WHAT’S IN A NAME?
Pathé and the Netherlands as envisioned in the Pathé-Desmet relationship

Ivo Blom

By the following particular history, one can see how Pathé operated in the outskirts of its imperium. Consequently one might say that the margin of the empire can tell a lot about the centre. Within the well-known Desmet film collection of the Nederlands Filmmuseum, France is the best represented country, with 339 films. Within the French section are some 80 Pathé films, a considerable amount considering Pathé’s rental system. However, there are more Gaumont films than Pathé films: 108 films. What was generally shown in Holland in the early teens, was much more Pathé than Gaumont. What is the historical explanation for this? Where did these films come from?

Jean Desmet is an intriguing personality because the Nederlands Filmmuseum possesses over 900 films from his distribution offer, hundreds of posters, programs, leaflets, photos, and his entire business archive. Like a piece of nitrate film in a wet gate film copier, one can “totally immerse” in the historic material. But Desmet is also an intriguing personality because his activities almost completely mirror the development of Dutch film culture in the years 1907-1914. He truly was the link between the pioneering generation of film exhibitors, within vaudeville and on the fairground, and the new generation of exhibitors and distributors, those builders of the picture palaces and the blockbooking importers of American and German film in the twenties and thirties.

The historical evidence within the Desmet business archive is the richest source worldwide on the presence of Pathé in the Netherlands in the early

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teens. Thanks to Desmet’s rich business archive, it is possible to reconstruct or rather to recompose the fascinating story of Desmet and Pathé. At the same time the archive gives an insight into the activities and strategies of Pathé in the Netherlands as a whole. Lastly it indicates how film culture developed in the Netherlands in a decisive phase and how it reacted with national and international cultural and economical developments. This story links personal and business history with a cultural history. In other words: a combination of micro-history and macro-history.

Desmet’s contacts with Pathé can be divided into three phases: first, his travelling cinema years, from 1907 to 1910; secondly the period 1910-1912, when many Pathé fiction films and some non-fiction films entered Desmet’s possession by way of the massive imports of complete programs from Germany; finally the years 1912-1914, when Desmet intensively bought newsreels from the Dutch agency of Pathé, but rented nor bought hardly any of their fiction films. During this phase instead, he fiercely competed with Pathé in film distribution and offered alternatives to Pathé.

Pathé and Desmet in Desmet’s travelling cinema years

Jean Desmet entered the film business in the summer of 1907, when he started a travelling cinema, entitled The Imperial Bio. This was exactly the moment that the relationship between Pathé and the Netherlands was changing.

Until 1907, Pathé headquarters considered the Netherlands as an out-skirt, a territory that could easily be ruled from Paris or Brussels. This did not mean that no Pathé films were shown in the Netherlands. On the contrary, from 1903 on, at the Wintergarden of the Tivoli theatre complex in Rotterdam, self-contained film programs were shown that consisted exclusively of Pathé films. Moreover, travelling cinema owners, like Alberts Frères, showed film programs that consisted mainly of Pathé eleven films, leaving little room for others like Urban, Méliès or Dutch films (mainly Dutch actualités).

Originally the Pathé films had to be ordered directly from France, but, between December 1905 and January 1906, a Dutch agency of Pathé was opened in Amsterdam, at Leidsestraat 11. Here Pathé sold both Pathéphone machines and records, projectors and films. For quite a few years the Dutch agency of Pathé was to be the only foreign film agency in the Netherlands. So when Desmet started his travelling cinema, he could have bought his films in Amsterdam. However the documentation on his travelling cinema years is scarce within the Desmet business archive.

Desmet's first advertisements, from the summer of 1907, indicate Pathé's changing relationship with the Dutch exhibitors. Earlier, fairground exhibitors would show countless Pathé films, but apart from the brand name on the posters and the cardboard rooster within the images, Pathé as a name was mostly not mentioned, neither in leaflets nor in newspaper advertisements and reviews. Instead the name of the exhibitor or the name of his cinema were appearing everywhere. The exhibitor annexed the material from the production companies in this way.

