

Preface

“The images of the world have returned ... every one of them”¹

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“It’s become a familiar experience to the 21st-century cinemagoer: that nagging feeling of *déjà vu* in the multiplex, the sense that one is seeing the same movie over and over again, ad infinitum” (Child).

So begins a recent article in the *Guardian* that goes on to reveal that before the screenplay to the new Star Wars story, *Rogue One* (2016), was even completed, director Gareth Edwards had a scene-by-scene edit of the entire film mapped out using clips from hundreds of other pre-existing movies. Making note of the fact that seven of the previous year’s ten highest-grossing films were either remakes, sequels or stories set in an established “cinematic universe,” the *Guardian* casts Edwards, and other new millennial filmmakers, as “modern-day Victor Franksteins,” constantly splicing together old parts to create new forms: “Even when they are not explicitly remaking a classic product, or putting together a sequel, a director’s first instinct is therefore to duplicate, to copy, to half-inch from the past” (Child).

Although the *Guardian* article admits that cinematic remaking is as old as filmmaking itself, further observations – for instance, that “Hollywood is slowly but surely eating itself” and that “movies could be facing a cultural desert of Tatooine-like dreariness” (Child) – point to the tension between *repetition* and *originality* raised by the form of the cinematic remake, and other serial types. That is, when seen as a *product*, the film remake is understood as an announced duplication and imitation of a previously made film (or films). However, when seen as a *process*, cinematic remaking describes an act

¹ These are the opening words of Raymond Bellour’s essay, “Images of the World.” *Between-the-Images*. Zurich: JRP|Ringier and Les presses du réel, 2012.

of transformation that involves creation and innovation, and dates back to the earliest days of filmmaking. Elsewhere, I have addressed this tension to advance an argument regarding the theorization of the film remake as an industrial, textual and critical category (see Verevis 2006).

Film remakes, along with related media types – sequels, prequels and series – can be understood as forms of *adaptation*: that is, modes of cinematic remaking characterized by strategies of repetition, variation, and expansion (see Hutcheon 16, 170). Defined primarily in relation to a body of copyright law, the acknowledged (credited) remake develops from being an ethical solution to the early practice of duping (pirating) to become an economically driven staple of the Hollywood industrial mode of representation, and typical of the defensive production and marketing strategies of post-classical Hollywood. In the case of the unacknowledged (disguised) remake, the absence of a production credit shifts attention from a legal-industrial definition to a critical-interpretive one, in which the remake is determined in relation to a more general discursive field, such as film criticism and reviewing. In either instance (credited or uncredited) the inter-textual relationship between a remake and its original/s is largely extra-textual, located in historically specific technologies and institutional practices such as copyright law and authorship, canon formation and film/media literacy (see Verevis 2006: 1–34).

As in some approaches to film genre, remakes can be understood as industrial products, located in “the material conditions of commercial film-making, where plots are copied and formulas forever reiterated” (Altman 84). For film producers, remakes are consistently thought to provide suitable models, and something of a financial guarantee, for the development of studio based projects. For instance, in the studio-dominated era of the 1930s and 1940s, Warner Bros. balanced the cost of acquiring expensive pre-sold properties (best-selling novels, Broadway hit plays) by “relying heavily on ‘the cheapest pretested material of all’ – earlier Warner pictures” (Balio 1993: 99). This rationale, along with the belief that films had a strictly current value, enabled Warner Bros. to recycle Dashiell Hammett’s *The Maltese Falcon* three times in ten years – *The Maltese Falcon* (Roy Del Ruth, 1931); *Satan Met a Lady* (William Dieterle, 1936); *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941) – and release “disguised” remakes of its own films: for example, *High Sierra* (Raoul Walsh, 1941) was remade as a western, *Colorado Territory* (Raoul Walsh, 1949), and again as a gangster film, *I Died a Thousand Times* (Stuart Heisler, 1955).

