

CHAPTER ONE



Reviewing Remakes: An Introduction

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Great films are not made. They are remade!

—*Stand-In* (Garnett, 1937)

In *Stand-In* (Garnett, 1937), Atterbury Dodd/Leslie Howard, the representative of the East Coast bankers who own Colossal Pictures, is sent to correct the financial mismanagement of the studio. He enters Mrs. Mack's boarding house inhabited by stand-ins, has-beens, stuntmen, and bit players and meets "Abe Lincoln" at the door. While waiting downstairs, Dodd overhears the actor wearing the familiar top hat, beard, and coat tails of the sixteenth president of the United States tell a fellow boarder, herself reduced from silent star to talkie extra, that he has been waiting for seven years for the remake of *The Battle of Gettysburg*¹ to make his comeback. That there will be a remake, he is convinced. That he uses the term "remake" locates the practice as standard in current studio production. "Abe Lincoln's" assurance that Hollywood will always return to themes of cultural, historical, and mythological importance to Americans links the remake to standard production formulas, from genre pictures to series

and sequels, to star vehicles that capitalize on a performer's established persona, and to imitations of others studios' successes.

Stand-In's "Abe Lincoln" could just as easily have answered the door as a cowboy, waiting for the lull in the production of Westerns to end, and determined to be prepared for when opportunity knocks. But his preparation is limited to the visual portrayal. The boarding-house scene in *Stand-In* deftly plays on the irony of an actor having assumed his role to the point of iconographically becoming Abe Lincoln, and yet who is utterly unable to remember the words to the Gettysburg Address, needing unexpected prompting from the very British Dodd. Although the viewer knows that this down-on-his-luck bit player's screen life is over, it is not only because he has forgotten his lines, nor that he is a has-been like many of the silent stars that didn't successfully make the transition to the talkies, nor even that he is no longer marketable like Lester Plum's child actress who Hollywood didn't want anymore once she grew up, but because the studios simply aren't making Civil War movies or biographies of the life of Abraham Lincoln at this time. After all, one can hardly predict when a picture will be remade. Some remakes appear within a few years of an original (*Pépé le Moko* [Duvivier, 1936] was remade two years later as *Algiers* [Cromwell, 1938]), some fifty years later as in *Down and Out in Beverly Hills* (Mazursky, 1986), the remake of *Boudu sauvé des eaux* (Renoir, 1932). "Abe Lincoln" has made the colossal error of becoming a type with very narrowly circumscribed market value. He would have done better to be a cowboy, since the Western was a very successful genre during the 1930s, and thereby lessen the margin of error in specializing in a type. However limited "Abe Lincoln" is as a type, he serves as a living symbol of the recyclable nature of film material.² What is clear from "Abe's" presence is that there will always be remakes, if not of *The Battle of Gettysburg*, then of some other film. His comment above all shows how much the remake was an institutionalized element of Hollywood production, and this long before the thirties.

While genre films, cycles, series, and sequels, and star persona vehicles have found their legitimate place in film theory and criticism, the same cannot be said for the remake, which, at least since the fifties, has been treated as a less than respectable Hollywood commercial practice. Remaking is far from being a uniquely American phenomenon, but because American film production has dominated world cinema since the late teens, Hollywood receives the lion's share of critical attention. The perception of Hollywood as exclusively a commercial enterprise makes its

recourse to the remake reflect the worst in Western capitalist production, a type of production where catering to the tastes of a mass public entails forfeiting on film substance. Or does it?

In *Stand-In*, the caricatured foreign Hollywood director Kodolfski explains to Atterbury Dodd that the studio viewing of the “finished” but terribly flawed film *Sex and Satan* (a subgenre jungle picture) does not mean that it cannot be doctored up before release. He cries out prophetically, “Great films are not made. They are remade!”³ Although Kodolfski is not referring to the remake per se, i.e., a new version of an older film that was commercially exhibited, he is not altogether off the mark. Some of the cinema’s most important films are remakes. *The Maltese Falcon* (Huston, 1941), considered by many to be a masterpiece of the nascent *noir* mode, was the third “adaptation”⁴ of the Dashiell Hammett story: *The Maltese Falcon* (Del Ruth, 1931) and *Satan Met a Lady* (Dieterle, 1936). Fritz Lang’s *Scarlet Street*, his 1945 version of both Jean Renoir’s *La Chienne* (1931) and his own 1944 *Woman in the Window*, can hardly be described as a bland imitation of the original. While many remakes are indeed uninspired copies of their originals—probably in proportion to the amount of uninspired “original” films produced annually—the existence of many critically acclaimed remakes hinders us from adopting as a general rule the widely accepted notion that all remakes are parasitical and not worth any critical consideration outside a political and economic evaluation of Hollywood’s commercial filmmaking practices. The remake is a significant part of filmmaking both as an economic measure designed to keep production costs down *and* as an art form. Because many remakes qualify for this double status, *Dead Ringers* proposes to remove the phenomenon from the purgatory of casual reference and the summary dismissal and place it within the purview of serious film criticism.