This changed in the summer of 1907, when film shows were organised at three different locations in Amsterdam, in two variety theatres and one theatre hall. At the Grand Theatre, the Rembrandttheater and the Paleis voor Volksvlijt (the Dutch Crystal Palace), the brand name of Pathé was promoted, attached to projectors but even more to the films shown. From then on Pathé as a name was promoted as something that stood for quality, continuity and sure profit. Abrassart and Favier, responsible for the shows at the two variety theatres, the Grand Theatre and the Rembrandttheater, even toured the Netherlands to spread the message.

Pathé's strategy encouraged fairground exhibitors like Desmet also starting to use the Pathé name in their advertisements as an attraction, as a guarantee for quality (cf. Richard Abel on Pathé in the United States). When Desmet stood at the fairground in the autumn of 1907, his advertising proclaimed that he showed films of the « world famous cinematograph Pathé ».

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5 At least this is the address that Pathé occupied in 1907, according to the Amsterdam addressbook of 1907-1908. 6 Moreover the Dutch Pathé agency regularly advertised in a widely distributed trade paper for fairground and variety artists and managers, called De Komeet, a magazine that had its equivalent in Belgium and Germany. Until 1912 it was also the main trade paper for early cinema owners in Holland. 7 In 1909, Desmet opened his first permanent cinema, but continued to give fairground shows in the summers and autumns of 1909 and 1910. 8 This marking strategy was corroborated in the next summer of 1908, when an official representative of the new Belge-Cinéma, Daniel Vandevijver, toured the big Dutch cities with Pathé programs. 9 Apparently Pathé used likewise strategies in other countries, e.g. the United States, but from 1907 on people there started to complain more and more about the « lower » aspects of Pathè's products: the sensational, aggressive and erotic character of the films. Richard Abel, « The Perils of Pathé, or the Americanization of Early American Cinema », in Leo Charney, Vanessa R. Schwartz (eds.), Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, pp. 194-200.
Frères and other big firms from London, Paris and Berlin. Other travelling cinema exhibitors acted the same way.

In his early years, 1907-1908, Jean Desmet did not advertise in newspapers indicating a major film, or any hierarchy in the program. Only later, in 1908 and 1909, actuality films, both Dutch and foreign, and dramatic fiction films would appear within a hierarchic composition or would be singled out. Generally one can say that the titles within Desmet's advertisements were mainly Pathé films. From these, *Lutte pour la vie* (1907), *La Vengeance du forgeron* (1907), *La Maison ensorcelée* (1908), *Chez les Touaregs* (1908) and *Pardonne grand-père* (1908) still exist in the Desmet Collection today.

On April 1908, *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise* (1908) was shown for the first time in Amsterdam. As elsewhere this film started the vogue of the Film d'Art films in the Netherlands and that of the historical genre in general. The presence of actors from the stage performing these films and the cachet the historical or literary bases of the plots uplifted these films in general and the Pathé films in particular. Desmet did not join the trend immediately, but in the summer of the following year he showed several of these art films, like *La Main* (Film d'Art, 1909). His advertising campaign took full advantage of Film d'Art's legitimising characteristics. Sometimes the ads announced the presence of the actors from the French stage, without even mentioning the film titles themselves. At the same time (1909) a differentiation in Desmet's film offerings became visible. Films from Italian companies like Ambrosio, Itala and Cines as well as other French film companies began to appear on the program alongside Pathé films projected at the Imperial Bio. All of the rival companies competed with each other offering the same genre, the historical drama, like the Itala production *Enrico III* (Itala, 1909) and *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei* (Ambrosio, 1909), the last one still available in the Desmet Collection.

