TV Remakes, Revivals, Updates, and Continuations: Making Sense of the Reboot on Television

Mehdi Achouche, Université Lyon 3 Jean Moulin

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When discussing the remake, it is generally the case that we are talking about the movie remake. Stigmatized or (more rarely) defended, the remake is historically thought of as a cinematographic institution, with very little thought devoted so far to the television remake[1]. Yet the phenomenon has been dramatically increasing over the past few years. A zap2it.com article counted in late 2013 32 projects being either remakes or spinoffs, with another 52 series being based on books or comics, accounting for 20% of the shows in development at the five broadcast networks for the 2014-15 season. By comparison, 53 such projects were developed throughout the previous season[2]. While TV series have been said to be in a new golden age thanks to their "cinematisation", they thus allegedly are in danger, according to the same article, echoing the long-standing complaints about "recycling" on the big screen, of ironically falling victim to the "movie-fication" of the business: "TV development is starting to look an awful lot like the movie business, where at the big-studio level pre-sold franchises and risk aversion seem to be the guiding principles." Or, as another writer puts it more succinctly, "there's a point where the recycled material is just garbage"[3].

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[1] Only two book-length studies entirely dedicated to the TV remake exist so far, edited by the same scholars: Lavigne Carlen, Marvotich Heather (eds.), *American Remakes of British Television: Transformations and Mistranslations*, Lenham: Lexington Books, 2011; and Lavigne, Carlen (ed.), *Remake Television: Reboot Re-use Recycle.* Lenham: Lexington Books, 2014.

[2] http://zap2it.com/2013/11/remake-fever-the-movie-fication-of-tv-development-should-worry-fans/, last access on December 1, 2015.

[3]http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/television/john-doyle-reuse-reboot-and-recycle-a-fatal-addiction-in tv/article22536931/, last access on September 1, 2015.

Yet, just like its movie counterpart, the notion of a TV remake is a complex and challenging one, perhaps even more so than in the cinema, and is inevitably tied to the issue of (and the opprobrium reserved to) sequels and other derivative material. As the number and the nature of remakes on television has significantly increased since the early 2000s, the phenomenon has attained new dimensions and nuances. At the same time, the research that does exist tends to be overwhelmingly directed at cross-cultural, or transnational, remakes[4], rather than to what Thomas Leitch calls "archival remakes" (Leitch, 38) or what are often called "updates", older series remade within the same country. Even less attention has been granted to the reboot, even though the word and the phenomenon have been seemingly omnipresent for the past few years.

A major difference between film and TV remakes is historical: whereas remakes have been present in cinema since almost day one, updates are in fact a relatively new phenomenon on television, contrary to transnational remakes, with U.S. remakes of British TV series and sitcoms popular since the 1970s (Lavigne and Marcovitch, xi). Spin-offs and remediations have also always been present on TV, with radio shows, movie and movie serials, books or comics adapted for television as early as the 1950s (*Superman*, *Flash Gordon*). Yet archival remakes, in the present instance Hollywood TV series being remade or "updated" on the same medium[5] by Hollywood itself after a number of years have passed, were rare occurrences until roughly 15 years ago, with most of those "true" remakes made after 2000. The closest analog on television would be the remaking of a pilot episode at the production stage when the network is unhappy with the current script, and/or to recast one of the lead parts (e.g. the 2009 unaired pilot of *Game of Thrones*)[6].

The traditional difficulty when talking about the remake in cinema is defining the very notion of remaking, an apparently easy endeavor which quickly reveals itself to be an intractable task. This is what Constantine Verevis makes clear in his introduction to *Film Remakes* (2006) when discussing the taxonomies offered by

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[4] Such as the recent special issue of the *Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* dedicated to transnational television remakes, Perkins Claire, Verevis Constantine (eds.), 29:5, 2015; see also in addition to *American Remakes of British Television: Transformations and Mistranslations*, mentioned above, McCabe Janet, Akass Kim, *TV's Betty Goes Global: From Telenovela to International Brand*, London: L.B. Tauris, 2013; and the earliest such study, Moran, Albert, *Copycat TV: Globalisation, Program Formats and Cultural Identity*, Luton: University of Luton Press, 1998.

[5] We are thus not tackling here the issue of remediations, except as far as they apply to the issue of reboots.

[6] http://io9.gizmodo.com/5348032/original-pilot-vs-official-pilot-which-shows-changed-the-most, http://gameofthrones.wikia.com/wiki/Pilot_episode, last accessed on October 11, 2015. Watching one of those unaired pilots and the remade one is one of the most fascinating and instructive experiences to understand the dynamic behind the production of TV series on television.

previous writers (Verevis, 1-34). The problem is compounded on television with the use of alternate terms, such as "revivals", "continuations", "reimaginings" or more recently "reboots", the latter seeming to promise an alternative to, or a variation on, the remake – a remake of the remake, as it were. Textual, paratextual and legal factors are all useful factors to help define TV remakes, as Verevis so amply demonstrates, yet they often contradict each other. In fact, beyond the terminological confusion encouraged by carefree commentators, the rebooting notion proves useful to offer valuable insights into the complexity of the remaking enterprise and of adaptations in general[7]. Thus, while keeping in mind Verevis's injunction not to "succumb to the problems of taxonomism and associated difficulties" (Verevis 2), distinguishing the various narrative strategies used to remake a scripted TV series proves valuable in terms of making sense of the specificities of the TV remake compared to the cinema, and especially its latest avatar, the reboot, which we argue is more than a terminological bluff.

