

BETTER NOT SLEEP UNDER WATER

A Comparison of Two Norwegian Films
and their American Remakes

By

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Dedication

...to Lånekassen for lending me the funds to complete this thesis

...to my supervisor Deborah Kitchen-Døderlein for making me realize that people actually has to read my writings

...to Ida Vaa and Ronny Strand for listening to my frustrations and making me listen to theirs

...and to my husband Magnus Rygh for indispensable proof reading and emotional support.

...same same but different...

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Introduction

“...while some remakes are demonstrably failures, others are undeniably superb, and almost all interesting for what they reveal, either about different cultures, about different directorial styles and aesthetic orientations, about class or gender perceptions, ... , or simply about the evolution of economic practices in the industry.”¹

The remake, a film based on another film, is – as Jennifer Forrest and Leonard Koos note in the quote above – an interesting phenomenon for students of culture. Still, even more interesting for us who study another culture than our own, are films that have been remade across cultural boundaries. Andrew Horton and Stuart McDougal, the editors of the book *Play It Again, Sam*, claim that the remake tells us as much about the time it was made as it does about the originary text, when referring to remakes of American films made in the United States.² When movies in addition cross an entire ocean, the possibilities for study are even greater. If we compare the originary film, and what that tells us about the society it came out of, with the remake and what that tells us, will we be able to see significant cultural differences between two societies?³

The title of this thesis: *Better Not Sleep Under Water*, alludes to the fact that there have been two Norwegian films remade in Hollywood: Erik Skjoldbjærg’s *Insomnia* (1998) and Nils Gaup’s *Hodet over vannet* (1993). Christopher Nolan’s *Insomnia* is not a superb work of art in its own right, but it is a good film. Jim Wilson’s *Head Above Water*, on the other hand, is not. One of the starting points for this thesis, then, becomes why not? What went wrong in making *Head Above Water*? And what did the makers of *Insomnia* do right?

¹ Forrest, Jennifer and Leonard R. Koos. “Chapter One: Reviewing Remakes: An Introduction” in *Dead Ringers: The Remake in Theory and Practice* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002) 4-5

² Horton, Andrew and Stuart Y. McDougal. *Play It Again, Sam: Retakes on Remakes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) 7

³ I use the word ‘originary’ instead of the word ‘original’ because I feel that in certain contexts the word ‘original’ have qualitative connotations I would like to avoid.

Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall, in *Understanding Cultural Differences*,⁴ operate with an interesting term: ‘situational dialect’, by which they mean a vocabulary which will arise out of a certain situation, like the vocabulary we use to order at a fast food restaurant or the one we use to communicate with colleagues within the same field of research. I will try to show that film, in addition to being what James Monaco⁵ calls a language with syntax that needs to be learned, also has dialects for each genre, and for each national cinema. Do we need to learn the “dialects” of foreign cinemas in order to enjoy them? Can it be that Norwegians are so well versed in the situational dialect of Hollywood film, that when we – as we often do – attack American remakes for not being close enough to the originary text, we are not able to see that Americans, not having been exposed to the situational dialect of European film to such a large degree, simply need the stories translated into a “dialect” they can understand? In short, will the study of remakes from different culture perhaps tell us more about the countries respective film making traditions than about their cultures?

With these questions in mind, I will, through an analysis of the two film pairs *Hodet over vannet* (Nils Gaup, 1993)/ *Head Above Water* (Jim Wilson, 1996) and *Insomnia* (Erik Skjoldbjærg, 1997)/ *Insomnia* (Christopher Nolan, 2002), try to read both cultural differences and differences in film making style, between the country of the originary texts and the country of the remakes.

⁴ Hall, Edward T. and Mildred Reed Hall. *Understanding Cultural Differences* (Yarmouth, Me: Intercultural Press, 1990)

⁵ Monaco, James. *How to Read a Film: Movies, Media, Multimedia 3rd ed.* (London: Oxford University Press, 2000)152-227

Chapter 1. Theory

The theories of why the American film industry chooses to use already existing material for their films are many and diverse. Some claim it is an evil plot by Americans to take over the entire world's popular culture needs. Others see it as a complete lack of imagination on the part of the American film industry. Others again see it as a good way for an American audience to take part in an exchange of stories they otherwise would not be able to.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part deals with theories regarding remakes and the second deals with theories regarding culture. In part one, I will first look into when, and by whom, remakes have been done, before giving some explanations of why foreign remakes are produced and trying to define remakes in relation to other re-uses of artistic material. Finally I will discuss cross-cultural remakes – remakes where the originary film is from another culture than the remake – and how they differ from other remakes.

If we want to look at cultural differences in films that have been made in two different countries, we must establish films as cultural artifacts. In part two, I will first define the term culture. I will also discuss some differences between Norwegian and American culture, and try to explain the relationship between art and entertainment cinema and between American culture and Hollywood culture. At the end of the chapter I will explain some of my choices in narrowing this vast field of study. Unfortunately, this survey of the literature on which I base my theories cannot be exhaustive, as I have been forced to rely on literature from several academic disciplines, like social studies, film and media studies, American studies, and culture studies in general.

Remakes

When have remakes been (re)made?

When we think of a remake, we will often conjure a mental picture of an American film based on a French original, like *The Birdcage* (Mike Nichols, 1996)/*La cage aux folles* (Edouard Molinaro, 1978) or *Three Men and a Baby* (Leonard Nimoy, 1987)/ *Trois homes et un couffin* (Coline Serreau, 1985). However, contrary to common perception, remakes have been made by all countries at all times. Re-use of artistic material is by no means something new or, for that matter, something American. Jennifer Forrest and Leonard Koos point out that "... every national cinema remakes its own and other nations' films."¹ Actually, one of the French films mentioned above, Molinaro's *La cage aux folles*, is based on a play by Jean Poiret, so a case could be made for calling the American version a cross-cultural re-adaptation and not a remake. It is a well known fact that many of Shakespeare's plays were based on stories from other countries; stories that had even been performed as plays in their countries of origin. *Romeo and Juliet*, for instance, is based on a classic Italian tale of lovers lost.

The earliest remakes in the world of film production were either remakes of a film from the same studio because the original had been worn out, or rip-offs from other production companies. With the coming of sound film in the 1920's many studios resorted to multi-language films, remaking films for different language audiences on the same sets.² In America, early remakes were made to profit off someone else's film or because the negative had been exhausted. They were used to test new innovations, and used during the depression to keep the major studios alive. The remake in American film history is linked to other Hollywood tricks like genre pictures and star vehicles as

¹ Forrest 26

² Kamsvåg, Astri I. *To nasjoner – to versjoner. Om krysskulturelle remakes med utgangspunkt i filmparene "Trois Hommes et un couffin" og "Three Men and a Baby", "Nikita" og "Point of No Return"* (Bergen: Thesis, University of Bergen, 1996) 12

far back as 1937.³ Andrew Horton focuses in his essay “Cinematic Makeovers and Cultural Border Crossings” on the remake from Hollywood to Europe, i.e. the opposite direction of what we are used to.⁴ In the same anthology, Patricia Aufderheide looks into Hong Kong remakes of western films. The idea of reusing artistic material is in other words definitely not solely American.

However, there is no denying that the remake, like the sequel, is an economic venture more and more often used by the production companies of Hollywood since the early 80's: the age of the blockbuster. Since the success of *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975), the pressure to make many times the production cost in revenue has been steadily growing, and with it the need to find easily exploitable material. Today, you would be hard pressed to find a single Hollywood film without a sequel, and the film cycle (like *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Matrix* trilogies), has started to become a more common sight. This evolution has also impacted the remaking industry. Of six films featured at the Paramount website as coming attractions in March 2005, half were ‘unoriginal.’ *Aeon Flux* (Karyn Kusama, 2005) is an adaptation of the MTV cartoon series *Æon Flux*, Steven Spielberg’s *War of the Worlds* (2005) is either a re-adaptation of H.G.Wells’ book or a remake of the 1953 film, and *The Honeymooners* (John Schultz, 2005) is an adaptation of the famous 1950s TV series by the same name.⁵ This mirrors numbers presented by Karen Jaehne in 1984. She found that in 1982, 1983 and 1984 respectively, 53.1%, 49.1% and 56.1% were “unoriginals”, defined as sequels, adaptations, TV spin-offs, or remakes.⁶ This trend, which was something new for Jaehne in the early 1980s, has not abated yet. We might then say that even though remaking is not something new,

³ Forrest et al 1-36

⁴ Horton, Andrew. “Cinematic Makeovers and Cultural Border Crossings: Kusturica’s *Time of the Gypsies* and Coppola’s *Godfather* and *Godfather II*.” in Horton et al. 172-190

⁵ The Paramount Studios Website is to be found at [<http://paramount.com/>] Date accessed: 05.03.21. Interestingly, Spielberg’s is not the only film by that name coming out in 2005. Timothy Hines has directed a film described in the marketing as the “...first authentic adaptation of the 1898 H.G. Wells classic novel.” International Movie Data Base.[www.imdb.com/title/tt0425638/] Date accessed: 05.03.24

⁶ Jaehne, Karen, “Once is not enough” in *Stills* 11(1984): 11

or something American, it is something that has been brought to its full potential by the current Hollywood economic system.

Why are foreign remakes made?

Richard Maltby and Kate Bowles speak of “Hollywood’s history of turning the pleasure of entertainment into a product we will repeatedly consume.”⁷ As with the sequels that have become almost a standard addition to every film, and what the two scholars discuss – genre pictures –, remakes are a way of earning an easy buck. But is this the whole story? Jennifer Forrest claims in her introduction to one of the few books dealing with remakes in American and world film history that “The remake is a significant part of filmmaking both as an economic measure designed to keep production costs down *and* as an art form.”⁸ No one disputes that the current flow of remakes reveals a lack of imagination on the part of certain Hollywood executives. James Monaco, as well, writes about Hollywood’s “Sequelmania.” “When Hollywood isn’t making sequels, it’s doing remakes, often of television shows, sometimes – surprisingly – of European films.”⁹ The prevailing attitude in Norway is that the financial reasons are the only reasons. Associate Professor Gunnar Iversen at the Department of Art and Media Science at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) had this to say on the subject in a newspaper interview a few years back:

Hollywood will try anything that yields a profit. The Americans look for what is cheap and already tried – and what has shown to be successful. That’s why they make remakes of everything from *Hodet over vannet* to *Insomnia*. Hollywood has worked like this, as an entertainment machine, ever since the twenties. (...) What has proved to be a success somewhere, you try to repeat by putting it through your own grinder, which in turn means dizzying budgets and blockbuster formats. Hollywood’s sticky tentacles try desperately to catch anything with economical potential. Remember that original manuscripts are

⁷ Maltby, Richard and Kate Bowles. “Hollywood: the Economic of Utopia” in Maidment, Richard and Jeremy Mitchell. *The United States in the Twentieth Century: Culture, 2nd ed.* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2000) 136

⁸ Forrest et al 3

⁹ Monaco 259

terribly expensive, so if you can get a hold of something else, you will of course do that.¹⁰

However, as we have seen, remaking foreign films is by no means a new phenomenon, nor is it a specifically American phenomenon, even though there is no doubt that this is where remaking has been elevated to a financial art. Why then, use the foreign films that Monaco find so surprising? This practice becomes less surprising if we take into account the cultural changes the European films undergo as they cross the Atlantic. Forrest and Koos feel that remakes are significant for their artistic value, for what we as audiences can read out of them, and for what financial systems they divulge in Hollywood. Conversely we can say that remakes have been made both for artistic and financial reasons, although the latter are definitely the most common. Forrest mentions The French *Nouvelle Vague* scholar Bazin as one of the scholars who have been particularly unfair to remakes as an art form. She points out that Hollywood, at the time Bazin was writing, did invite many directors to remake their own films in the US, and so feels that his claim of economic terrorism is too one-sided. One reason for remaking is the need to make the foreign film culturally acceptable so as to be able to sell it to a domestic, American, audience. This means more than just translating or slapping on subtitles, it means adapting from one culture to another. This might be one of the reasons why parallel versions of the same film made in several languages died out as a venture for the large Hollywood studios before the Second World War. The films did not take into account the great cultural and narrative differences in the different

¹⁰ “Hollywood prøver alt som kan gi avkastning. Amerikanerne ser etter det som er billig, utprøvd - og har vist seg å være en suksessoppskrift. Derfor lager man nyinnspillinger av alt fra Hodet over vannet til *Insomnia*. Slik har Hollywood har fungert som en underholdningsmaskin helt siden 20-tallet. (...) Det som har vist seg å være suksess et sted, prøver man å gjenta ved å kjøre det gjennom sin egen kvern, noe som i sin tur betyr svimlende budsjetter og blockbuster-format. Hollywoods klebende fangarmer prøver febrilsk å gripe etter alt som har økonomisk potensiale i seg. Husk at originalmanuskripter er fryktelig dyrt, så hvis du kan få tak i noe annet, gjør du selvfølgelig det.” -Associate Professor Gunnar Iversen at the Department of Art and Media Science, The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), quoted in Strand, Eivind Biering. “Skrekk uten blod” in *Under Dusken* 03/2003 internet ed. [<http://www.underdusken.no/html/2003/03/1902.php>] Date accessed: 05.03.29

countries.¹¹ The cultural and economic reasons for remaking foreign films go hand in hand.

Michael Brashinsky asks in his article “The Spring, Defiled: Ingmar Bergman’s *Virgin Spring* and Wes Craven’s *Last House on the Left*” “...isn’t it the incentive of every remake to tell the same story with a different meaning?”¹² This echoes Harvey Greenberg’s claim that a director doing a remake is unconsciously committing patricide. Greenberg’s example is an American remake of an American film, Spielberg’s *Always* (1990) a remake of the 1943 *A Guy Named Joe*.¹³ Still, Greenberg’s explanation might shed some light on the matter. He claims that Spielberg wants to usurp the title of the definitive director of the story from the man he claims to do homage to, and so in reality does not do homage to the man at all. It is not always easy to separate personal and cultural reasons for wanting to re-do an artwork in your own image.

There is one, less obvious, and probably unintentional, function of foreign and domestic remakes. The film scholar Claire Vassé notes that one learns something distinctive from seeing both versions. She contends that it contributes to the intertextuality and invites comparison.¹⁴ Stephen Schneider also points to the ability of a remake to illuminate the good and bad points of the original film.¹⁵ In their introduction to *Play It Again, Sam*, Horton and McDougal argue that in watching films, we both view them and read their subtext at the same time. There is always an underlying text to be read by the audience. They also make a point of the fact that in watching, and therefore reading, remakes, we will always compare the film we’re watching to the older text. Therefore remakes have the function of teaching us cultural

¹¹ Marcussen, Hildegunn, *Den omskapt film: om amerikanske remakes av europeiske filmer* (Trondheim: Thesis, NTNU, 2000) 22-25

¹² Horton et al 165

¹³ Greenberg, Harvey Roy. “Raiders of the Lost Text: Remaking as Contested Homage in *Always*” in *Journal of Popular Film and Culture*, Vol. XVIII nr 4 (1991) 167-171

¹⁴ Vassé, 1999. Quoted in Forrest 29

¹⁵ Schneider 166-176

differences, and giving both films an added layer of intertextuality. Sadly, none of these scholars take into account that many who watch remakes do not know that there is an older text at the time of “reading”, and so do not get this added layer. Still, one definite advantage of remakes is that it gives film and culture scholars, and hopefully much of the audience, an added text to read in trying to understand cultural differences, both between different times and different places.

There are in other words three main reasons for remaking films, and these are the same reasons anyone has for making films at all: money, art, and ideology. However tempting it might be, there is no foundation for using the contextual explanations as reasons for the making of remakes, as they are usually not intended by the film makers. The reasons for making cross-cultural remakes are the same as for making *same culture* remakes: money, art and ideology. However, if one wants to show the story to an American audience, why not just distribute the original? If the object is to make money, the answer is clear. Both because foreign films have slim chances of making money in the US, and because it is always better to have full licensing rights, a production company will make more money from remaking a film than from distributing a foreign film someone else has made. We have seen that there can be personal ideological reasons for making a story your own; disagreeing with the ideological content of the original film, like Craven does with *Virgin Spring*. There is also another reason, namely wanting to change the story into an American story so that more people will see the film and get to participate in the exchange of stories. This might have been the reason the director Christopher Nolan wanted to remake *Insomnia*, however, as I will show, in this respect he has failed.

What are remakes?

The remake, the adaptation and the sequel are all ways in which a production company can produce a film without actually paying for an original script. However the boundaries between these three ways of re-using artistic material are difficult to define.

Many would argue that John Carpenter's *The Thing* (1982) is a remake of Christian Nyby's *The Thing (From Another World)* (1951) with the Soviet paranoia toned down and an added dimension of fear our own personal dark insides more fitting for the 1980s. This is not exactly accurate. The two films are both based on John W.

Campbell's novelette *Who goes there?*, although Carpenter's version more closely than Nyby's. Yet neither Leonard Maltin nor Carlos Clarens are exactly wrong in calling Carpenter's *Thing* a remake of Nyby's.¹⁶ The boundaries between remakes and re-adaptations of written work – and between remakes and sequels, for that matter – are very fluid. This becomes clear when we look at the relationship between the films *Dawn of the Dead* and *Night of the Living Dead*. Many would assume that *Dawn of the Dead* is a sequel to *Night of the Living Dead*, but they would be wrong. Zack Znyder's *Dawn of the Dead* (2004) is a remake of Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* (George Romero, 1978) which is a sequel-cum-remake of *Night of the Living Dead* (Romero, 1968). The new film is in no way a sequel to Savini's *Night of the Living Dead* (Tom Savini, 1990), a remake of the above mentioned Romero original. And the 30th anniversary version of the same original (1998), edited and changed by co-screenwriter Russo, has nothing to do with any of the above, except that it is being marketed in Norway as the restored and enhanced original Romero version. How can we know if we are looking at a remake, a sequel, or an adaptation? In this section, I will try to define some boundaries between

¹⁶ Maltin, Leonard (ed.) et al. *Leonard Maltin's 2004 movie & video guide* (London, Penguin Books, 2003)1406, Clarens, Carlos: "Ten Great Originals" in *American Film* Vol. IX no. 3 (1983):82-86

the different forms of re-use of artistic material that we find in the film industry: adaptations, re-adaptations, remakes and sequels.

According to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary to adapt is to “fit, to make suitable” or to “alter as to fit for a new use.”¹⁷ In the area of film, an adaptation is a film based on already existing material – a book or a stage play or another source – adapted to fit a new use, the screen. A film based on a screenplay is not an adaptation of that screenplay, as the screenplay was never intended for any other use. However, a new film based on that same screenplay would most definitely be a true *remake*, as I will show later. Joe Chappelle’s *Phantoms* (1998) would be a good example of an adaptation from book to screen. The film is a relatively straight forward adaptation of Dean Koontz’ novel *Phantoms* and the screenplay is actually written by Koontz himself. Other relatively faithful adaptations include Frank Capra’s *Arsenic and Old Lace* (1944) where three of the actors repeat their roles from a stage production of Kesselring’s play.¹⁸ However, we can easily find an example at the other end of the spectrum of adaptations; in the Disney film *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* (Gore Verbinski, 2003), the screenwriters have not adapted an already existing story; they have come up with one based on a ride in one of Disney’s theme parks. There are of course problems with calling this approach an adaptation at all, but maybe one could say they have adapted the image of the theme park ride into a movie. In between these extremes are innumerable variations: all known filmic adaptations of the fairy tales Cinderella or Snow White are relatively free adaptations of the source material – even if they, like Michael Cohn’s 1997 film, are called *The Brothers Grimm’s Snow White*.¹⁹

¹⁷ Little, William (ed.) et al.: *Oxford Shorter English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936) 20

¹⁸ Maltin et al. 60

¹⁹ Examples of adaptations of these two fairytales include for instance Cinderella by George Smith, 1898; Disney/Geronimi et al., 1950; Andy Tennant, 1998, and Snow White by Disney/David Hand, 1937; Michael Cohn, 1997

This last film depicts Snow White's father cutting her out of her mother's womb, something the fairytale fails to mention. The films *X-men* (Bryan Singer, 2000) and *X2* (Singer, 2003) are "based on *characters* created for Marvel by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby"²⁰ rather than lifting a story from one of the comic books *about* these characters. The same is true of *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* (Simon West, 2001), based on the computer game *Tomb Raider*. Still they can all be classified as adaptations, as can both Carpenter's and Nyby's 'Things', and Gillian Armstrong's *Little Women* (1994). Here, however, we are walking on treacherous grounds. Both Carpenter's and Armstrong's films are re-adaptations: adaptations of works that have already spawned earlier adaptations in the same medium.

