

# Media of Serial Narrative

*Edited by Frank Kelleter*



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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Kelleter, Frank, 1965– editor.

Title: Media of serial narrative / edited by Frank Kelleter.

Other titles: Theory and interpretation of narrative series.

Description: Columbus : The Ohio State University Press, [2017] | Series: Theory and interpretation of narrative | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016056111 | ISBN 9780814213353 (cloth ; alk. paper) | ISBN 0814213359 (cloth ; alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Serialized fiction—History and criticism. | Comic books, strips, etc.—History and criticism. | Film serials—History and criticism. | Television series—History and criticism. | Digital media. | Digital storytelling. | Popular culture.

Classification: LCC PN3448.S48 M43 2017 | DDC 809.3—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016056111>

Cover design by Lisa Force

Text design by Juliet Williams

Type set in Minion and Avenir

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## Hollywood Remaking as Second-Order Serialization

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### INTRODUCTION: SERIALITY AND FILM REMAKING

If one of the most basic challenges of serial storytelling consists in telling a familiar story as a new story, to what extent can we think of film remakes as examples of popular seriality? After all, remakes do not pretend to be episodes of a series; they do not claim to continue an ongoing story; they do not try to expand a given storyworld. Or do they? As a number of film scholars have pointed out, the distinction between a genuine film remake and a sequel, a prequel, or any other type of filmic iteration is more uncertain than these straightforward terms would seem to suggest (e.g., Verevis 1997, 2006). What counts as a “remake” and what counts as a “sequel” changes throughout the medium’s history. In fact, such fluctuations in the designation of iterative formats are dependent on what is going on in the serial practices of other popular media at a given time, not just cinema alone.

Still, all of these formats—film remakes, sequels, prequels, and so on—are primarily concerned with translating repetition into variation (Eco 1990). This observation involves more than simply a matter of narrative technique. Iterative modes of cinematic storytelling are propelled by the same project that animates the capitalist production of culture at large: they aim at an endless innovation of reproduction (Kelleter 2014b). This helps explain why research

on remakes often feels that it has to touch on sequels or film series as well (Horton/McDougal 1998b, Forrest 2008, Loock/Verevis 2012, and Klein/Palmer 2016). In this chapter, we argue that remakes, sequels, prequels, and so forth, are best understood as historical varieties of a serial practice that is distinct to Hollywood's commercial film culture (though not exclusive to it).<sup>1</sup> We call this media-specific practice cinematic *remaking*; our focus is on the self-reflexive historicity of its formats in Hollywood cinema.

Since the early days of cinema, films have recycled familiar stories, including other films. Commonly, this recourse to tried and tested story repertoires—the use of prefabricated material—is economically motivated. As a result, remakings have long been scorned by film critics who, until recently, tended to discuss them as unimaginative financial schemes.<sup>2</sup> But if the study of popular seriality shows anything, it is that the commercial foundation of popular series is inextricably interwoven with their aesthetic activities. The challenge of innovative reproduction is both commercial and creative; one aspect cannot be separated from the other. Serial stories are not commodities “on the one hand” and sites of aesthetic experience “on the other,” but they do what they do—in terms of both production and reception—as creative commodities.

Thus, if we want to move beyond a “hermeneutics of suspicion” (Felski 2011) without falling back on art-philosophical disclosures of transcendence, it is useful to view the commercial nature of popular storytelling cultures not as an underlying conspiracy that should be either unveiled (in the service of critique) or outsourced to other disciplines (in the service of aesthetic appreciation), but as their particular mode of existence which comes with specific affordances, constraints, and self-descriptions.<sup>3</sup> This means complicating

1. In the main, this chapter presents an outline of the larger project “Retrospective Serialization: Remaking as a Method of Cinematic Self-Historicizing,” conducted within the Popular Seriality Research Unit at Freie Universität Berlin. See Kelleter 2012b, 2015a; Loock/Verevis 2012; and Loock 2012, 2014a/b, 2015, 2016a/b.

2. On this unfavorable discourse, see Horton/McDougal 1998b, Mazdon 2000, Forrest/Koos 2002, Verevis 2006, Oltmann 2008, Loock/Verevis 2012, and Loock 2015. As a contemporary example, see the subtitle *Why Don't They Do It Like They Used To* for an academic study on horror film remakes (Roche 2014).

3. On the commercial dimension of popular seriality, compare Hagedorn 1988, 1995; Kelleter 2012a; and this volume's first chapter. As an example of a more “symptomatic” interpretive model centered on the industrial aspect of literary adaptations, see Murray 2011. We borrow the term *mode of existence*, with some hesitation, from Latour 2013. What we mean is a mode of doing things that gains self-knowledge and reproductive motivation through self-descriptions (in the systems-theoretical sense of the term; see Luhmann 1999)—in other words, a mode of improbable practical reproduction. However, we also believe that the ontological glamour of Latour's term risks defeating ANT's nonphilosophical promise. Perhaps this explains, *ex negativo*, the enthusiasm with which it has been greeted in Latour's Anglo-American philosophical reception (a scholastic realm that has yet to absorb Luhmann).

high-cultural philosophies of cinematic art and certain culturalist approaches that depict popular reception as essentially a “scene” of reading/viewing in which a single recipient is confronted with a distinct work that reaches him or her from some outside realm of authority: culture as an eventlike encounter. This scenario of Subject versus Object, “describing the ‘self’ as if it were an island surrounded by sharks” (Latour 2013: 190)—or, alternatively, as if it were surrounded by inspirational beings and transcendent mediators—has prompted many a narrative theory to cast popular reception as a confrontation between textual action and personal reaction, objective offer and subjective contribution, and sometimes even interpellation and resistance. Almost all critical models derived from nineteenth-century romantic philosophy, including a number of Marxist, phenomenological and vitalist approaches, are organized by some variation of this constellation. Not coincidentally, it is also a favorite scenario of Western popular storytelling itself.