This article will thus first try to outline the complex relationship between continuations and the various forms remakes can adopt on television. In each of the instances studied in the first part, the relationship will be a dyadic, traditional one between one series and its remake, while the notions of continuations, disguised and straight remakes will be discussed based on their handling of narrative continuity. Yet remakes have undergone recent transformations through the implementation of what are often called "reboots", whose main interest, beyond their own treatment of continuity, is to open up the relationship beyond only two referents and reveal the inscription of many TV remakes in a much larger, franchise-wide, cross-media, seemingly infinite storytelling enterprise. Finally, the intertextual web will be enlarged even more by considering the relationship between TV remakes and genres themselves by taking as a case study the example of the science fiction TV show remake *Battlestar Galactica*, itself a reboot.

Remaking a premise

Remakes in the cinema and on television share the same complex relationship to their source material, making it difficult to precisely define the remake and differentiate it from other forms of derivative material, traditionally the sequel or more

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[7] We follow Hutcheon in considering the word "adaptation" as including every form of transposition of one work into another, which includes remakes and remediations (Hutcheon, 8).

recently the prequel. As Thomas Leitch writes, "some [film] sequels […] gravitate towards remakes, and occasional remakes contain elements of sequels" (as the latest *Star Wars* installment has so spectacularly demonstrated[8]); yet to him they are still "fundamentally different" as "the audience for sequels wants to find out more, to spend more time with characters they are interested in and find out what happened to them after their story was over", whereas "the audience for remakes does not expect to find out anything new in this sense: they want the same story again, though not exactly the same" (44).

Yet "not exactly the same" is a very vague proposition, especially considering that many sequels do in fact consist in (sometimes minute) variations on the same story, while some remakes may take significant liberties with their original and even tell a different story, only keeping the original characters. Given that many (episodic) series tell different stories on a weekly basis, how could any TV remake ever give audiences more than a similar premise? Yet Leitch does underline an important aspect in the appeal of both remakes and sequels, in cinema as well as on television: characters and what happens to them from one iteration to the next, which is particularly true in TV series, characterized by "the vital role of the character" in storytelling, audience participation and identification (Mittell, loc. 2255), but also copyright acknowledgement. The status of characters in remakes or continuations, then, because of their importance and because they help clarify the exact narrative connection between a series and its revival, help define a new iteration on a textual and legal level as either a continuation, a "disguised" or a "straight" remake[9].

To qualify as a remake on a textual level, a new iteration must cancel any form of narrative continuity with its predecessor. The recent wave of revivals of serialized shows like *Dallas* (2012), *24* (2014), *Heroes Reborn* (2015) *The X-files* or *Twin Peaks* (2017), which pick up years after the original shows ended with the same actors still playing their (now older) characters, and with ongoing storylines often picking up as well, are continuations/sequels, because they do tell an ongoing story and do take into account the time that has passed. They can be seen as adding new seasons to the old ones rather than starting over with season 1: described as "event

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[8] http://www.denofgeek.us/movies/star-wars/251490/star-wars-the-force-awakens-can-a-film-be-a-sequel-and-a-reboot, last access on November 15, 2015.

[9] A distinction inspired by those put forward by Michael Druxman ("the disguised remake", the "direct remake" and the "non-remake"), Harvey Roy Greenberg (the "acknowledged, close remake", the "acknowledged, transformed remake" and the "unacknowledged, disguised remake") and Thomas Leitch ("readaptations", "updates", "homages", "true remakes") for cinema (Druxman's and Greenberg's are discussed in Verevis's introduction, op. cit.; Leitch offers his own taxonomy in his essay *Twice-Told Tales*, 45-54). See also Carroll, 36.

series" or mini-series by marketing material and network executives, the production code of the episodes for the new *24* and *X-Files* presented them as respectively seasons 9 and 10 of the former shows, while marketing material presented their premieres as "season premieres" rather than "series premieres"[10]. These shows were then, in the parlance of tvtropes.com, "un-canceled" and simply brought back under their old form[11].

Many new versions of episodic series will follow the same strategy and will acknowledge and incorporate the decades that have passed in the real world into the intradiegetic world of the new show. Television is familiar with the "reunion or extension episode" (Verevis, 42-43), when characters are reunited several years after the end of the show for one-shot adventures, often in the form of TV movies (*Kojak* in the 1980s, *Knight Rider* in 1991, *Hunter* in the 1990s and 2000s, etc.), which can then sometimes give birth to a new show if successful (thus acting as a backdoor pilot[12]). The former actors will then play older versions of their characters, sometimes with their intradiegetic children if the show wants to carry on as a proper series[13]. Sometimes, they will only appear in the pilot episode, like David Hasselhoff, who appears in the final minutes of the backdoor pilot of the new *Knight Rider* (2008), time enough to shake hands with his adult son and convince him to take over for him, before departing again – thus bringing legitimacy to a show which can then be seen as joining the canon of the franchise, while (hopefully) boosting ratings.