What distinguishes a *re-adaptation* from a *re-make*? In his book *Make It Again, Sam*, Michael Druxman defines remakes as "theatrical films that were based on a common literary source";²¹ all re-adaptations are to Druxman *remakes*. Peter Schepelern, on the other hand, feels a need to distinguish between remakes and re-adaptations:

What is ...problematic with [Druxman's] definition of the term is that it doesn't take into account whether or not there has been any direct contact between the films. To see Olivier's adaptation of "Hamlet" from 1948 as a remake of The Hepworth-Company's 1913 version because they are both undeniably based on the same literary text, does not make much sense, because Olivier's film is, for all we can know, made completely independently of, and without knowledge of the earlier version (which has been lost).²²

In other words: not all re-adaptations are remakes. Going back to the original source, like Cohn claims to do with his *The Brothers Grimm's Snow White*, or Andy Tennant has done in his *Anna and the King* (1999),²³ is shaping up to be something of a trend

²⁰ Maltin et al. 1584. My italics.

²¹ Druxman, Michael B. *Make it Again, Sam – A Survey of Movie Remakes* quoted in Schepelern, Peter: "De 117 trin: Remakes og genfilmatiseringer" in *Kosmorama*, Vol. XXV nr 143-144 (1979) 157

²² Schepelern 157. My translation.

²³ Tennant's film is a re-adaptation of Margaret Landon's *Anna and the King of Siam*, and not a remake of Walter Lang's 1956 musical version *The King and I*, which in it self is an adaptation of Rogers and

lately. These re-adaptations, which I choose to call revisionist re-adaptations, often claim to be without debt to earlier film versions. They have titles like *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1992) or *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (Kenneth Branagh, 1994), and are often reactions to a flood of earlier "based-ons." Whether or not they are completely debt-free is a matter for a much longer study, but it is doubtful.

Michael Brashinsky claims in his article "The Spring, Defiled" that "Unless a readaptation of a literary work refers to the previous adaptation(s) and not directly to the written source, the readaptation should not be considered a remake."²⁴ This is all well and true. However, he then goes on to say that "Thus, Martin Scorsese's *Cape Fear* (1991) and Werner Herzog's *Nosferatu: Phantom of the Night* (1979) are remakes, but Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) and Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet* (1996) or any other recent Shakespeare production is not."²⁵ The problem with this facile distinction is clear. Francis Ford Coppola has almost certainly seen several, if not many, films based on and inspired by Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (the book). He has certainly been influenced by these and other films of the classical horror genre in making his own version. Therefore it is too easy to say that just because a director puts the name of the author in the title of the film it is a re-adaptation and not a remake. Most versions live in a shadow land between the remake and the re-adaptation (or between remake and sequel, as we shall see later.) If we return to an earlier example, we can see what is obvious to all who have seen both Carpenter's and Nyby's versions of *The Thing*. Carpenter and his screenwriter Bill Lancaster have seen the older film. They give us a definite link to the older version; the Norwegians in *The Thing* (1982) are pacing

Hammerstein's Broadway musical *The King and I*: a musicalization of Cromwell's play *Anna and the King*, and not of the book.

²⁴ Brashinsky, Michael. "The Spring, Defiled: Ingmar Bergman's *Virgin Spring* and Wes Craven's *Last House on the Left*" in Andrew and Stuart Y. McDougal (ed.). *Play It Again, Sam: Retakes on Remakes*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) 170

²⁵ Brashinsky 170

out the exact same shape of a flying saucer beneath the ice that the scientists in *The Thing (From Another World)* (1951) did. This is a shape that is nothing like the one described in *Who goes there?*. In both films the spaceship is round; in the novelette it is closer to cigar-shaped. In this and other details, like his flaming introduction titles, Carpenter is paying homage to the earlier film, although his version follows the story in the book more closely and in doing so usurps the title of the definitive adaptation of Campbell's novelette, doing what Harvey Greenberg claims is an unconscious desire by all who make remakes.²⁶

The time has come to define the *remake*. There are two ways we can know for certain that a film is a remake and not a re-adaptation. First, there are films where there is no earlier literary work to re-adapt, like Marcus Nispel's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003), a remake of Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* from 1973. Hooper's film in turn professes to be based on a true story, but is in reality very loosely based on the exploits of serial killer Ed Gein. Other examples in this category include *Ocean's Eleven* (Steven Soderbergh, 2001) and Savini's *Night of the Living Dead*, and a whole host of cross-cultural remakes, like my own two examples *Head Above Water* and *Insomnia*. Savini's *Night of the Living Dead* is also - up until the very end - a scene-by-scene remake, which is the other category. In this category, examples include Gus van Sant's homage to Hitchcock's *Psycho*, which in itself is an adaptation of a book by Robert Bloch, again based on the life of Ed Gein. However, with van Sant copying everything down to the camera angles from Hitchcock's version, there is no mistaking the new film for a re-adaptation. It is a remake.

Sequels are another category of films that have much in common with the remake, the adaptation and the re-adaptation. Earlier I claimed that *Dawn of the Dead*

²⁶ Greenberg 167-171

(Romero, 1978) was not a sequel to *Night of the Living Dead* (Romero, 1968). I meant by this that the stories – a small group of people fighting off an ever-increasing number of zombies while resolving problems within the group – are so similar as to almost be a remake; it is a sequel-cum-remake. In this I have the support of Leonard Maltin,²⁷ if not of my fellow Romero-fans. These sequel-cum-remakes are well-known and well-tested as money-making ventures by the larger studios. The majority of movie sequels still fall into two categories: either bringing a known set of characters into new (and often very similar) situations, or bringing a new set of characters into the same situation. A large percentage of the films in the second category also fall within the sequel-cum-remake category, but if the story is sufficiently different, like with the post-modern meta-horror stories of *Scream 2* and *3*, (Wes Craven, 1997/2000) they can also fall outside the two, and simply be sequels; a continuation of the story.

If we look closer at some remakes, we find that the opposite of a sequel-cum-remake is also possible: a remake where the story is so different from the originary film that the new version can almost be described as a sequel. Examples of this include John Singleton's *Shaft* from 2000, based on Gordon Parks' blaxploitation classic of the same name from 1971. The character 'Shaft' in the new movie is the nephew of the 'Shaft' in the originary movie. The story has changed with the times; the Black Panthers are now gang bangers, the bad guy is a young daddy's boy racist. The film is a remake-cum-sequel. Another good example of this category is the latest *The Body Snatchers* (Abel Ferrara, 1993). From the title one would assume that this is yet another revisionist re-adaptation (the two former adaptations are called *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, the originary book by Jack Finney *The Body Snatchers*), but the story has nothing to do with either the book or the two films. Only the premise – aliens taking over the world by

²⁷ Maltin et al 326

exchanging your loved ones with unfeeling copies grown in pods – is the same, although, like Carpenter in *The Thing*, Ferrara acknowledges the earlier films in small details, like the scream the “pod people” use to alert their comrades that they have discovered a human, taken from the 1978 film.²⁸

In summing up, we can say that on both sides of the category ‘remake’ there are reuses of artistic material whose categories flow into that of the remake: adaptations and re-adaptations on the one side, and remake-cum-sequel and sequel-cum-remake on the other. In many ways, the category we are looking at in this thesis, cross-cultural remakes, resemble adaptations from one medium to another more than they do straight forward film-to-film remakes.

- Reading remakes

One way of “reading” film is by the use of semiotics, like James Monaco does. A “word” consists of two things: the signifier and the signified. The interesting thing is that all cultures, according to Monaco, have their own special syntax, and that all film cultures then also have their own syntax and their own very special film grammar. Every film culture is its own language. The syntax of the film has to correspond with the way a culture read images, because there are “... cultural differences in the perception of images.”²⁹ Monaco claims that the difference between film and literature is that in literature the signifier and the signified can be vastly different, whereas in film the two are almost identical. “Film does not suggest ...: it states,”³⁰ he claims, after first having established that “The great thing about literature is that you can imagine, the great thing about film is that you can’t.”³¹ This is why it is easier to translate a book than a film. It is not necessary to change as much in a book, because the reader fills in

²⁸ *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, Philip Kaufman.

²⁹ Monaco 152

³⁰ Monaco 159

³¹ Monaco 158

the blank her/himself, but the viewer does not have this luxury. Therefore a “translated” film has to be conformed to a “language” the viewer is familiar with, and so the films change. Culturally derived codes, like clichés and stereotypes are culturally dependant, and need to be translated. There is a grammar for Norwegian film and there is a “Hollywood grammar.”³²

Adapting from one culture to another. Cross-cultural remakes as adaptations

In an article about the remaking of two European films by their original directors in Hollywood, Steven Schneider explains how with foreign remakes “... what gets “made over” is not simply a story, but a whole host of cultural signifiers.”³³ He quotes the screenwriter of *The Vanishing* (George Sluizer, 1993), the American remake of the Sluizer’s own film *Spoorloos* (1988), as saying that the “female roles have been expanded, especially the second girlfriend ... These are no-b.s. American women”³⁴, implying that the European women in the originary film were in some way weaker. These are according to Schneider changes made by “Producers, directors, screenwriters and focus groups...”³⁵ I will contend that the structures of the films themselves, the classical Hollywood formula, and not just cultural differences, are responsible for the changes needed in the cross-cultural remakes, as exemplified by the Norwegian films *Insomnia* and *Hodet over vannet*. This theory will be expanded on in the course of the next two chapters.

There are several similarities between literary adaptations and cross cultural remakes. George Bluestone claims in his book *Novels into Film*³⁶ that films become

³² Monaco 153-225

³³ Schneider, Steven. “Repacking rage: The Vanishing and Nightwatch” in *Kinema*, no. 17 (Spring 2002) 49

³⁴ Schneider 57

³⁵ Schneider 49

³⁶ Bluestone, George. *Novels into film: The Metamorphosis of Fiction into Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press) 1971

different from their originary novels because they leave behind certain novelistic elements. An example of this can be seen in the recent screen adaptation of the comic book series *John Constantine: Hellblazer* into the film *Constantine* (Francis Lawrence, 2005). The film script has been adapted “back” into a comic book story in “Constantine: The Official Movie Adaptation.”³⁷ The story, written for the screen by Kevin Brodbin, seems flat and uninspired when it comes back to its originary medium. The film *Constantine*, on the other hand, works very well compared to many films based on comic book series. It might then be argued that the reason the story in its new comic book form seems flat, is that certain elements that the readers are used to in comic books, like excessive violence and bad behavior on the part of the (anti-) hero, is missing, and so we feel cheated. The conventions that work so well in film do not work in comic book form. The opposite is also true. Conventions that work in comic book form do not necessarily work in film. Neither do conventions that work in one country necessarily work in another.

Bluestone also claims that there is some hostility between film and novel and that films deviate from the originary work at their own peril. This is definitely true of cross-cultural remakes as well. Imelda Whelehan, in her article in *Adaptations*, claims that adaptations have gotten the short end of the stick in that they are always measured up against their “originals” and not seen as a work in their own right. “The differing conditions within which fiction and film narrative are situated depend upon the necessity of “violating” the originary text.”³⁸ We have to take this into account as well in considering the transposition of a film from one culture to another. The 1950s

³⁷Seagle, Steven T, Ron Randall and Jimmy Palmiotti. “Constantine: The Official Movie Adaptation” in Nybakken, Scott (ed.). *Constantine: The Hellblazer Collection* (New York: DC Comics, 2005) 8-71 The series is published by DC Comics. Like many comic book series, it has changed authors and artists several times. The character ‘John Constantine’ was created by Alan Moore. Writers include Jamie Delano and Garth Ennis.

³⁸ Whelehan, Imelda. “Adaptations: The Contemporary Dilemmas” in Cartmell, Deborah and Imelda Whelehan, *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, From Screen to Text* (London: Routledge, 1999) 10

American studies scholar Hortense Powdermaker, takes it for granted that the screenplay has to change from the book and that the characters has to change to fit them into social mores, production code, star personalities and the “producer’s personal fantasies and his conceptions of what the public wants.”³⁹ Today, this role is often filled by focus groups. Whelehan also claims it is often seen as more important to retain the characters than the overarching themes of the work. She points out that in adaptations of early texts, gender roles and class differences are modernized, and our assumptions are put into the work.

All these considerations in adapting a film both from novels and other sources have close parallels to adapting a film from one culture to another. The hostility that Bluestone mentions is definitely there; Europeans have for years attacked American film studios for appropriating their culture. Chief among the critics have been the French film critic Bazin.⁴⁰ Films that are translated from one culture to another definitely have to change to fit into the social mores of that culture. Terrence Rafferty claims cross-cultural remakes are mostly doomed to fail, because the cultural differences are too big.⁴¹ Carolyn Durham says that the growth of multiplexes and subsequent decline of art cinemas in the US makes “pre-assimilation into native product ... a requirement for foreign films to enter American cinemas.”⁴² Forrest argues that dubbing would not work in Hollywood as it kills the suspension of disbelief, and that Europeans only tolerate it because they have been used to it from the beginning.⁴³ Whelehan’s claim that it is often seen as more important to retain the characters than the overarching themes of the work fits into this. There is a clear parallel here both to the

³⁹ Powdermaker, 1951, quoted in Whelehan 7

⁴⁰ Bazin, André, 1952, quoted in Forrest et al. 8

⁴¹ Rafferty, Terrence, 1996, quoted in Forrest et al 7

⁴² Durham Carolyn A. *Double Takes: Culture and Gender in French Films and Their American Remakes* (London: University Press of New England, 1998) 7

⁴³ Forrest et al 2-36

two versions of *Hodet over vannet* and to the two versions of *Insomnia*. Although the plot is kept in *Head Above Water*, the characters, retaining superficial characteristics like their jobs and to some degree their look, have been changed to fit American social mores. In the American version of *Insomnia* the overarching theme is totally transformed. This means that cross-cultural remakes can be seen as adaptations from one culture to another. In Chapters 2 and 3, I will try to show what cinematic techniques were altered when *Hodet over vannet* and *Insomnia* crossed the Atlantic, and what differences these changes made to the stories and characters.

Cultural Theory

Defining culture

Robert Eberwein laments in his article “Remakes and Cultural Studies” the tradition of simply comparing remakes feature for feature and seeing which is best. He claims that this is impossible because we all live within a cultural time ourselves, and so we must take the times in which the films were made into account.⁴⁴ This is the same with cross-cultural remakes. We must look at the cultures within which the two versions of the different films were made, and see the films in relation to this. Even though it can be argued that a film is a signifier of cultural attitudes in a given country at a given time, *culture* in itself is a fluid term that is difficult to define. Film is often put into the category *popular culture*, which is defined as something other than *high culture*. But we also speak of the culture of a country, meaning its values, beliefs and practices. We even use the word when it comes to larger entities, as in the terms *clash of cultures* and *western culture*. The question then becomes whether the popular culture of a society in any tangible way can be used to read the values, beliefs and practices of that society. Is Hollywood film a just signifier for American culture?

⁴⁴ Eberwein, Robert. “Remakes and Cultural Studies” in Horton et al. 15-33

In *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction*, Don Mitchell points to the fact that the word culture has no ontological basis.⁴⁵ In other words, ‘culture’ is what we define as culture. Mitchell claims that “To understand culture ... we must look at the battles over it.”⁴⁶ Battles over what is the culture of a country, if we use the term *culture* as the values, beliefs and practices of that country, have been fought constantly. Discussions of what lies in the roles of the different genders, of how many immigrants a country should allow in, and how much the cultural practices of these immigrants should be allowed to influence society, are all part of the continuous cultural battles going on. Fons Trompenaars has written a book on corporate cultures in relation to international cultural differences. Some of his insights might help in defining culture and cultural differences.

Trompenaars definition of culture is borrowed from the scholar Schein, and is as follows: “[C]ulture is the way in which a group of people solves problems.”⁴⁷ The group of people in this instance would be a nation, and the problems would be all the problems a nation’s people have to contend with. Trompenaars uses a presentation of culture as an onion. This same presentation is also featured in Edward and Mildred Hall’s book. The onion is structured in three layers, where artifacts and products of a culture compose the outer layer, norms and values the middle layer, with basic assumptions making up the core of the onion. Trompenaars sees the distinction between different national cultures in light of “normal distribution.” All people living within a nation do not have the same values and norms, but one can level out an average, and where we draw the lines between *us* and *them*, between the ones outside the group and the ones inside, defines the separation between cultures. As an example we can take the Mexican American

⁴⁵ Mitchell, Don. *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) 12

⁴⁶ Mitchell, Don 11

⁴⁷ Schein, E., *Organisational Culture and Leadership* (San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985) quoted in Trompenaars, Fons, *Riding the Waves of Culture, Understanding Cultural Diversity in Business* (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1993) 6

communities in the south of the United States. In this instance we have a physical line as well as a cultural divide, but where does Mexico end and the United States begin? Is the line to be drawn at the national border, or where the language changes from Spanish to English? Perhaps it should be drawn where the churches change from catholic to protestant? And who is to say that the Spanish language and the Catholic Church are not integral parts of American culture in 2005?

In light of this, the battles over culture that Mitchell discusses can be seen as battles over where the line should be drawn. These lines are always difficult to define, and so the ever evolving culture of a country is caught in constant battles over what the culture is really about, and especially who gets to dominate the outward projected look of that culture. Culture is in short defined in the battles over culture, but the culture of a country as seen from the outside is a median culture, drawn within boundaries that are to a certain extent arbitrary.

Norwegian vs. American culture

There are marked differences between the median cultures of Norway and the United States. Unfortunately, it would be impossible to explore them all. The Norwegian scholar Torbjørn Sirevåg has written a book listing the cultural differences between what he calls Northwesterners – by which he means Scandinavians and to a certain degree the English and German peoples – and Americans. To explain culture, Sirevåg uses the same onion as Hall, Hall and Trompenaars, but in addition, he defines culture as a “shared set of attitudes, values, practices and social skills ... cultivated and transferred to all members so as to form their idea of what is common sense.”⁴⁸ How these attitudes, values and social skills are transferred to the nation’s people he does not mention, but here the film industry of the country definitely has an impact. We need

⁴⁸ Sirevåg, Torbjørn. *Westerners: Six Reasons Why Americans Are Different, A View From Northwest Europe* (Oslo: AdNotam Gyldendal, 1999) 17

only look at the sharp shift in public opinion about the Second World War before and after the Hollywood studios decided to endorse the war, to see that film can be an extremely powerful medium. Sirevåg suggests six ways in which Americans and Northwesterners differ: individualism vs. collectivism, masculine vs. a feminine culture, differences in the view of time, and of space, hierarchy vs. equality, and universalism vs. particularism. Sirevåg's book unfortunately only touches the surface of these issues, and he has a tendency to oversimplify some things. In describing hierarchy, he simply says that it denotes "who is best, or who is the boss."⁴⁹ I feel this is far too facile a dismissal of a cultural trait that has roots going back thousands of years, both in Europe and in Asia. However, the generalizations he presents can still be considered valid.

If we are to look at differences in Norwegian and American film cultures, a particularly interesting divide that both Sirevåg and Hall and Hall point to, is the divide between high and low context cultures. In high context cultures, people usually have the same background and can communicate subtle messages without much background information, whereas in low context cultures people have very different backgrounds and so need more background information or less subtle language. Sirevåg points to the many written agreements in the US as an example of the US as a low context culture. If we transfer this to the "language" of the Hollywood film industry, it is easy to theorize that American films are less subtle than European ones because they need to communicate information to a more diversified audience (especially now that much of the audience is comprised of foreign nationals living outside of the US).

In addition to the concepts of high and low context cultures and different attitudes to space and time, Edward Hall and Mildred Reed Hall operate with the terms polychronic and monochronic time. These are not to be confused with the more

⁴⁹ Sirevåg 19

common concepts of cyclical and linear time. Trompenaars uses the terms synchronic and sequential time for the same concepts. A person with a synchronic or polychronic sense of time will use several paths at the same time to reach one goal. The person with monochronic or sequential view of time will have a strict view of the perceived order or sequence by which events should take place.⁵⁰ Polychronic time is often found in rural communities, whereas monochronic time is an effect of the industrialization, and so is found in industrial societies to a larger degree. Some scholars claim that the Norwegian society is still a very much tribal and rural community. In his essay in the anthology *Den norske væremåten*, a book written by social and cultural anthropologists as a result of the 1982 seminar of the Norwegian Social Anthropologist Association (Sosialantropologisk Forening), Hans Kristian Sørhaug comes up with a reasonable explanation for the Scandinavian phenomenon of “Janteloven”, (Jante’s law) a widely known common-sensical concept in Norway, taken from the Danish/Norwegian author Axel Sandemose. With Norway being such a small rural community, there is a need for tact, of which *not showing off* is a big part, for the close-knit community itself to survive. Julian Kramer as well points to the rural-ness of Norwegian culture, even in this day and age.⁵¹

Tord Larsen’s article on specific Norwegian traits in the same anthology argues that Norwegian literature is expected to have “meaning”, and that art for art’s sake is not tolerated in Norway. He mentions that every public speech in Norway has to have a “nytteverdi,” a Norwegian word with the connotations of purely practical, mundane value. He says that “The American [academic festive speeches] were about personal growth, about changing our understanding of ourselves and our understanding of reality. The Norwegian ones I remember were about a lack of governmental funding and about

⁵⁰ Trompenaars 107-124

⁵¹ Klausen, Arne Martin (ed.). *Den norske væremåten: Antropologisk søkelys på norsk kultur* (Oslo: Cappelen, 1999)

the future of scholars in the workforce.”⁵² Larsen does not mean that the American speeches were less useful than the Norwegians in any way, simply that they would not have been seen as realistic, useful or down to earth enough in Norway. A use that cannot be measured in money is often not seen as useful at all. This means that entertainment simply for entertainment’s sake is frowned upon in Norway.