It is noteworthy in this context that hostile attitudes to film remakes or sequels are, almost as a rule, strongly invested in the idea of the feature film as a self-contained work of art that has transcended its commodity status. From this perspective, with all its emphasis on media closure and authorial unity (habitually condensed in the figure of the cinematic auteur), remakes and sequels are likely to appear as profit-oriented copies of some valuable original. This is an intriguing argument, not only because it has been made so often—at least until recently—but also because the very distinction between original and copy, on which this argument rests, tends to erase the commercial mode of existence of the supposed source text. As a matter of fact, in virtually all cases of cinematic remaking the so-called original was itself designed as a commodity, meaning that its aesthetic accomplishments, including its susceptibility to be recognized or rebranded as a work of unique vision, were rooted in (rather than opposed to) the culture of commercial filmmaking. Even more important, many “originals” turn out, on closer inspection, to have been remakes themselves. MGM's 1939 version of *The Wizard of Oz*, for instance, was not only an adaptation of a piece of literature (which kicked off a literary series in turn) but also a remake of previous film and musical versions.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the rhetoric of the cinematic artwork has often served to distract from the way in which “originals” and “classics” are actually produced—how they come into “being”—in popular cinema, namely, through practices of repetition and variation that are structurally akin to the more explicitly serialized aesthetics of other popular media.

4. For a more detailed discussion of the Oz narratives, see Kelleter 2012b and chapter 12 in this volume.

To discuss these serialities of Hollywood cinema, we will, in the following, briefly clarify three frameworks of analysis (the feature film's media-specificity, remaking as a practice, and the concept of "second-order observation") before focusing on two exemplary phenomena in greater detail (remaking in the DVD era; and the *Planet of the Apes* franchise). In this manner, the present chapter proceeds from the general and theoretical to the specific and analytical. Its overall argument concerns the historical self-reflexivity of cinematic remaking, understood as a media-specific practice of serial self-observation.

## SERIALITY AND THE HOLLYWOOD FEATURE FILM

The Hollywood feature film has developed media-distinct varieties of popular seriality that differ from the serial processes of dime novels, radio soaps, television series, or (nonfeature) film serials of the silent and early sound era.<sup>5</sup> As always, the evolutionary trajectory of serial storytelling in a particular medium is dependent on the technological possibilities and limitations of that medium, as well as on the medium's strategies of positioning itself toward other media of serial storytelling, in terms of both commercial competition and cultural legitimacy (Denson 2011 and Denson/Mayer 2012). It is telling in this regard that the first defining forms of popular seriality were developed in media characterized by relatively fast rhythms of production and reception, such as newspapers and radio. These "quick" media, with their short-cycled but regular consumption frequencies, encourage the explicit serialization of narrative material, typically in the form of recurring episodes or ongoing installments. They also invite continuations adjusted to the quotidian routines of their audiences.<sup>6</sup> The greater the time pressures of commercial production (e.g., a new comic strip every day), the more we can expect efficient standardizations to emerge, such as an industrial division of labor, program-based types of reception, or episodic structures (even in the case of ongoing narratives).

5. Of course, film serials were a defining element of silent cinema. After the consolidation of the Hollywood studio system and with the advent of sound, they survived as deliberately short formats with fast-paced patterns of production and reception, mostly presented as highly standardized chapter plays in conjunction with, but clearly distinguished from, stand-alone feature films that were billed as the main event of a cinema show (Lahue 1964, 1968; Stedman 1971; and Cline 1984). The separation of film serials and feature films into distinct cinematic formats in the late 1910s and throughout the 1920s illustrates the media-ecological basis of popular culture at large. On the cross-fertilization of film serials and feature films, see Canjels 2011 and Henderson 2014. On the specific seriality of nonfeature film serials, see Higgins 2016 and chapter 5 in the present volume. On serialized feature films, see below.

6. On this point, see chapter 13 below.

Popular seriality thrives on speed—hence its early affinity to daily or weekly media. Even when they produce epic effects, as "vast" narratives (Harrigan/Wardrip-Fruin 2009), commercial series remain recognizable as "fast" and shifting narratives, enacting a regime of storytelling predicated on the quick succession of smaller interacting elements for the purpose of durable audience reengagement (Kelleter 2015b). By contrast, the Hollywood studio system, with its elaborate structures of production, its oligopolistic market, and its various efforts to establish the medium's cultural legitimacy against its vaudeville roots, has advanced a storytelling culture that is not naturally favorable to the creation of series and serials. American feature films of the studio era had to employ strategies of repetitive variation that were slower, more laborious, less rhythmical, and altogether more mediate—though no less organized—than the ones we find in the seriality practices of newspapers, radio, or (later) television. And while there are examples of feature film series in the studio era—Andy Hardy, Charlie Chan, Blondie, Pa and Ma Kettle, and so on—these productions commonly relied on serialization strategies developed in other media (especially radio and comics) and were often marketed as contributions to trans-media franchises. Overall, however, innovative reproduction in Hollywood feature films did not and does not *typically* culminate in *explicitly* serialized stories. Instead, innovative reproduction is frequently pursued through a more implicit practice of serialization: the practice of cinematic remaking, in which a source text that was initially identified as a stand-alone story is reactivated, repeated, changed, and indeed continued in the act of remaking.