In post-classical Hollywood (a period that extends to the present), remakes of high profile properties such as *King Kong* (Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1933; John Guillermin, 1976; Peter Jackson, 2005), *Godzilla* (Ishiro Honda, 1954; Roland Emmerich, 1998; Gareth Edwards, 2014) and *Planet of the Apes* (Franklin J. Schaffner, 1968; Tim Burton, 2001) are revived through massive production budgets as cultural juggernauts, with strong marketing campaigns, merchandizing tie-ins and franchise branding, for example: *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* (Rupert Wyatt, 2011), *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (Matt Reeves, 2014), *War for the Planet of the Apes* (Matt Reeves, 2017). Remakes of cult properties such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Marcus Nispel, 2003; Tobe Hopper, 1974), *Rollerball* (John McTiernan, 2002; Norman Jewison, 1975) and *Halloween* (Rob Zombie, 2007; John Carpenter, 1978) are often described as cynical “rebranding exercises,” and evidence of “the entertainment industry’s artistic laziness and penchant for pre-sold product” (Kermode 14). In the case of Hollywood cross-cultural remakes – films such as *Vanilla Sky* (Cameron Crowe, 2001)/*Open Your Eyes/Abre Los Ojos* (Alejandro Amenábar, 1997); *The Ring* (Gore Verbinski, 2002)/*Ringu* (Hideo Nakata, 1998); and *Insomnia* (Christopher Nolan, 2002; Erik Skjoldbjaerg, 1997) – foreign films are said to be dispossessed of local detail and political content to exploit new (English-language) markets. In these examples, cinematic remaking is not only evidence of Hollywood being an “aesthetic copy-cat,” but (worse) of “cultural imperialism” and “terroristic marketing practices” designed to block an original’s competition in the US market (Vincendeau 24).

The remake is often dismissed as a commercial category, but film remakes also provide opportunity for filmmaker-auteurs to *replay* pre-existing titles, “over-writing them with their own traceable signatures [and] reconfiguring them by incorporating references to other (rewritten) intertexts” (Grant 58). Understood in this way, Tim Burton’s version of *Planet of the Apes* is not a “remake,” but rather a “re-imagining” of Franklin J. Schaffner’s film (and Pierre Boulle’s novel); George A. Romero’s zombie movie *Dawn of the Dead* (1979) is digitally “re-envisioned” by director Zack Snyder (2004); and *Solaris*, a 1972 film by Andrei Tarkovsky (from the novel by Stanislaw Lem), is “revisited” by Steven Soderbergh (2002) who finds in the film’s “second chance” scenario an opportunity to replay (through his actor-muse George Clooney) a career long interest in isolated protagonists and non-linear narratives. In the case of one high-profile European export, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, *Yellow Bird*, the

production company behind the Swedish-Danish film version (*Män som hatar kvinnor*, Niels Arden Oplev, 2009), bought the rights to Stieg Larsson's 2005 novel and consequently earned a main production credit in the Hollywood version, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (David Fincher, 2011). Although the much-anticipated remake performed financially below expectation, Fincher's authorial interests, established in such psycho-thrillers as *Se7en* (1995) and *Zodiac* (2007), transformed the classical *mise-en-scene* of the 2009 adaptation into state-of-the-art Hollywood filmmaking. In such examples, official film web-sites take the opportunity to instantly invest these new versions with aesthetic and commercial value, citing filmmakers and producers who enthuse about the timeless attributes and "classic" status of originals before going on to insist upon their own value-added transformations.