Entertainment, such as it is, does not even have the redeeming feature of being thought-provoking, as art can have. This can be one reason why Hollywood film is often not seen as worthy of critical attention in Norway. Larsen sees the Norwegian culture as too practically oriented, whereas the American one is more ideological. ”...the demand for the clear relevance of the secondary reality to the primary reality, that all fairytales should have a moral, is founded on the understanding that most things in this world are means to an end outside yourself, something blessed with a more privileged reality”⁵³ Norwegians need a reason for their play.

Film as cultural mirror

One question we still need to explore is whether the culture we read out of the American remakes of Norwegian and other foreign films is American culture, or a special brand of “Hollywood Culture”? In the words of Richard Maltby and Kate Bowles: “...to what extent can we read Hollywood’s movies for signs of contemporary America, when the essence of [Hollywood] movie-making is not to inform but to entertain?”⁵⁴ We might say that the films in this thesis, the cultural artifacts of Norway and the United States, are symbols of the values and norms of the respective cultures, but this assumption is too easy to be taken for granted. Film making style can be influenced by other factors

⁵² Larsen, Tord. “Bønder i byen – på jakt etter den norske konfigurasjonen” in Klausen 20 (My translation)

⁵³ Larsen 21. My translation

⁵⁴ Maltby et al 131

than those we usually associate with a country's culture, in Trompenaars' and Hall's use of the word.

- Art cinema vs. entertainment cinema

Bazin, a French film critic influential in creating the French *Nouvelle Vague* (New Wave) Cinema in the late 1950s, wrote scathing critiques of American film studios for usurping French and European art film and remaking it as entertainment. He claims that what American studios do amounts to economic terrorism.⁵⁵ This has long been the prevailing attitude to Hollywood remakes. They take art and make it into entertainment. But what is 'art' and what is 'entertainment' in general, and what is art and what is entertainment in film? James Monaco divides the media of film into three areas: movies, film and cinema. He sees movies as the economic part of the medium, film as the political area and cinema as the aesthetic area. His point is that there is a need for a division of the different functions film as a medium serves. He has devised a scale of film function that goes "...from documentary and non-fiction on the left, through massive commercial narrative cinema that occupies the middle ground, on to avant-garde and "art" film on the right."⁵⁶ I do not completely agree with his scale. I feel *function* is a word better used for a scale from *entertainment* through *art* to *documentary*, instead of a scale from documentary through narrative to art. A scale like Monaco's is based on form, not function.

Some claim that in Norway, entertainment for entertainment's sake is not tolerated. Jennifer Forrest, however, reacts to the art film/ commercial film dichotomy when it is used in connection with comparisons of French and Hollywood film. For instance, she explains that the French critics of the magazine *Cahier du cinema* referred to American directors in their attempt to build up an art cinema in France in the 1950s.

⁵⁵ Bazin, 1952, quoted in Forrest et al 8

⁵⁶ Monaco 228

Clearly the divide between art and entertainment film cannot be drawn between American and European film. Both the originary films I discuss are Norwegian entertainment films, and this is what makes the changes that have been done when they crossed the Atlantic so interesting.

However, American film production has from the start been dominated by private interests, and so has had a slant towards commercial mass entertainment films. The business slant of Hollywood can be detected in many ways. Maltby and Bowles uses the example of *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993) and its selling of T-shirts *in* the film that are the same as T-shirts *from* the film to be sold to fans outside. Another example is the product placements so visible in the James Bond-franchise. Bond, and other action heroes with him, wear Ray Bans, and drive Jaguars and BMWs not because it fits with the film narrative, but because the production company has gotten money from the manufacturers to place the products within the narrative. How much of the Tom Hanks vehicle *Cast Away* (Robert Zemeckis, 2000) that was financed by FedEx is anyone's guess. Maltby and Bowles also point to the fact that since the beginning, Hollywood has constructed the fan as a consumer and the star as a commodity. The industry also came up with the reliable yet variable formula of Classical Hollywood narrative. The formula is described by Pierre Sorlin as "... good sharp pictures, a soundtrack which helps the spectator to follow the plotline without encroaching on her or his pleasure, audible dialogue, good actors and, more importantly, a well-defined story, with a situation revealed at the outset, developed logically, and unambiguously closed or solved at the end."⁵⁷ This was formula was broken, however, by Hitchcock with his film *Psycho* (1960), and later by the young film school educated directors of the 60s and 70s, who were inspired by the French *Nouvelle Vague*, but this, according to

⁵⁷ Sorlin, Pierre. *European Cinemas, European Societies, 1939-1990* (London: Routledge, 1991) 1

the two, was a short lived thing, and Hollywood soon went back to its classical style, albeit with some alterations.

We cannot claim that all European film is art, and we cannot claim that all American film is entertainment, but the commercial entertainment slant of Hollywood is too large to be ignored in this discussion.

- Is Hollywood culture American culture?

For every claim about “Americans,” there are hundreds, perhaps millions, of counterexamples.”⁵⁸

Maltby and Bowles claim rightly that Hollywood is not the American film industry. There are independents making film in America, there are many foreign film makers in Hollywood, and the most money is made from the foreign market. Hollywood is a business, pure and simple. If it has not been so always, Hollywood cinema has become the cinema of an imagined America, imagined both by foreigners and by Americans themselves. “Yet,” as the British journalists Edmund Fawcett and Tony Thomas describe it “in the movies, seen the world over, is recreated a Mythic America that could well ... [serve] as a commentary on the Real America we describe...”⁵⁹ Let us look at the example of the myth of America as the land of youth. Already in the early eighties Fawcett and Thomas commented that America was no longer the “new” country of common conception. The country is over 300 years old, and most of its institutions, in politics and business alike, are almost as old. Yet, in our minds and in the minds of Americans themselves, America is still the land of youth, especially as it is often compared to Europe. The Hollywood myth machine might be one of the reasons for this. The “American” culture of Hollywood is how Americans – and us foreigners, as films are increasingly marketed towards overseas audiences – still prefer to view America, and so the culture we can read out of Hollywood films is the culture of

⁵⁸ Fawcett, Edmund and Tony Thomas. *America and the Americans* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1983) 9

⁵⁹ Fawcett et al 10

common conception perpetuating the image of America as the land of youth and progress.

If culture is the battles over culture, the battles over what constitutes American culture have been particularly fierce. The Hollywood film industry is in a special position amongst the world's film industries. Nowhere else can you find so many different cultures within one society, and nowhere else has the glue of an envisioned common past and future been so needed. Allan Lloyd Smith formulates it as an "ever present possibility of political fragmentation [that] has led to an assertive dominant culture which organizes loyalty to abstract ideas of 'America' around the spectacular iconography of patriotic symbols ..."⁶⁰ He talks about America's 'shared abstractions', and uses the example of the small town as a mythic picture of how America sees itself. Some scholars even call America an invented country.⁶¹ There are of course other views baked into this mythic 'America' and many of these have been upheld by Hollywood over the years.

As a young country with an extremely diverse population from the very beginning, American society has recognized the need for a common basis for life, common cultural myths and fantasies. Looking at the films of the Hollywood film industry is a great way to try to pin down the battles over culture of the United States, as this is an arena where many of these battles have been fought. As the film industry grew to be an accepted part of American culture, the censor boards were the ones who made sure that common myths and fantasies were what the film industry was making. However, there has never been official prior restraint censorship on a federal level in the US, and after the death of the production code, the American film industry has in a

⁶⁰ Smith, Allan Lloyd, "Is there an American Culture?" in Maidment, Richard and Jeremy Mitchell. *The United States in the Twentieth Century: Culture, 2nd ed.* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2000) 271-295

⁶¹ Bell, Ian. "The Constructions of an American Culture: An Overview" in Maidment, Richard and Jeremy Mitchell. *The United States in the Twentieth Century: Culture, 2nd ed.* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2000) 1-12

sense been free to make the films they want. Still, because of Hollywood's longstanding position as America's myth-machine, the battles over what comes out of Hollywood have been particularly fierce since the end of prior restraint. Diverse, multicultural America is not a very easy society to make magical myths for, as what is seen as magical and romantic to one group, might be seen as mundane and trite by another, and what is seen as thought-provoking by one group might be seen as insulting by another. The fierce battle that ensued as the white middle class consensus culture of the US fell apart in the 1960s – over what American culture, American history and American future really was – has in no way ended. All we have to do to realize this is look at last year's controversy over Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ* (2004).

Even though Hollywood is America's favorite history teller and myth maker, its position is unofficial, and since the Supreme Court has decided film is art, few but the financiers, and a select group of directors, have any say in its political content. A full discussion of the financiers of Hollywood and their political leanings and cultural values would be an impossible task to undertake in the scope of this thesis. However, it is pertinent to recognize that there are discussions as to whether media ownership directly influences the political content of the product or not. In some instances it most certainly does. In his less than serious, but nonetheless factual, book *Lies, and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them*, Al Franken recalls the story of how Executive Editor of *The Washington Times*, Wes Pruden, added paragraphs to a writers column without his knowledge, and put it under the writer's by-line, and that this apparently "happens all the time."⁶² Monaco claims that because most studios are foreign owned these days, this refutes cultural critics "who rail against American cultural imperialism."⁶³ Maltby and Bowles, however, claim that even though the American film industry is both owned by

⁶² John McCaslin, quoted in Franken, Al. *Lies, and the Lying Liars who Tell Them* (New York: Dutton, 2003) 177

⁶³ Monaco 257

and gets most of their profit from foreigners, this has not had much influence on the content of the films. If the studios make films to suit an American audience, the films will still carry messages fit to suit an American audience.⁶⁴ Monaco himself admits that “Despite this unprecedented financial upheaval, there has been no discernible change in the product that Hollywood manufactures.”⁶⁵ Money does have an impact on the content of the film myth that comes out of Hollywood, not because of who owns them, but because the production companies do not want to alienate their audiences and lose them.

This makes Hollywood an extremely conservative business, upholding the dominant social values of the US.⁶⁶ James Monaco claims that “...because [American studio productions] were turned out on an assembly-line basis in such massive numbers, they are often better indexes of public concerns, shared myths, and mores than are individually conceived, intentionally artistic films.”⁶⁷ Hollywood is also a business that lets itself be influenced by what its customers want. And it is a business that is influenced by the customers who rattle the loudest. Charles Lyons shows that after the controversies created by several films in the 1990s and the following culture war debates both in the media and in intellectual circles, fearing public opinion, Hollywood production companies will often shelve controversial projects so as not to anger their customers.⁶⁸ In this way, one could argue that the culture that Hollywood represents is a conservative median culture for the US.

Another important distinction is that not all films produced in the United States are made within the Hollywood system. “Independent” film has been made in the US

⁶⁴ Maltby et al 125-132

⁶⁵ Monaco 257

⁶⁶ Auster, Albert and Leonard Quart. *American film and society since 1945* (London: Macmillan, 1984) 4 I use ‘conservative’ in its original meaning: conserving the values that are, not ‘conservative’ as in right-wing.

⁶⁷ Monaco 247

⁶⁸ See Lyons, Charles, *The new censors: movies and the culture wars* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997) for a very intelligent discussion of the way spokes groups influence content in American movies.

since the beginning of film. D.W. Griffith was to a certain degree an independent filmmaker. All through the lifetime of the studio system there were made films on the outskirts of 'Hollywood': low budget B-movies, exploitation films and porn are all types of film made in the US, but not within the Hollywood system. The first films recognized as American Independent, or Indies, surfaced after the re-closing of the economic moneybag after the rise, and fall, of auteur cinema in Hollywood in the late 60s and early 70s. Film school-educated directors with a vision started trying to get their films financed by other sources than the major producing studios, and with the help of the Sundance film festival, many of them got distribution they otherwise would not have dreamed of. The "indies" of the 80s and 90s have, largely through the success of some of Quentin Tarantino's films, been taken up by the studios and production companies and are now expected to make as much money as the older blockbusters. These new studio indies can be called "semi-indies" and are films with an "indie-sensibility", like the films of Soderbergh and Spike Jonze, but made with a large budget and expected to raise big bucks. These new semi-indies do not fit into the 'Hollywood' of the last hundred years, or into the 'Hollywood' I refer to when using this reference, yet they are definitely a part of American culture.⁶⁹

Frederick Wasser feels that Hollywood film has "ceased to reflect American values and begun to take on a more transparent air, as they need to appeal to a more international audience. I agree that American films some times do not represent American values, but I find it curious that Wasser feels that they do less now than they used to. It might be, though, that the overarching salad dressing that is Hollywood culture has even fewer flavors now that it has to be palatable to an even more diverse audience. The economic processes of the Hollywood system does give the American

⁶⁹ This paragraph is to a large degree based on a lecture that Jan Langlo gave through the People's University (Folkeuniversitetet)'s course on post-war film history spring of 2005 at the Norwegian Institute of Film (NFI) 05.03.17.

people a certain say in the cultural values and content of the myths that are created for their benefit, but unfortunately in a very haphazard and random way. Still, to a certain extent we can recognize at least differences in Norwegian and American culture from looking at films from the two different cultures, as long as we keep in mind that Hollywood culture is not synonymous with American culture.

Narrowing the field and explaining my choices.

The films I have looked at are all entertainment films, although as I have alluded to, this means something different in Norway than it does in Hollywood. In the term 'Hollywood' I include TV production companies, video and DVD distributing companies and other empires, as does most of the literature I have used. James Monaco argues that in the movie industry, in its present form as huge media conglomerates, TV, video, DVD and cinematic release is all the same thing.⁷⁰

Norwegian being my first language, and culture, it seemed natural to pick Norwegian films to look at, even though this made my selection rather slim. There have only been made two remakes of Norwegian films in the US, so the choice was easy. As I wanted to be thorough, and had a limited amount of time, my original idea of comparing films from two different originary countries, and four American remakes, seemed too large a project, and so I decided to concentrate on the Norway-US dichotomy of *Hodet over vannet/ Head Above Water* and the two versions of *Insomnia*. None of the two film pairs have more than 5 years between originary film and remake. This is important, so that we do not have to take into account time differences, as well as geographical ones, when discussing the cultural differences within the two film pairs.

I have decided to look at my film in sequences, and divided the films into scenes. The lists of scenes can be found in Appendix B. In the analyses, when I refer to

⁷⁰ Monaco 228-387

for instance HN (Hodet over vannet Norway), Scene 15 or IUS (Insomnia US), Scene 25, these are the lists I am referring to. I have chosen to deal with the stories in *Hodet over vannet* and *Head Above Water* first, as these are close to identical, making the distinction between them more subtle, though definitely not less interesting. The films *Insomnia* and *Insomnia* have more instantly visible differences, and so are easier to analyze. I want to look at what differences there are in the four films, both intentional and not, and see if these can be attributed to differences in culture between the US and Norway. I also want to look at the success of the two American films as remakes, and whether they are truly Hollywood films or have become shadows of Norwegian films.

Chapter 2. Hodet over vannet vs. Head Above Water

Jim Wilson's 1996 *Head Above Water* is a flat, boring, and confusing film. The story is incoherent, and even worse, inconsequential. There does not seem to be a point to the film whatsoever. We, as the audience, are completely unable to connect, much less sympathize, with any of the characters. It is supposed to be a comedy, but it is not funny. It is supposed to be a thriller, but it is not interesting. Yet the Norwegian film that spawned it, Nils Gaup's 1993 *Hodet over vannet*, is both funny and interesting, and won the Norwegian *Amanda* Film Award in 1993. The confusing part is, the two films have almost exactly the same story, and the American one has better sound, better music, better actors and a more streamlined storyline. How can this be? This chapter will be an analysis and comparison of the two films. Through this analysis I will try to find out what went wrong in the making of the American film. I will first give short a short account of the plot and point to differences in story between the films in question, as I find it imperative that the reader have some idea of the story and the differences in story between the two films, even if he or she has not seen the films. I will then move on to the analysis of differences in character and form. Finally I will try to place the American *Head Above Water* within Hollywood film making tradition, and look at whether the differences I have found come from differences between Norwegian and American culture or film making style.

Although I have divided the differences between the two films into three categories: plot and story differences, character differences, and differences in form, these distinctions are simply notional conveniences. Differences in form, like how the film is shot, or whether we see the characters mostly from the front or the back, do have a large impact on our understanding of the characters. In the same way, the differences in character have a great impact on the storyline and plot and the other way around. So

this divide is purely artificial. All the same, some sort of division makes the differences easier to see, so I have selected this one.

Synopses and plot differences

The main points of the story are these: A young woman has taken her slightly older husband on vacation to her family's cabin on a small island with only one other inhabitant, a male childhood friend of hers. While the men are out fishing, her ex-boyfriend shows up, and dies in his sleep. When her husband comes back he begins a spiral into jealousy and madness that ends with everyone dead but the young woman.

- Hodet over vannet, Nils Gaup

Lene and her husband Einar are on vacation at her childhood summer cabin on a small island off the coast of southern Norway. Lene is a sculptor with a nervous disposition trying to kick a pill habit, while her husband is trying to quit drinking. Einar has recently been transferred from his judgeship in Oslo to Melhus, a small town further north in Norway. The island they are on now is mostly rock and forest. The only other person living there is Lene's childhood friend Bjørn, a political cartoonist who takes care of the cabin for Lene's family in the winter. The morning we join the action, Bjørn is taking Einar on an overnight fishing trip. While they are gone, Lene's ex-boyfriend Gaute unexpectedly shows up in a stolen dingy, with flowers and candy. The two drink and talk, and Gaute tells her that his wife has left him, and that he has been drinking for a week straight, despite a weak heart. The next morning, when Lene goes to wake him up, she discovers he is dead. She hears the fishing boat with the men returning, and panics. She hides Gaute's body in the food cellar and the flowers and candy rather shoddily in drawers and closets. When the two men come in, Lene excuses herself, claiming she needs a swim, and runs to sink Gaute's clothes in the bay and push his dingy out to sea.

When she comes back, Einar is preparing for breakfast, and accidentally breaks Gaute's neck jumping on the cellar trapdoor. Einar then goes on to discover Gaute's watch on the bedside table and the candy and flowers, and Lene confesses that Gaute has been there, and eventually where he is. They decide to take the body into town, but when Einar discovers that Gaute's neck is broken and that his clothes are gone as well, he claims that bringing the body back would make him the laughing stock of the town. They go out to look for his clothes, but cannot find them. They try to dump the body in the sea, but Lene's childhood friend Bjørn turns up and they do not want him to see Gaute's body. Lene tries to distract Bjørn, but this still does not give Einar enough time to dump the body. Lene still wants to take Gaute into town, and offers to take the blame, but Einar, believing that Gaute died from drinking methanol from a vodka bottle found in their shed, refuses to bring the naked dead body in to the authorities.

Later, Lene discovers that her childhood friend Bjørn has found both the clothes and the boat, and talks him into giving them to her, saying she will clean the clothes and take the stolen boat into town. However, when she brings the clothes back to Einar, he is drunk and has already cut up Gaute's body and cemented it into the stairs of their new gazebo. She confronts him with the insanity of this action and begins to suspect him of having killed Gaute by leaving the methanol out on purpose. She threatens to divorce him and tries to run away, but is caught by Einar, who ties her up. She seduces him into letting her go and they make love, but he still locks her up in the basement when he goes to sleep. She gets out and runs away again, this time using Bjørn's boat. Einar goes after her. They fight, and he knocks her out and ties her up again and starts preparing to leave the island. The next morning, while Einar is explaining Lene's absence to Bjørn as an attempted suicide, she gets away again and runs to Bjørn's cabin. She tries to get

Bjørn to believe that Einar is trying to kill her, but Bjørn believes her husband when Einar tells him she is paranoid and a danger to herself, and helps him tie her up again.

Bjørn does, however, want to placate Lene by checking out her story about the body in the cement. While the men are gone Lene gets loose yet again, and finds a postcard from Gaute, which she had suspected Einar of hiding, in Bjørn's cabin. She begins to suspect Bjørn of having killed Gaute. When Bjørn finds the body, the two men fight, Bjørn knocks Einar out, and Einar seemingly dies just as Lene comes to say she forgives him and believes he did not kill Gaute after all. Thinking that Einar is dead, they go back to Bjørn's cabin to dress Bjørn's wounds, and once there, Bjørn professes his love for Lene. She now thinks Bjørn is the murderer but he in turn is shot by the risen Einar who then ties her up yet again, and adds concrete shoes. Einar then goes to Bjørn's cabin to think, and inadvertently drinks the "methanol-vodka", which has been there the entire time. Just as he is explaining his plan for what to tell the police, he goes blind from the methanol, falls in the water and dies, leaving Lene in a precarious situation. She gets loose by using Einar's circular saw, but the gazebo collapses and she falls in the water. She almost drowns, but is rescued by a police officer who has come looking for the dingy Gaute stole. On the way back to the mainland the policeman drinks a bottle of water that has been laced with Lene's painkillers by Einar, and dies. Lene is alone with four dead bodies and no one to verify her story.