## REMAKING CONSIDERED AS A PRACTICE RATHER THAN A FORM

To study remaking as a cinematic practice (Dusi 2011) rather than as a distinct cinematic form that can be defined in a typology of structural features means to investigate how different designations of filmic iteration came into existence in the first place and how they served to make and unmake such recognizable industry "formats" as the film remake, the sequel, the prequel, the trilogy, the reboot, and so forth. There have been numerous attempts to classify such iterative modes typologically, with each new undertaking refueling the debates about the formal properties of distinct types (e.g., Leitch 1990, Eberwein 1998, and Junklewitz/Weber 2011). Definitions that emerge from such endeavors provide useful signposts, but their competition is often characterized by a normative insistence that we use the right words, as if cinematic formats existed as ideal forms that are then articulated more or less precisely by this or

that film. This is obviously not the case—not only because formal boundaries are always fluid but because cinematic remaking is a reflexive, multi-agential, and temporally shifting process, ultimately competition-based and spanning the fields of production and reception. Consequently, not only are these formats not ideal, but they do not even exist (for long) in historically canonized shapes. What is understood and active as a “remake” in 1965 is different from what is understood and active as a “remake” in 2017.

We therefore propose to examine cinematic remaking as an evolving cinematic *formatting practice*—that is, a practice that generates media-specific modes of variation and organizes them in historically variable categories, such as, currently, the “remake” (in the more limited sense of a feature film that repeats the narrative of another feature film), the “sequel” (which continues the story of one or more protagonists), the “spin-off” (which diversifies an existing narrative universe without having to focus on an established character constellation), the “revision” (which tells a familiar story from a markedly new perspective), the “spoof” (which does so in a parodist or satirical mode), the “re-imagining” (a revision usually attributed to a director’s artistic vision), the “prequel” (which constructs a backstory for popular character constellations or storyworlds), the “franchise” (which, as an explicitly legal entity, engages in transmedia storytelling and is not necessarily structured in continuing story arcs but can also renew itself episodically or at the level of storyworld), and—most recently—the “reboot” (which seeks to remake an entire series or franchise rather than a single narrative, usually with revisionary ambitions). And then, of course, there are the more expansive remaking practices of “genres” and “cycles.” The catalogue of these terms is not systematic because it cannot be systematic. The formats named and differentiated in this fashion exist as the result of what they are doing, which is another way of saying that we are dealing with auto-adaptive, evolutionary structures.

The key question, then, is: how does it become possible—perhaps even necessary—at a particular moment in the history of popular seriality to distinguish between a variation that is called a *remake* and a variation that is called a *reboot*? Phrasing the problem like this has interesting methodological consequences. Perhaps most importantly, any investigation of remaking as a formatting practice, while not being required to participate in typological controversies, needs to study them as part of the research field itself. If that is done, scholastic distinctions and debates become visible as lively forces within a larger network of actors that sustains this particular storytelling culture.<sup>7</sup>

7. For a more detailed exposition and illustration of this research program, using the example of HBO’s *The Wire*, see Kelleter 2014a.

Consequently, we suggest analyzing how public discourses, media scholarship, industry operations, audience engagements, packaging practices, and the aesthetic activities of “remade” films themselves all enact cinematic seriality. Which categories, evaluations, procedures, and so on, of filmic iteration are invented, identified, or performed by whom (or what) at which point? What effects are coming to pass?

## RETROSPECTIVE SERIALIZATION, CINEMATIC SELF-HISTORICIZATION, AND SECOND-ORDER OBSERVATION

Periodical series tend to produce highly committed audiences (Hills 2002), such as the “forensic fandoms” identified by Jason Mittell (2006, 2015) in the context of digital-age television (where formerly academic modes of interpretation migrate in large numbers to the realm of consumer practices). Compared with these more typical series, cinematic remaking formats operate at a more abstract level of imagined collectivization (to invoke Benedict Anderson).<sup>8</sup> A change has set in only recently, with remaking formats beginning to borrow serial structures from television and other media rather than vice versa (Elsaesser 1998 and Loock 2016a). For the longest time, however, cinematic audience engagement differed in important ways from the reception cultures of more explicitly serialized media. As so often is the case, *Star Wars*—with its extremely dedicated and active fandom—can be named as an exception. But then, the first *Star Wars* films were almost unique in using sequels in an openly prospective manner and across media. The success of this strategy certainly paved the way for developments in the convergence era, where we find cinematic remaking formats fully attuned to the logic of the digital (and arguably becoming more televisual in the process).

For the most part of their history, however, cinematic remaking formats have enacted less direct types of serial communality. Unlike daily cartoons or telenovelas, feature film iterations cannot structure rhythms of everyday life. Instead, they often structure seasonal, generational, and media-historical sequences. Summer blockbusters, for example, usually exhibit features of generic remaking. Or, on a larger temporal scale, while there may be no ongoing fandom for *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, a media generation can recognize itself as a media generation in the way its version of *Invasion of the*

8. On the relationship between popular seriality and what Anderson calls “imagined community” (1991), see Chatterjee 1999; Denson/Mayer 2012; Kelleter 2012a, 2014b; Mayer 2015; and chapters 1 and 14 in this volume.

*Body Snatchers* varies from those that precede it. In a similar fashion, a cinematic period can define itself against a previous one in the way it produces *King Kong*. It should be noted, for example, that remakes and sequels are frequently produced *because* of the advent of new technologies, such as sound, color, or 3-D. More succinctly put, remakes, sequels, and similar formats can act as markers of shifting media affordances. Following Harold Innis (1950), one can perhaps say that cinematic remaking, as a communication practice, is more “time-biased” than it is “space-biased”: while radio soaps or television series bind together disparate localities through synchronized procedures, film remakes and sequels provide temporal continuity markers, sometimes for entire cultures that can recognize themselves in the films they keep remaking. Thus, cinematic seriality encourages communities of knowledge and belonging that tend to be more far-ranging than the concentrated fan cultures of fast-paced television series. Cinephile culture, for instance, the seedbed of various institutions of professional attachment and expertise (such as film studies departments or the New Hollywood), can indeed be thought of as a popular fan culture—a fan culture, however, whose object is not this or that particular narrative or storyworld but the medium of cinema itself. Calling this a “culture” implies that its reproduction takes place beyond any idealized “scenography of Subject and Object” (Latour 2013: 201) because it always co-involves audiences, producers, conferences, theories, cinema journals, and numerous other agents of continuation.