The cinema boom and the Theatre Pathé

This differentiation in Desmet's offering reflects the changes world wide at the time. It has also more local reasons. Desmet opened in March 1909 his first permanent cinema: the Cinema Parisien at Rotterdam, the first cinema in Desmet's chain, which would soon be the biggest in the Netherlands. In April 1910, he opened up another Cinema Parisien, this time in Amsterdam, and moved his office there. Desmet was at the head of the Dutch cinema boom, which manifested itself mainly in Rotterdam and in Amsterdam. It reached its peak in Rotterdam in 1911 and in Amsterdam in 1912. In the middle of this boom Pathé opened its first cinema in Amsterdam: the Theatre Pathé.

Around 1900, the Netherlands experimented an industrial boom, a highly improved transportation infrastructure (the national and European
railway net, the Rotterdam harbour), and a rapid growth of consumer culture, for instance expressed in the flourishing variety circuits in Rotterdam and Amsterdam. Within this context, the number of cinemas started to increase from 1906 on. The Kalverstraat, the main shopping street of Amsterdam, became the street for elegant cinemas. Pathé gave the impetus for this, when opening the Theatre Pathé here in 1911. Others followed this example, like Desmet, who opened his luxurious Cinema Palace at the Kalverstraat at the end of 1912\textsuperscript{10}.

On July 15\textsuperscript{th} 1911, the Theatre Pathé was opened at the Kalverstraat 122. The former Hotel-Café-Restaurant de France, a site of occasional film screenings, was transformed by architect Breman within six months into an elegant cinema for some 400 visitors. The walls and ceiling, still white plastered at the opening, were to be painted two years later with floral decorations in soft colors. An extraordinarily large projection screen guaranteed the clarity of the image and flickering was avoided. A small orchestra, directed by violin player Mr Snoeck, accompanied the films. In contrast to most Dutch cinemas at the time, there was no lecturer present. Apparently this was part of the Pathé policy to get rid of lecturers at an early stage. In most other Amsterdam cinemas however the lecturers would continue at least until the late teens\textsuperscript{11}. One of the main attractions of the Pathé cinema was the Pathé Journal. The local press stressed the newsreels’ importance and the pleasure they provided the modern urban flaneur, casually wandering into the cinema to inhale the world news. Desmet primarily rented or bought Pathé newsreels in the years 1911-1914, thus giving the Dutch a French perspective on world events. Newsreels by other nationalities only began to appear on Dutch screens when the First World War broke out\textsuperscript{12}. The Theatre Pathé would exclusively show Pathé films. Strangely enough, this seems to have been the only official Pathé cinema in the Netherlands. Some independent cinemas in smaller provincial towns used the name « Pathé », but apparently only because they had contracts with Pathé to show their films exclusively.

All in all some 40 cinemas arose in Amsterdam in the early teens. Every provincial town also had a few permanent cinemas of its own. Jean Desmet and his relatives opened or took over other cinemas in Rotterdam, Bussum, Flushing,

Delft and Eindhoven in the years 1912-1916. All of these Dutch cinemas were hungry to have films. Pathé could offer them complete programs, containing every possible genre, at a reasonable price. However, the rise of permanent cinemas led to the appearance of independent distributors like Desmet and created room for competing foreign and even national production companies.

Pathé films within Desmet’s programs imported from Germany

The Dutch cinema boom made Desmet aware not only of the demand. For films, but also for electric equipment such as projectors or quite simply chairs for the new opening cinemas. He started importing, renting and selling all this to clients, both travelling cinema and permanent cinema exhibitors. The equipment was provided by two sources: the German company Ernemann and Pathé. Thus Desmet formed a network of clients. After incidental relationships he started a system of contracts, thereby obliging whoever bought projectors or other equipment from him to rent weekly film programs during a few months or a whole year.

Desmet’s film distribution started early 1910, when he began to import complete programs from Germany, in those years a country with a much larger film trade than the Netherlands. From March 1910 on Desmet regularly received, complete film programs from the German company Westdeutsche Filmbörse, in Krefeld, and could set up his distribution network. Probably in the first months these programs were only rented, but from October 1910 on all these pictures were bought and remained in Desmet’s possession. Because they were second-run, the programs were relatively cheap and payed for per meter. One could say Desmet’s film distribution originated with a second-hand basis.

