* was built and shot in Vilvoorde (Flanders) as it was financially more viable according to Van Looy (Ruëll, 2012). All three lofts are quite similarly decorated with high-class design furniture. A reason for that could be that the same art director, Kurt Loyens, was used in all three films. Of all three lofts the American upmarket loft makes the most luxurious and spacious impression with an extra floor added. The higher budget\(^4\) for the American remake could account for that. Moreover, according to Kohls (1984), Americans in general attach greater importance to material objects than other cultures do.

The interrogation room is another important location. In all three films this room is similarly decorated with a lattice pattern as a recurring element. In the Dutch *Loft* the camera sometimes films the characters from behind this lattice pattern. This pattern could be seen as a symbol for the psychological entrapment of the characters, which intensifies as the story evolves and the protagonists are further questioned (Melpon, 2008). The interrogation rooms in the Flemish and American films seem significantly darker than in the Dutch film. In general, it could be

\(^4\) A budget of 11 million euros was allocated for the American remake, compared to 3.2 million euros for the Flemish original and 3.5 million euros for the Dutch remake (Vandemaele, 2014).
argued that more light and colour is used throughout the entire Dutch remake. The Dutch director Antoinette Beumer, explained that this was a deliberate choice to support the warmer characters of her female roles (interview, Goorix, 2012). The darker setting in the Dutch and American Loft is probably a consequence of the choice for the same director of photography, Nicholas Karakatsanis, who is known as the prince of darkness, referring to his generally dark style (Vandemaele, 2014).

In conclusion, it can be stated that a relatively low number of adjustments has been made in terms of locations, but that in the Dutch Loft more choices have been made bearing in mind the Dutch target audience. Locating the remakes in different cities was an inevitable adjustment to the Dutch and American target countries. However, it should be noted that despite the adaptation of the setting, all three cities bear close resemblance and that the two most important locations, the loft and the interrogation room, have a very similar architecture and interior. The choice for Amsterdam instead of Rotterdam was a deliberate adjustment to increase familiarity with the Dutch audience. Moreover, the addition of extra colour in the Dutch remake was aimed at supporting the more amiable female characters. Finally, all three lofts are located in the surroundings of water, but in the Dutch Loft this is screened most explicitly, which could be seen as an adaptation to the Dutch culture and history which is characterised by the presence of water.

6.3. Language

As suggested in the literature study, the introduction of language was an important turning point in the history of remakes. According to Verpoorten (1983), language is a vital element in film considering that dialogues largely determine a film’s credibility. The producer of the Dutch Loft, Mark Punt (Radio 1, 2010), explained that the original Flemish dialogues, scripted by Bart De Pauw, were considered too Flemish and were therefore adapted by the Dutch crime writer Saskia Noord. Analogously, the dialogues for the American Loft were reconsidered by the American screenwriter Wesley Strick. However, no large alterations could be introduced in the American remake as the Flemish director Erik Van Looy strongly insisted on remaining faithful to the original script (Temmerman, 2014). According to the Dutch director of Loft, Antoinette Beumer (interview, Goorix, 2012), Van Looy did not accept all the alterations suggested by crime writer Saskia Noord, especially some language elements he looked upon
as too direct and coarse (te direct en plat). In this language analysis we will mainly focus on the comparison between the Flemish and the Dutch Loft as many linguistic adjustments can be observed despite their common language. To conclude, we will discuss some notable linguistic elements in the American Loft.

Beheydt (2002, p. 34-39) argues that although officially the same language is spoken in Flanders and in the Netherlands, this does not fully correspond to practical reality. Written formal communication in both regions may be very similar as lexicon and grammar are basically the same. However, when it comes to spoken language, many differences can be distinguished. In Flanders, another variant has developed, next to the standard language and regional variants, namely the Flemish tussentaal. Tussentaal is a supra-regional, semi-standardized colloquial form of Dutch, also called a mesolect. This informal variant has characteristics of both standard Dutch and regional variants, and is generally accepted in Flanders. Especially in grammar, lexicon and pronunciation it significantly differs from standard Dutch. In the Netherlands, on the other hand, the informal spoken language bears closer resemblance to standard Dutch. Absillis, Jaspers, and Van Hoof (2012) argue that the Dutch are therefore less tolerant towards the Flemish mesolect.