Against this backdrop, one serial operation in particular stands out as a signature practice of iterative filmmaking: retrospective serialization. It has often been remarked that remakes and sequels tend to canonize their source texts (Corrigan 2002, Quaresima 2002, Oltmann 2008, and Loock 2012). Frequently, it is only after a remake has been produced and after its success or failure has reactivated interest in the material that the initial film version becomes established as a “classic” or “original.” A similar dynamic is active at the level of formatting (though not always with canonizing effects, as we shall see in the next section) when a stand-alone film is reinterpreted *by* its sequel as the launching pad *for* a sequel. Sometimes even the title of the first film is changed to place it in serial succession. As we know, there was no film called *Episode IV: A New Hope* in 1977. Similarly, many a trilogy recognizes and addresses itself as a trilogy only after a third film has come out (and even then it will typically provide connecting options for further extensions). This kind of retrospective serialization can be understood as a special case of the dynamics of recursive progression that defines popular seriality at large.<sup>9</sup>

9. See chapter 1 in this volume; for *Episode IV*, see footnote 14 there.

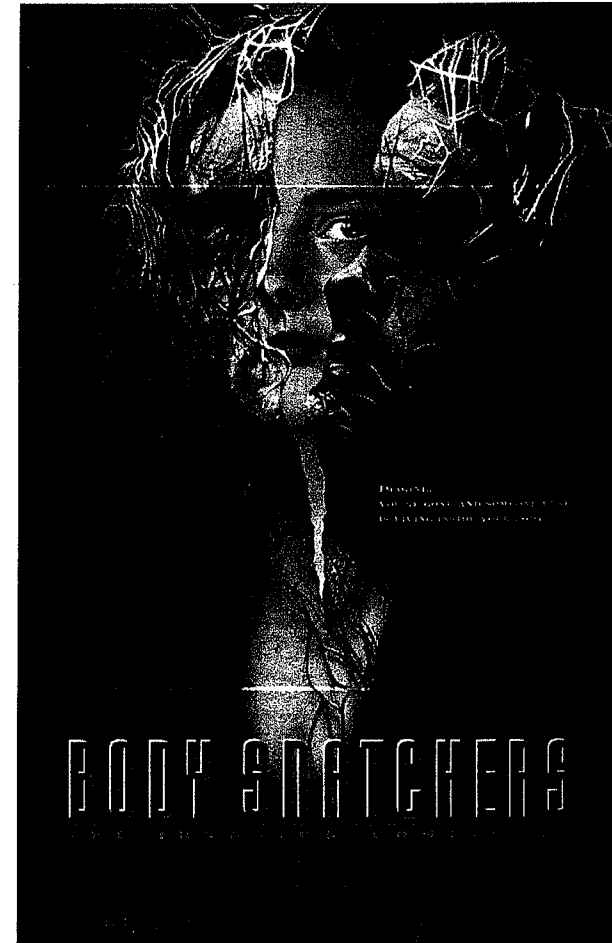


FIGURE 7.1. *Body Snatchers* poster (Warner Bros., 1993) featuring the tagline “The Invasion Continues.”

Thus, any remake will almost automatically reflect on the praxeological conditions under which it reactivates old material, even when it adds nothing new to an already familiar plot. This is why all remakes contain progressive elements, even (and especially) in their acts of retrospection. They invariably explore possibilities of variation and continuation. Consider the poster of Abel Ferrara’s 1993 *Body Snatchers*, the third remake of Don Siegel’s 1956 *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (figure 7.1).<sup>10</sup> “The Invasion Continues,” the poster con-

10. For a more detailed discussion of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, see Loock 2012.

fidently announces, even though in terms of its plot, this film is not a sequel. The obvious question is: At which level of popular storytelling is something being continued here? Evidently, recursive progression in this case takes place in a sphere of storytelling at one remove from (though enacted through) the film's plot: initially unconnected versions of one and the same narrative are retrospectively serialized at a higher level of cinematic self-observation. In this manner, even the most faithful repetition, such as Gus Van Sant's *Psycho*, inevitably adds something to the story reproduced (Kelleter 2015a). Moreover, new versions usually herald these additions as innovations, that is, as progressive elements in the history of the medium itself. In other words, remaking operates as a method of *cinematic self-historicization*: cinema writes its own history with remakes, sequels, or prequels—and it does so within the evolving network of expectations, recognitions, allusions, variations, and reinterpretations that makes these iterations possible and keeps them in circulation.<sup>11</sup> Tracing this network and its acts of self-historicization—and doing so within a media-ecological framework (i.e., within the framework of cinema's changing relationship to other media of serial narrative)—means watching remade films with an eye toward the technological, institutional, and personal actors and actions that make them watchable in the first place. Two exemplary cases shall illustrate this point in the following analytical sections, which will focus on specific historical and praxeological moments within the larger theoretical argument sketched out so far: the material (storage) conditions of remaking in the DVD era and iterations of *Planet of the Apes* as examples of pop-generational self-awareness.

### REMAKING IN THE DVD ERA: STORAGE, INTERTEXTUALITY, AND SERIAL CONSUMPTION

Until the rise of stay-at-home television entertainment in the 1950s which would eventually supply audiences with regular reruns of old Hollywood movies, the opportunity to rewatch a film depended entirely on prolonged first runs and re-releases.<sup>12</sup> “Repeat viewing was [. . .] a practice not favored by a distribution system almost fully geared to novelty,” notes Vinzenz Hediger:

11. Our concept of self-historicization builds on various theories of (popular) media's temporal reflexivity, for example, Haverkamp/Lachmann 1993, Engell 2010, and Denson/Mayer 2012. Wloszczynska also talks about “the ‘thinking remake’” (2012).