Among the films of the Westdeutsche Filmbörse were films from every country, from every production company. The programs were very diversified and contained Pathé and Gaumont films, as well as many films from Italy, the United States and Germany. Thus several Pathé films circulated in the Netherlands that did not come from France directly. An example in the Desmet Collection is the tinted copy of *L’Épouvante* (1911), an exciting thriller with Mistinguett, containing modern filmic techniques like an over-the-shoulder shot and tracking shots. Other pictures still « alive » in the Desmet Collection are *Le Fils du pêcheur* (1910), *Amour de page* (1911) and *Madame Tallien* (1911). The Pathé origin was not stated in the accounts

13 To complete the list: *Max a trouvé une fiancée* (1911), *L’Envyuse* (1911), *Amour et musique* (1911), *Une conspiration sous Henri III* (1911), *La Barbe grise* (1911), *La Légende des ondines* (1911); the non-fiction film *Le Sauvetage en Australie* (1911) and two Russian Pathé films, *Karenina* (1911) and *V dni getmanov* (1911).
of the German company to Desmet, nor in the accounts by Desmet to the local cinemas and travelling cinemas and neither in the programs or leaflets. Apparently the 1907 strategy of marking the brand name had fallen out of favor and would only come back around 1912-1913 with the Dutch acceptance in late 1912 of the Bern Convention on copyright (1908).

At the same time the « monopole » system, already popular in countries like Germany, set foot in Holland: exclusive rights for distribution for certain territories (the Netherlands in this case) and for a limited period began to be sold to Dutch distributors. These exclusive rights could be sold to them in order to avoid rivalry in releasing the same film. After the institution of the « Auteurswet », the Dutch copyright law, and the acceptance of the Bern Convention, the monopole system became the custom in Holland, at least for brand new long fiction films that featured the film program. Whenever Dutch distributors did not have exclusive rights to a whole production company (like Desmet’s rival Gildemeijer for the German Union films), short films or older films remained free to any buyer.

From April 1911 until August 1912, Desmet traded with the competitor of the Westdeutsche Filmbörse, the Deutsche Film-Gesellschaft at Cologne. The head of the company was Jakob Schnick. At the same time Desmet’s programs from the Westdeutsche Filmbörse began to drop, Schnick started to send Desmet programs. These contained more Pathé films. From July 1911 until March 1912, Schnick delivered between 8 and 14 titles, depending on the ever-increasing length of the main drama within the program, but also on the increasing length of the shorter films like comedies or non-fiction films. At the beginning of Schnick’s deliveries Pathé dominated these programs, but over the months this changed. The programs became more and more differentiated and the dominance of Pathé films started to fade.

Through the Deutsche Film-Gesellschaft many Pathé-films entered Desmet’s possession and are still available today in the Desmet Collection, even if about one third of the Pathé films mentioned in the accounts are lost. Most of the Pathé films are short dramas and comedies, like *La Tournée du docteur* (1911) and *La Ruse de Miss Plumcake* (1911, with Mistinguett), but non-fiction films are also included, like Alfred Machin’s *Chasse à l’aigrette en Afrique* (1911). The pictures of the Westdeutsche Filmbörse and the Deutsche Film-Gesellschaft often possess German intertitles. This explains also why most of the Pathé films in the Desmet Collection are from the years 1910-1912.

In 1912-1913 Desmet directly contacted several production companies like Gaumont and distribution companies who owned rights for specific production companies, as the French Aubert owned those of the Italian Cines company for France, Belgium and Holland. Instead of Krefeld and Cologne, Desmet focused now on Brussels and Berlin. There numerous agencies for national and foreign companies had sprung up. He not only bought film prints, but also distribution rights for the Netherlands, the previously mentioned «monopole» system.16

Desmet and the Pathé film agency 1911-1914

From September 1911 on Desmet started dealing with the Amsterdam branch of Pathé.17 A film agency, separate from the gramophone department, was opened in that year, probably attached to the Theatre Pathé, run by L. Infroit.18 Around 1912 Infroit moved to Keizersgracht 456, where he called himself ‘sole representant of the Cinematograph Pathé Frères’. Desmet continued to buy equipment like resistors, arc lamps, carbon points, film projectors and lantern plate projectors (for publicity plates), destined for his own cinemas, his regular customers or for whoever wanted to buy from him. He would take 5% commission from Pathé for everything he would sell to third parties.