Beheydt (2002, p. 35-36) enumerates a number of characteristics of the Flemish mesolect, many of which can be found in the dialogues of the Flemish Loft. These characteristics are generally eliminated in the Dutch Loft as they were probably considered too Flemish.

Example 2: Omission of ge/gij and u/uw

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flemish</th>
<th>Ann: Ge kunt alleen maar gekwetst worden door diegenen die ge graag ziet.  ‘Eb ‘k van u geleerd.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Ann: Je kan alleen maar gekwetst worden door degene waar je van houdt. ‘Eb ik van jou geleerd.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
be interpreted as starting informal (ge) and ending formal (u) in the Netherlands, whereas users of the Flemish mesolect interpret the entire phrase as informal.

Example 3: Pronunciation of the final –t and initial -h

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flemish</th>
<th>Interrogator: Om oe laat was da?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Interrogator: Hoe laat was dat?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of pronunciation, speakers of the Flemish mesolect tend to omit the final –t and the initial -h. This tendency was heard very frequently in the Flemish film, but less often in the Dutch film (see example 3). Rys and Taeldeman (2007, p. 6-7) note that the omission of the -h is also heard in standard Dutch. As Dutch colloquial speech bears close resemblance to standard Dutch, this could explain why in the Dutch remake the –h is sometimes omitted as well (e.g. Ik weet en niet).

A morphological difference between Flemish and Northern Dutch is the use of diminutives. The standard–je diminutive very often changes to –ke in tussentaal, not only in the case of nouns but also with adverbs. Examples from the Flemish Loft (followed by the variant used in the Dutch remake) include plekske (plekje), vrouwke (vrouw), zoietske (zoiets) effekes (even), etc. Another typical element of tussentaal that was frequently omitted in the Dutch film is the conjugation of articles and pronouns: den inzet (de inzet), diene brief (die brief), mijne cadeau (mijn cadeau), etc.

In terms of lexicon, we will discuss standard versus non-standard language, synonymy, polysemy, region-specific expressions, loan words and swear words. Some typically Flemish, and often more informal or even dialectical, words used in the original film are: plezant (prettig), flikken (polite), bleiten (janken), pree (salaris). In the Dutch remake on the other hand, more standard language equivalents are chosen, which are understood in both Flanders and the Netherlands. An exception to that tendency is the term wethouder, member of the city council, which is only used in the Netherlands. By contrast, the term used in the Flemish Loft burgemeester, the executive of the city council, is understood in both language areas. Another lexical issue are polysemous words which carry a different meaning in both language areas, for instance the informal word poepen. In the Netherlands poepen can only refer to taking a shit,
whereas in Flanders it is also a vulgar expression for *having sex*. To avoid that confusion, the term was not used in the Dutch *Loft*.

At phrase level, we observe that some linguistic expressions are literally copied from the Flemish original to the Dutch remake, for example *iemand erin luizen* (*play a trick on someone*). On the other hand, in the case of region-specific expressions a more idiomatic equivalent was favoured, for example the typically Flemish phrase *hij heeft het ook aan zijne rekker* (*he let himself be fooled*) changed into *hij is er ook ingetuind*. When students rent a room this is called *op kot gaan in Leuven* in the Flemish *Loft* and *op kamers gaan in Leiden* in the Dutch *Loft*. Leuven and Leiden being two university towns. Two expressions with a very different word origin are *de vetpotten verdelen* (*to share the profits*) and *de poen verdelen* (*to share the money*). The Flemish expression *de vetpotten verdelen* refers to the biblical expression *de vleespotten van Egypte*, jars in which meat was prepared, and is symbol of the Egyptian years of prosperity. In the Dutch *Loft* the expression *de poen verdelen* is used, *poen* being thieves’ slang (Bargoens) for money. Finally, an interesting expression that was added in the Dutch *Loft* is *is geld verdienen als water* (*to earn big money*). According to Huisman, (as cited in Van Engelen, 2005, p. 28) expressions related to water are very typical of the Netherlands as water has always formed an important part of their history and culture. This expression is in line with our finding that water plays a more prominent role in the Dutch film (see 6.2).