This is then a continuation. Yet a closer look exposes such a show to be a remake, or a "disguised remake", in so far as a TV remake will consist in the remaking of a premise, with at least part of the cast changing and their adventures transplanted in a modern setting. Various references and nods will thus tellingly be made to the original in the course of the remade version, aligning the new production with the original as closely as possible while still offering fresh weekly scripts. 2008's *Knight Rider* is only "based on characters created by Glen A. Larson" according to the credits, the legal marker of a looser adaptation than a stricter remake would

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[10] http://www.hitfix.com/news/jacks-back-fox-confirms-24-live-another-day-for-summer-2014, http://www.fox.com/the-x-files, http://www.starwatchbyline.com/?p=19594, last access on November 15, 2015.
[11] http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/UnCanceled?from=Main.UnCancelled, last access on December 23, 2015.
[12] An episode from a TV show or a made-for-television film which if successful will give birth to its own separate TV series.
[13] Verevis gives the example of *Leave it to Beaver*, a sitcom originally produced from 1957 to 1963 and then revived for a special TV movie, *Still the Beaver* in 1983, which led to a sequel series, *Still the Beaver*, later renamed *The New Leave it to Beaver* (1984-1989). The actors reprised older versions of their original characters, thus making it a sequel or continuation (Verevis, 45).

warrant, where the new series would simply be "created by" the original creators (such as 2011's *Charlie's Angels*, which credits the creators of the former iteration, who had passed away by then, as the creators of the new one as well). Yet it provides its viewers with much more than inspiration from the original characters and with everything they would expect from a series called *The Knight Rider*: the talking car, edgy onboard gadgets, the playful banter between Michael and KITT, car chases, etc., again using an older, white-haired character as a father-like figure and a romantic interest for Michael (the son being tellingly named after his father).

This is then an update, Leitch defining it as a type of remake (47): remaking a show to essentially modernize it, like the remixed opening theme of many of these (barely) disguised remakes (*Mission Impossible*, *Knight Rider*, *Charlie's Angels*, etc.), while closely adhering to the original's narrative formula (the briefing/collecting the team/setting up the trap/encountering an unforeseen difficulty/the successful conning of the antagonist in *Mission Impossible*); exhibiting the same emblematic props (Michael Knight's black leather jacket); resorting to similar visual effects (the wipe transitions from *Charlie's Angels*); using the same signature lines ("This tape will self-destruct in five seconds. Good luck, Jim"); recalling the previous iteration in promotional material (the new "angels" adopting the same postures in promotional photos); etc. NBC's marketing material described the new *Knight Rider* as the old series "roaring back to life" and "as a reinvented, updated and super-charged action series", similar to an ABC press release introducing the new *Charlie's Angels* as a "fun, glamorous, action-packed take on the 1970s smash hit series" [14].

The new *Charlie's Angels* shows how relatively unimportant the narrative continuity issue is: the three titular "angels" are new characters, yet their handler is still named Bosley, although instead of the affable, benign and father-like figure of the original show, the new Bosley is a younger, edgier, sexier Latino, who takes a more active role in the weekly operations and who will in due time fall for one of the girls [15]. Because of the recasting of the original character (who is not introduced as the older Bosley's son), we are confronted to a straight remake (there is no narrative continuity). Yet, since only a change of name, or a reference to some filial

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[14] http://www.nbc.com/classic-tv/knight-rider, last access on December 1, 2015.
[15] The pilot plays on the expectations of TV viewers in that regard: when one of the angels turns to look for Bosley, the camera first focuses on a look-alike of the old version of Bosley among the crowd, before revealing the real one in the background, who is dabbling with two young women in a swimming pool. 'This is not your daddy's *Charlie's Angels*", the series seems to be saying.

relationship, could easily have made the show the "next generation of angels", the distinction is again essentially incidental.

Thus disguised remakes will differ very little from the actual, straight remakes, where the familiar characters have not aged and are thus now played by new actors, and where they go through the familiar origin story in the pilot – where in short continuity has been rebooted. Thus a show like *The Fugitive* (2000) is a straight remake, as the new version restages the very same origin story: Doctor Richard Kimble (played by a new actor and who has not aged in the meantime) is again framed for the murder of his wife in the pilot episode and on the run from the authorities. *Hawaii Five-0* (CBS, 2010 -) again sees Steve McGarrett meet and partner with detectives Chin-Ho, Danny and Kono (now a woman) battling crime and terrorism in Hawaii. *Battlestar Galactica* (Syfy, 2003-2010), *Kojak* (USA Network, 2005), *Bionic Woman* (NBC, 2007) and *Ironside* (2013, NBC) also fit the same pattern of having new actors impersonating familiar characters and of retelling in their pilot episodes the origin of their adventures. Yet even here copyright acknowledgement may blur the situation, with *Hawaii Five-0*'s credits for instance stating that the remake is "Based on the series 'Hawaii Five-O' created by Leonard Freeman", thus implying a looser form of adaptation than *Charlie's Angels*.