12. Hediger points out that runs of up to sixty-two weeks (e.g., for Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*, 1923) were not uncommon during the silent era, when film screenings

Up until the early 1940s, film production ran from 500 to 800 films annually, and films were distributed through a system of runs, zones and clearances that favored rapid turnovers. Accordingly, films hardly ever stayed on the bill for more than one week or even a few days. An average film took two years to descend the ladder of the distribution system, from urban first run in prestigious palaces to lower-run and rural theaters. After their two-year distribution period most films were withdrawn and disappeared into the vaults of the studio. (2004: 26)

During the early years of what is commonly called the Golden Age of Hollywood, films were essentially treated as ephemeral commodities—quickly outdated and forgotten, unless they were remade. In 1938, Hollywood's leading fan magazine, *Photoplay*, explained to its readers that a remake was, in fact, the best chance a film narrative had for an afterlife: “In addition to the ‘flash in the pan’ film, which is seen by many audiences and then consigned to oblivion,” *Photoplay* remarked, “there are those perennial classics that live forever in the form of ‘remakes’—new versions of old films that are often remade two or three times” (“Match Them” 42). This statement provides an insight into how the memory of motion pictures was kept alive—predominantly via the survival of narratives—before television reruns and the emergence of new information-storage technologies like VHS and DVD. It also suggests that remaking helped to construct and to communicate a cinematic past—understood as an imagined story archive—through processes of repetition and variation (Loock 2016b).

Today, the mnemonic and archival functions of remaking have changed dramatically. Instead of *replacing* earlier film narratives with updated versions, remakes now interrelate with their precursors in more explicitly material and entangled ways. Television reruns have extended the life span of old Hollywood movies and transformed them into new “classics” that coexist alongside the latest release. Since the 1980s, with the swift rise of VHS and, later, DVD, private viewers can become collectors and cultural archaeologists of the cinematic past; individualized possibilities to repeatedly view (and personally engage with) films have in turn influenced Hollywood's current remaking practices.

As Constantine Verevis observes, “A remake and its original [circulating] in the same video marketplace [. . .] radically [extend] the kind of film literacy—the ability to recognize and cross-reference multiple versions of the same property—that was inaugurated by the age of television” (2006: 18). Remakes in the DVD era generally build on this new film literacy and seek

were still accompanied by “lavish stage shows” (2004: 27). In the sound era, first-run engagements were reduced to only a few weeks.



to address a double audience consisting of those who are familiar with an earlier version and those who are not. As Leonardo Quaresima puts it, the film remake ideally “assumes that its viewer is an intertextual viewer [who finds pleasure] in juxtaposing and comparing” (2002: 80). As such, it offers an array of references for viewers in the know, for example, the repetition of famous lines, in-jokes, and cameo appearances from actors who starred in an earlier film (Leitch 1990 and Lock 2012). Tim Burton’s 2001 *Planet of the Apes*, for example, contains several intertextual moments that are designed to mirror the 1968 original. Astronaut George Taylor’s iconic lines “Get your stinkin’ paws off me, you damn dirty ape!” and “Damn you, damn you, damn you all to hell!” are slightly altered and spoken by the apes this time (“Get your stinkin’ hands off me, you damn dirty human!”; “Damn them, damn them, damn them all to hell!”), whereas Charlton Heston, who played Taylor in the original, returns as an ape himself. Coproducer Ralph Winter said about Heston’s uncredited role: “It’s like an Easter egg for aficionados to find out who is he playing and how that resonates in the story. [. . .] I think the fans will appreciate it” (quoted in Landau 2001: 68).

In the same context, DVD marketing strategies invite the serial consumption of films in the form of “Original & Remake” or “Double Take” special editions, which sell two films in the same production package, and “Complete Collections,” which include all sequels to date and often come in elaborately designed boxes. By the early 1990s, studios had already noticed that the theatrical success of remakes and sequels stirred VHS sales and rentals of the original films, and they reacted by repackaging older titles to coincide with the release of a new remake or sequel (Natale 1991). Such “piggybacking” strategies soon became more sophisticated and were no longer restricted to cinema. In his analysis of TV-to-DVD publishing and the rise of the season box set, Derek Kompare (2006) suggests that the introduction of DVD technology produced new home video practices. Improved audiovisual quality and larger storage capacity (allowing for the inclusion of numerous extra features) “raised the cultural status of video releases” and favored a shift in domestic media consumption from rental to acquisition (Kompare 2006: 346). Not surprisingly, a new focus on video sales also “prompted [. . .] a greater emphasis on packaging and overall design, enhancing the perceived value of an object meant for permanent ownership and display rather than temporary use” (348).<sup>13</sup> The developments outlined by Kompare for television series (before

13. Gray (2010) and Mittell (2010) have expanded on Kompare’s analysis, stressing that DVD publishing, though a transitional phenomenon, has transformed television series from events to be experienced into more authoritative, sometimes obliquely oeuvre-like cultural objects.

the rise of online streaming) can also be traced, with some qualifications, in the production of cinematic “Original & Remake” editions and “Complete Collections.” Assembling a film and its remake or sequel in one and the same production package to be consumed alongside each other bestows previously maligned remaking formats with a new temporal specificity and, in connection with this, a new kind of pop-cultural (at times campy) value.