As regards loan words analysis showed that the Flemish dialogues contain a higher number of French loan words, which were generally replaced in the Dutch version: *in affront vallen* (*voor lul zetten*), *garçon* (*ober*), *gazet* (*krant*), *etc*. According to Van der Sijs (1996, p. 171-173), Flemish Dutch generally contains more French loan words than Dutch from the Netherlands. A difference in location and history may account for that tendency. Not only was the Flemish language influenced by cross-border interactions with France, French is also an official language in Belgium and roughly half of the country forms part of the French speaking Walloon provinces. The Netherlands lack that close connection with French. Moreover, from a historical perspective, although both regions were ruled by France, the Netherlands were more independent and less influenced than Flanders (Van der Sijs, 1996).

Another language that affected Dutch, but in a later stadium, is English (Van der Sijs, 1996, p. 317-320). The major influx of English loan words, especially from the 20th century onwards,
is expressed more clearly in the Dutch Loft as more English words slipped in: *what the fuck, bullshit, chickies, no worries, chill, personal assistant, shut up, geef mij maar something special, everything under control*, etc. Whereas in the Flemish film more frequently the classic Dutch word (*e.g. naaktzwemmen*) is preferred, the Dutch characters tend to use its English equivalent (*e.g. skinny-dipping*). This finding could be explained by Flanders’ long struggle for the recognition of Flemish and the need language purists felt to protect their language against foreign influences (Cohen, as cited in Van Der Sijs, 1996, p. 311). The Netherlands on the other hand, never had to fight for the acknowledgement of their language and have always been more internationally orientated than Flanders (Klimaszewska, 2006, p. 52). Similar purist movements exist in the Netherlands as well, but are less influential.

In terms of swear words, the abusive language used in the Flemish and Dutch Loft is peppered with English words. In both films words as *fuck* and *shit* are uttered very often. According to Van Sterkenburg (as cited in De Moor, 2008), a professor at the University of Leiden who examined Flemish and Dutch cursing, this increase of English is caused by the influence of television series and the Internet over the past decade. As regards choice of words, we noticed a difference between the Flemish and Dutch Loft. Van Sterkenburg explains that the Flemish tend to use more words related to faeces and genitals in their offensive language, whereas the Dutch seek their inspiration in illness. This observation is confirmed by the very frequent use of *kloten* (*testicles*) and *kak* (*shit*) in the Flemish Loft, whereas the Dutch characters use *tering* (*type of tuberculosis*). We must notice, however, that the words *zak* (*dick*) and *lul* (*prick*) were also sounded in the Dutch remake. If we compare the Flemish and Dutch swearing to the English abusive language in *The Loft*, genitals as *dick* and faeces as *shit* are heard as well. The use of illness-related swear words, however, seems to be restricted to the Dutch language. Instead, religious cursing is heard more frequently in the American Loft with numerous references to *God, hell* and *Jezus*. According to Jay (1992, p. 74-75), religious expressions in cursing are very common in American English as they “express milder forms of anger compared to curses referring to sex and obscenity”.

Example 4: Creation of play on words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flemish</th>
<th>Chris: Ik zie dat ge ook tijdens het weekend werkt... Ge zijt wel een heel toegewijde assistente... De burgemeester mag van geluk spreken.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Finally, as we mentioned earlier, the Flemish dialogues were translated for the Dutch and American remakes as part of the localization process. Example 4 illustrates that translating into another language may offer new phrasing possibilities. By adding the verb to screw a play on words was created in the American film. This witty formulation results in a more direct dialogue, which is in accordance with the general directness in the American communication style as we will discuss in the next section (6.4).