- Head above Water, Jim Wilson

The young woman in Wilson's film is called Nathalie and her husband is called George. In this story they are newlyweds, and on their first vacation together. The cabin is somewhere along the east coast of the United States. Nathalie is a recovering drug addict, and George drinks too much, but has not drunk since they were married. They met when he was the judge in a trial where she was the defendant, and where he gave

her a suspended sentence. Like in the Norwegian film, the cabin is situated far from any civilization and the only other person living in the area is Nathalie's childhood friend Lance, who in this film is a painter and sculptor who takes care of the cabin for Nathalie's family in winter. While Lance has taken George fishing, Nathalie's controlling, and recent, ex-boyfriend Kent shows up with flowers and candy. They start drinking, and Kent professes his love for her. Like in the Norwegian film, the next morning, when Nathalie goes to wake him up, he is dead. When the men come back they eat breakfast, and George accidentally breaks Kent's neck jumping on the trapdoor to the cellar. Like in the Norwegian film, they then try to hide the body but are foiled by Lance. However, Nathalie does not threaten to divorce George before running away, and George does not tie her up before locking her in the basement. They do not have sex. After the second escape attempt in the middle of the night and subsequent recapture, when Nathalie has for the third time run away, this time to Lance's cabin, Lance goes to get George, because he does not believe Nathalie's story about George's murderous insanity. At the very end, when George has tied her up at the gazebo, in contrast to the Norwegian film, George explains to Nathalie that he will tell the police that Lance killed her while George himself was asleep. George does not die when he falls in the water, but is accidentally killed by Nathalie when she tries to get loose. She uses a chainsaw to try to cut her ropes, but instead brings down the entire gazebo, and George is impaled on the stake protruding from the top of it. The end of the film is the same as the Norwegian version, although we do not actually see the policeman drink the poisoned water and die.

The main differences in story between *Hodet over vannet* and *Head Above Water* are differences in the background story of Nathalie and George as compared to Lene and Einar. We find out during Nathalie's voiceover in the beginning of the film

that Nathalie and George met in court (HUS, Scene 2).¹ George was the judge in her trial and he gave her a lenient sentence. They married and are away on their first trip together. The Norwegian couple Lene and Einar have been married for some time, and Lene's relationship with Gaute has been over long enough for him to have a wife and several kids. Lene has had a short lapse in her love for Einar – she ended up in bed with Gaute once, and Einar chased him with an axe. We do not hear anything about Nathalie and Kent, but apparently she has been “saved” from Kent by George. The two other main plot differences is that George threatens to kill Nathalie at the very end, something Einar does not do, and that Nathalie kills George by accident, while Einar dies on his own. Although the storyline is almost exactly the same in the two films these are subtle differences that make rather large differences in character as well.

Character differences

The character differences, though difficult to spot at first, are major. If we count the policeman in both films – and the tourists in the American one – as bystanders, there are four characters in each film: the girl, the husband, the childhood friend, and the ex-boyfriend. The characters, and thereby the relationship between them, change drastically from the Norwegian to the American film. I will start with the couples Einar/ Lene and George/ Nathalie and the changes in dynamics between them, secondly move on to the ex-boyfriends Gaute and Kent, and finally deal with the childhood friends Bjørn and Lance.

The husband in the Norwegian film, Einar, is a judge whose career is obviously not at its peak. He has been transferred from his post in the big city to a small town in mid-Norway because he drinks too much. We do not know how he met Lene. However, we do know that she is trying to stay off nerve pills given to her because of a previous

¹ These abbreviations point to lists of scenes that can be found in Appendix B. HUS signifies Head Above Water US, HN Hodet over Vannet Norway.

nervous breakdown, and that and he, in turn, has quit drinking. At some point in the past Einar has lost control when he found his wife in bed with her ex-boyfriend Gaute, and chased Gaute with an axe, as he indicates to Bjørn in HN, Scene 6. Because of his already shaky reputation, he is afraid of what the papers might say if he brought the naked dead body of her ex-boyfriend into town. George, on the other hand, is a more collected and less troubled character. He has not lost his job, his attack on Kent was pre-meditated – he poured lighter fluid over the ex-boyfriend and threatened to light it in order to break the hold he had over Natalie (HUS, Scene 11) – and his explanation for not wanting to take the body in to the authorities is that he is afraid that they will be put in jail (HUS, Scene 23). If we compare HUS, Scene 23 with its ordinary scene: HN, Scene 13, it is interesting to see the small differences that give a completely different feel for why he does not want to take the body in. In HN, Scene 13, Einar grumpily gives in to Lene's demands that they bring Gaute's body into shore.

Lene: But you haven't killed him, right? The clothes mean nothing?

Einar: I wouldn't count on that in court.

Lene: This has nothing to do with your little vanity, does it?

Einar: No, but I...

Lene (overlapping): Gaute is dead, right? He will be buried! Evelyn and the kids have a right to know where he is. And then you damn well have to take that some people laugh behind your back for a few weeks.

Einar: Ok, ok, but, but you have to let me clean the filter, we won't get anywhere without that. Were you planning on swimming to shore? How stupid can you get? We have to get rid of that old piece of junk. I want a new boat! Go get the methanol.²

² Lene: Men du har jo ikke drept ham, ikke sant? Tøyet betyr jo ingenting?

Einar: Det skal ikke du være for sikker på i retten.

Lene: Dette har ikke noe med den lille forfengeligheten din å gjøre, vel?

Einar: Nei men, du..

Lene (overlapping): Gaute er død, ikke sant? Han skal begraves! Evelyn og ungene har rett til å få vite hvor han har blitt av. Og da får faen meg du tåle at noen ler bak din rygg i to-tre uker.

Einar: Ja, ja, men, men jeg må jo få lov til å rense den forgasseren, vi kommer jo ingen vei uten den. Har du tenkt til å svømme'n inn til land eller? Hvor dum går det an å bli. Vi må se å kvitte oss med det gamle skrapet. Jeg skal ha meg en ny båt! Ta og hent trespriten.

In HUS, Scene 23, George gives in to Nathalie because he feels sorry for her after chastising her for thinking they could get away with it.

Nathalie: Can we stay here until the autopsy's over?

George: You could. But they'd want someone in jail, and that would be me.

Nathalie: But nobody killed him. I don't see how clothing can make a difference one way or another.

George: We're not talking about a kindergarten squabble. Anything can happen in a court of law.

Nathalie: Are you sure you're not worried about your position? I think ...

George (overlapping): Don't you realize that I could be convicted on circumstantial evidence? Don't you realize that I could be convicted even if I'm innocent? And I could spend the rest of my life in jail because of this stupid mess.

Nathalie: This is all my fault, George.

George: What we have to do now is stick together. Now go to the shed and get the methanol for me and I'll clean the filter, and we'll take him in.

Einar gives in right away, because he knows that it is his vanity he is afraid of, George dismisses Nathalie's claim that he is worried about his position, and exclaims worry that he could spend the rest of his life in jail.

These two particular scenes are interesting for several other reasons as well. They show a completely different dynamic between the two couples Lene/ Einar and Nathalie/ George. Furthermore, they are good examples of differences in both Einar/ George and Lene and Nathalie's characters. Einar is less sure of himself than George is. Lene stands strong and attacks Einar ferociously for not wanting to take Gaute's body into shore, while Nathalie's comment is a feeble "This is all my fault, George." Another change in the dynamics between the two characters is seen in HUS, Scene 7, where George tells his new wife as he is leaving: "And remember, no drinking and no sedatives." There is no corresponding dialogue in *Hodet over vannet*. George is much more condescending of Nathalie than Einar is of Lene. Nathalie does not drink because George does not like her to. She is also afraid that he will come home while Kent is

there (HUS, Scene 12). The reason Einar worries when he sees the open vodka bottle, is that he knows that Lene does not like vodka. George worries because he has told Nathalie not to drink.

The Norwegian Lene is a neurotic artist. The American Nathalie is an ex-drug addict who has gotten off easy in George's court, has married him, and is trying to quit. *Head Above Water* starts with a voiceover with Nathalie explaining her motivation for marrying George. She has not had "much luck with men." George is "not exactly what [she] had in mind for a husband," but she loves him because he helped her with her "little addictions." No such explanation is needed in *Hodet over vannet*. The first we see of the couple they seem happily married.

Lene is a young girl who has been wild in her youth. Bjørn mentions in HN, Scene 3 that she would rather be in Paris in her teenage years than at the cabin with her family. However, she is by no means a criminal. Nathalie, on the other hand, has had a history of domestic disturbance and petty crimes, which George has bailed her out of. This is brought forth in HUS, Scene 35, where George attacks Nathalie for being unrealistic about what could happen if they came to town with the dead ex-boyfriend.

The only thing you know about criminal law is the silly little appearances you and your friends made in connection with drugs and domestic disturbances! You know about having your hand slapped, and that's all! You've never been responsible for any of your actions!

Lene is also somewhat less excitable than Nathalie. After she has run away to Bjørn's cabin in HN, Scene 37, she first picks up a knife, but changes her mind and grabs a candlestick that she raises above her head when she hears someone coming. Nathalie, however, attacks her childhood friend with a boathook without first seeing who's there. Nathalie also has a greater appetite for men than Lene does. She wants it all. She wants Kent and Lance and George. She hides in the bathroom and smiles to herself when Kent puts on the record from their past in HUS, Scene 15, and she smiles the same secretive

smile when she is invited into Lance's cabin in HUS, Scene 33. These scenes are non-existent in the Norwegian film.

The changes in the dynamics between the couples are clearly visible. Nathalie married George after a lenient sentence he gave her, which puts her in a state of dependency on him. Nathalie and George are newlyweds, whereas Lene and Einar know each other better. Einar is jealous because Lene had a fling with Gaute after they got married, and because she obviously has a good connection with him. George is jealous for no apparent reason, as the two are newlyweds and he has "broken" the "hold" that Kent had over Nathalie. In the end, the Norwegian film tells a story of a young woman finding her attempt at a normal life foiled by accidents, mishaps and an overly suspicious alcoholic husband. She has a nervous disposition, but is resourceful and ultimately is the lone survivor of a gruesome tragedy. The American film tells a story of a woman who through her inability to let go of her sordid past sets in motion a chain of events that ruins her attempt at redemption through marriage. In addition to this, the differences between Einar and George – George's more collected manner and greater authority over Nathalie – make it difficult to understand his sudden turn to insanity.

We have seen that George fears being arrested whereas Einar fears being laughed at. This could indicate that Norwegians depend on the legal system more than Americans do. Sørhaug claims that Norwegian culture has a tendency to "totemize" societal structures, as opposed to for instance Americans, who use nature to symbolize power, like with the bald eagle.³ Harry Eckstein, in his book *Division and Cohesion in Democracy*, explains it differently. He claims that Norwegians have a very high sense of community, and we have a strong sense of the necessity of public services, not

³ Sørhaug 62

because it is necessary, but because it is the right thing. We actually like and respect public power.⁴ Einar has a trust in the court system that George lacks.

However, to explain the rest of the differences in dynamics between the couples, we need to look at gender in American and Norwegian film and society. Most scholars agree that the image usually given of women on the Hollywood screen does not reflect the realities of American women. James Monaco is among the people who see a large rift between the sexual politics of the screen and the sexual politics of American society. He claims that women's roles in the cinema have not changed at all in the last 30 years, and says that "Sexual politics in film is closely connected with what we might call the "dream function" of the movies."⁵ Although I might not agree with everything she says, in her book *From Reverence to Rape*, Molly Haskell does show effectively what American women expect from women on the silver screen. American women have been socialized into expecting true love and a happy ending, so that when a woman gives up love for a career, they react negatively. Hollywood films are there to give fantasies and not realities. The stars should come together in the end and, as Haskell describes them, the female audiences "salivate like Pavlov's dogs for the happy ending, the "forever" union of two perfect creatures that corresponds to [their] own drugged fantasies of love."⁶ This, Haskell claims, is because throughout post war American film history, there have only been two types of women on screen: the whore and the madonna, as exemplified by Marilyn Monroe and Katharine Hepburn. These two "characters" have been cast in roles as victims, love interests, femme fatales and not much else. They are females before they are persons. They are stereotypes devised for the consumption of a predominantly male audience. Frank Manchel, in his *Women on the Hollywood Screen*

⁴ Eckstein, Harry. *Division and Cohesion in Democracy: A Study of Norway* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966) 11-31

⁵ Monaco 275

⁶ Haskell, Molly. *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) 380

argues that “The Hollywood woman is an image of America’s fantasies...”⁷ The interesting question now is why this is so? Why are women on the Hollywood screen such flat and uninteresting characters?

One reason is that, as I have mentioned, the audience for most typical “Hollywood” studio pictures are male. Another is that, as I pointed to in chapter one, the industry has since its very birth been governed mainly by economy. Yet another reason is that the American film industry has throughout its history been governed by men. Women have generally had influence only through their ‘bankability’ as stars. This is changing, but still most of the people employed by the Hollywood industry are men. Women have had a history as screenwriters, as is reflected by the fact that both the American remakes I am examining are written partly by women. Female directors and producers can be found, but they are scarce.

The situation is somewhat different in the European and Norwegian film industry. Sorlin points to a subtle difference between American and European cinema: “Feminists that focused on the dominant cinema, Hollywood’s, rightly noted that ... [the] male gaze... [was] not so obvious in Europe...”⁸ Pauline MacRory has written an interesting article dealing with the transformations of the main character when the French film *Nikita* (Luc Besson, 1990) was remade into the American *Point of No Return* (John Badham, 1993). She notes that even though the action heroine is a relatively new and positive development, the American action heroine in *Point of No Return* does not transgress the traditional boundaries of the masculine and feminine. ‘Maggie’, the American version of ‘Nikita,’ does not go through a maturing from child to adult, like her French twin, but a move from a “...qualified masculinity to a femininity; the creation of her feminine persona eventually leads to her real

⁷ Manchell, Frank. *Women on the Hollywood Screen* (Franklin Watts, London, 1977) 1

⁸ Sorlin 203

feminization and through this to her rejection of violence.”⁹ In the end, Maggie does not transgress the common gender boundaries found in Hollywood film. And neither does Nathalie. Yet both Lene and Nikita are of a different mold.

One of the reasons for this might be that there are different expectations tied to Norwegian films than to American ones. Even though we can find female directors throughout Norwegian film history the industry is male-dominated here as well.¹⁰ However, on the two other counts, Norway differs sharply from the US. The economic aspects of moviemaking in Europe and in Norway have traditionally not been as strong as in the US, and the audiences for Norwegian films in Norway have traditionally been older and more mixed. An example of this is that when it premiered, Anja Breien’s *Hustruer* was one of the most seen Norwegian films in years.¹¹ The expectations for Norwegian films have also been that they will in some way tell the truth, like Larsen points out in his article, mentioned in Chapter 1, Norwegian art is expected to perform some function besides entertainment, and besides beauty. American films have not had that pressure. Like Jeanine Basinger exclaims in her book *A Woman’s View*, about movie reception among female audiences in the US:

Even as children, we knew how much of what we were seeing was untrue, wishful, escapist. What were we – idiots? I am always astonished at how much writing about old movies assumed that the audience believed everything in them. Of course we didn’t. We entered into the playful conspiracy of moviegoing.¹²

All audiences might not have been as aware of the conspiracy as Basinger was, but it would be a mistake to assume that American men believe that women are like they are portrayed in the movies. This does not change the fact that women are portrayed as card

⁹ MacRory 52

¹⁰ Examples of successful Norwegian female directors include Edith Calmar, director of *Ung Flukt* (The Wayward Girl, 1959) and Anja Breien, who made the successful *Hustruer* (Wives, 1974).

¹¹ Cowie, Peter et al. *Scandinavian Cinema: A Survey of the Films and Film-makers of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden*. (London: Tantivy Press, 1992) 94

¹² Basinger, Jeanine. *A Woman’s View: How Hollywood Spoke to Women 1930-1960*. (London: Wesleyan University Press, 1993) 4

board cut outs rather than humans. Still, it might help to explain why. Gender in American film, and in film in general, is a highly contested field that unfortunately needs further study.

The two smaller characters in the two versions of the film also show rather marked differences. The ex-boyfriend in Gaup's film is a lovable but alcoholic friend of the family, with a family of his own known to both Lene and Einar. In HN, Scene 23 Lene admonishes Einar for cutting up and cementing into the stairs "...A good friend of yours. ... You know his wife and kids..."¹³ Gaute speaks about his wife Evelyn who has kicked him out (HN, Scene 5), and comes to his friends Lene and Einar for sympathy. In *Head Above Water*, on the other hand, Kent is Nathalie's recently abandoned ex-boyfriend. He has also been left by his wife Evelyn, but he is there for Nathalie, not for sympathy from the couple. In the scene comparable to HN, Scene 5, Kent claims he came back because he has "missed [her] so much" as he falls to his knees in front of her (HUS, Scene 16). He is clearly trying hard to seduce her, and possibly succeeding. Whether the couple have sex or not is an open question. Billy Zane's Kent is a despicable man with no friends and no future (quite literally), and has had a hold over Nathalie that George broke by squirting him with lighter fluid and threatening to set fire to it (HUS Scene 11).

Lene is on an equal footing with Gaute; although Bjørn comments that "Gaute is a very intense guy" who has "an enormous attraction for people like her,"¹⁴ it is obvious from the repartee between the two in HN, Scene 5 that they have had a fairly equal relationship. They both seem relaxed in each other's company. They laugh and joke around. When Lene laughingly remind him that it is better for his heart to drink beer than vodka, he retorts that alcohol is good for the hair. Nathalie, on the other hand, has

¹³ "En god venn av deg! Som du skjærer opp og støper inn i trappa? Du kjenner kona og ungene og. Hva var det som fikk deg til å gjøre det?"

¹⁴ "Gaute er en jævlig intens type, vet du. Enorm påvirkningskraft på folk som henne" HN, Scene 6

been under Kent's spell. This disparity is seen clearly in the scenes where the two ex-lovers are alone prior to Kent/ Gaute's death. In Gaup's film they drink and joke around, before Gaute puts his arms around Lene, while Wilson's Kent tries to seduce Nathalie from the very start, by putting on a record from their past, and getting her to slow dance with him.

Gaute is a psychiatrist. We are never told what Kent does for a living, but he steals boats, and upon hearing this Nathalie exclaims: "You will never change, Kent Draper." When he claims that the boat is borrowed from a friend, she asks "Since when do you have any friends,"¹⁵ indicating that Kent is a loner and a misfit. His shady background can also be gleaned from his response to Nathalie admonishing him for drinking vodka with a heart condition. He jokingly exclaims that "Vodka is the last of my vices. Considering how many I started with, it's not bad."¹⁶ As we have seen, Lene's ex-boyfriend Gaute is a nice guy and the couple know him well. Nathalie's ex-boyfriend Kent is mean and he is not a friend of George. Gaute has a career and a life of his own, while Kent does not. Gaute is in short a "good guy" whereas Kent is not. I believe that this disparity between the two ex-boyfriends comes from a lack of willingness in Hollywood studios to kill off a good guy by accident in the beginning of the film. Within the Hollywood formula of filmmaking, this is simply not done. The jar to the narrative line would be too big. James Monaco point out that Hollywood star cinema depends on identification between hero and audience.¹⁷ The smaller characters, as long as they are "good" characters, are people the audience identifies with, and killing them off for no reason in the beginning of the film would put the audience at odds with the filmmaker.

¹⁵ HUS Scene 10

¹⁶ HUS Scene 12

¹⁷ Monaco 265

With the other minor characters, the childhood friends Bjørn and Lance, the differences are not as marked, but still there. Lance has a pet bird that is integrated into the storyline, Bjørn has no animal. The woman, Lene, is an artist in the Norwegian film, but in the American one, the childhood friend Lance is the artist, sitting alone in his cabin on the island drawing pictures of Nathalie. Lance's Norwegian twin Bjørn is a newspaper cartoonist who in his spare time makes funny caricatures of Einar, not erotic pictures and sculptures of Lene, as Lance does in HUS, Scenes 11 and 38. This also gives the impression that Lance is more interested in Nathalie than Bjørn really is in Lene. Another indication of this could be the disparities between HN, Scene 47 and HUS, Scene 45. After the two friends have come back to Bjørn/Lance's cabin, and they think Einar/George is dead, Bjørn uses the word 'jealousy', Lance the word 'hate.' Bjørn says of Einar's jealousy that "Jealousy is also a kind of love. Just love that is unrequited."¹⁸ Lance, in the comparable scene in *Head Above Water*, begins a monologue about love that turns hard and brittle and to hate, without prompting from Nathalie (HUS, Scene 45).