A "real", fully realized remake would remake every single script of its former incarnation, which no series has attempted thus far. This was the original intent of the 1988 incarnation of *Mission Impossible*, because of an ongoing writers' strike that prevented new stories to be written; in the end, however, only a handful of early episodes were actually remade[16]. Other recent revivals have offered isolated remakes of some of the most famous and emblematic episodes from their originals: the 2002 version of *The Twilight Zone* offered a new version of the now-classic *Eye of the Beholder* (1.39). The new *Charlie's Angels* (2011) remade one of the most titillating episodes of the original series, "Angels in Chains" (1.4 in both versions), with scenes also recreated in the 2000 movie version. More recently, *Psych* (USA Network, 2006-2014) even offered its viewers a remake of one of its own earlier episodes: the 2007 episode entitled "Cloudy with a Chance of ... Murder" (1.12) was thus remade into the 2014 episode "Cloudy With a Chance of ... Improvement" (8.3). The change in title indicates the reasoning behind the remake, although the show

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[16] http://missionimpossible.wikia.com/wiki/Mission:_Impossible_%281988%29, based on Patrick J. White, *The Complete Mission: Impossible Dossier*, Avon Books, 1991, last access on November 12, 2015.

also tried to please fans by playing on the discontinuity to include multiple references, nods and "Easter eggs" to the series' past (the show was nearing its end) and its intradiegetic future (since the episode is still set in its intradiegetic past), while humorously commenting on the ongoing craze for TV remakes, one of its characters ironically interjecting at one point: "I hate remakes!"[17] It thus showed the point and pleasure there could in remaking a TV episode, especially for connoisseurs of the show, although not all viewers appreciated the move[18].

As these counter-examples show, fully fledged remakes do not exist on television. Even transnational remakes of serialized shows will typically only faithfully remake the pilot episode of their original to then progressively explore fresh narrative directions, as the U.S. versions of *The Office* or *Broadchurch* have shown (as well as the French version of the latter, *Malaterra* (France 2, 2015), each revealing a different murderer by the end of their first season, like the remade episode of *Psych*. Because of the ongoing nature of the story being told in these shows, then, these remakes will not be able to simply propose weekly variations on their premise, a fundamental difference with episodic shows which will force them to innovate if they want to still put forward enough novelty and thus get legitimacy.

Whether disguised or straight remakes, then, these various shows all try, like sequels or prequels, to capitalize on and offer their own variation on and reinterpretation of a familiar formula, regardless of narrative continuity, minimal to begin with in an episodic TV show. They function very much like any type of TV show, underpinned by the same familiarity/novelty dialectic as any form of serial storytelling, or indeed any form of adaptation (Hutcheon, 4). Indeed, as will be seen below, TV storytelling traditionally consists, in the case of episodic series, of episodes offering a new variation on their premise, that is to say, in essence, remaking their pilot episodes. What official remakes do is simply foreground this principle and push it to its logical conclusion by broadening the concept to remaking, not just the pilot (the paradigmatic episode of the series) but the premise and "spirit" of the original show, that is to say, any element from the hypotext that is seen by the producers as an emblematic aspect of the previous show. In that regard, they function much like the continuations of shows like *Dallas*, which retains so many elements from the

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[17] http://zap2it.com/2014/01/remake-episode-is-psych-all-stars-a-lot-of-things-to-pick-out-for-super-fans/, last access on November 12, 2015.

[18] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3030772/reviews?ref_=tt_ql_7, last access on December 28, 2015.

previous iteration that many will be tempted to call it a remake, narrative continuity notwithstanding, as witness the numerous press articles calling it a remake.

As Hutcheon writes of adaptations in general, "we seem to desire the repetition as much as the change" (9), which applies equally to television storytelling. Remaking is thus a natural fit in the context of TV storytelling, providing an alternative strategy for the repetition/innovation dialectic to be realized once more, as it itself needs variations: endlessly offering audiences sequels or spin-offs will wear thin, hence the need to draw inspiration from movie practices and offer prequels or remakes/updates instead. This is all the more logical, from a commercial standpoint, as TV series are increasingly being co-opted in cross-media franchises, or brands, which increasingly blur the (narrative, economic) lines between cinema, television and other media. This is why another, more complex kind of remake has seen the light of day: the reboot, whose handling of narrative continuity is far more consequential and which does concentrate on – reinvented – characters.

Remakes vs. Reboots

Some remakes do not indeed merely remake an actual show but a whole cross- or transmedia franchise, or selected parts of them, and thus recreate discrete elements of various hypotexts at the same time – not just a former TV show or even a common original property. Reboots are the clearest manifestation of the current efforts by studios and networks to build and capitalize on franchises and brands as they try to rebrand their current properties and relaunch and reinvent them to realize their full commercial potential. They do so by getting rid of narrative continuity altogether but also by retaining and "reinventing" their characters.

The notion of rebooting an ongoing series stems from comic books, when D.C. Comics rebooted the storylines of its major characters in the 1980s. The 12-volume limited series *Crisis on Infinite Earths* (1985-1986) rebooted the D.C. universe (or "multiverse") by destroying the "space/time continuum" and timeline of the original and bringing the countless storylines of D.C's various superheroes back to square one. This allowed the company to start anew, simply abolishing the multiple contradictions and complexities which had accumulated over the decades and confused readers and writers alike (Proctor, *Anatomy*, 6). The conceit, which indeed

had already been partially used in the past in the cinema[19], was later embraced by Hollywood when a D.C. adaptation, *Batman Begins* (2005), conveniently erased all previous films and retold Batman's origin story. The move was soon aped by *Superman* (whose 2013 iteration, *Man of Steel* – a nod to the 1980s reboot of the character – "cancelled" the 2006 version); *Spiderman* (which in 2012 abolished the continuity established by the previous trilogy, a mere five years after the last opus); or, most spectacularly, 2009's *Star Trek*, which, thanks to a time travel conceit, wreaked havoc in the byzantine *Star Trek* continuity by establishing a parallel reality where the canon was abolished and everything could be remade differently (Proctor, *Déjà-View*).