Example 5: Expressions related to the gambling industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flemish</td>
<td>Vincent: Bent u een gokker, mijnheer de burgemeester?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tyberghhein: En u, mijnheer Stevens, neemt u graag risico's?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vincent: Dat hangt af van de inzet...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vincent: Mag ik u succes wensen in het spel, want in de liefde heeft u het alvast niet meer nodig!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Matthias: Bent u een gokker, mijnheer de wethouder?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>De Nijs: En u, mijnheer Stevens, neemt u graag risico's?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matthias: Dat hangt af van de inzet...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matthias: Mag ik u succes wensen in het spel, want in de liefde heeft u het absoluut niet meer nodig!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>Vincent: Are you a gambling man, Mr. Rotkin?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fry: What about you, Mr. Stevens, do you like to take chances?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vincent: As a matter of fact I do, especially when I'm holding a hand of hearts...

(...)  
Vincent: If you are as lucky on the tables as you are in love, then I'm sure you will hit your jackpots!

Another situation where the English language offers more possibilities in translation is during the casino scene (see example 5). Analysis showed that the American dialogues contain a wider range of expressions related to the gambling industry than the Flemish dialogues. These findings were corroborated by Boers and Stengers’ (2008, p. 69) linguistic analysis which indicated that the English language contains about twice as many card-game and gambling idioms as the Dutch language. Consequently, the introduction of these extra idioms related to the gambling industry could be seen as an adjustment to the American audience.

In conclusion, it can be stated that in terms of language the Dutch dialogues have been adapted by eliminating the characteristics of the typically Flemish tussentaal. Moreover, region-specific Flemish words and expressions were replaced by Dutch equivalents. These equivalents often bear closer resemblance to standard Dutch. As far as foreign languages are concerned, our analysis showed a more profound influence of French on Flemish colloquial speech and English on Dutch colloquial speech. In addition, we observed that the Flemish characters used a higher number of swear words related to faeces and genitals, whereas their Dutch equivalents were related to illness and genitals. The American characters, on the other hand, had a preference for religious cursing and used a higher number of idioms related to the gambling industry.

6.4. Culture

In the literature study we concluded that a remake is an act of localization in the context of film. Localization involves adjusting a product to the target audience. It is therefore crucial that remakes take into account their target audiences. According to Moran (2009) and Mandilberg (2008), culture is a crucial element for successful localization. The target audience should be able to culturally identify with a remake. We must, however, stress that culture is a very broad
category and that some of the elements discussed in the previous categories (characters, locations and language) can be considered cultural adjustments as well. In this section we will discuss the following subjects: directness, boastfulness, attitude towards authorities, celebrating style, sex, use of drugs and cultural references.

Example 6: Different levels of directness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sarah: Ik heb er al beter zien liegen dan gij.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Sarah: Je bent een slechte leugenaar Bart Vanekken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>Sarah: A friend who’s out of town? Save it for some girl who’ll actually buy your bullshit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A first cultural difference that we remarked is the level of directness. The Dutch and American characters generally come across as more direct and assertive than the Flemish characters (see example 6). Antoinette Beumer, explicitly wanted to incorporate this difference in attitude in the Dutch Loft (interview, Goorix, 2012). According to the Flemish/American director, Erik Van Looy, a fundamental difference between the Flemish and Dutch national character is the higher level of assertiveness in the Netherlands compared to the shy and modest Flemish nature (interview, Goorix, 2012). He claims that the same assertiveness characterizes the American citizen (Temmerman, 2014). Several authors confirm Van Looy’s and Beumer’s intuition about the level of directness in Dutch, Flemish and American people. Wouters (2005, p. 19-21), for instance, states that despite their common language the Netherlands and Flanders are culturally very different, the Dutch being far more articulate than the generally reserved Flemish people. Professor Claeys (as cited in Permentier, 2004) argues that the Flemish tend to consider this direct way of speaking as impolite, whereas the Dutch see it as a form of honesty. Hall (1990, p. 146) confirms the American preference for directness and their uneasiness with indirectness in conversation. Okabe (1983) and Miller (1994) both researched the American communication style and characterized it as forthright and explicit. This commitment to assertiveness is illustrated by the high number of assertiveness trainings that have emerged in the United States since the 70s (Kohls, 1984).