Films such as *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951/2008), *Planet of the Apes* (1968/2001), *The Fly* (1958/1986), *The Omen* (1976/2006), *Amityville Horror* (1979/2005), *The Flight of the Phoenix* (1965/2004), *Anna and the King* (1946/1999), *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968/1999), and *Cape Fear* (1962/1991) have been released in this fashion on DVD. All of these packages, which are often produced for an international (non-U.S.) market, share certain design patterns. First, the words “Original & Remake” are featured prominently on the front or in such sentences as “The classic original and smash hit remake.” Second, the title is sometimes quoted twice and sometimes shared by both films, either establishing the artistic autonomy of the remake or stressing its indebtedness to the original. Third, and most strikingly, all DVD covers consist of halves representing an image of the original on the left side and of the remake on the right; central characters are either shown back-to-back (looking in opposite directions), positioned to face each other, or spliced together to form one image, as if existing in the same storyworld. The new film’s most prominent innovation is generally highlighted by this juxtaposition.

The DVD cover for a German release of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, for example, features a picture of the humanoid robot Gort composed of different halves joined together to form a whole. The left half is taken from the 1951 version, in which Gort was made of smooth, shiny metal—an armor of seamless perfection. The right half depicts the robot as he appears in the 2008 remake: CGI-redesigned and composed of a dark, shimmering material that is supposed to be a vast swarm of “nano bugs.” This arrangement draws attention to the remake’s state-of-the-art special effects, while suggesting that the “Original & Remake” should be watched in sequential order to fully experience the development of this cinematic narrative within the technological trajectory of sci-fi storytelling.

Similar marketing strategies are applied to sequels when they are sold as “Complete Collections” after the release of a (presumably) final installment. Box sets of *Star Wars*, *Back to the Future*, and *The Godfather* are obvious examples, because they retrospectively create and promote trilogies (i.e., almost classical, self-contained structures) or—in the case of *The Godfather*—a comprehensive family “saga” that has finally reached its conclusion. Yet (non-U.S.) viewers can also watch the *Jaws* *Quadrilogy*, including “Jaws 1–3”

and the fourth sequel, *Jaws: The Revenge*; or the *Psycho Collection*, containing “Psycho I–IV.” In each case, a once discrete, critically acclaimed, and by now classic film—Steven Spielberg’s 1975 blockbuster *Jaws* and Alfred Hitchcock’s 1960 *Psycho*—is converted into the first part of a series that is advertised with and by the box set. Thus, rather than canonizing an (already canonical) source text, these cinematic iterations highlight its status as an elastic piece of popular storytelling. Apparently, many viewers welcome such collections as series. Comments in Amazon’s review section reveal that numerous customers who bought the *Psycho Collection* had already watched Alfred Hitchcock’s film and were interested in the sequels or had seen Gus Van Sant’s 1998 remake (not usually considered part of “the canon”). Some even wondered why the remake and the new A&E television series *Bates Motel* (since 2013) were not part of the set, feeling that these latest additions to the “film series” should have been included for the sake of completeness (Robin 2006 and Schlüter 2014). Seriality apparently is understood by these digital-age viewers more in terms of an expansive storyworld than in terms of linear narrative progression.<sup>14</sup>

Other DVD editions have responded to this desire and are specifically designed for fan cultures obsessed with storing and archiving. These collections contain all of the films to date—regardless of whether they are sequels, remakes, or sequels of remakes—in one single box. Thus, the Dutch *The Fly Chamber Collection* includes Kurt Neumann’s 1958 horror classic *The Fly* and its two sequels, *Return of the Fly* (1959, Edward Bernds) and *Curse of the Fly* (1965, Don Sharp), as well as David Cronenberg’s 1986 remake and its sequel *The Fly II* (1989, Chris Walas). The ostentatious box, which is protected by a transparent plastic package with small flies printed on it, comes in the shape of a miniature version of the “telepod” featured in Cronenberg’s film. The door of this telepod shows a lenticular flicker picture of Seth Brundle (Jeff Goldblum) morphing into the fly creature. Clearly, this DVD box is meant to be more “than [a] container for the discs”; rather, it resembles a “collectable media object” that “demands to be displayed, dismantled, used, and discussed” (Mittell 2010).<sup>15</sup>

The effect of gathering such dissimilar versions of the same popular material and making them watchable as interdependent parts within a joint storytelling universe—a universe no longer defined (merely) by the continuation

14. On the question of remake and (serial) storyworld in the case of *Psycho*—and Gus Van Sant’s version in particular—see Kelleter 2015a. On serial storytelling from Hitchcock’s film to *Bates Motel*, see Loock 2014b.

15. Mittell’s article addresses box sets of television series, which, though often indebted to the same gimmicky aesthetic that has characterized secondary-distribution media at least since VHS, tend to be less overt than film DVDs in their pop-cultural self-performance.

of plotlines or even a shared fictional storyworld—points toward what Shane Denson has called “a non-linear form of ‘conrescent’ (compounding or cumulative) seriality” (2011: 532, with a nod to Whitehead and, more specifically, to Newcomb’s 1985 interpretation of some episodic TV series as “cumulative narratives”). Interestingly, however, the design of *The Fly* box devotes its chief attention to the most highly acclaimed movie, establishing a framework of viewer expectations that runs contrary to the chronological order of the films (also represented on the package), but that nevertheless defines a point of orientation from which audiences will look backward and forward. By singling out Cronenberg’s remake, *The Fly Chamber Collection* functions as what Jonathan Gray has called an “entryway paratext,” in the sense that it tries to “control and determine [the viewers’] entrance to a text” (2010: 35). Thus, while the box somehow promises that the 1986 film will be “the best” of the five iterations, it simultaneously suggests that the others are necessary viewing if one wants to properly appreciate Cronenberg’s masterpiece. In this fashion, DVD publishing of remakes and sequels not only facilitates access to different versions but also enables a mode of reception that foregrounds viewers’ second-order engagement with a narrative’s media-historical aspects: What used to be an implicit function of cinematic variations becomes both an increasingly explicit part of their reception and an important influence on their production practices.