Hollywood had thus given itself a new form of remake, which would redo not simply one film but an entire film series and cancel their narrative continuity. Most importantly, the new movie series would not in fact remake the various films but would completely reimagine the whole intradiegetic universe, offering new storylines. Going back to square one thus allowed them, like D.C. 20 years earlier, to send their characters in new narrative directions and reinvent, or "reimagine" in the current parlance[20], their biographies, character developments and interactions, etc. This means that a reboot (a continuity reboot) will also typically be a reimagining: the franchise is reset and reinvented according to new parameters. Finally, these reboots will typically reach farther back in time than the previous film series to draw their inspiration from older hypotexts, thus allowing them to rejuvenate their respective franchises by going back to the source or some later milestone: the rebooted comics of the 1980s (*Batman*, *Superman*), the original TV series of the 1960s (*Star Trek*), or the original Ian Fleming novel in the case of James Bond (*Casino Royale*).

The same issue as in films thus arises, with the palimpsestic relationship between numerous hypo- and hypertexts blurring the straight, linear relationship between a film or TV show not adapted from any previous material and its remake, a dyadic pattern which in an age of franchises and cross- or transmedia storytelling is increasingly becoming obsolete. Even the triangular relationship Thomas Leitch examines between the remake, the original film and the common literary property

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[19] *Highlander III* (1994) for example simply acted as though the second film (1991) had never happened, and conveniently forgot some of the plot elements established in the first one. We should then talk about a partial (continuity) reboot. James Bond is different, as the absence of almost any continuity among the films means the movie series simply carried on with different actors.

[20] Tim Burton popularized the use of the term when he characterized his version of *Planet of the Apes* (2001) as a reimagining, to convey the liberties his version was taking compared to the 1968 version.

both are based on is increasingly being superseded by a comic-book-inspired "hyper-diegesis" (the accretion of narratives all related to the same storyworld; Hills, 137), where the hypotexts are far more numerous: the original comic book and its numerous reincarnations throughout the decades (new authors, new versions, new reboots), the various TV series, cartoons and movies produced over the years, the novels and novelizations, etc. It would thus be difficult to deem the new *Flash* (CW, 2014 -) a remake of the previous TV series of the same name (NBC, 1990-1991), but rather the latest take on the character and his universe. It would even be difficult to call it a new adaptation of a common literary property since the series can draw its inspiration from any of the hypotexts produced since the first comic book was published in 1940 (for instance, the character reprised in both TV shows, Barry Allen, was not created until 1956 in the first revival of the *Flash* comic book series[21]). Linearity is thus abolished in the sense that discrete elements from the hyper-narrative, originating in various media and eras, can be brought together in the reboot.

What ultimately links the original texts and their reboots, then, are again the characters. The same main protagonists (and often their most popular antagonists) are present in all these iterations, but played by different actors, which again marks the reboot as belonging to the realm of the remake. The same phenomenon has been recently occurring on television, in the wake again of the contemporary popularity of superheroes and comic book adaptations. And again, D.C Comics is at the center of the wave of rebootings.

None of the recent or current TV shows based on comic books which had already inspired previous TV shows, virtually all of them from D.C. (*The Flash*, *Gotham*, *Supergirl*), can be called remakes of those previous shows. *Gotham* (FOX, 2014 -), which recounts the adventures of a young Jim Gordon in Gotham City and tells the genesis of the various characters populating the Batman universe (Batman himself, then only a child; the future Penguin, Catwoman, Poison Ivy, etc.), has no previous TV counterpart and is technically a prequel. The show shares the same universe as Batman, yet is decidedly not a Batman TV series in the sense that it does not feature Batman as its main protagonist. The same can be said of *Smallville* (WB, 2001-2011), the first TV prequel to recount the youthful adventures of Clark Kent, before he became Superman, thus revising the Superman canon (e.g. a younger Lex Luthor

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[21] http://dc.wikia.com/wiki/Flash, last access on December 23, 2015.

now resides in Smallville). *Supergirl* (ABC, 2015 -) is a variation on *Superman*'s premise (a Krypton refugee adopted by a human family who must grapple with their superpowers and become a superhero) with a woman in lieu of Clark Kent/ Superman. The Superman mythos is thus again remade and reimagined, with the show going one step farther than *Smallville* (it is not just a teenage version of Clark Kent we will follow, but his female cousin), but no specific previous TV show is the object of the remake (nor is any specific film being adapted to the small screen). Yet of each of these shows will be replete with allusions to the remixed canon, providing viewers with the familiar oscillation between novelty and familiarity, functioning mostly on extrapolation (what was Clark Kent's youth like in *Smallville*? What would a female Superman be like? Etc.).

Supergirl brims with allusions to the previous TV shows, relying on familiar forms of "celebrity intertextuality" (Verevis, 20) used by remakes: Dean Cain, who played Clark Kent/Superman in *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman* (ABC, 1993-1997), is now her adoptive father. Many story elements echo those of the previous Superman series: Supergirl arrived as a child and was raised by adoptive parents; she now works as a journalist in a Daily Planet-like newspaper, where she is an inconsequential nobody who uses glasses and clumsiness to magically conceal her secret identity; her intimidating boss, Cat Grant, is the equivalent of Perry White (but is now a woman); she dons a similar blue and red uniform with the same 'S' plastered on its front; she has exactly the same powers as Superman; etc. Even a character from the Superman universe, Jimmy Olsen, is part of the cast, thus possibly establishing some form of shared universe with the ongoing movie series (if the actor is glimpsed in the future *Man of Steel* movies reprising his role) or, possibly, with at least some of the other D.C series now in production (*Arrow*, *The Flash*, soon *Legends of Tomorrow*). The show is thus clearly a variation on, if not a remake of, the classic Superman storyline, in spite of its allusions to *Supergirl*'s cousin somewhere in a hypothetic shared universe ("he", "the other guy", etc.).