The ability to identify and cross reference film remakes – especially disguised and foreign language remakes, such as *The Uninvited* (Charles Guard and Thomas Guard, 2009)/*A Tale of Two Sisters* (Ji-woon Kim, 2003); *Brothers* (Jim Sheridan, 2009)/*Brødre* (Susanne Bier, 2004); and *Contraband* (Baltasar Kormákur, 2012)/*Reykjavik-Rotterdam* (Óskar Jónassan, 2008) – comes about not only through prior knowledge of earlier films and intertextual comparisons, but also from the extra-textual discourses surrounding the viewing experience. As in the case of genre, an approach to the film remake requires not only that it be understood as a textual structure (of repetition and innovation) but also as a category determined by contextual factors, such as "audience knowledge and audience expectation," and the role of "industry [discourses] and film reviewers" (Neale 17). Moreover, because cinematic remaking can refer to more general structures of intertextuality – quotation, allusion, adaptation – the identification of a film remake is not restricted to the recognition of textual patterns of similarity, but can be achieved through classifying statements and cultural consensus. One such example is the *Remembrance* cinema program (Australian Centre for the Moving Image, 2003) that focused on works possessing some "historical recollection of cinema" to exhibit remake pairs, including: *Rio Bravo* (John Ford, 1959) and *Assault on Precinct 13* (John Carpenter, 1976); *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1952) and *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976); *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958) and *Sunless* (Chris Marker, 1962); *Blow-Up* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1966) and *The Conversation* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974); *All That Heaven Allows* (Douglas Sirk, 1955) and *Far From Heaven* (Todd Haynes, 2002). These examples – not one of which is an authorized or credited remake – demonstrate the way in which the film

remake is not only an industrial concept but also a category identified and maintained by exhibition and critical practices.

Over the past two decades, a growing body of work has sought to demonstrate (as briefly sketched above) that serial forms are not purely financial procedures but a complex process of cultural practice/s that are material, aesthetic and critical (see Forrest, Forrest and Koos, Heinze and Krämer, Horton and McDougal, Jess-Cooke, Jess-Cooke and Verevis, Kelleter, Kelleter and Loock, Klein and Palmer, Loock, Loock and Verevis, Mazdon, Perkins and Verevis 2012, Perkins and Verevis 2016, Smith and Verevis, Verevis 2006, Zanger). These works have demonstrated that serial forms are not only as old as moving pictures themselves, but also that serial forms are dynamic and variable historical processes, often shaped in and by moments of media transformation (for instance, the talker remakes of the 1920s and 1930s, or the widescreen remakes of the 1950s and 1960s). To date, analyses of serial media production have typically described three broad historical periods: 1. Early Cinema (pre-1917); 2. Studio Era Hollywood (1917–60); and 3. Contemporary Hollywood (post-1960).

More recently, my work on “new millennial remakes” has sought to account not only for the commercial and aesthetic imperatives of *contemporary* Hollywood (and transnational) film remakes but also to understand the way in which the phenomenon of the remake has been extended and transformed through such factors as the development of a film and television canon, mnemonic and archival practices, and the impact of media transformations, initially television and home video, but now the internet and social media. A key textual marker in the periodization of serial media forms in the new millennium is Gus Van Sant’s 1998 remake of Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960). Although Hitchcock’s film had already been serialized in *Psycho II* (Richard Franklin, 1983), *Psycho III* (Anthony Perkins, 1986) and *Psycho IV* (Mick Garris, 1990), Van Sant’s “replica” antagonized critics and audiences alike, who dismissed it as an attempt to exploit the original film’s legendary status. *Psycho 98* initiated a broad discursive shift away from the term “remake” toward a host of remake euphemisms – replica, reworking, refitting, retooling, retread, redo, replay and “reboot” – that have come to dominate contemporary review articles and promotional materials (see Proctor, Tompkins).