From October 1911 on Desmet rented Pathé newsreels from Infroit. From March 1912 on he bought them. Apparently it was possible for Desmet to buy these films, instead of renting them. Probably they stood apart from the rental-policy, to which Pathé had changed in 1907, giving an example to others. The newsreels would come to Desmet from Infroit’s stores in Amsterdam. Presumably it was advantageous to have newsreels in stock at Amsterdam, so that shots of local news could be inserted into the already existing products sent from France. Until the outbreak of war hundreds of Pathé newsreels were acquired by Desmet. There are still a few examples of these within the Desmet Collection. However the main lot of the Pathé newsreels was not kept, probably because they were so quickly outdated in contrast to comedies, dramas or travel films.

17 At the same time as he was dealing with Germany for the import of his films, Desmet contacted the Dutch branche of Pathé, first in Rotterdam and later on in Amsterdam. From March 1910 until July 1911, he acquired equipment but hardly any films from the Rotterdam branch. 18 The film agency opened in Begijnesteg, a street aside of the cinema. The Pathé agency moved around 1908-1909 from Leidsestraat 11 to Reguliersbreestraat 43. The film department was not split from the gramophone department yet. This happened probably when the agency next to the Theatre Pathé was opened: the gramophone department remained at Reguliersbreestraat 43. In February 1911 there the Salon du Pathéphone was opened, where one could listen to records. The company at the Reguliersbreestraat was closed down in 1932.
In July of 1912 Infroit announced he had organised a laboratory and could be hired to shoot film actualities. Desmet probably did not give orders for these films, but he bought actuality films from Infroit and his successor Louis Justet in 1912-1914. In addition to ordinary newsreels, he bought special newsreels on the Balkan War in October-November 1912. From the regular offers in 1913 and 1914, mostly of national and local news, Desmet bought a few, but none have survived. 

1913 brought changes to the Pathé agency. Infroit left in January for Russia, where he took over Pathé’s agency lead until then by Maurice Hache. In contrast to Hache, he focused on distribution over production. Louis Justet took over the Amsterdam agency and moved the office to a large Art Nouveau-like building in Raadhuisstraat 42, purposely built for the company. Here showroom, laboratory, projection room, film, storage and package room were all located on the different floors of the building, as well as the quarters for the Justet family.

Fiction from the Dutch Pathé agency

Desmet’s dealing with Pathé fiction and non-fiction films is another story. After the massive imports of Pathé films through his two German contacts in the years 1910-1912, the Pathé purchases dropped down drastically. In 1912 he occasionally rented films from Pathé, like La Dame aux Camélias (1911) and The Escape of Hugo de Groot (1912), one of the drama’s Alfred Machin shot for the Dutch production unit for Pathé, De Hollandsche Film. Machin came to the Netherlands in 1909 to shoot documentaries and returned in 1911-1912 to produce a series of fiction films for De Hollandsche Film. As important as these films were for the future of the Dutch film industry, they are barely mentioned in the records of the Desmet archive. 