Crucially, what *Supergirl* also does is remake discrete narrative elements from previous hypotexts: peripheral characters, plot elements, emblematic scenes. The first scene in the pilot is thus the occasion to see yet another rendering of Kal-El's (Superman) hasty departure from a dying Krypton, a key scene in the Superman mythology already staged dozens of times in the previous filmed incarnations of the franchise, including on television (*Lois & Clark*, *Smallville*) and cinema. In her first

outing as a superhero, Supergirl saves a passenger plane from crashing, an emblematic sequence in most previous Superman incarnations (as Supergirl actually notices herself in one of many verbal allusions to *Superman*). Actor Mehcad Brooks offers yet another remaking of Jimmy Olsen (this time a black man), while Supergirl herself had already been portrayed on television at least once, in a few episodes of *Smallville* (as well as on the big screen). Even Cat Grant, originally a Superman character, can be compared with her previous incarnations, including on TV (*Lois & Clark*, *Smallville*). The same can be said of *Gotham* and *The Flash*, with archetypal scenes of their own: the killing of Bruce Wayne's parents (which fans by now know by heart and will pay extra attention to, comparing the scenes online[22]), or Barry Allen being struck by lightning in his laboratory.

Many autonomous elements (scenes, costumes, lines) can thus be remade within a particular show, establishing a giant and complex network of references, allusions and quotations among dozens of productions, which only the most expert of fans will comprehend fully. All these discrete remakings are made possible by the presence of the same characters, or of characters who clearly echo and mirror their predecessors, even when they are not technically the same ones (Cat Grant harkens back to her previous incarnations as well as Perry White's). Such shows are "based on the characters from DC Comics", as the credits usually indicate, and each of these shows thus reboots the whole or part of their own universes, since they remake, or reimagine, the genesis of some of their key characters, the way they originally meet, how and why they become who we know they are fated to become (*Smallville, Gotham*), etc., thus inevitably contradicting and remaking the canon established by previous incarnations. While not being remakes in the usual sense, therefore, and often technically being prequels, these shows have everything to do with the remaking enterprise.

Finally, a reboot can be understood outside of its comic-book, multiverse origins. Like in cinema, partial reboots had already been employed in the past to opportunely erase some inconvenient story lines. The great paradigmatic example on television is the *Dallas* season 9 finale cliffhanger, where viewers dramatically learn that Bobby was not dead after all and that the whole of season 9 was only a dream – the show was then only rebooted back one season, to accommodate the return of star Patrick

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[22] https://hitfilm.com/forum/discussion/5626/bruce-wayne-s-parents-always-die, last access on November 27, 2015.

Duffy and producer Leonard Katzman – the show was thus "retconned" (for retroactive continuity, yet another term imported from comics)[23]. The rebooted 2012 version also took over where the original series had ended, ignoring the two reunion television movies that had been produced in the meantime[24]. But the term can also be used by the media to designate any kind of significant shakeup in an ongoing show. The midseason cast and concept shakeup of the rebooted *Knight Rider*, for example, with several actors dismissed and the concept of the show tweaked to more closely resemble the original series (chance encounters with strangers in need rather than government-sponsored operations), was thus itself sometimes called a reboot of the rebooted show[25].

While the media's haphazard use of terminology is partly responsible for the terminological confusion, the *Knight Rider* example also demonstrates how the reboot label is understood as designating some kind of major change in the set-up of a show, which can sometimes reinvent and remake itself in the course of its run. In the case of the remake *per se*, it often tends to designate a remade series with a decidedly different tone and style, a show so markedly different from the previous one that the word remake is felt to be insufficient to convey the sheer importance of the changes, hence the need for a stronger term. The subjective nature of deeming a new iteration a reboot often makes the term a difficult one to apply: how far should the remake stray from its original material to deserve the label? Films like *Batman Begins*, *Star Trek* or even 2006's James Bond adventure *Casino Royale* were also called reboots or reimaginings because they relied on such radically altered visual aesthetics, tone and characterization to their material that they seemed to reinvent their respective "brands". What did not change, crucially if they were to be considered remakes, were the characters' names, but the way these protagonists now behaved and interacted was significantly modified. On television, the most striking example of such a radical makeover is *Battlestar Galactica*, which radically revised the older series (1978-1979), giving it, to use the words most often used to characterize those reboots/reimaginings, a "darker, grittier" tone and outlook – dealing with religious fundamentalism and terrorism, suicide bombings, torture, and other issues related to

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[23]http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-leonard-katzman-1362803.html, http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/Retcon, last access on November 27, 2015.
[24] http://ultimatedallas.com/cynthiacidre/, last access on November 27, 2015.
[25] http://www.ign.com/articles/2008/11/11/knight-rider-cast-gets-smaller, last access on November 27, 2015.

the Bush administration's War on Terror, in stark contrast with the original[26]. Yet, it is not so much the original *Galactica* that showrunner Ronald D. Moore strived to reimagine than, more ambitiously, the space opera subgenre itself.