According to professors Gerritsen and Claeys (as cited in Permentier, 2014), this difference in assertiveness between Flanders and the Netherlands originates in education. Whereas Dutch children are stimulated to form and express opinions, the focus in Flemish schools and
households is more on listening and reproduction. Moreover, Hofstede (2001) argues that Flanders has a high *power distance index* and a high *uncertainty avoidance index*. This combination results in a more hierarchical and insecure Flemish society, which may account for the Flemish inhibition to directly state their opinion. By contrast, both the Netherlands and the United States have a low *power distance index* and a low *uncertainty avoidance index*, resulting in less hierarchical and more self-assured societies in which people feel less restraint to speak freely. Finally, a possible historic explanation for the Flemish shyness is the uncertainty they felt to speak their Flemish dialects in a society dominated by French high society (Evenepoel, 2013, p.55-57).

Example 7: Boastful expressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flemish</th>
<th><em>Vincent</em>: Zo’n trouwfeest! Geld maakt niet gelukkig, zeggen ze dan...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Filip</em>: Dat zijn wel serieuze meiskes hè... Weet gij wel hoeveel die kosten? (Marnix does not answer.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td><em>Matthias</em>: Zo’n chique trouwfeest! Geld maakt niet gelukkig, zeggen ze dan...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Tom</em>: Dat zijn wel serieuze meisjes hè... Weet je wel wat ze kosten? (Willem does not answer.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td><em>Vincent</em>: Money can’t buy happiness? Tell it to the valet out front, parking our Beemers for two-buck tips!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Philipe</em>: You know what they cost?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Marty</em>: How much? I might have it on me right now!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our analysis showed that in the American *Loft* some *boastful* expressions were added that do not occur in the Flemish and Dutch *Loft* (see example 7). According to Hall (1990, p. 146), “bragging and boastfulness are common among Americans”. Furthermore, Van Ginkel (1997, p. 232) indicates that American bragging is a typical element of their culture. Nevertheless, it would be ill-considered to regard boastfulness as a characteristic of the American culture based on the opinion of two authors and several expressions scripted in one particular film. Moreover, we should bear in mind that these expressions may seem bragging only from a Flemish perspective. Hofstede (1991, p. 79-80) explained that American job applicants in Flanders come across as overselling themselves by boasting and using superlatives, whereas Flemish job applicants are too modest and undersell themselves through the eyes of Americans.
Example 8: Attitude towards authorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Flemish  | Chris: *Fatum nos iungebit is fout*…
          | Interrogator: *Hoe bedoelt ge, fout?*
          | Chris: *De onvoltooid toekomende tijd van het werkwoord verbinden, iungere is niet iungebit maar iunget. Er zou dus ‘Fatum nos iunget’ moeten staan… Het lot zal ons verbinden. Diegene die ge zoekt, heeft een klassieke fout in het Latijn gemaakt. Maar dat wist ge zelf waarschijnlijk ook al…*
          | Interrogator: *Kent ge de uitdrukking fuck you? Het is wel geen Latijn, maar ge verstaat mij wel, zeker?*
| Dutch    | Bart: *Fatum nos iungebit is fout*…
          | Interrogator: *Hoe bedoelt u, fout?*
          | Bart: *De onvoltooid toekomende tijd van het werkwoord verbinden, iungere is niet iungebit maar iunget. Er zou dus eigenlijk ‘Fatum nos iunget’ moeten staan… Diegene die u zoekt, heeft een klassieke fout in het Latijn gemaakt. Maar dat wist u zelf waarschijnlijk ook al…*
          | (The interrogator is silent and considers his suggestion.)
| American | Chris: *Fatum nos iungebit is wrong*…
          | Interrogator: *How so?*
          | Chris: *The future imperfect tense of the verb unite, iungere is not iungebit, it’s iunget. It should say ‘Fatum nos iunget’. The person you’re looking for made a classic Latin error… But you probably already knew that, too.*
          | Interrogator: *Are you familiar with the phrase fuck you? It’s of Germanic origin, but you can guess the meaning!*