To explain the changes in Lance, we need again to look at American film making tradition. As Belton describes in his book *American Cinema/ American Culture*, "'Hollywood' is not only a place in California where movies are made. ... 'Hollywood' is also a consistent and coherent set of aesthetic and stylistic conventions that audiences readily understand."¹⁹ One of these stylistic conventions is clearly defined characters. Lance is even more of a sensitive type than Bjørn, perhaps to offset George's macho man. Lance is a clearer character than Bjørn. These stereotypical characters have come to be what the audience expects in seeing a Hollywood film. As with the question of gender in American film, the interesting question is why this is so. If these stylistic

¹⁸ "Sjalusi det er og en slags form for kjærlighet. Bare kjærlighet som ikke blir tilfredsstilt." HN, Scene 47

¹⁹ Belton xxiii

conventions in general and the stereotypical characters specifically have been accumulating over time, why have they done so? This can be seen as an effect of what Olson calls the narrative transparency of Hollywood. Olson's theory is that the films that come out of Hollywood are popular all over the world because the narrative is based on stereotypes, and that the audiences all over the world can project their own fantasies onto those stereotypes. However, he offers no explanation for why these clearer characters should arise specifically in the US.²⁰ A better explanation might be that of US as what Trompenaars calls *low context culture*. Stereotypical characters are easily recognizable for all, and as a low context culture, the US needs characters that are easily recognizable, and a storyline that is clear and defined. The need for explanation is greater.

Differences in form

Nils Gaup's film *Hodet over vannet* is made in what a Norwegian would call an American style. The genre is a mix between the action/comedy and the noir *who's fooling who* type film. We shall see that this does not mean that it is an "American" film. The form may be influenced by Hollywood, but the content is definitely Norwegian, from the comedy of a dead man falling out of bed and knocking his head on the wall (HN, Scene 7), all the way down to the last naked breast. Gaup has been said by many to be influenced by Hollywood filmmaking; his breakthrough film was *Ofelas* (*The Pathfinder*, 1987), in form a generic action film, but set in a very typical Nordic (Sámi) environment. With that film as well, the form was inspired by Hollywood while the content was Norwegian. His third film, *Hodet over vannet*, was also seen as a very

²⁰ Olson, 1-20

Americanized film when it premiered, as part of a wave of action films in Norwegian cinema in the late 80's early 90's.²¹

The American film starts with a voiceover by Nathalie explaining the background story, how she came to meet her husband, who her friend is, and even why her friend is taking her husband fishing. In the Norwegian film we start in medias res: in the middle of the action. Some of the things Nathalie are explaining in the voiceover are things that become clear in other parts of the Norwegian film, like who Gaute is, and that the two are going fishing. Others are additions to the story: the fact that this is Nathalie and George's first holiday together, how they met, and that this will be their first night apart. The voiceover in *Head Above Water* is, like the clarified stereotypical characters, explained by the larger need for explanation in American film, both because it is to be sold to an international audience and because the US itself is a low context culture.

In the Norwegian film, Lene swims topless on several occasions. Her breasts are also visible when she gets dressed. This partial frontal nudity is completely gone in the American film. Where Lene went out in her underwear, Nathalie changes into a bathing suit before sinking Kent's clothes in the bay, and where Lene used her dress to help get the cellar door open, Nathalie uses other tools. To explain the question of the lack of nudity in the American film, in addition to the stereotypic female roles in Hollywood that I have mentioned above, and I want to mention that nudity has been natural in Norwegian film for some time. In 1959, Liv Ullmann was seen half naked in her leading lady debut *Ung flukt* (*The Wayward Girl*, Edith Calmar). Up until the late 1990's, Norwegian women went to the beach with their tops off. This was not seen as sexual, but a natural thing to do, like when Lene naturally goes swimming in her underwear

²¹ Solum Ove. "Veiviserne" in Iversen, Gunnar and Ove Solum (ed.). *Nærbilder: Artikler om norsk filmhistorie*. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1997) 187-202

when she is in a hurry to get Gaute's clothes out of the way. The American tradition of film censorship could account for the lack of nudity in the American film, as well as for the fact that the sex scene has been taken out. James Monaco notes that "While in Continental countries film censorship has most often been political in nature, in the U.S. and Britain it has been anti-sexual and puritanical, a vestige of native Puritanism and Victorian attitudes toward sex."²² He claims that the Hays Code has been an excuse for the American film studios to not treat political or sexual subjects. Although the Hays Code is no longer in effect, the inertia in American film industry stemming from the Hollywood economic system makes sure that the sexual politics of American film has stayed the same for some time after the fall of censorship.

James Monaco finds sound and music very important in deciphering a film. He claims that Hollywood has a standard of music as well as a standard of narrative, and that the soundtrack of a Hollywood film carries the film.²³ Therefore, the music in the two versions of the film is another interesting area to explore. Nils Gaup uses music to underscore dramatic moments to the same degree that the American director does, as seen in HN, Scenes 3a-3e where the music changes from Gaute's leitmotif when we see him in his boat, to happy music as Lene is frolicking in the water, back to Gaute and so on, until the two characters meet in the same environment and the music changes to a "shark theme" as Gaute swims under water to surprise Lene. However, Gaup also uses music that slowly changes from light comedy music to dramatic music in the course of the film, as Einar is slipping further and further into insanity, whereas the music stays the same happy theme in the American film. This could mean that the American filmmakers tried to keep the light tone throughout the film, in order to signify that this is a comedy. There is really no tradition in Hollywood for the kind of mixing of genres

²² Monaco 277

²³ Monaco 214

that Gaup is doing by changing the music. Anything that can be confusing to a paying audience is not considered to be part of the clear narrative needed.

Another interesting formal difference is the use of sunlight by Gaup and the corresponding lack of direction behind Wilson's use of sunlight. The sunlight is ever present and golden in the Norwegian film. Bjørn in particular has a halo of sun-filled blond hair in every shot he is in. This helps the audience come into the mentality of the sunny happy southern part of Norway, an important offset to the macabre storyline in the film. The sun is not used in the same way in *Maine*. The sun comes and goes from scene to scene, and there is no discernable thought behind the use of sunlight. The Norwegian's use of the light can be explained by the fact that *Hodet over vannet* is not first and foremost a Norwegian film; it is first and foremost a film set in the southern part of Norway, a part of the country known mostly for its alcohol bans and many Evangelical chapels. Every Norwegian who sees it will instantly recognize this, from the boat life and the water, but mostly from the sun light quality. Conversely, *Head Above Water* does not have a regional identity, and so the connotations of the oppressive southern part of Norway, which are ingrained in the consciousness of every Norwegian and adds dimension to the film, are lost.

In the Norwegian film, the sound often has an "authentic" feel to it. Possibly because the microphone is attached to the camera, the sound of the dialogue diminishes if the characters are far from the camera. An example is HN, Scene 3. As the characters move away from the camera the dialogue becomes almost inaudible. In addition, the characters mumble a lot and it is often difficult to hear what they are saying. This is especially prominent in the scenes where only Lene and Bjørn are present, like HN, Scene 47, where the two talk after Lene has escaped Einar once again. In the American film the dialogue sound is all clear. The overall sound quality also is better in the

American film than in the Norwegian one. In addition to the sound quality being “poorer” in the Norwegian film, two of the actors in *Hodet over vannet* are novices. Their performances are not slick. Stewart and Bennett claim in their *American Cultural Patterns* that American attention to mastery is one of the things that set them apart from Europeans.²⁴ This can account for some of the formal differences in the films, and the apparent slickness of the American film and the jarring feel of the Norwegian one in comparison. Another reason for the difference in sound quality is the need for American film not to give away that it is film, as both Monaco and Belton have pointed out.

The differences between these two films are, as we shall see, very much smaller than the ones between the two versions of *Insomnia*. The main differences are the dynamics between the couples, and to the characters Lene/Nathalie, Einar/George and Gaute/Kent. Some of the formal and the plot or story differences work together to change the characters and to change the overall feel of the film.

Trying to place *Head Above Water* within Hollywood cinema

Head Above Water was not well received in the US. It made its debut on cable TV, and the LA Times reviewer Jack Mathews had this to say:

... By the time "Head Above Water" reaches its "Perils of Pauline" ending, it's a question of interest only to Nathalie. If you have to spend time with a corpse at the beach, this is better than "Weekend at Bernie's." But it's a near thing.²⁵

The interesting thing is that the Norwegian reviewers liked the film, exactly because it was ‘European.’ In his review of the film in the magazine *Dag og Tid*, the Norwegian film critic Hallvar Østrem had this to say:

Head Above Water still does not turn into a typical Hollywood film, but really gives stronger associations to Euro-American films like Roman Polanski's "Death and the Maiden" ... The action is built up like an intense and realistic psychological chamber drama between the characters, but the film never moves to the dangerous depths where Polanski prefers to swim. "Head Above Water" is film play and entertainment, but without taking the story to the

²⁴ Stewart et al., 1991, quoted in Sirevåg 140

²⁵ Mathews, Jack. "Head Above Water" in *Los Angeles Times* Internet ed. [<http://www.calendarlive.com/movies/reviews/cl-movie970625-1.story>] Date Accessed: 05.03.29

extremes, like the Americans prefer to do. Even if they seem to love psychopaths over there these days, those kinds of diagnoses are left to the audience.²⁶

There is one way in which the film fits perfectly into the Hollywood tradition. The characters have been changed, and this has altered the relationship between the sexes. Like with the character of Bjørn/ Lance, Lene has been clarified into a stereotype in moving across the Atlantic. Nathalie is, in Haskell's division of the female roles in Hollywood, a femme fatale, in the sense that she brings down her husband and her friend because she cannot decide between men. However, having a femme fatale as the heroine is not something that is commonly done in Hollywood film. There are several aspects of the American film that do not fit with the Hollywood mold, and I will show this by using Belton's description of classical narrative in Hollywood cinema.

Classical narratives routinely begin with an act which disturbs the original state of things and which is answered, by the film's end, with another act which reestablishes initial order or balance. Thus a murder mystery...or an action picture of the 1980s..., will begin with the discovery of a dead body and end with the solution of the crime.²⁷

The act that disturbs the original state of things is definitely there. Nathalie's ex-boyfriend dies in the beginning of the film. However, order is definitely not restored at the end of the narrative. Nathalie is alone, her husband and best friend are dead, and there is a definitive possibility that she will be charged with multiple murders. The film scholar Pierre Sorlin describes the classic Hollywood formula as "... good sharp pictures, a soundtrack which helps the spectator to follow the plotline without encroaching on her or his pleasure, audible dialogue, good actors and, more importantly, a well-defined story, with a situation revealed at the outset, developed logically, and

²⁶ "Head Above Water" blir likevel ikkje nokon typisk Hollywood-film, men gir eigentleg sterkare assosiasjonar til euro-amerikanske filmar à la Roman Polanskis "Døden og piken" ... Handlinga er bygd som eit intenst og realistisk psykologisk kammerspel mellom karakterane, men filmen rører seg aldri ut på dei farlege djupa der Polanski likar best å bade. "Head Above Water" er filmleik og underhaldning, men utan å presse forteljinga til yttergrensene slik amerikanarane ofte yndar å gjere. Sjølv om dei ser ut til å elske psykopatar over der for tida, blir slike diagnoser overlatne til sjåaren å stille." My Translation Østrem, Hallvar. "Hovudet høgt over vatnet" in *Dag og Tid* Internet ed.

[<http://www.dagogtid.no/arkiv/1996/45/film>] Date Accessed: 05.03.29

²⁷ Belton 23

unambiguously closed or solved at the end.”²⁸ Sorlin’s description of classic narrative includes more formal aspects, and in this respect the film can be said to follow the recipe.

However, when we take into account the second part of Sorlin’s description: “... a well-defined story, with a situation revealed at the outset, developed logically, and unambiguously closed or solved at the end,” we find the same as when we compared it to Belton’s formula, namely that the film has several problems fulfilling these requirements. Is the story about the murder of Nathalie’s ex-boyfriend, about her husband’s descent into alcoholism and madness, or about Nathalie’s complete inability to hold on to a man? The latter seems the most probable, but it is definitely not “clear and defined.” Carolyn Durham describes differences in narrative in the two films *Trois hommes et un couffin* (Coline Serreau, 1985) and *Three men and a baby* (Leonard Nimoy, 1987) and explains how the change from incoherent to coherent narrative fits with French and American narrative tradition respectively.²⁹ In this discussion we have the opposite situation. The changes from incoherent to coherent narrative have not been made, and so *Head Above Water* does not fit into the American tradition of coherent narrative.

Are the differences born of Hollywood or America?

The differences between these two films, and as we shall see, also between the Norwegian and American versions of *Insomnia*, demonstrate a marked difference between views of women in Norwegian film and Hollywood film, but does that mean that there is as big a difference between these views in Norway and the US? There are of course marked differences between American and Norwegian women, their values

²⁸ Sorlin, Pierre. *European Cinemas, European Societies, 1939-1990* (London: Routledge, 1991) 1

²⁹ Durham, Carolyn. “Three Takes on Motherhood, Masculinity, and Marriage: Serreau’s *Trois Hommes et un couffin*, Nimoy’s Remake, and Ardolino’s Sequel” in Forrest, Jennifer and Leonard Koos (ed.). *Dead Ringers: The Remake in Theory and Practice*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002) 243-273

and habits. Hofstede calls Norway a feminine culture with feminine values. By this he means for instance that the Norwegian culture is less competitive, and that Norwegians place inherent value in private life. This is backed up by an article by the American sociology doctoral student Jeremy Schultz, who spent 5 months in Norway interviewing Norwegian professionals. In his article he shows that men are less likely to value the competitive area of work over the joys of family life in Norway than in the US. Schultz points to a marked difference in Norwegian and American men's feelings toward their work.³⁰ Torbjørn Sirevåg interestingly claims that the "gender gap between the Nordic-Dutch cultures and the American culture ... is so wide that it rates among the truly major cultural differences."³¹ Unfortunately, he does not elaborate. As such, there is not much interesting about gender in Sirevåg's book, but he does bring up the interesting divide between private and public morality in the US. He points out that both in the US and Norway bundling and night courting were considered normal in the 1700s, whereas the Cult of True Womanhood³² changed women from people to an institution of virtue in the US in the 1800s. Norway, on the other hand, stayed a rural culture for a long time, and, as Sørhaug and his colleague Julian Kramer point out, in some important cultural aspects, still is.³³

However, if we take Haskell, Monaco and almost every other American film scholars opinion into account, we can see that the portrayal of women in American film does not mirror American women. The differences between the female character in *Hodet over vannet* and *Head Above Water* are differences that are mostly born of

³⁰ Schultz, Jeremy, "The Lifestyles of Norwegian and American Elites: The Meanings of Work and Private Life in Two Cultures" *The Americanist Journal*, issue 3 (2005) [<http://www.theamericanist.com/journal/march05/march05-1.html>] (Date Accessed: 05.04.20)

³¹ Sirevåg 91

³² See Welter, Barbara, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860" in *American Quarterly*, University of Pennsylvania/ The American Studies Association 18 (2) (1966) 151-174

³³ Kramer, Julian. "Norsk identitet – et produkt av underutvikling og stammetilhørighet" in Klausen, Arne Martin (ed.) *Den norske væremåten: Antropologisk søkelys på norsk kultur*. (Oslo: Cappelen, 1992) 88-97

Hollywood filmmaking and not necessarily of differences in American and Norwegian culture.

Chapter 3. *Insomnia* vs. *Insomnia*

In Erik Skjoldbjærg's 1997 film *Insomnia*, the main protagonist, a Swedish policeman named Engström, walks away at the end of the film after having killed his partner by accident, covered it up, and gotten away with it. However, when the film was remade in the US by Christopher Nolan in 2002, the last scene consists of the policeman Dormer dying after being forgiven for his sins by the young girl whose life he has just saved. The scene from the Norwegian film gives us an impression of a man living his life in the grey zones between good and evil, the American scene is a depiction of a man given absolution and rejoining the guys in the white hats. Does this mean that Americans are more moral than Norwegians? Does it mean that Hollywood film is completely unable to depict anything but stark black and white world? Or does it mean something else entirely?

This chapter will deal with the two versions of the tale 'Insomnia.' I will start by giving a very short summary of the action that the two films have in common, then point out where they differ in terms of plot. After the short summaries I will move on to the analysis of the differences in character and form before trying to fit the American *Insomnia* into American film making tradition. Here, like in the previous chapter, we must keep in mind that the boundaries between the categories character differences, differences in form and differences in plot and story, are fluid and not to be taken literally.

Enumerating all the differences between Skjoldbjærg's *Insomnia* and Nolan's *Insomnia* would be close to impossible and completely beyond the scope of this thesis, and so I have had to choose the most visible ones and the ones that amount to substantial cultural differences, whether these differences are between Hollywood storytelling and Norwegian filmmaking technique, or between Norwegian and

American culture. I will first look at the major plot and story differences, then I will move on to the character differences and differences in form, and try to give an explanation of the differences I have found.

Synopses and plot differences

The storyline that the two films have in common is as follows: A young girl is murdered in the summer, north of the Arctic Circle. Two outside investigators are sent to help. Once there, one accidentally shoots the other, and spends the rest of the film trying to get away with it, all the while trying desperately to get some sleep. He also has to duck the investigation of the local police, and the blackmail of the girl's murderer, who saw the whole thing.

- Insomnia, Erik Skjoldbjærg

A young girl has been killed in a small town in the north of Norway. Two investigators from Kripos (the Norwegian national criminal investigations unit), the Norwegian Vik and the Swede Engström, have been called in from Oslo to lead the investigation. They arrive in summer, when the sun does not set in areas above the Arctic Circle. During the autopsy it becomes clear that the murderer has spent some time scrubbing the body clean. They interview the young boyfriend of the victim, a surly youth called Eilert, but are convinced that the murder is done by someone with more knowledge in these matters. Eilert admits that he and the victim had a quarrel the night she disappeared, but claims that she went to someone else, and he does not know who. The police believe him, partly because they have already found designer clothes, and jewelry the young Eilert could not have afforded, in Tanja's little apartment.

The police then find Tanja's backpack, and set a trap for the murderer. They fill the backpack with books and put it back where they found it. They hold a press conference, saying they are looking for the backpack. The murderer takes the bait, and

comes to pick up what he had left behind. However, as they move to arrest him, he escapes through a tunnel. In the fog Engström accidentally shoots and kills his partner Vik. He then finds a second gun on the ground. Back at the police station Engström lets the local police believe that the murderer shot Vik, and a massive man hunt is set in motion to catch the cop killer, and the female officer Hagen is assigned to the case. Engström panics and replaces the bullets that killed Vik with bullets from the gun he found on the beach in the evidence room.

Engström then interrogates Tanja's best friend Frøya without telling anyone. Frøya tells him who Tanja's older friend is, and Engström goes to the man's apartment to see what he can find. Later that same evening Engström's suspect, a writer called Holt, calls Engström and the Engström tries to set up a meeting. Holt refuses, but the next day Engström follows him from a dentist's appointment he has found in Holt's appointment book. Holt admits to killing Tanja, but also tells him that he witnessed Engström killing his partner. The two make a plan to pin both murders on Tanja's boyfriend Eilert. Hagen takes Holt in for questioning and Holt lets hints drop about Eilert. The police search Eilert's apartment, find the gun Engström has planted there, and arrest Eilert.

The investigation over, Engström then plans to go home to Oslo and then Sweden, but Holt calls him, and insists they meet. In the meantime Frøya has gone to the police to provide Eilert with an alibi, and they find a print not belonging to the boy on the gun. Hagen insists they check Holt's prints. At Holt's apartment Engström makes sure that the writer gets away, and then follows him to a fishing village where he knows Holt will escape to, from finding a picture of it when he searched his apartment. They fight, and Holt falls through rotten boards in a pier and dies in the water. The police find Tanya's clothes at Holt's place, and Eilert is freed.

As Engström is packing to go home, Hagen comes to see him in his hotel room. She gives him a gun shell that she has found on the beach, and leaves. The shell is of the same type the Swedish police use. Engström leaves for his plane home.

- Insomnia, Christopher Nolan

In this film the young girl is named Kay, and she has been brutally beaten to death in a small town in Alaska. Two investigators from LA, Will Dormer and Hap Eckhart, are brought in by the local police to help with the investigation. There is a crackdown on corruption in their department in LA, and so the two have been sent to Alaska to avoid the investigation. During the autopsy, the police discover that the victim's bruises cover up older ones, and that the body has not only been washed, but taken great care of after death. Like in the Norwegian film, they also find that the victim, living with her mother, and not well off, has designer clothing in her closet. The same night, Dormer and his partner have an argument in the restaurant, revealing to the audience that Detective Eckhart is planning on making a deal with the Internal Affairs Department (IAD), incriminating Detective Dormer.