Remakes and genre

Many television remakes' point of reference is not just the series they are based on, but the whole genre to which they belong. This means that remakes which purposefully remake a designated hypotext may actually have more to do with another series, or with several other shows. In that case, the "palimpsestuous" relationship which underpins the remake will be even more complex than simply the hypotexts which bear the same name or belong to the same cross-media universe (Hutcheon, 6).

Many series traditionally lift elements from each other to the point that they can reasonably be seen as unofficial or "disguised remakes" in so far as they remake a previous premise – much like the straight remakes studied above. Such is the case of the many series which have used *The Fugitive* as a template without using the exact same plot or characters (*Renegade*, *Two*, *First Wave*, probably many others), before the actual remake was produced in 2000. In each of these shows, a man wrongfully accused of murdering his wife is on the run from the authorities, while trying to clear his name. In the meantime, he travels across the United States, encountering strangers along the way who he helps getting out of whatever dire situation they find themselves in. Other series, such as *The Pretender* (NBC, 1996-200) or *The Incredible Hulk* (CBS, 1978-1982) use similar premises, with the exceptions of the wrongfully-accused trope. *First Wave* is even trickier as it actually combines *The Fugitive* and *The Invaders*, with the hero framed for the murder of his wife by aliens who he tries to expose on a weekly basis.

Things complicate even further when considering that *First Wave*, like many other 1990s science fiction or fantasy shows (such as an aborted *Invaders* remake) was produced in the wake of *The X-files*' success, by one of that show's writers, Chris Brancato. What these examples show is that a TV series does not need to be an official remake to draw a large part of its inspiration from one or several previous shows and remake their premise with the appropriate variations – another kind of

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[26] http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/DarkerAndEdgier, http://www.thebatt.com/opinion/a-darker-grittier-marvel/article_21f5aeb2-9718-11e5-b616-5baca2a861a6.html, http://tvline.com/2015/09/23/heroes-reborn-zachary-levi-season-1-spoilers-preview/, last access on December 1, 2015.

disguised or unacknowledged remake. But since remakes, as we have seen, always offer their own variation on the remade formula to get more legitimacy and *raison d'être*, the line between the official and officious remake can be very fine indeed. As Steven Gil writes, "remaking [is] a cultural practice that operates at multiple levels. Textual aspects of narrative and premise can be remade, thus showing the intertextuality of television series that is present even in those examples which are labeled as original" (33).

What *The Fugitive* did was invent a pattern that would prove ideal for a weekly episodic series, with each new episode taking place in a new town and centering on a new stranger-in-need. Along with the cop or private detective investigating a new case each week, the spaceship crew visiting a new planet in each episode, the lawyers defending a new case, the doctors treating new patients, etc., the pattern has been able to the present day, with the appropriate variations, to sustain a whole TV genre in itself. Each new show locating itself in one of these genres, or at the crossroads between several of these, thus consists in the remaking of one or several previous series whose tropes have been adopted and assimilated by said genre. In that sense, then, again, all television is remaking.

This will prove even truer of series which rely on such a formulaic premise that each new episode is actually a variation on the same. In essence, each new episode is then a remake of the pilot. *Columbo*'s (already in essence a disguised TV adaptation of Hitchcock's 1955 *Dial M for Murder*) extremely repetitive nature might be the extreme example of this, the only obstacle to calling each and every episode a remake of the pilot being the names of that week's characters and the nature of the murder, while no other weekly variation will be fundamentally different from the creative liberties a remake might grant itself. The more formulaic a show is, therefore, the more it will weekly remake itself and its pilot episode. A show like *24* upped the ante by basically remaking, or reinventing, its original season every year. The current wave of spin-offs also demonstrates this, with each *CSI* or *NCIS* avatar essentially remaking the original, highly-codified series, with a new cast and a new setting (a new city). This is what Ina Rae Hark underlines: "all television series are just that, serial narratives expected optimally to provide sequels every week for one season and several seasons after that" (122), except that it is in fact weekly remakes that many shows offer rather than sequels (if, as seen above, the distinction has any relevance at all). Because television series are first commercial endeavors produced

on an industrial scale, industrialization does indeed require, to sustain huge outputs, endless repetition, standardization and serialization (Kelleter 22).

The remade *Battlestar Galactica* is a good example in the way that it remakes not just one hypotext but a whole network of them. *Galactica* can and should thus also be read as a "disguised remake" of *Star Trek: Voyager*, the show which Ron Moore, *Galactica*'s showrunner, used to work for. Frustrated essentially by the episodic nature of that show, and by the constraints of the *Star Trek* doxa (not too dark, clean, straight, optimistic, formulaic, statically filmed) he used *Galactica*, which essentially has the same storyline as *Voyager* (a ship lost in space looking for the way to earth), as a vehicle to implement the ideas he had developed while working on *Voyager*. For example, the ship should bear the traces of the passing of time, food and fuel should be issues for the crew, there should be a psychological impact stemming from the situation, etc. Hence the idea that he tried to make a more "realistic" kind of space opera, essentially an oxymoron up until then[27].