Analysis showed that there is a difference in the *attitude towards authorities* between the three films. During one of the interrogation scenes Chris/Bart suggests that the Latin proverb written with the blood of the corpse is wrong and that therefore the murderer probably did not master Latin (see example 8). In the Dutch *Loft* the interrogator takes this suggestion into serious consideration, whereas in the Flemish and American *Loft* the detective immediately feels offended and puts Chris down to size. This difference in reaction could be explained by Hofstede’s (2001) *power distance index*, which is significantly higher in Flanders than in the Netherlands and in the United States. This may result in stricter hierarchical differences and an interrogator exerting his powers more explicitly in the Flemish film. However, Hofstede’s
assumption that in the light of their higher power distance index the Flemish adopt a more formal attitude towards authorities than the Dutch is refuted by the Dutch use of the polite form in contrast to the Flemish informal ge-form. An explanation why the Dutch interrogator feels less quickly offended and is more willing to consider other people’s opinion may be found in the debate culture which is more present in the Netherlands than in Flanders (Permentier, 2014).

Another aspect where the Dutch Loft differs from the Flemish and American films is in their celebrating style. During the wedding scene the Dutch characters are very excited and dance with abandon, even the more reserved and aged Rob De Nijs. By contrast, in the Flemish and American Loft the characters celebrate far more modestly and dance more calmly. This difference is also expressed in the classical violin music played during the Flemish and American wedding compared to the more compelling gypsy orchestra and disco music played during the Dutch wedding. The more enthusiastic celebrating style in the Dutch remake confirmed our intuition from a Flemish perspective bearing in mind the Oranjegekte (Orange madness) during Koningsdag (King’s Day) when the entire country is partying elatedly. However, Zahn and Linthout (1989) claim the opposite and give a religious explanation to the difference in festivity between the Flemish and the Dutch, the Catholic Flanders being more abundant than the sober Protestant Netherlands. It should, however, be noted that a significant part of the Netherlands is Catholic and that Flanders also has a minority Protestant group (Knippenberg, 1992, p. 1). Moreover, the question should be raised to what extent present day secularized society is still influenced by religion. A research report on religion in the 21st century carried out by The Central Bureau of Statistics (Schmeets & Van der Bie, 2009) concluded that the austere Protestant lifestyle is steadily vanishing in the Netherlands.

A clear difference between the three films is in the screening of nudity and sex. In the Flemish original sex scenes are subtly filmed from the side or from a distance and little nudity is shown. The American remake is even more implicit showing sex scenes in a very suggestive manner and ensuring that naked body parts are nearly always covered by a sheet. The Dutch remake, on the other hand, screens far more explicit sex scenes and not only shows nudity for longer periods of time but also adds extra nude scenes. The permissive sexual morality in the Netherlands may account for this explicitness (Frijhoff & Spies, 2004, p. 107). Antoinette Beumer, the director of the Dutch remake, explains that she found the sex scenes too vague, distant and stylized in the Flemish original and therefore wanted to screen this more clearly in
the Dutch Loft (interview, Goorix, 2012). The Flemish director, Erik Van Looy, states that he is rather a fan of the implicit approach and would have felt too shy to film the sex scenes in Beumer’s manner. Nevertheless, he understood her choice given the more open attitude towards sex in the Netherlands. Van Looy remarks that Flanders trails behind, referring to Dutch films as Turks fruit (Verhoeven, 1973) and Keetje Tippel (Verhoeven, 1975), which became very popular in Flanders as the Flemish films did not show that much nudity (interview, Goorix, 2012). Koolhaas (2013) argues that the Netherlands were very early in televising the first sex education programme (Open en Bloot, 1974). It can thus be suggested that the Dutch Loft shows more explicit nudity in the light of their progressive history of screening sex.