On March 9th, 1912, Desmet bought two prints of the Pathé Passion film, Vie et Passion de N.S. Jésus-Christ. As the new version of 1913 had yet to appear, it is fairly certain that this meant that Desmet purchased two prints of the 1907 version. I cannot give a satisfactory explanation why Desmet ordered a film that

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19 Incendie dans une usine de produits chimiques à Amsterdam (acquired October 1913), Aviateur Chanteloup à Amsterdam (November 1913), Enterrement d’un sous-officier des pompiers à Amsterdam (February 1914) and Visite des souverains danois à Amsterdam (May 1914). 20 An Interview with Infroit appeared in the Russian magazine Sine-Fono, 4, 1913. Correspondence with Yuri Tsivian, 25 June 1996. 21 Justet’s photographer and laboratory worker was Herman van Luijnen, who worked for Justet until the latter’s death in 1928. Mrs L. Deba-Justet, Justet’s daughter recalls having made the translation of the inter-titles in the Pathé films in the twenties. Interview with Mrs L. Deba-Justet, 15 December 1994. 22 From other Machin’s productions no trace was found, except the non-fiction film Chasse à l’aigrette en Afrique (1911), obtained via the German imports, and the poster of a Belgian Machin production, L’Hallali (1913). See also Éric de Kuyper, Alfred Machin, cinéaste, Bruxelles, Cinémathèque Royale, 1995.
was five years old, if not that he had earlier obtained a copy, now worn out, and wanted to continue the success of this film by ordering new prints. Or maybe he was just stingy with buying older and therefore cheaper stock. One of the two prints was discovered fairly complete within the Desmet Collection and restored by the Nederlands Filmmuseum. At the time, the Leiden based company Leliefilm released the Kalem Bible-version *From the Manger to the Cross* (1912), which was a huge success and was shown in Carré, one of the main theatres of Amsterdam. When Desmet released his Passion-film he did so under the same title, a popular practice in those days. When his rival accused him of plagiarism and boasted that their film had been shot in Palestine, in the Holy Land itself, he replied: «Yes, but I have the film in *color*! »

Instead of purchasing fiction films from Pathé, Desmet even turned the situation round on one occasion. In June 1914, he rented for 8 months the Italian film *Nerone e Agrippina* (Gloria, 1914) to Justet. Desmet would withdraw all his own publicity around the film and « grant the floor » to Pathé. The film opened at the Theatre Pathé from October 9th 1914 on, well after the outbreak of the First World War.

**Competition with Pathé**

Why didn’t Desmet rent more films from Pathé after his complete programs imported from Germany, containing many Pathé films, were left out? Probably because he did not need Pathé anymore, except for equipment and newssreels. Desmet was no longer merely exhibiting films, as in his travelling cinema years, but distributing them as well. He created a niche in Holland by importing all that Pathé did not offer.

Desmet stepped into the distribution field when diversification of the film offer grew as a result of developing alternatives to Pathé. He distributed films from all the film producing companies of that time and was able to respond to the fads like the Danish and German sensational films. Dutch customers were prepared to pay high prices to get Desmet’s films and programs. In addition, the explosive growth of the number of theatres of 1911-1912 in the Netherlands with the concomitant growth in demand for film and equipment helped him increase his national network. Internationalisation from one side, localisation on the other side, both contribute to this developments.

The development of the program format cannot be credited to Pathé. The breakthrough of the long feature film, around 1911, occurred in Holland mainly through the Danes, seconded by the Germans and the Italians. Desmet was one of the key persons in importing and distributing these films, like *La Caduta di Troia* (Itala, 1911), *Ballhaus Anna* (Vitascope, 1911) and *De fire djaevle* (Kinografen, 1911).
Pathé instead continued to rule the short film circuit in the early teens, especially the nonfictional and comical sections, but had to share its position with companies like Gaumont, Vitagraph and Éclair. This is clearly reflected in the Desmet film collection then and now. When the Pathé films were almost omitted in 1912 within Desmet's purchases, he could easily replace these with films by Gaumont and others. Therefore most shorts within Desmet's offerings after early 1912 are by those companies. In general the short film continued to claim the lion’s share of the film program well into the early teens, even if this was hardly reflected in advertisements and reviews that focused mainly on the long feature films within the film programs. Desmet's imports were mainly one-reelers.