The rise of the term “reboot” (a term typically aligned with series and franchises) leads, in my recent inquiries into cinematic remaking, to an investigation of digital era

remakes: that is, the predominant practices, medium specific innovations, and media-ecological conditions of cinematic remaking in the first decades of the new millennium. Specifically, that work develops from recent accounts of global cinema the idea that since the turn of the century a combination of forces – conglomeration, globalization and digitization – has contributed to a new historical period (see Balio 2013; Elsaesser, Schatz). For these writers, digital (franchise) era Hollywood not only signals the way in which production practices have changed significantly over the past two decades, but also heralds a transformed media culture, one characterized by a proliferation of viewing screens and new communicative technologies (iPhones, Twitter, Instagram), a rapid increase in digital distribution (downloading, streaming), and an intensification of interest in moving image content and its manipulation (iTunes, Netflix, YouTube). Reversing the direction of these discussions, in which new media provides templates for new ways of thinking about contemporary film and television, such an investigation claims that contemporary serial media forms exemplify conceptual frameworks for digital information organization, and provide a key to understanding a moment of significant cultural transformation (see Bourriaud; Stenport and Traylor).

All of this begins to demonstrate that the film remake has never been a static thing, but a concept that is constantly evolving – expanding and renewing itself – in/through a discursive field. While it may be too early in the new millennium to draw conclusions as to the nature of a *distinct* media-historic period, new millennial remakes – often, digital adaptations of earlier analogue films – can be understood by way of a number of interrelated (and necessarily provisional) hypotheses: 1. *New millennial remakes are intermedial* – in the new millennium, one can no longer make claim to a distinction between film remakes and other media forms; 2. *New millennial remakes are transnational* – new millennial remakes challenge unidirectional accounts of global media traffic, and focus on the interrelationship between cultural and geographical centers and margins; 3. *New millennial remakes are post-authorial* – new millennial remakes demonstrate a shift in emphasis from a regime of rights based around signature and originality toward one centered on trademark and reproducibility; 4. *New millennial remakes are characterized by proliferation and simultaneity* – new millennial remakes do not erase or overwrite but co-exist as new versions or variations that actualize a potentially implicit at the source (see Verevis 2017).

These propositions – in particular the final one – describe the ways in which recent criticism begins to move beyond objections around the commercial debasement and

self-cannibalization of film, to understand the remake in ways akin to Derrida's untranslatable text: namely, as evidence of that "residue [that] can never be interrogated as the same, but must be constantly sought out anew, and must continue to be written" (see Birnbaum and Olsson). In a contemporary media landscape – one characterized by self-referencing and interconnection – film criticism recognizes that the present and future of cinema is a re-vision of its past, and that aesthetic and economic evaluations of film remakes (good or bad, success or failure) are less interesting than the cultural and historical significance of new millennial remake practice.

The essays in this special issue derive from "*Bis Repetita Placent? (2): Remake, genre and gender in film and television series of the English-speaking world,*" a conference organized by Université du Havre (GRIC) and Université Stendhal-Grenoble 3 (CEMRA), and held on 9–10 October 2014 at Université du Havre, Faculté des Affaires Internationales. As a follow-up to the conference on "Remake and technology" (held at the University of Grenoble 3 in October 2013), the conference focused on the intersections between film and television genres and the representations of gender in movies and television series. As demonstrated, for instance, by David Roche in his study of the horror movie genre (and his essay in this volume), the film remake can be interrogated for the way it (simultaneously) criticizes – implicitly, explicitly and sometimes even emphatically – the "uncharted territories" of a genre and its gender stereotypes. The essays selected here for publication variously investigate questions of gender and genre, casting a wide net to attend to sets of remakes and series – for instance, television series remakes (Achouche), Australian horror remakes (Cantero), American sitcoms (Tredy) – and also individual film and television case studies, including: *Robocop* 2014 / 1987 (Besson), *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* 2011 / 2009 (Gordon), *Sherlock* 2010– (Machinal), *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* 1941 / 1932 (Ménégaldo), *The Bridge* 2013– / *Bron-Broen* 2011– (Thomas), and *The Birdcage* 1996 / *La Cage aux folles* 1978 (Torti Alcayaga). Each of these essays makes its own vibrant contribution to an understanding of the forms and functions of serial media types – remakes, sequels, series – and to the field of studies in media seriality.

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