The next morning, they confront the victim's boyfriend, Randy, with the older bruises on Kay. He admits they fought, but claims he couldn't get her to tell him where she was going afterward. The young detective assigned to help them, Ellie Burr, gets a call from the police station telling her they have found Kay's backpack. Like in the Norwegian film, they set a trap for the murderer. The murderer comes to pick up the backpack, but escapes going through an old mineshaft. Dormer tries to shoot at someone he believes is the murderer, but his gun fails, and he uses his backup. He discovers that the person he shot is Eckhart, and rushes to help, but Eckhart accuses him of trying to murder him, before dying. Back at the police station, Dormer blames

himself for the death of his partner, but doesn't mention that he was the one who shot him.

Ellie Burr is assigned the investigation of Detective Eckhart's death. She finds a bullet shell on the beach. When Dormer comes back to the hotel, he gets a call from the IAD threatening to investigate the death of Eckhart. Like in the Norwegian film, Dormer then switches the bullet that killed Eckhart with one from the gun he found on the beach. Detective Burr wants to file a shoddy report on the killing of Eckhart to get back to the investigation of the murder of Kay, but Dormer tells her to make sure she has all her facts straight. Later, in her room, she discovers the bullet could not have come from where Dormer said it did.

Dormer gets a call in his hotel room from the murderer. Like in the Norwegian film, he tries to get the murderer to meet him, but unlike in the ordinary film, when the murderer refuses, Dormer threatens to come find him. Next morning Dormer picks up Kay's friend Tanya at the girl's funeral and like in the Norwegian film, makes her tell him who Kay was seeing. Finch, the man now established as the murderer, calls Dormer at the police station, and Dormer goes out looking for him. He chases him but loses him and goes to Finch's apartment. By now, Detective Burr has found a book by Finch in Kay's room, and they decide to take him in for questioning. Dormer meets with Finch. In this version, it is Finch who wants to pin the murder on the victim's boyfriend Randy, but Dormer refuses. Dormer then discovers that Finch has taped the conversation. Later Finch calls him again in his hotel, and they argue about Randy once more. Finch also explains why he killed Kay. During the interrogation the next day Finch implicates Randy anyway, and Dormer attacks him. Dormer then hurries to Randy's apartment to try to get there before the rest of the police and extract the gun that Finch has planted there, but he cannot find it before the police do, and Randy is arrested. Dormer and

Finch meet at a bridge and Finch accuses Dormer being accessory to Randy's false imprisonment, but gives him the tape. In the pub that evening, Ellie confronts Dormer with the .38 shell she has found on the beach, but he tells her the case is closed.

The next morning Ellie goes to Finch's cabin to pick up some letters from Kay implicating Randy, which Finch claims to have at his place. Dormer finds out and races after her. Finch punches Ellie unconscious, but she wakes up as Dormer and Finch are confronting each other in the next room. The two men fight, and Ellie helps Dormer as he admits that he killed Eckhart by accident. In the ensuing gunfight Finch is killed and Dormer is mortally wounded. Ellie wants to throw away the evidence that Dormer killed Eckhart, but he makes her promise that she will not stray from the straight and narrow path, before dying.

There are major differences in the stories in the two versions of *Insomnia*. First and foremost the background stories are different. Engström is Swedish and has come to Norway to work, possibly because he has gotten a reputation in Sweden for his inability to leave young female witnesses alone (as seen both in the story the coroner tells in IN, Scene 5¹, and in the fact that he cannot keep away from young, female witnesses in this town either). Dormer and Eckhart have been sent away from their desks in Los Angeles because there is a big crackdown on corruption in their department, and Dormer has done some things for the sake of good that he should not have. For instance he planted the blood of a young boy in the apartment of a suspect a year and a half ago because, "The second I met this guy Dobbs, I knew he was guilty. That's what I do, that's my job. I assign guilt. You find the evidence, figure out who did it, and then you go get'em and put them away. This time there wasn't enough evidence." (UIS, Scene 50c) This major difference in background stories seems to stem from one specific cultural

¹ Like in the previous chapter, I have divided the films into scenes depending on location of the characters and major story developments. The lists of scenes are to be found in Appendix B. IN signifies *Insomnia Norway*, while IUS signifies *Insomnia US*.

difference between Norway and the US. American and Swedish police officers wear guns, Norwegian police officers do not. Engström cannot tell anyone he was the one who shot Vik because he was not supposed to be wearing a gun. Dormer cannot admit to shooting Eckhart because Eckhart was going to sell him out to the IAD.

To foil the investigation, Engström shoots a stray dog in an alley to produce a bullet he can substitute for the one he shot his partner with (IN, Scene 25). In Alaska the dog is already dead when Dormer shoots it (IUS, Scene 29). This difference can be explained by fear of angering animal right's groups on the producers' part. As explained in Chapter 1, the American film industry is sensitive to attacks from different interest groups in the US, and so will tone down as many controversial aspects as possible.

Another difference between the stories is the reason for the last showdown between the hero and the bad guy. In the Norwegian film, Engström goes after Holt because he has to avoid Holt being arrested by the police and giving him up. They have gotten Holt's fingerprints from his toothbrush in his apartment, and that can lead to Hagen wanting to arrest Holt (IN, Scene 52). Engström has tried to convince Holt to leave town before (IN, Scene 48), but Holt only goes to the fishing village, where he eventually dies. Dormer, for his part, goes after Finch because he has to save Ellie (IUS, Scene 51f), who after being tricked by Finch (IUS, Scene 45t), is at his cabin to pick up some letters Finch claims will prove Randy's guilt.

A fourth and major difference is the murder itself. It becomes clear in the opening sequence of the Norwegian film (IN, Scene 1), showing a man shaking a girl and the girl's head getting stuck on a nail on the wall, that Holt killing Tanja was an accident. This also becomes clear from Holt's own dialogue.

Holt: It was an accident. .. She called me in the middle of the night. She was completely freaked. Her boyfriend had dumped her. Do you understand? It was a fucking accident!

(...)

Holt: She almost didn't bleed at all. She was just so sleepy. And then I got her into bed. Later I tried to wake her, but she wouldn't wake, she just wanted to sleep. She slept and slept and slept and slept.²

Holt cannot understand why Tanja will not wake up after he has shaken her. He did not notice her head getting stuck on the nail. Finch, on the other hand, spent ten minutes beating Kay to death, as can be gleaned from his conversation with Dormer in IUS, Scene 43 and Scene 47g.

I only wanted to comfort her. Hold her. (mumbles) I kissed her, and I got a little excited, and.. She started laughing at me! Huh. She wouldn't stop laughing. Have you ever had somebody laugh at you when you're like that, I mean, when you're really vulnerable? Laughing their ass off at you? Someone you thought respected you? Ever had that happen, Will? I just wanted to stop her laughing, that's all. And then you know, I, I hit her. A couple of times. You know, just to stop her. Let her know! Get a little respect, you know. (...) And you know, I'm more scared than her! And then everything was clear. There was no turning back. After that, I was calm. Real calm. You and I share a secret. We know how easy it is to kill somebody. That ultimate taboo. It doesn't exist outside our minds. I didn't murder her. I killed her, but it just ended up that way.

He wanted her to respect him, and so tried to get her to stop laughing at him by hitting her. His reason to claim that it was an "accident," is that he after a while could not stop hitting.

Dormer: It took you ten minutes to beat Kay Connell to death! Ten fucking minutes! You calling that an accident?

Finch: It took you only a fraction of a second to kill your partner. Does that make it any more of an accident, Will?

Finch does not seem to view whether something is an accident in terms of actions, but rather in terms of intent. His murder of Kay was an "accident" because he had not intended to kill her, but lost control. He also implies that Dormer and he are in the same situation, as Dormer had not intended to kill Eckhart. The differences between the

² **Holt:** Det var et uhell. .. Hu ringte meg midt på natta. Hu var helt gærn. Kjæresten hadde slått opp. Skjønner'u? Det var et jævla uhell!

...
Holt: Hu blødde nesten ikke. Var bare så veldig søvnnig. Og så fikk jeg a til sengs. Etterpå så prøvde jeg å vekke'a, men hun ville ikke våkne, ville bare sove. Hu sov, og sov, og sov, og sov. (IN, Scene 48) All translations of dialogue are mine.

characters Holt and Finch will be explored more deeply during the discussion of character differences.

The main plot difference between the two films is of course that there is no redemption for Engström. Dormer gets to die for his sins after saving the girl; Burr ultimately gives him his redemption. Engström has to go home without. This difference as well will be explored more thoroughly in connection with differences in character and form.

Character differences

There are several major differences between the main protagonists of the two films. We can start with something as simple as their names. The name Engström signals clearly to a Norwegian audience that this is an outsider, a Swede. Dormer, on the other hand, is an outsider to the people of Alaska, but not to his partner. Dormer seems to be a name designed to make us think of sleep, and lack of it, or a man who is morally dormant, and who wakes up during the film.

Dormer is set up as a moral character right from the beginning. During their flight to Nightmute, the 'halibut fishing capital of the world,' he shames his partner into silence by saying "Tell that to her, partner" referring to the picture of the young murdered girl, in response to his partner's admonition to "Cheer up, will ya" (IUS, Scene 1). Dormer has several scenes during the movie where he acts like a moral compass to others, especially to young Ellie Burr. He scolds her for complaining about just being given misdemeanors to investigate, and tells her that "it's all about small stuff, you know. Small lies, small mistakes. People give themselves away same in misdemeanors as they do in murder cases." (IUS, Scene 12) Another example is the scene after Eckhart's death. Ellie has been given the case and is prepared to just write a cursory report, and get Dormer to sign it. However, he tells her to get all her facts

straight before she files the report (IUS, Scene 32), and this leads to her finding out who really shot Eckhart. These scenes give us the impression that Dormer is a man with a strong moral compass, even though he has strayed in the past.

Engström, on the other hand, is not a 'good guy' in the Hollywood sense. We find out early on from a conversation between other cops that he has a reputation for getting sexually involved with witnesses, and that this might even be the reason he moved from Sweden to Norway (IN, Scene 5). It is also obvious to the audience that Engström has a thing for young girls. He has difficulty restraining himself in the car, when Tanja's friend Frøya tries to hit on him (IN, Scene 30), and goes too far with Ane, the girl at the hotel reception (IN, Scene 42), while he is oblivious to Hagen's feeble advances in the beginning (IN, Scene 6). Dormer has no such sidesteps. He does stay up all night confessing his sins to the woman at the lodge reception (IUS, Scene 50a-51a), but if there is any sex at all, which we never know, it is all very consensual and not with a young girl under 20. Dormer's reaction to Tanya's banter is a completely different one to Engström's reaction to Frøya's. Dormer scares her by drifting into the opposite lane, not by taking the sexual innuendo further than she had planned, like Engström does with Frøya. Dormer kills Finch in self defense and while defending the girl. Engström goes to the abandoned fishing village with the intent to kill Holt. However, Engström doesn't have to kill him; he dies by accident. Instead, Engström looks away as Holt sinks into the water, waiting for him to die. Engström has also tried to kill Holt before, in IN, Scene 48. The two stand talking and Engström eventually realizes that Holt will be unable to keep their secret, because he is going mad. Holt refuses to move far enough away that the police, and Hagen in particular, will not find him. Engström rushes forward to push him into the water, but is foiled by the passing of a ferry.

The major story development that clearly shows Dormer's moral nature and Engström's flaws, however, is the fact that Engström is perfectly willing to sacrifice Tanja's boyfriend – in fact, he is the one who brings up the subject (IN, Scene 39), while Dormer is reluctant to involve the young boy from the start. When Finch brings the idea up, Dormer refuses and tells him, "Randy is none of your business. It's not your affair." After Finch still frames Randy during the investigation, Dormer even hurries to Randy's apartment to try to save Randy when he realizes that Finch has planted the gun there (IUS, Scene 45a-45y).

The differences in Dormer's and Engström's character can be explained both by the Norwegian "Janteloven", and by the need in Hollywood narrative to have a hero and a bad guy, a clear resolution and clear narrative. Sirevåg shows that even among Norwegian scholars it is widely accepted that success, in other than sports, is not respected in Norway. The scholar Sirevåg quotes, claims that only sports achievements are acceptable, because these are for the good of the collective. Other achievements are seen as egotistical.³ Therefore the character Engström can be a failure and still be a protagonist the Norwegian audience has a certain measure of sympathy with, whereas Dormer needs to win. Stewart and Bennett point to the *effort-optimism* of Americans. With this they mean that success can, for an American, be achieved through effort alone. Conversely, failure is seen as a lack of effort.⁴ Like I mentioned in chapter 2, in the US, according to James Monaco, "Star cinema – Hollywood style – depends on creating a strong identification between hero and audience. We see things from his point of view,"⁵ and so Dormer has to be someone the audience can completely relate to. Relating to a failure would not be acceptable to an audience which adheres to the effort-

³ Refsum, Helga, quoted in Sirevåg 139

⁴ Stewart, Edward C., and Milton J. Bennett. *American Culture Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. 2nd ed. (Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, 1991) 73-76

⁵ Monaco 265

optimism ideology. Monaco claims that “Hollywood works to outlaw roles that do not fit with the star system.”⁶ In this way the hero-centeredness of Hollywood becomes self-perpetuating. The economic system and the audience expectations work together to keep the hero/ villain- dichotomy alive. Furthermore, stereotypes, clear concise characters with readily recognizable character traits, is a necessity in a low context culture like the United States.

In addition, both Trompenaars Sirevåg point to the fact that American morals and ethics are universalist; they are seen as applying to every people at every time, whereas Europeans tend more towards the particularist; every situation calls for a review of the particulars and what ethical questions they raise. This can be seen in the differences in Dormer’s and Engström’s attitudes toward Finch/ Holt. Engström meets with Holt and listens to what he has to say, and only rejects him after hearing that he tried to have sex with the girl after she was hurt (IN, Scene 54), whereas Dormer rejects him as a monster already in the beginning of the film, without knowing who he is or the reasons for his actions (IUS, Scene 6).

In addition to Engström/ Dormer, the other pair of characters whose changes from Norwegian to American film make a large impact on the narrative are the murderers Holt/ Finch. Holt is a writer of detective novels who has moved up north to get peace to write. He is lonely. At the gondola in IN, Scene 38, when he and Engström speak face to face for the first time, Holt tells him that he “doesn’t know that many [people].”⁷ He writes stories about what it is like after you have murdered someone, and the death of Tanja has given him the opportunity to try out his knowledge, but he has discovered that it isn’t “just math.” He says specifically that “I’ve been doing that for 20 years. Conceptions of what happens afterward, when you have crossed the line

⁶ Monaco 266

⁷ ”Jeg kjenner veldig få.” (IN, Scene 38)

completely. You have full control. It's just math?" But then he confesses that "you cannot calculate something like this. You see that afterwards, when you've been there."⁸ He has been drawn to the concept of death for some time, but then realizes that it is not as glamorous as he thought it would be, when he finally gets the chance to try. The dialogue between Dormer and Finch in the corresponding scene in the American version is of a whole different character. Dormer is far more antagonistic towards his opponent/partner in crime, and it is a whole other type of writer we meet.

Finch is mean and calculating. Like Holt, Finch writes detective novels. However, he tried to become a police officer, and failed, in his youth, and claims this is why he writes about cops. Admittedly, Holt also mentions that he has "great respect for" police officers, but claims it comes inbuilt from his childhood, and never mentions wanting to be a cop.⁹ Finch is a failure. He could not follow his dream, and ended up writing about it instead. Finch does not clean up the body after Kay is dead out of curiosity, like Holt does, but because he is afraid of being caught by the police. He also claims to have a new insight after crossing the line into the world of killers, but his is not pain, it is "...not guilt. I never meant to do it. It's like awareness. Life is so important. How could it be so fucking fragile?" (IUS, Scene 41) Holt seeks genuine companionship with Engström as two who have crossed the line. He ends every sentence with a "You'd know that" or a "No one's completely flawless," or an "I understand. A writer understands that." (IN, Scene 38-39) Finch is more interested in taunting Dormer for killing his partner. "How did it feel when you found out it was Hap? Guilt? Relief? Suddenly you are free and clear. Did you ever think about it before

⁸ "Det der har jeg holdt på med i 20 år. Forestillinger om hva som hender etterpå. Når du har tråkka helt over. Hva som foregår her" "Du har full kontroll. Full kontroll. Det er jo bare matematikk? Du kan ikke regne ut noe sånt? Det ser du i ettertid, når du har vært der." (IN, Scene 38)

⁹ "Det er jævlig rart, det der. Jeg har alltid hatt sånn respekt for yrkesgruppa di. Det sitter i fra barndommen tenker jeg." (IN, Scene 38)

that moment? I mean, what would it be like if he wasn't there anymore? Doesn't mean you did it on purpose, you know." (IUS, Scene 41)

As was shown while explaining the differences in characters between the heroes Engström and Dormer, there is a need in American Hollywood cinema to have a strong identification between hero and audience. This need is not so pronounced in European cinema. This can also explain some of the differences between the villains Holt and Finch. To have a strong identification with the hero, the audience needs to feel a strong antipathy towards the villain. Hence, Finch has been changed from a character to whom the audience can relate into a monster. In addition to being a staple of Hollywood cinema, this attitude also ties in with the universalist tradition in the United States.

The female characters in the two versions are radically different. The Norwegian police officer Hagen is strong and clear and nagging. She is about the same age as Engström, and independent. She takes control of the investigation into Vik's death from the beginning, saying that "I'll be the one who takes the Vik case."¹⁰ She is forceful in her investigation, and relentlessly getting closer to the truth throughout the film. She resents the outside interference. When she takes on the investigation into the shooting of Engström's partner, she is thorough, and soon begins to suspect that something is wrong. She confronts Engström with this repeatedly (IN, Scene 34 and Scene 41), but ultimately realizes she has no evidence. She resents Engström's talking to witnesses, like the young girl Frøya, without telling her. After Engström has forced Frøya to give him the name of Tanja's older friend, and the two of them have framed Eilert, Frøya comes to the police station to give Eilert an alibi. Hagen is the one she speaks to, and she, in turn, immediately gets suspicions that Engström hasn't told her everything. "Someone is lying here. Frøya tells me completely different things about Tanja. Eilert

¹⁰ "Det blir jeg som tar Vik-saken." (IN, Scene 23)

never hit her.”¹¹ When Engström then reveals that Frøya is in love with Eilert in an attempt to discredit her story, Hagen reveals that they have found a fingerprint on the gun not belonging to Eilert and insists on getting the fingerprint of Holt, and this is what leads to the turn in the story, and Engström’s scramble to get to Holt before Hagen does.

In the American version of the story, the functions filled by Hagen – being a female counterpart to the main protagonist, resenting his interference in the investigation, and finding out that he has lied – are filled by two young police officers, one male and one female. The closest we find to the character of Hagen is Ellie Burr, a rookie police officer. From the very beginning, she is in awe of Dormer, whose work she studied at the police academy. The only one who seems to have a problem with the outside interference is a young police officer, who is a mix between the characters Hagen and a young police officer named Zachariassen: the young policeman Duggar. Duggar is clearly resentful from the start. When he is told that Dormer and Eckhart are helping out with the investigation he has been heading up, his response is an almost sneering “Helping?” (IUS, Scene 5), and he continues his hostility throughout the scene, for instance by referring Dormer to his report when he wants to see the body of the young girl. Ellie Burr is a young novice hanging on to Dormer’s every word, to the point where older man ends up making fun of her for her devotion. Dormer lectures her every chance he gets. In the car as the two investigators first arrive, Ellie lists every case she knows that he has done, and tries to impress him with her knowledge that “every case is solved within the first 72 hours.” To this he replies that “No, it’s 48 hours. We’re a day behind.” (IUS, Scene 3) He is almost a father figure to her. Ellie Burr does not pressure Dormer the way Hagen pressures Engström. Burr is young and inexperienced, and welcomes Dormer with open arms. She is told by the police chief to “write up” a

¹¹ “Det er noen som lyver her. Frøya forteller meg helt andre ting om Tanja.” ”Eilert slo henne aldri.” (IN, Scene 50)

report on the death of Eckhart, and takes his word for it when he says, “It doesn’t have to be Shakespeare.” (IUS, Scene 19) She is prepared to do a less than perfect job with the report and has to be told by Dormer, of all people, to “be sure of all of your facts before you file this thing” (IUS, Scene 32). Only later does she realize that “the shots couldn’t have come from there” (IUS, Scene 33d), and even then she is willing to cover for Dormer by throwing the evidence in the sea after he saves her life (IUS, Scene 53).

The other main female character present in both films is the receptionist at the hotel counter, who in the Norwegian film is in her early twenties and one of many love interests for Engström. Ane the receptionist is smitten by him and drinks whisky with him and later they kiss in the back room, but Engström goes too far until she screams “Don’t touch me!”¹² The receptionist in the American version, Rachel Clemens, is in her thirties. Because Dormer is now a good guy he cannot force himself on young girls, so the young girl at the counter has turned into the older hotel manager for Dormer to be able to make sexual advances toward her. The question of whether the two have sex when she spends the night in his room in IUS, Scenes 50a through 51a remains open.