A decade Pathé-Desmet

A few important conclusions can be drawn ship, that lasted just a decade. Pathé's marketing strategy in the Netherlands was rather feeble. Pathé have never been the motor for the cinema boom in the Netherlands, which occurred much later than France or Germany, namely around 1911-1912. In contrast with countries like Belgium, where every average town had one or a few Pathé cinemas, only one real Pathé cinema opened up in Holland. The Amsterdam Pathé cinema was the first on the main shopping street in town. Still, it was never the main film theatre of the city.

Oddly enough Pathé was a pioneer in Holland in many ways, but did not maintain or expand these pioneering activities. Their strategy of emphasizing their brand name was successful in 1907-1908 but faded afterwards. The strategy was followed by others, especially after the introduction of the «monopole» system. On the other hand Dutch distributors often claimed film titles as their own. Pathé was the first foreign company to open an agency in Holland. However from the early teens on it never expanded. It was the first foreign company to shoot fiction films in the Netherlands, but this adventure was stopped after a year or so. Nevertheless Machin's fiction films were an important catalyst and for the development of the Dutch film production, especially that of the Hollandia studio's.

Pathé was the first in the Netherlands to rent their prints instead of selling them. As elsewhere it stimulated the general transition from film sales to film rental in the Netherlands. Others like Desmet followed the example. On the other hand in the early teens everything was still possible and the shift from selling to renting did not occur smoothly. Dutch film distribution in general developed more slowly than in Germany or Belgium. Amsterdam never reached the status of locus transito for international film trade like Brussels or Berlin did.
Even if loose « actualities » had been shown before, Pathé newsreels started the genre of the newsreel. They were sold to Desmet instead of rented, at least later on. They became highly popular as a film genre, especially after the opening of the Amsterdam Pathé cinema. They made the newsreel an integrated part of the film program, which lasted much longer than other genres within the program. When feature films became longer and shorter films were consequently pushed out, the newsreel endured. It even inspired the development of a Dutch production company that focused on newsreels: Polygoon.

The reason for the dominance of Gaumont films over the Pathé films within the Desmet film collection, mentioned at the beginning of this text, is that Pathé shifted from selling to renting for all genres but newsreels. Pathé thus blocked the independent distributors’ way, and therefore those looked for alternatives. Other companies like Gaumont started rental policies too, but because of their lack of agencies in the Netherlands, they still sold large numbers of mainly short films to Dutch distributors like Desmet in the early teens.

The reason that there are still so many Pathé films within the collection is that Desmet evaded the national limitations and imported and bought complete programs from Germany, which contained many Pathé films. These imports occurred in the years 1910-1912. Therefore most Pathé films within the collection are from those years. The Dutch Pathé agency never questioned this practice, maybe because nobody mentioned the origin of the films, at least in advertisements or accounts. Another reason could be that before the recognition of the Bern Convention, ratified in the Netherlands only in late 1912, Pathé could not claim their rights on films shown by others. Of course anybody could see the origin of these films on the street when posters of the films were hung up, but there wasn’t a poster for every film in the program.

Coming back to my initial statement about the margin and the centre, I would like to state that, instead of the image Pathé promoted on posters and the like, everybody being member of the Pathé family, Pathé was just part of one big international film trade family, at least for the Dutch case. If we want to know more about Pathé, we should look at its distributors, and maybe I should add: and its competitors.

I owe thanks to the Nederlands Filmmuseum, Ansje van Beusekom, Mrs. L. Debs-Justet, Geoffrey Donaldson, Alison McMahan, Jenny Reynaerts and Yuri Tsivian.

23 Maarten Loeffen, « De oorsprong van het Nederlandse bioscoopjournaal », *Jaarboek Mediageschiedenis* 1, 1989, pp. 53-72. 24 Today the situation is reversed within the Desmet Collection. Generally there are more posters than film prints. Often these posters refer to prints once in Desmet’s possession. See for the posters in the Desmet Collection: Paul van Yperen, « Passion! Sensation! Fate! The fascinating development of early film posters », *Affiche*, 8, 1993, pp. 30-37.