This also allowed him to revisit the *Star Trek* paradigm as a whole, and even the space opera subgenre itself (which on television is essentially the same thing), giving it more "realism" (docu-fiction-like aesthetics, characters with believable and relatable flaws and psychology) and seriousness[28]. The show even tried to transpose material from contemporary series belonging to other genres (mainly *24* and *The West Wing*), again demonstrating the vast corpus a remake can draw on (while the original *Galactica* drew itself much of its inspiration from *Star Wars*, released one year before). The show also relies on science fiction at large, basing its story on the classical Frankenstein and man vs. machine theme, which have little to do with space operas, and draws its inspiration from cinema as well, mainly *Blade Runner* (use of the word "skinjobs", the ambiguity as to the nature of these so-called robots, the presence of actor Edward James Olmos). Thus *Battlestar* is essentially a reimagining and a remake of at least two shows (the original *Galactica* and *Star Trek: Voyager*), while incorporating elements from other series, books and films.

Does this mean that the original *Battlestar* was only an alibi? Yes and no, as the new show does take pains to acknowledge its predecessor, including by featuring some former cast members. The original Appolo, Richard Hatch, plays an entirely

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[27] http://trekmovie.com/2008/06/21/exclusive-interview-ron-moore-fighting-the-trek-cliches/, last access on December 1, 2015.

[28] Ron Moore expands on his vision for *Galactica* in the series' bible:
http://leethomson.myzen.co.uk/Battlestar_Galactica/Battlestar_Galactica_Series_Bible.pdf, last access on December 1, 2015.

new character, Tom Zarek, one that did not exist in the previous iteration, and uses him as a mirror to the new Appolo in one of the early episodes ("Bastille Day", 1.3). The pilot will also allow viewers to hear the original theme music playing intradiegetically. The show even tries to situate itself in the narrative wake of the previous one, by starting forty years after a previous war against their enemy robots and presenting the old models as being very close to what the robots in the previous show looked like. Yet this is definitely not a continuation of the old show since civilization is once more destroyed in the pilot and the same characters have once more to flee towards a mythical earth. The "reimagined" *Galactica* thus keeps emphasizing in its intradiegetic narrative the idea of cyclical, mythical repetition, with everything that has happened doomed to happen again. The goal of the characters is to break free of the meaningless repetition of history, with the show ending on a question mark: will humanity be able to break free? The original conceit of starting the series decades after a previous war thus foregrounds the remade nature of the new show, promising metadiegetically to break free from the mold of the previous series.

The original *Galactica* is therefore only one coordinate (admittedly an important one) in the constellation of previous shows and films the new show is amalgamating. The remake is not alone in doing so; every TV series does the same, to varying degrees, especially when they belong to such codified genres as science fiction or subgenres such as the space opera, (sub)genres being giant networks of diachronic and synchronic connections between texts which also function through the same repetitive process as TV series – each new text is a variation on a given genre (Altman, 25). Many shows have likewise traditionally recycled storylines from films belonging to similar genres to base some of their episodes on: seemingly countless science-fiction/fantasy shows have thus used the never-ending day conceit at the center of *Groundhog Day* (Harold Ramis, 1993) for at least one of their episodes[29]. Remakes or reinterpretations thus systematically transcend the strict limit often imposed on them to adapt material from many texts, media or genres. Remakes simply make some intertextual connections more obvious and clarify the legal status of a production, but they also obfuscate other connections by pointing ostentatiously to one show in particular, at the expense of the others present in the palimpsestic

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[29] *Lois and Clark*, *The X-files*, *Xena: Warrior Princess*, *Early Edition*, *First Wave*, *Stargate SG-1*, *Buffy*, *Angel*, *Charmed*, *Farscape*, *Fringe*...

identity of each and every show. Logically, even remakes should thus be able to bring their own contributions to the ever-evolving genres to which they belong and serve as inspiration for future series, as *Stargate Universe* (Syfy, 2009-2011) has arguably done by drawing some of its inspiration from *Galactica*, despite its official status as a spinoff of the *Stargate* franchise. By reimagining several shows and a whole subgenre, then, *Galactica* provided the sort of novelty that only a reboot or reimagining may be capable of, as opposed to a more traditional remake.

The repetition/innovation dialectic which lies at the heart of the remaking enterprise thus underpins TV series themselves, making the idea of TV remakes logical and inevitable. Yet the commercial nature of the phenomenon makes it look deeply suspicious, while obscuring the similar nature of much television fare. The advent of cross- or transmedia brands also means that remakes have attained a new degree of complexity, where finer elements (characters, scenes, various emblematic elements of their respective brands) can be sampled and remixed rather than simply remade, to use another useful analogy developed by Eduardo Navas[30]. Reimagined, reinterpreted or remixed, these elements offer infinite new potential to producers, writers and showrunners. Reboots or reimaginings thus destabilize the traditional understanding of a finite, quantifiable text, coming closer to reveal the true nature of texts as a "space in many dimensions", a "tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture": "the writer can only imitate a gesture forever anterior, never original; his only power is to combine the different kinds of writing, to oppose some by others […]", as Roland Barthes wrote[31]. This is not to deny the validity of judging remakes or reboots from the perspective of the novelty or relevance their reinterpretation brings to the "original" material; but by more clearly escaping the traditional dyadic relationship they have long been ascribed, the modern forms of remakes, with their reliance on seriality, reinterpretation, reinvention and sampling, foreground the mechanics of contemporary storytelling and offer, ironically enough, fresh ways forward for television to reinvent itself.

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[30] http://remixtheory.net/, last access on December 14, 2015. See also bibliography.
[31] http://www.tbook.constantvzw.org/wp-content/death_authorbarthes.pdf, last access on December 15, 2015.

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