By contrast, the American film shows the least sex and nudity. During the filming of the American remake Van Looy noticed that American actors very strictly stipulate in contracts which of their body parts can be screened naked (Temmerman, 2014). Moreover, he argued that only in the United States the film was R-rated, prohibiting under aged to see it among others due to its sexual content. According to Klein (2012), America fights a continuing war on sex, imposing laws that restrict sex and censoring films that show the slightest part of nudity. A reason for this firm rejection could be found in the traditional American Puritan-Protestant values, which fiercely oppose sex and nudity. Although these values date back to the time of the early English colonizers, recent studies (Uhlmann, Poehlman, Tannenbaum, & Bargh, 2010) provided evidence that the judgement and behaviour of contemporary Americans is still implicitly influenced by Puritan values regarding sex, disapproving of, for example, revealing clothing and sensual dances. These effects were observed not only among devout American Protestants, but also among non-Protestant and less religious Americans. Conversely, in present-day Dutch society the influence of Protestant values is waning (Schmeets & Van der Bie, 2009). Although it is nowhere near the norm, Althen (2003, p. 179) argued that some strict Puritan American families even forbid their children to interact with the other sex until a certain age. A small detail probably adapted in that regard in the American remake is the age of Zoe, the younger sister of Philip who loses her virginity to the significantly older Vincent. Whereas in the Flemish and Dutch films she is only seventeen years, she is twenty in the American remake. This age adaptation and limitation of sex and nude scenes could be seen as adjustments to a more prudish American audience.

Another element that is adapted in the Dutch Loft is the use of drugs. During the dinner scene Tom goes to the bathroom to snort a few lines of drugs when Rob and Marjolein suddenly
enter. Nevertheless, Tom does not have an air of feeling caught nor does he try to hide his drugs, whereas his equivalent characters in the Flemish and American Loft immediately put the drugs away. An explanation for that opener attitude towards drugs in the Dutch Loft may be found in the progressive drugs policy in the Netherlands which tolerates the use of soft drugs in small quantities. Moreover, a very unique phenomenon are the Dutch coffeeshops where the sale and consumption of cannabis is permitted (Leuw, 1991). It should, however, be noted that this tolerance is only aimed at soft drugs and policies have become stricter since the introduction of the weed pass in 2012. Nevertheless, compared to Flanders, where coffeeshops are illegal, and the United States, where they only exist on a very limited scale, we can argue that the Netherlands are more tolerant towards the public consumption of soft drugs.

Finally, we noticed that in the Dutch Loft several culture-specific references were added, such as the Efteling, Vrouw Holle and Joods Historisch Museum, which are all typically Dutch tourist attractions. In addition, the traditional Dutch children’s song In Holland staat een huis is sung and the typical voice of Calimero is imitated. Calimero is an Italian cartoon series that was dubbed in the Netherlands. It was broadcast in Flanders as well but was far more popular in the Netherlands. The Flemish and American Loft do not contain such explicit cultural references. The introduction of these Dutch national and cultural symbols could therefore be seen as an attempt to increase familiarity with the Dutch audience. However, the Dutch director of Loft, Antoinette Beumer, stated that she did not deliberately add these elements to make the remake more recognizable to the Dutch audience (interview, Goorix, 2012). This statement shows that although some adjustments may seem deliberate localization strategies by the filmmakers, they may as well be coincidental or reflect personal preferences.

We can conclude that in terms of culture a relatively high number of adjustments has been made geared towards the target audiences. Firstly, both the Dutch and American characters come across as more direct reflecting the assertive communication style of the Dutch and American people compared to the indirect style of the Flemish people. Secondly, sex and nudity were screened more explicitly in the Dutch Loft in the light of the opener sexual moral and progressive history of screening sex in the Netherlands. On the other hand, the more subtle screening of sex in the American Loft can be explained by the conservative Puritan values that continue to be influential in modern-day America, whereas the influence of religion in Dutch society is waning. A final possible localization strategy is the opener stance taken on drugs in
the Dutch *Loft*, which could be seen as a reflection of the progressive drugs policy in the Netherlands.
7. CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this thesis was to determine whether and to what extent the Dutch and American remakes of the Flemish film *Loft* have been adapted in terms of four specific aspects: *characters, locations, language* and *culture*. Secondly, we discussed whether the changes we identified can be considered adjustments geared towards the Dutch and American target audiences. In order to do so, we examined whether these changes can be explained by differences between the Flemish, Dutch and American culture as described in the literature. In several cases our analysis led us to take a closer look at certain social topics in society such as race, drugs and sex.