The change in the protagonist’s relationship to women is also evident in the difference between Engström’s and Dormer’s treatment of the young girls Frøya and Tanya in the car in IN, Scene 30 and IUS, Scene 35 respectively. These scenes also show a minor difference in the girls themselves. Frøya tries to seduce Engström. She tells him to “show [her] something cool”¹³, and shows him the upper part of her thighs. She only screams at him to let her go sometime after he has started feeling her up. There is no such physical contact between Dormer and Tanya. She does agree to go somewhere with Dormer “as long as it’s fun,” and remarks “Young, impressionable girl

¹² “Ikkje rør mæ!” (IN, Scene 42)

¹³ “Vis mæ no’ kult’a.” (IN, Scene 30)

left alone with older Los Angeles cop. Who knows where we might go, right” (IUS, Scene 35), but this is as far as she goes.

The difference in the female characters: Hagen/ Ellie Burr, Ane/ Rachel and Frøya/ Tanya, can be explained by the attitudes Hollywood films have shown toward women all through film history, as explained both by Molly Haskell and James Monaco. The female characters in the cultural mirrors that are the two Norwegian films have turned into cardboard copies in the American ones. Haskell and Monaco both claim that women in American film have throughout American film history been stereotypes, and not much else. This attitude has been explored more fully in Chapter 2. The differences in attitudes towards the victim in the two films: that in the Norwegian film the girl is seen as a young woman, in the American one she is a child, and in the differences in the victim’s friend: she tries out her new-found womanhood (and fails) in the Norwegian film, the American girls does not, are also examples of the differences in the treating of gender roles in American and Norwegian film.

The characters Erik Vik and Hap Eckhart also have some differences. Vik is nice, but somewhat ditzy. We discover this when it becomes evident that he can never remember that he has told a story before. He starts to tell Engström a story in Engström’s hotel room, but gets distracted in the middle, and does not even remember that he was telling a story (IN, Scene 11), and when he dies he insists Engström told him to go to the right, even though Engström told him to go to the left (IN, Scene 17). Eckhart is a sharper character. He will not let Dormer talk him out of cutting a deal with the Internal Affairs investigators (IUS, Scene 9). He also blames Dormer for shooting him and accuses him of wanting to kill him, before he dies (IUS, Scene 18). The differences between the characters Vik and Eckhart can be explained both by the change in story stemming from the fact that Norwegian police officers do not wear guns, while

American police officers do, and by the fact that it is unusual for an American film to kill off a good guy for no reason, and so Eckhart needs to be a threat to Dormer before he dies. We have seen in the previous chapter that this has also had an even larger impact on the remake of *Hodet over vannet*. The theory has been explained more fully there.

Differences in form

Like I mentioned in Chapter 2, some scholars, for instance the film scholar Pauline MacRory, feel that often the formal and the ideological aspects of film music are difficult to keep apart. Terribly interesting though this may be, it would unfortunately be beyond the scope of this thesis, to, in MacRory's footsteps, attempt to successfully analyze the ideological content of the musical differences and other differences in form between either *Insomnia* and *Insomnia* or, between *Hodet over vannet* and *Head Above Water*, but there still are interesting differences.

Norwegian film uses music much less than American film does. Seeing the Norwegian *Insomnia* the viewer gets the impression that there is almost no use of music at all. This, however, is deceptive. The American remake has string music swelling and fading at exactly the right moments to tell the audience just what to feel at all times. This is part of Hollywood standard and a tradition that is not as pronounced in Europe. However, there is much more use of music in the Norwegian film than what the audience first picks up on. The reason the audience might be deceived into thinking there is almost no music at all, is that the music is faint, and by no means as pervasive as in the remake. Nolan uses music to bind all the scenes together. A theme will start, let us say, in IUS, Scene 6: at the morgue, as the detectives are surveying Kay's dead body, and continue into the next scene: looking for clues in her bedroom. This way the audience is in no doubt whose bedroom we are in, because we are hearing Kay's

leitmotif. What is perhaps more surprising, is that the Norwegian victim Tanja has a theme as well. Hers is slightly reminiscent of the main theme from David Lynch's TV-series *Twin Peaks* (1990-91), and is played during the opening scene, where we see her murder, and at select scenes throughout the whole film.

As we have seen, Monaco claims that Hollywood has a standard of music in addition to a standard of narrative. Belton describes the musical score as serving to "...direct the audience's attention to specific characters or details, to provide information about the time or place of the action, or to establish mood..."¹⁴ in classic Hollywood narrative. As an example, he points out how dramatic moments often will be underlined by musical crescendos. Skjoldbjærg's film has long sequences with no music at all. There is no music from we leave Tanja's room in IN, Scene 6 until Engström is alone in his, in IN, Scene 12. However, if we disregard the amount of music used, the music that is there has mostly the same function. There is a theme for the victim, a theme for the dead colleague when Engström/ Dormer is thinking about this, and discordant music that grows ever more confusing the more sleep-deprived the protagonist becomes.

A large part of the storyline in both films is the descent of the protagonist into utter sleep deprivation with resulting optical and auditory illusions. In both films the sun is almost a character of its own. It shines relentlessly throughout the night and denies both Engström and Dormer sleep. Neither of them are able to successfully block it out by curtains or blankets or any other means. With regards to the sun and its effects, the directors have again chosen similar solutions, albeit in different magnitudes. They both use flashbacks, both to illustrate and to counterpoint what characters are saying or thinking. However, Nolan uses flashes of Kay whenever we see her picture, so in this

¹⁴ Belton, John. *American Cinema/American Culture* (New York: McGraw Hill Inc., 1998) 53

way Kay is “real” to Dormer and to the audience throughout the film. Tanja doesn’t come alive to Engström until he smells her dress at the very end of the film, but the audience has seen her die at the very beginning without Engström present in the storyline yet. This is one of the formal aspects that distance us to Engström much more than to Dormer. Another one is that we see the ghosts that both Engström and Dormer see, but in addition we see the flashbacks to Dormer’s bad deeds in the past, where we only hear about Engström’s. The audience does not identify with Engström the way we identify with Dormer. A third technique that has the effect of distancing us from Engström, is that the camera very often follows Engström’s back where it follows Dormer’s front and face, and this again makes Dormer more sympathetic and Engström cold and distant.

There are also significantly more “action scenes” (chase and fight-scenes) in the American version of *Insomnia* than in the Norwegian one. In IN, Scene 31, Engström goes to Holt’s apartment, and there he finds Holt’s dentist’s appointment and a picture of his house by the abandoned fishing village. Engström then returns to his hotel. Dormer, on the other hand, is surprised by Finch in Finch’s apartment in IUS, Scene 39b, and chases him through the town, before eventually losing him after almost being killed trying to move across wooden logs on the water. The ending is also marked by more action in the American film than in the Norwegian one. Dormer hurries up to Finch’s cabin to save Ellie Burr, and the two men engage in gunfight, and both get killed. The increase of action scenes in the changing from Norwegian to American film can be explained in several ways. One way of explaining this difference is by using Sirevåg’s differences in sense of time. He quotes Tocqueville who finds American busyness amusing. More action can be seen as a reflection of a desire to get more done in less time. Stewart and Bennett mention “time thrift” as an American invention that

arose with the industrialization and the need for employers to maximize the work done in a workday.¹⁵ In addition, the action scenes also help clarify the relationship between the hero and the villain. The hero hunts the villain. Engström sifting through Holt's apartment is less of a heroic action than Dormer running after him on moving wooden logs on the river, risking his life.

Nolan seems to have taken his queue on most of the effects from Skjoldbærg, but have magnified them. This fits perfectly with Sirevåg's high and low context cultures, and so although it is an effect of purely technical differences, shows us that the Hollywood standard techniques sometimes are rooted in an American culture that is markedly different from Norwegian culture.

David Wills in his article "The French Remark"¹⁶ claims that the Hollywood film or the classical narrative film "seeks to erase the traces of its own production and given that, ... it stands to reason that what a Hollywood remake would seek to erase from a French film would be precisely the traces of writing."¹⁷ Vincendeau claims that Hollywood film makers "streamline their source material,"¹⁸ and that Hollywood films require a "clear-cut causality, both of resolution (no loose ends) and of character (good or evil)."¹⁹ Forrest and Koos, on the other hand, claim that this is unfair to the Hollywood industry, and that elements that are not central to the plot are subordinated in making a remake, and that most changes simply are made to keep the suspension of belief.²⁰ This is in congruence with Monaco's claim that invisible cutting is the aim of all Hollywood productions. Many of the formal differences between *Insomnia* and *Insomnia* can be attributed to this tendency to disguise the production of the film, and

¹⁵ Stewart and Bennett 73-78

¹⁶ Wills, David. "The French Remark: Breathless and Cinematic Citationality" in Horton et al 147-161

¹⁷ Wills 148

¹⁸ Vincendeau, Ginette. "Highjacked" in *Sight and Sound* 23.7, (July, 1993) 23, quoted in Forrest et al 10

¹⁹ Vincendeau, Ginette. "Highjacked" in *Sight and Sound* 23.7, (July, 1993) 23, quoted in Forrest et al 8

²⁰ Forrest et al 1-36

that the film is a production at all, and not something which just “appeared.” However, the changes both in character and in resolution that I have found in *Insomnia* and *Insomnia* would indicate that Vincendeau has a point.

What is so interesting about looking at a story made in two different environments is that one sees just how much small tweaks in emphasis and differences in character portrayal has to say for the meaning behind the text. This thesis starts with a quote by Jennifer Forrest explaining why all remakes are interesting for what they reveal about the cultures of both the remake and the original film. ‘Insomnia’ is particularly interesting in this respect. What I have found to be the deeper meaning behind the story has changed completely when moving across the Atlantic. Skjoldbjærg’s *Insomnia* is a story of the grey areas between good and evil, a cautionary tale of how easy it is to cross the line, and how we are all capable of evil acts. Nolan’s *Insomnia* has become a tale of sin and redemption, and in so becoming, a tale of the basically good and the basically evil persons in this world. The story has gone from telling us that the world is made up of shades of gray to telling us that the world is black and white. This major change is to a certain degree brought about by changes in the story, but mostly by changes in the main characters and their motivations for their actions.

Placing *Insomnia* (US) within Hollywood cinema

Both versions of *Insomnia* were well-received in the US. According to the net-site rottentomatoes.com, which charts reviews in most of the larger newspapers and magazines in the US, 92% of American reviewers gave the Nolan’s remake a favorable review. Mark Caro of the Chicago Herald Tribune calls it a “solid Hollywood thriller.” He does, however, lament the fact that Dormer’s flaws are being presented as bad

decisions rather than the character flaws of Engström, in order for him to be “redeemed in tidy Hollywood fashion.”²¹ Sean Burns for the Philadelphia Weekly says this:

My handy *Film Critic Rule Book* dictates that I spend the first portion of this review bemoaning how Hollywood has become so desperate for decent material that we're already seeing remakes of films that are barely half a decade old. So yes, Christopher Nolan's *Insomnia* is indeed an unnecessary reworking of the phenomenal Norwegian pressure-cooker that hit U.S. art-houses all the way back in Jurassic-era 1998. (...) But the funny thing is, even with all those rough edges safely sanded down, the American *Insomnia* is still pretty darned good. Sure, it craps out in all the ways we've come to expect (and dread) from any big studio blockbuster with aspirations toward noir, but *Insomnia* is nonetheless a polished, efficient thriller with a catchy hook and some impressive character work. It may be nothing more, but it ain't nothing less, neither.²²

Annlee Ellinson from the Box Office Magazine even likes it better than the original.

... the plot and relationships between characters are more developed. While the protagonist takes almost exactly the same course of action, he is both more likable and more complex. The result is a superior version of an already very good film.²³

As mentioned, it is important to distinguish between the terms ‘Hollywood cinema’, and ‘American films’. It seems at first reasonable to try to place Nolan’s film in the category of American Independent film somewhat outside Hollywood. There are several reasons why this would seem the most natural course of action. First, Christopher Nolan is one of the young directors often mentioned in connection with the “Indie” scene described in Chapter 1. Second, his breakthrough film, *Memento* (2000) is permeated with the kind of auteur “indie” sensibility and play with form that usually marks these films. Third, *Insomnia*, as well, has some formal aspects that make it look like an indie-film. However, if we look closer at the film, the storyline and character development make the film look more and more like a traditional “Hollywood” film of the transparent narrative Olson speaks of in his *Hollywood Planet*, and the stylistic elements John

²¹ Caro, Mark “Movie Review, *Insomnia*” in *Chicago Herald Tribune* Internet ed. [http://metromix.chicabotribune.com/search/mmx-16760_lgcy.story] Date Accessed: 05.03.29

²² Burns, Sean “No Rest for the Weary” in Philadelphia Weekly Internet ed. [<http://www.philadelphiaweekly.com/view.php?id=2304>] Date Accessed: 05.03.29

²³ Ellinson, Annlee. “*Insomnia*” in Box Office Magazine Internet ed. [<http://www.boxoffice.com/scripts/fiw.dll?GetReview?&where=ID&terms=6742>] Date Accessed: 05.03.29

Belton sees as typical of Hollywood narrative. I will again use Belton and Sorlin's descriptions of classic Hollywood narrative from the previous chapter as a starting point. According to Belton, there needs to be an act that disturbs the order at the beginning, and a resolution and re-establishment of order at the end. The American *Insomnia* is both a murder mystery and an action film, and we see that the act that disturbs the order is the murder of the young girl, and that the death of both Finch and Dormer at the end re-establishes the order of the universe, as they are both punished for their crimes. Finch is punished for his murder of the young girl and his attempt to frame Randy, and Dormer is punished for his lapse in moral in giving in to the temptation of blaming the death of his colleague on someone else, and his previous planting of evidence in the apartment of the child murderer in LA (recanted by Dormer in IUS, Scene 50c).

According to Sorlin, there need to be good sharp pictures, a soundtrack which helps the spectator to follow the plotline, audible dialogue and good actors, a well-defined story, with a situation revealed at the outset, developed logically, and unambiguously closed or solved at the end. *Insomnia* also fits into this pattern. There are good sharp pictures, the soundtrack is made to help the audience follow the action, the dialogue is audible, there is little background dialogue to clutter the auditory picture, the actors are all well known and respected for their acting abilities, the story is a straight narrative of a murder, and its solving, albeit with a few detours into the troubled mind of Dormer, and the death of both Dormer and Finch definitely resolves the situation. *Insomnia* fits perfectly into the classical Hollywood narrative tradition.

Are the differences born of Hollywood or America?

Scott Robert Olson claims that “Every text is born out of three crucibles: the author, the culture, and the technology of its production.”²⁴ One could make the assertion that formal differences mainly are reflections of differences in technique between two cinematic cultures, while story and character differences more closely reflect ideological differences. The situation is, however, not as black and white as that. Differences in story, which can be seen as ideological differences, become formal differences when we take into account Maltby and Bowles “principal standardizing storyline of heterosexual romance.”²⁵ Plot and storylines have been a large part of classical Hollywood narrative tradition ever since the 1920s, and the love story between the hero and the woman is one of the most important standards.²⁶ We can find even better examples of this than my two films, like the before mentioned adaptation of the comic *Hellblazer* into the film *Constantine*, where the love story is what makes it impossible to use the story again in the comic, as it is completely misplaced. Here the originary comic takes the place of the foreign film, in accordance with my claim in Chapter 1 that cross-cultural remakes can be seen as adaptations from one culture to another. The effect can also be seen in the dichotomy *Insomnia* and *Insomnia*, as the malfunctioning relationship Engström has with women becomes the consensual relationship between Dormer and the woman at reception. American comics, and Norwegian films, are playful when dealing with heterosexual romance, Hollywood films are not. This of course brings up the point again that Hollywood films do not represent every shade of American culture, as American comics must be a reflection of part of that culture, just like the films are.

²⁴ Olson, Scott Robert. *Hollywood Planet: Global Media and the Competitive Advantage of Narrative Transparency* (London: LEA Publishers, 1999) 14

²⁵ Maltby et al. 116

²⁶ Maltby et al. 105-116, Monaco 275

In some ways American popular culture must reflect certain aspects of American culture. Where else would their ideological content come from? On the other hand there are so many economic factors at play that I find it difficult to say that American life is reflected in American film. The plot differences show a marked technical difference between Norwegian film and Hollywood, as these are results of changing from Norwegian film into Hollywood formula film. The character differences, however, show to a larger degree cultural difference between Norway and the overarching majority culture of America that Hollywood to a certain extent reflects

Ian Bell sees American film as "...constructions of homogeneity against the realities of an inescapably pluralist society."²⁷ Hollywood films are one of these things keeping pluralist America together, even if most Americans are well aware that they portray fantasies and not realities.

²⁷ Bell 2

Chapter 4. Comparisons and Conclusions

In the introduction to this thesis I asked four questions:

1. Can we read cultural differences out of films made from the same story in two different cultures?
2. What went wrong in the remaking of *Hodet over vannet*, and what did the makers of the American *Insomnia* do right?
3. Do we need to learn the “dialects” of foreign cinemas in order to enjoy them?
4. Will the study of remakes from different cultures perhaps tell us more about the countries’ respective film making traditions than about their cultures?

In this chapter I will try to answer these questions. To do this, I will first give short summaries of what I found in chapters 2 and 3, and then draw some conclusions from the large difference between filmmakers’ approaches to the two film pairs. Finally I will sketch some interesting topics for further discussion.

My initial question in Chapter 2 was why *Head Above Water* was such a bad film when the Norwegian *Hodet over vannet* was quite good. I found that the makers of *Head Above Water* have made major changes to the characters in the film, but not to the story. The major plot differences are changes in the background stories of the characters, meaning that the differences that have been made to the story are mainly character differences. These differences have been made for several closely related reasons. Firstly, the film needed more explanation to be palatable to an audience that has been brought up in a low context culture. Secondly, the film needed to fit with Hollywood stylistic conventions of clear stereotypical characters, which see George becoming a meaner character and Nathalie becoming a less sympathetic character, and the need for Kent, the ex-boyfriend, to be a larger threat to George and Nathalie’s marriage. However, the makers have neglected to change the story to fit with these

conventions; the story is not resolved and the aim of the narrative is not clear, and so the characters and the story do not match. However unintentional this might have been on the part of the film makers, the characters have all become unsympathetic, and so there does not seem to be much point to the story at all. The changes that have been made to the form – the clearer sound, and the happy music throughout – clarify the film, but they also take away some important aspects. The characters become less real to us. The charmingly confusing aspect of the Norwegian film, which helps us sympathize with Lene, is lost. The film still does not fit into American filmmaking style. However, the differences are mostly due to stylistic conventions in the US, and not so much cultural differences between Norway and America. The answer to my initial question, such as I see it, must be that the makers of *Head Above Water* changed the wrong aspects of the film, or simply did not change the film enough. Much as it would be less than accurate to translate the Norwegian title ‘Hodet over vannet’ literally into ‘the head above the water’, simply translating the script from Norwegian to English, changing some of the characters, and re-filming it with English speaking actors does not make an American film.

The starting point in my analysis of *Insomnia* and *Insomnia* was slightly different. Here we have two films that have both been fairly successful in their home countries. The initial question in this chapter was why the change in ending? What in American culture or film making tradition could account for the major changes that have been made? The formal differences were as not as great as I had expected them to be. The American director has mainly amplified the use of music and light of the Norwegian director, but there was also more action and more flashbacks: stylistic conventions that made the audience feel closer to Dormer as a character than to Engström. The plot and character differences were major. The murder happened in a

different way, and the boyfriend beat Kay in the American film; something his original character did not do. The ending and the reason for the ending were vastly different, and the background story had changed. Dormer is a clear moral character in the American film, his original character Engström is not. The Norwegian murderer Holt is a character the audience could sympathize with, his American twin Finch is not. The women have become props instead of characters of their own. The reason for the change in the female characters definitely had more to do with Hollywood conventions than with American culture, but the other changes revealed a large rift between American and Norwegian culture. Among the visible differences are the universalist/ particularist dichotomy, the effort-optimism of Americans, the Norwegian love of failures – and suspicion of success – and the American idea of the innocence of children and young girls. The underlying message of the film has become something completely different and more fitting with the American view of life, but the film was also altered to fit into the Hollywood mold, and so we were able to successfully place *Insomnia* (US) within American film tradition.

Like Imelda Whelehan, I have also found it to be necessary to “violate the original text”¹ in order to create a successful remake. Even though American culture is more varied and diverse than we might assume from watching mainstream American cinema, the American audience, and other audiences who have grown up watching American films, have certain cultural expectations in watching a Hollywood production – the demand for a clear resolution of the narrative, for instance. These expectations are a mix between the overarching median culture of the US and expectations produced by the economic processes in Hollywood, such as the star system and the tradition of using trial audiences or focus groups. The difference between the success of the American

¹ Whelehan 10

Insomnia and the failure of the American *Head Above Water*, and the particular changes made – and not made – show us that there is definitely a need for a change in ideological content in films that are to be remade across cultural boundaries. The films need to fit both with the film tradition of their “new” country and with the cultural expectations of their new audience.