Similarly, the UK *Planet of the Apes: Evolution Collection* (figure 7.2) includes all seven *Planet of the Apes* movies released between 1968 and 2011. While the collection can no longer claim to be complete (one more sequel came out in 2014; another one is scheduled for release in 2017), it still provides a meaningful record of the *Apes* films that bears testimony to how cinematic techniques, sociohistorical concerns, and cultural self-descriptions have indeed “evolved” over four decades. Moreover, the set invites a mode of consumption that generates and accumulates knowledge about changing possibilities and limitations of cinematic variation—a mode of consumption, in other words, that reveals how remakes, sequels, and prequels function as markers of media-generational change.

## PLANET OF THE APES AND MEDIA-GENERATIONAL CHANGE

Like *King Kong*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *Psycho*, *Rocky*, and others, *Planet of the Apes* belongs to those stories that have been continually retold and updated in Hollywood films. Each new installment has helped to preserve a rich

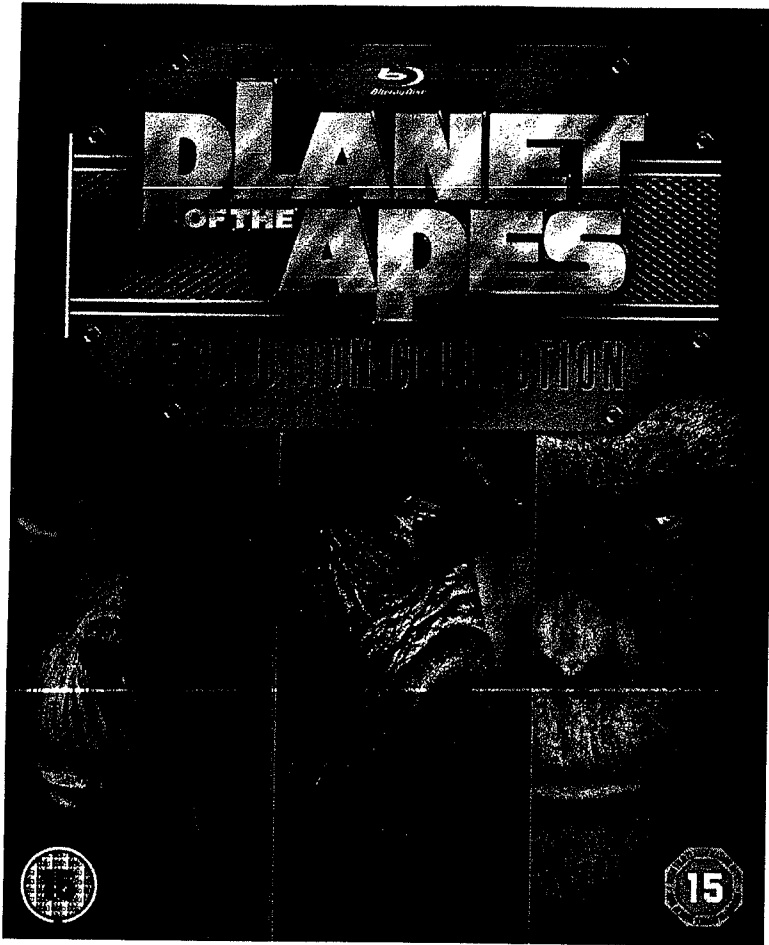


FIGURE 7.2. DVD cover of *Planet of the Apes: Evolution Collection* (20th Century Fox, 2011).

and reliable repertoire of popular narratives for future generations by placing familiar characters and plots in new cultural, political, or technological contexts. Franklin J. Schaffner's *Planet of the Apes* (1968), based on Pierre Boulle's novel *La planète des singes* (1963), tells the story of four astronauts who crash-land on a planet ruled by apes. The only female astronaut has died in hibernation, but the surviving crew members set out to explore their unknown surroundings. Shortly after encountering a group of mute humans, they are attacked by apes on horseback. One astronaut is killed, another is captured and lobotomized, and the third—Charlton Heston's character George Taylor—is taken

prisoner. Chimpanzee scientists Zira and Cornelius, who feel compassion for the enslaved humans, recognize Taylor's intelligence and help him and a woman named Nova to escape. In the end, when Taylor finally reaches what the apes call the "Forbidden Zone," he sees the half-buried Statue of Liberty, realizing that he has landed not on an alien planet but on a future Earth.

The film was a commercial and critical success—"so much so," writes Eric Greene, "that the studio requested a sequel. And another. And another. And another" (1996: 1–2). All in all, four more feature films were released between 1970 and 1973: *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* (1970), *Escape from the Planet of the Apes* (1971), *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes* (1972), and *Battle for the Planet of the Apes* (1973). By the mid-1970s "the market was flooded with Apes juvenilia and toys, including model kits and [. . .] action figures" (Paul Woods quoted in Verevis 2006: 93). "Go Ape!" marathons lured fans back into the cinemas to watch all of the *Ape* movies rereleased as a quintuple bill, and a short-lived live-action series (CBS, 1974) and an animated series (NBC, 1975–76) based on *Planet of the Apes* and its sequels were broadcast on television. Over the following decades, interest in the *Apes* franchise was maintained by what Verevis has described as an "exhaustive cultural production" that eventually "generat[ed] interest in, and speculation about, a remake" (2006: 93). This included "the reprint of Boulle's novel, the rerun of the television series on the cable Sci-Fi channel, and the recycling of Apes iconography by visual and performance artists. In its most popular reincarnation, *Planet of the Apes* was (closely) remade in an episode of *The Simpsons* ('A Fish Called Selma') as an all-singing, all-dancing Broadway musical titled 'Stop the Planet of the Apes[,] I want to get off!'" (93).