Both the Dutch and American remakes can be categorized as faithful to the original. Nevertheless, a relatively high number of adjustments has been made. First of all, in terms of *characters*, the age gap between the characters has been bridged to gain more credibility and the names have been altered to increase familiarity with the target audiences. An eye-catching difference was that an actor with a darker skin colour was cast for a leading role in the Dutch film only. According to the Dutch director this mirrors Dutch society, which is racially highly integrated. However, the literature proved that the cliché of the Netherlands as being tolerant and integrated needs to be balanced. Consequently, this adjustment can be considered an idealistic attempt to reflect Dutch society. In the American remake on the other hand, no black actors were cast for the leading roles despite New Orleans’ predominantly black population. This lack of adjustment is in accordance with the general tendency of popular American films to limit ethnic diversity.

As far as *locations* are concerned a relatively low number of adjustments has been made. The remakes were located in different cities, but the architecture and interior of the key locations is very similar. Although all three lofts were situated in the surroundings of water, this was screened most explicitly in the Dutch film, which could be considered as an adaptation to the Dutch audience, water being deeply embedded in their culture.

In terms of *language* the Flemish dialogues have been adapted to Dutch colloquial speech. Most characteristics of the typically Flemish *tussentaal* have been eliminated and region-
specific Flemish words and expressions have been replaced. Furthermore, our language analysis showed that the Flemish dialogues contain a higher number of French loan words, which were generally omitted in the Dutch film. Flanders’ closer connection with French both in terms of location and history may account for this tendency. As regards the language in the American Loft, our analysis showed a higher number of idioms related to the gambling industry and religious swear words.

*Culture* was the category with the highest number of adjustments to the target audiences. Our analysis showed that the Dutch and American characters come across as more direct and assertive than the Flemish characters. This difference may originate in Flanders’ history of language insecurity and its educational system that is more focused on reproducing and listening instead of self-expression. In addition, we found that the Dutch film showed sex, nudity and use of drugs in a more explicit manner in the light of their progressive history of screening sex and more open drugs policy. This is in sharp contrast to the American film, which limited the number of sex and nude scenes and made them more subtle. An explanation for this may be found in the traditional Puritan-Protestant values which still fiercely influence contemporary America, whereas the influence of religion on present-day Dutch society is waning.

In general, it can be stated that both the Dutch and American remakes have undergone a relatively high number of alterations to make them more attractive or suitable for their target audiences. Nevertheless, it is notable that in the Dutch Loft more adjustments have been made geared towards the target audience than in the American remake. The literature proved that the American culture bears closer resemblance to the Flemish culture than to the Dutch, regarding social topics such as drugs and sex. This is reflected in the lower number of cultural adaptations in the American remake. Some critics may even attribute the more negative reception of the American remake to this lower number of localization strategies. However, other factors should also be taken into account such as the bad timing of the film release, the film critics’ suspicion aroused by the three-year delay and the sensitive nature of the topic of adultery in the U.S. Finally, we must bear in mind that the lower number of adaptations in the American remake may be a consequence of the fact that the remake was not directed by an American but by a Flemish person, whereas the Dutch remake was directed from a native Dutchwoman’s perspective.
This study was a first step in the research field of Flemish remakes abroad as *Loft* was the first Flemish film remade in the Netherlands and in the United States. Further research on these three films could involve comparing other aspects such as humour and time.


Dumon, P. (03.02.2015). Het einde van de American Dream? De Morgen, p. 4-5 (cult).


Temmerman, J. (27.09.2014). ‘Ooit schrijf ik een boek over dit avontuur. Of twee’. *De Morgen*, p. 6-7M.