The originary films in my analyses are both very “Norwegian” films. The subject matter in *Hodet over vannet* is a cabin holiday in the sunny southern part of Norway gone wrong, and the spin on *Insomnia* is the effect of the midnight sun. This last spin has been effectively recreated in Alaska, but the aspect of the typical Norwegian holiday has disappeared in the American *Head Above Water*. However, this is not the only reason why the American *Insomnia* works and *Head Above Water* does not. The main reason is that the makers of *Head Above Water* failed to realize just how much a story has to be changed in order to fit in with the Hollywood film making style and the American cultural climate. *Insomnia* has been changed to the point where the story is almost unrecognizable, but in *Head Above Water*, the characters have been changed and the story has not.

It is difficult to know just how one could have changed the story in *Hodet over vannet* to become a good American film. In the Norwegian film, it is imperative to the narrative that the story is confusing and arbitrary, and so the changes that need to be made to fit it into the Hollywood mold are exactly the changes that take away the whole point of the story. In *Insomnia*, on the other hand, the concept is original enough that it is possible to spin a different story on the same premise, and make a completely new, American film. The warning from the title of this thesis: *Better Not Sleep Under Water*, can also be a warning that remaking a film across cultural boundaries might not be as easy as we can be led to believe.

There are definitely greater differences both in Norwegian and American film making and in Norwegian and American culture than we might have supposed. Norwegians in general might not be aware of this great discrepancy, as we have been exposed to American filmmaking for years and so have learned to recognize and “read” the syntax that is American film. In the US, access to foreign films has gone down over the last years because of multiplexes.² American audiences, not being used to watching foreign films, do not have the luxury of being able to “read” several film languages. The problem with this situation is that as long as American viewers are unable to read the syntax of foreign films, they will lose out on many good stories that are presented in a way that make them difficult to translate into their own film language.

There are scholars, most notably Durham and David Ansen, who feel that American remakes of foreign films might help the cinemas of other countries, as audiences will be intrigued by the remakes and will want to see the original films as well.³ However, as long as American audiences are unable to both read the syntax of, and find it difficult to get access to, foreign films, this seems unlikely. Still, the topic is an interesting one, which needs further study.

Another interesting topic for future consideration would be the reception of cross-cultural remakes in the home countries of the original films. The American *Head Above Water* was better received in Norway than it was in the US, and the American *Insomnia* was also well received in Norway. This might be a case of the Norwegian audience being star struck – pleased and flattered by the fact that Hollywood deigns to remake a *Norwegian* film, but it might also be an effect of Norwegian audiences now being more used to the American film syntax than they are to the Norwegian. Despite the recent upsurge of Norwegian films in cinemas in Norway, films produced in the US

² Durham. *Double Takes* 7

³ Durham. *Double Takes* 8

still vastly outnumber Norwegian ones in viewing numbers. Will there come a time when we know American film grammar better than our own? Has that time already come? And what does this internalized knowledge of American film grammar paired with an apparent ignorance of American cultural tradition on the part of young Europeans do for the relationship between Europe and the United States? These are questions that are interesting for further research.

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Appendix A, Film Facts

Hodet over vannet

Directed by: Nils Gaup
Production country: Norway
Production Year: 1993
Script: Geir Eriksen, Eirik Ihldahl
Original music: Morten Abel (Hodet over vannet), Kjetil Bjerkestrand
Produced by: Filmkameratene (John M. Jacobsen)
Running time: 97 min.
Cast:
Lene: Lene Lise Bergum
Einar: Svein Roger Karlsen
Bjørn: Morten Abel
Gaute: Reidar Sørensen
Policeman: Jon Skolmen

Head Above Water

Directed by: Jim Wilson
Production country: US
Production Year: 1996
Script: Theresa Marie
Original music: Christopher Young
Produced by: Tig Productions (Helen Pollack, John M. Jacobsen)
Running time: 92 min.
Cast:
Nathalie: Cameron Diaz
George: Harvey Keitel
Lance: Craig Sheffer
Kent: Billy Zane
Policeman: Shay Duffin

Insomnia (N)

Directed by: Erik Skjoldbjærg
Production country: Norway
Production Year: 1997
Script: Nikolaj Frobenius
Original music: Geir Jenssen
Produced by: Norsk Film AS/Nordic Screen Production AS
Running time: 92 min.
Cast:
Tanja: Maria Mathiesen
Engström: Stellan Skarsgaard
Vik: Sverre Anker Ousdal
Hagen: Gisken Armand

Zakariassen: Kristian Fr. Figenschow
Engen: Thor Michael Aamodt
Politimesteren: Frode Rasmussen
Eilert: Bjørn Moan
Ane: Maria Bonnevie
Frøya: Marianne O. Ulriksen
Holt: Bjørn Floberg

Insomnia (US)

Directed by: Christopher Nolan
Production country: US
Production Year: 2002
Script: Hillary Seitz
Original music: David Julyan
Produced by: Alcon Entertainment
Running time: 113 min.
Cast:
Kay Connell: Crystal Lowe
Will Dormer: Al Pacino
Hap Eckhart: Martin Donovan
Ellie Burr: Hilary Swank
Fred Duggar: Nicky Katt
Farrell: Larry Holden
Chief Nyback: Paul Dooley
Randy Stetz: Jonathan Jackson
Rachel Clement: Maura Tierney
Tanya Francke: Katherine Isabelle
Walter Finch: Robin Williams
Coroner: Paula Shaw
Mrs. Connell: Tasha Simms

Appendix B, Scene Breakdowns

Scene breakdown, Hodet over vannet

- Scene 1. At the Beach. Lene**
- Scene 2. House. Lene and Einar**
- Scene 3a. Outside on the way to the boat**
- Scene 3b. Dingy. Gaute**
- Scene 3c. Pier. Lene**
- Scene 3d. Dingy. Gaute**
- Scene 3e. Water. Lene and Gaute**
- Scene 4. House. Lene and Gaute**
- Scene 5. Later same night**
- Scene 6. Boat. Einar and Bjørn**
- Scene 7. House. Next morning**
- Scene 8. By the water, Lene**
- Scene 9a. House. Einar**
- Scene 9b. Outside. Lene and Bjørn**
- Scene 9c. Inside. Einar**
- Scene 9d. Outside**
- Scene 10. Inside. Lene's Explanation**
- Scene 11. Shed. Putting Gaute in**
- Scene 12. Boat. Looking for the clothes**
- Scene 13. Beach**
- Scene 14a. Shed. Looking for the methanol**
- Scene 14b. House**
- Scene 14c. Shed**
- Scene 14d. House**
- Scene 15. House and outside. Beating up a dead man**
- Scene 16. Pier. Carrying the body**
- Scene 17a. Forrest. Getting the oven**
- Scene 17b. Boat. Trying to fool Bjørn**
- Scene 19. Gazebo. Einar**
- Scene 20a. House**
- Scene 20b. Inside. Arguing**

Scene 21. Bjørn's cabin. The suit
Scene 22. Gazebo. Cement and blood
Scene 23. House. Lene's suspicion
Scene 25. Boat. Running away
Scene 26. House. Caught
Scene 27. Later
Scene 28. At night
Scene 29. At the boat (with cuts to Bjørn's cabin). Running away again
Scene 30. Back at the house
Scene 31. Bjørn's cabin
Scene 32. House. Lene and Einar
Scene 33. Pier. Einar and Bjørn
Scene 34. House
Scene 35. Boat. Bjørn
Scene 36a. House/Pier/ House/ Pier/House
Scene 36b. Inside
Scene 36c. Outside. Einar and Bjørn

Scene breakdown, Head Above Water

- Scene 1. On the pier. Policeman and complainants**
- Scene 2. In the dingy. Kent**
- Scene 3. On the pier of the cabin**
- Scene 4. Lance's cabin**
- Scene 5. Nathalie's house**
- Scene 6. In the dingy. Kent**
- Scene 7. On the pier. Nathalie**
- Scene 8. In the dingy. Kent**
- Scene 9. On the beach/house/water. Nathalie and Kent**
- Scene 10. Back in the house**
- Scene 11. On the boat. George and Lance**
- Scene 12. At the house. Nathalie and Kent.**
- Scene 13. On the boat.**
- Scene 14. House.**
- Scene 15. Bathroom. Nathalie**
- Scene 16. Living room. Kent and Nathalie**
- Scene 17. Next morning. Living room. Nathalie**
- Scene 18. On the beach. Nathalie**
- Scene 19. In the house. George and Lance**
- Scene 20a. Porch. Lene and Lance**
- Scene 20b. In house. George**
- Scene 20c. Porch**
- Scene 20d. In house**
- Scene 21. The storage shed**
- Scene 22. In the boat**
- Scene 23. On the pier**
- Scene 24. Storage shed**
- Scene 25. Porch**
- Scene 26. In house**
- Scene 27. On the pier**
- Scene 28. In the woods**
- Scene 29. Pier/Boat**
- Scene 30. Porch**

Scene 31. Tool shed
Scene 32. House
Scene 33. Lance's cabin
Scene 34. By the gazebo
Scene 35. In the house
Scene 36. Pier/boat
Scene 37. In the house
Scene 38. Lance's cabin
Scene 39a. House
Scene 39b. Boat
Scene 39c. House
Scene 39d. Boat
Scene 39e. House
Scene 39f. Boat
Scene 40. Beach. Next morning
Scene 41a. House
Scene 41b. Boat
Scene 41c. House
Scene 42a. Pier
Scene 42b. House
Scene 42c. Pier
Scene 43a. Forest/Lance's cabin
Scene 43b. Rocks. Lance
Scene 43c. Boat. George
Scene 43d. Lance's cabin
Scene 44a. Gazebo
Scene 44b. Lance's cabin
Scene 44c. Gazebo
Scene 44d. Lance's cabin
Scene 44e. Gazebo
Scene 45. Lance's cabin
Scene 46. Gazebo
Scene 47. Lance's cabin
Scene 48a. Gazebo
Scene 48b. Policeman's boat

Scene 48c. Gazebo. The rescue

Scene 49. Reef. Nathalie and policeman

Scene 50. Boat. Nathalie and policeman

Scene breakdown, Insomnia (N)

- Scene 1. Cabin. Tanja's death**
- Scene 2. Plane. Engström and Vik**
- Scene 3. Airport. Engström and Vik**
- Scene 4. Car. Engström and Vik**
- Scene 5. Morgue.**
- Scene 6. Tanjas rom. Engström and Hagen**
- Scene 7. Outside police station.**
- Scene 8. Police station.**
- Scene 9. Interrogation room.**
- Scene 10. Hotel. Ane**
- Scene 11. Engström's room.**
- Scene 12. Engström's room.**
- Scene 13. The classroom.**
- Scene 14. Engström's car.**
- Scene 15. Engström's office. Press conference.**
- Scene 16. By the water.**
- Scene 17. In the fog.**
- Scene 18. Police chief's office.**
- Scene 19. Engström's car / alley.**
- Scene 20. Hotel reception.**
- Scene 21. Engström's room.**
- Scene 22. The hospital.**
- Scene 23. Police station.**
- Scene 24. By the water.**
- Scene 25. Engström's room./Alley.**
- Scene 26. Evidence room.**
- Scene 27. Engström's room.**
- Scene 28. Reception.**
- Scene 29. School yard.**
- Scene 30. Engström's car.**
- Scene 31. Holt's apartment.**
- Scene 32. Engström's car.**
- Scene 33. Engström's room.**

Scene 34. Police station.
Scene 35. Outside the dentist's.
Scene 36. Chasing Holt.
Scene 37. In the car.
Scene 38. The gondola.
Scene 39. On the mountain.
Scene 40. Eilert's apartment.
Scene 41. Police station.
Scene 42. Hotel reception. Back room.
Scene 43. Engström's room.
Scene 44. Eilert's room.
Scene 45. Outside Eilert's room.
Scene 46. Police station interrogation room.
Scene 47. Police station hall.
Scene 48. Shack.
Scene 49. Engström's room.
Scene 50. Garage under police station.
Scene 51. Outside Holt's apartment.
Scene 52. Holt's apartment.
Scene 53. Engström's car.
Scene 54. Abandoned fishing village.
Scene 55. Holt's summer house.
Scene 56. Police chief's office.
Scene 57. Engström's room.
Scene 58. Engström's car.

Scene breakdown, Insomnia (US)

Scene 1. On the Plane.

Scene 2. Plane landing.

Scene 3. In the car.

Scene 4. At the police station.

Scene 5. In the bull pen.

Scene 6. In the morgue.

Scene 7. Kay's room.

Scene 8. At the lodge, reception.

Scene 9. Restaurant.

Scene 10. Dormers room.

Scene 11. Outside the lodge, morning after.

Scene 12. In the car.

Scene 13. At the school. Classroom

Scene 14. Inside the other room.

Scene 15. In the hallway.

Scene 16. Police station.

Scene 17. By the fishing cabin.

Scene 18. In the fog.

Scene 19. In Bubbles' office.

Scene 20. Bull Pen.

Scene 21. In the alley.

Scene 22. Lodge. Reception.

Scene 23. Lodge. Dormer's room.

Scene 24. Police station. Morning.

Scene 25. Hospital.

Scene 26a. By the beach. Burr.

Scene 26b. By the beach. Search.

Scene 26c. By the beach. Burr.

Scene 26d. Search.

Scene 27. At the hotel.

Scene 28. Hotel room.

Scene 29. Alley.

Scene 30. Morgue.

Scene 31. Street. In car.
Scene 32. Police station.
Scene 33a. Hotel room.
Scene 33b. Ellie Burr's apartment.
Scene 33c. Hotel room.
Scene 33d. Ellie Burr's apartment.
Scene 33e. Hotel room.
Scene 34. The funeral.
Scene 35. In the car.
Scene 36. The dump. Tanya.
Scene 37. Police station.
Scene 38. In the car to Umkumiut.
Scene 39a. Umkumiut, Finch's building.
Scene 39b. The Chase.
Scene 39c. Finch's building.
Scene 40. Police station.
Scene 41. Ferry.
Scene 42. Police station.
Scene 43. Dormer's room. Phone.
Scene 44. Outside the lodge. Morning.
Scene 45a. Police station interrogation room.
Scene 45b. Car/Randy's room. Dormer.
Scene 45c. Interrogation room
Scene 45d. Randy's room. Dormer.
Scene 45e. Interrogation room
Scene 45f. Randy's room. Dormer.
Scene 45g. Interrogation room
Scene 45h. Randy's room. Dormer.
Scene 45i. Interrogation room
Scene 45j. Randy's room. Dormer.
Scene 45k. Interrogation room
Scene 45l. Car. Duggar.
Scene 45m. Randy's room. Dormer.
Scene 45n. Car. Duggar.
Scene 45o. Randy's room. Dormer.

Scene 45p. Car. Duggar.
Scene 45q. Randy's room. Dormer.
Scene 45r. outside police station.
Scene 45s. Randy's room. Dormer.
Scene 45t. outside police station.
Scene 45u. Randy's room. Dormer.
Scene 45v. Randy's room. Duggar.
Scene 45w. Randy's room. Dormer.
Scene 45x. Randy's room. Duggar/Dormer..
Scene 45y. Outside apartment
Scene 46a. Burr's car. Burr.
Scene 46b. Police station.
Scene 46c. Beach. Burr.
Scene 46d. Police station.
Scene 46e. Beach. Burr.
Scene 47a. Bridge. Dormer/Finch.
Scene 47b. Beach. Burr.
Scene 47c. Bridge. Dormer/Finch.
Scene 47d. Beach. Burr.
Scene 47e. Bridge. Dormer/Finch.
Scene 47f. Beach. Burr.
Scene 47g. Bridge. Dormer/Finch.
Scene 48. Burr's room. Burr.
Scene 49. The pub.
Scene 50a. Dormer's room.
Scene 50b. Burr's car. Burr.
Scene 50c. Dormer's room.
Scene 50e. Burr's car. Burr.
Scene 51a. Dormer's room. Morning.
Scene 51b. Dormer's car.
Scene 51c. Burr's car.
Scene 51d. Finch's apartment. Dormer.
Scene 51e. Burr's car.
Scene 51f. Finch's apartment. Dormer.
Scene 51e. Burr's car.

Scene 51d. Dormer's car.
Scene 52a. Finch's cabin.
Scene 52b. Dormer's car
Scene 52c. Finch's cabin.
Scene 52d. Dormer's car
Scene 52e. Finch's cabin.
Scene 52f. Dormer's car
Scene 52g. Finch's cabin.
Scene 53. Outside the Finch's cabin.

Appendix C, Films Mentioned

- Aeon Flux* (US, Karyn Kusama, 2005)
- Always* (US, Steven Spielberg, 1990)
- Anna and the King* (US, Andy Tennant, 1999)
- Arsenic and Old Lace* (US, Frank Capra, 1944)
- Birdcage, The* (US, Mike Nichols, 1996)
- Body Snatchers, The* (US, Abel Ferrara, 1993)
- Brothers Grimm's Snow White, The* AKA *Snow White: A Tale of Terror* (US, Michael Cohn, 1997)
- Cage aux folles, La (Birds of a Feather)*, France, Edouard Molinaro, 1978)
- Cape Fear* (US, Martin Scorsese, 1991)
- Cast Away* (US, Robert Zemeckis, 2000)
- Cinderella (and the Fairy Godmother)* (US, George Smith, 1898)
- Cinderella* (US, Disney/Geronimi et al., 1950)
- Constantine* (US, Francis Lawrence, 2005)
- Dawn of the Dead* (Italy/US, George Romero, 1978)
- Dawn of the Dead* (US, Zack Snyder, 2004)
- Dracula* AKA *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (US, Francis Ford Coppola, 1992)
- Frankenstein* AKA *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (UK/Japan/US, Kenneth Branagh, 1994)
- Guy Named Joe, A* (US, Victor Fleming, 1943)
- Hamlet* AKA *Shakespeare's Hamlet* (UK/US, Kenneth Branagh, 1996)
- Honeymooners, The* (US, John Schultz, 2005)
- Hustruer (Wives)*, Norway, Anja Breien, 1974)
- Invasion of the Body Snatchers, The* (US, Philip Kaufman, 1978)
- Invasion of the Body Snatchers, The* (US, Don Siegel, 1956)
- Jaws* (US, Steven Spielberg, 1975)
- Jungfrukällan (The Virgin Spring)*, Sweden, Ingmar Bergman, 1960)
- Jurassic Park* (US, Steven Spielberg, 1993)
- King and I, The* (US, Walter Lang, 1956)
- King and I, The* AKA *Rogers and Hammerstein's The King and I* (US, Richard Rich, 1999)
- Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* (US, Simon West, 2001)
- Last House on the Left, The* (US, Wes Craven, 1972)

Little Women (US, Gillian Armstrong, 1994)

Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, The (New Zealand/US, Peter Jackson, 2000)

Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, The - Special DVD-release (New Zealand/US, Peter Jackson, 2001)

Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers, The (New Zealand/US/Germany, Peter Jackson, 2002)

Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King, The (New Zealand/US/Germany, Peter Jackson, 2003)

Matrix, The (US, Andy and Larry Wachowski, 1999)

Matrix Reloaded, The (US, Andy and Larry Wachowski, 2003)

Matrix Revolutions, The (US, Andy and Larry Wachowski, 2003)

Memento (US, Christopher Nolan, 2000)

Night of the Living Dead (US, George Romero, 1968)

Night of the Living Dead (US, Tom Savini, 1990)

Nikita (La Femme Nikita), France/Italy, Luc Besson, 1990)

Nosferatu: Phantom der Nacht (Nosferatu, The Phantom of the Night), West Germany/France, Werner Herzog, 1979)

Ocean's Eleven (US, Stephen Soderbergh, 2001)

Ofelas AKA Veiviseren (The Pathfinder), Norway, Nils Gaup, 1987)

Passion of the Christ, The (Mel Gibson, 2004)

Phantoms (US, Joe Chappelle, 1998)

Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl (US, Gore Verbinski, 2003)

Point of No Return (US, John Badham, 1993)

Psycho (US, Alfred Hitchcock, 1960)

Psycho (US, Gus van Sant, 1998)

Scream 2 (US, Wes Craven, 1997)

Scream 3 (US, Wes Craven, 2000)

Shaft (US, Gordon Parks, 1971)

Shaft (US, John Singleton, 2000)

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (US, Disney /David Hand, 1937)

Spoorloos (The Vanishing), Netherlands/France, George Sluizer, 1988)

Texas Chain Saw Massacre, The (US, Tobe Hooper, 1973)

Texas Chainsaw Massacre, The (US, Marcus Nispel, 2003)

Thing (From Another World), The (US, William Nyby, 1951)

Thing, The (US, John Carpenter, 1982)

Three Men and a Baby (US, Leonard Nimoy, 1987)

Trois hommes et un couffin AKA *3 hommes et un couffin* (*Three Men and a Cradle*, France, Coline Serreau, 1985)

Ung flukt (*The Wayward Girl*, Norway, Edith Calmar, 1959)

Vanishing, The (US, George Sluizer, 1993)

War of the Worlds (US, Steven Spielberg, 2005)

War of the Worlds, The (US, Timothy Hines, 2005)

X2 (US, Bryan Singer 2003)

X-men (US, Bryan Singer, 2000)