Twentieth Century Fox, aware of the *Ape's* pop-cultural capital, tried to revive the franchise in the late 1980s. The project went through various stages and had several well-known names attached to it—among them James Cameron, Chris Columbus, Michael Bay, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Oliver Stone (Pendreigh 2001). In 2001, Tim Burton's big budget remake—or, "re-imagining," as it was called—earned mostly negative reviews and ultimately failed to reboot the franchise (despite its open ending and built-in options for sequelization). Film critic David Edelstein saw the film as "proof of Hollywood's simian instincts: Monkey see old hit, monkey do remake" (2001). However, a decade later, in 2011, Rupert Wyatt's *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* eventually proved the "rise-ability" of the franchise. This much acclaimed prequel in turn spawned sequels, starting with *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* in 2014, and *War for the Planet of the Apes* scheduled for release in 2017.

In their entirety, the *Apes* films produce seriality effects that manifest themselves, among other things, as reflexive expressions of media-generational

change. To begin with, many of their self-references draw attention to technological advances in cinematic storytelling, providing opportunities for viewers to identify, however nostalgically, with a specific standard of commodity production that has come to define their age group's experience of popular culture. In 1969, John Chambers, who had designed the ape makeup for the first film, was awarded an Honorary Oscar for his "outstanding achievement" (Booker 2006: 97). Thirty-three years later, the makeup in Tim Burton's remake was seen as "far more sophisticated, realistic, and expensive" (97), showcasing progress in special-effects techniques that many critics at the time described as "a quantum leap." Yet most of the same critics agreed that the new makeup was "not one bit more effective" (97) than the earlier films' look, which still managed to evoke an entire landscape of cultural production now gone and yet present as archived memory.<sup>16</sup>

Just ten years later, *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* set new standards once more, with Weta-Digital's groundbreaking mixture of performance capture and digital animation. This technology communicated the film's relationship to its own media environment in more self-evident and successful ways than the makeup artistry of the 2001 remake. It had already been employed in the latest *King Kong*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *Avatar*. Andy Serkis, who played King Kong and Gollum, now starred as Caesar, the movie's genetically altered chimpanzee protagonist. Critics claimed this film was "his best computer-captured work" (Valero 2013), and Serkis's performance fueled the debate about whether motion-capture actors should be eligible for the Academy Award (Stevens 2011). Advances in technology also made it possible to film performance capture in real outdoor environments (instead of blank soundstages) for the first time, eliminating the barrier between visual effects and live action. These qualities were significantly enhanced during the production of the sequel, *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (which also added 3-D technology): more than 85 percent of *Dawn* was shot outside in the rainy forests of British Columbia.

In short, the early films, the 2001 remake, and the 2011 prequel/reboot—made so many years apart—all lay claim to being state-of-the-art, thereby reflecting, with varying degrees of success, distinct media-specific moments of an expansive narrative consumer aesthetics. In this manner, popular culture's increased availability for re-performance and comparison invites deeply autobiographical engagements with commercial material, to the point of

16. On the serial dialectics of simultaneous presence and absence, spectacularly dramatized as "spectral" seriality in horror films and some of their philosophical extrapolations, see chapter 6 in the present volume.

structuring individual personalities and their life stories in terms of progressing brand (dis)attachments. But media generations can also recognize themselves in the cultural concerns of remade films, which are usually accentuated more sharply there than in nonserialized formats (Kelleter 2012b). As Greene has argued, the first *Planet of the Apes* and its sequels "allegorized racial conflict and the Vietnam War": "Apocalyptic images of cataclysmic race wars, nuclear destruction, struggles for dominance, ecological and biological devastation [. . .] resonate throughout the Ape saga" and comment on the "tumultuous public contestations of the character and meaning of United States society" in the late 1960s and early 1970s (1996: xii, 7–8). By contrast, some critics disliked Tim Burton's remake exactly because they considered it "devoid of [. . .] contemporary resonance [. . .], chiefly an occasion for special effects, endless chases, chaotic combat sequences, Rick Baker's intricate makeup, and the witty production design of Rick Heinrichs" (Atkinson 2001). However, Verevis also points out that "[the] decision to assign a wide range of behaviours to both humans and apes transforms the earnest attempts at racial allegory of (especially) the latter films of the Apes series into a concern of 'species guilt'" (2006: 94). Similarly, Andrew O'Hehir identified "a jittery catalogue of millennial anxieties" in Burton's work (quoted *ibid.*).

Equally alert to its own timeliness, *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* in 2011 dramatizes contemporary fears of genetic engineering and—in the postcredits scene that paves the way for *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*—the possibility of a viral pandemic spreading across the globe. *Dawn*, in fact, is deeply involved in a cultural climate that keeps envisioning impossible escapes from the factuality of the Anthropocene by way of "post-anthropocentric" transcendence. As if sublimating its own dependence on global revenue streams and marketable proliferation, this sequel of a prequel of a remake—the second installment of a rebooted franchise in conglomerate-era Hollywood—delineates ecological change as a reassuringly sequential catastrophe. We are shown biopolitical warfare with reversed roles but with a straightforward trajectory: always ahead.

## CONCLUSION

These are just a few examples of the peculiar seriality of film remakes, sequels, prequels, franchises, and so forth. They serve to underline how studying Hollywood remaking as a practice of cinematic and pop-cultural self-historicization requires us to do more than we can do in this chapter; it requires us to trace in high descriptive detail the industrial, public, quotidian, economic, and

academic practices and discourses that animate specific remakings and their storytelling ensembles, because together with the aesthetic activities of the films in question, these networked acts and actors produce something that can be called *second-order seriality*: ongoing narratives about (and through) ongoing narratives.

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