Not all remakes are of the same order. They reflect the different historical, economic, social, political, and aesthetic conditions that make them possible. Most early cinematic remakes from 1896 to 1906 were generally indistinguishable from dupes (duplicated positive prints), others were remakings of successful films whose negatives were exhausted. The former were instrumental in the construction of cinematic norms from narrative structure to cinematic techniques, both for viewers and filmmakers. The influence of technological innovations—some would say advances—such as sound, color film, special effects (especially as concerns some genre films like the Western, the musical, and the horror film), and computer digitalization, are often the reason behind testing new (and

often expensive) ground with pretested stories and storyboard breakdown. Recourse to the remake sought to counter losses incurred during the Depression. The remake helped keep some independent and Poverty Row film companies solvent during the 1930s (Taves 334). Recycling old material equally served to feed the “maw of exhibition” resulting from the major studios’ block-booking. More recently, the remake reflects the competition posed to blockbuster studio productions by very successful and critically praised independent films. The remake has reappeared whenever audience attendance has been low or threatened because of the advent of rival technologies like radio, television, and video. Hollywood has always had recourse to canned projects that promised to ensure stable audience attendance more than new and riskier projects. Equally important was the major studios’ investment in story properties and the desire to maximize their returns.⁵ Studios owning the options for dramatization rights to a novel or play often remade a film several times. Good examples of this in-studio practice are Paramount’s *Accent on Youth* (Ruggles, 1935), which it remade twice (*Mr Music* [Haydn, 1950] and *But Not for Me* [Lang, 1959]), and M-G-M’s *The Last of Mrs. Cheyney* (Franklin, 1929) which was remade twice by the same studio, first under the same title in 1937 (Richard Boleslawski), and subsequently as *The Law and the Lady* (Knoph, 1951). The remake sometimes reflects a director’s desire to revisit or rework themes because of what has been called “generic evolution,” or because of newly available technology, or because of budgetary restrictions on the original. It can serve to fulfill the aspirations of a star who is given the opportunity to chose a project. For example, Frank Sinatra “had always been intrigued with [John] Garfield’s role in *Four Daughters* [Curtiz, 1938] and indicated to the studio head [at Warner Brothers] that he’d be willing to remake that story—as a semimusical” (Druxman 59). The switch in genres, as in the shift from melodrama of *Sadie Thompson* (Walsh, 1928) and *Rain* (Milestone, 1932) to the semimusical *Miss Sadie Thompson* (Bernhardt, 1953), or from the *noir* thriller *The Asphalt Jungle* (Huston, 1950) to the Western *The Badlanders* (Daves, 1958), often reflects an effort not only to mask the source material by hiding it in another genre, but also to tap the talents of the stars carrying the vehicle: Rita Hayworth’s singing voice and dancing for *Miss Sadie Thompson*, Alan Ladd’s box-office draw as a cowboy for his performances in *Shane* (Stevens, 1953) and other Westerns. Whatever the case, while some remakes are demonstrably failures, others are undeniably superb, and almost all interesting for what they reveal, either about different cultures,

about different directorial styles and aesthetic orientations, about class or gender perceptions, about different social-historical periods and changing audience expectations, about the dynamics of the genre film, or simply about the evolution of economic practices in the industry.

Not all remakes are even recognizable as such. Disney's animated *Beauty and the Beast* (Trousdale, 1991) resembles remarkably the conceptualization of the characters and the mise-en-scène of Jean Cocteau's 1946 film of the same name, yet we have found no reference in the press or film literature to the former being a remake of the latter. So too with the animated *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Trousdale, 1996), which seems to draw less from Victor Hugo's novel than from the William Dieterle 1939 version starring Charles Laughton. And the animated *Aladdin's* (Musker, 1992) direct antecedent is neither Sir Richard Burton's, nor Edward Lane's, nor John Payne's translations of *The Arabian Nights*, but *The Thief of Bagdad* (Berger, Whelan, and Powell, 1940). Some critics (and probably some copyright lawyers) would say that an animated film cannot qualify as a remake because the medium is not the same as photographic film. Indeed, we would not say that a screen version of a successful Broadway play, even when it recreates much of the play's staging, is a remake, because these are two distinct mediums. Both Cocteau and Trousdale's versions of *Beauty and the Beast*, however, are films that draw upon the same tradition of cinematic narrative construction (camera movement, editing and shot length, shot distance, etc.), and are exhibited in the same venues, significantly bridging the distance between animation and photographic film. Finally, the reformulation of these original films into an animated context further complicates matters by their generic shift to the musical format.

Remakes often do not credit their sources. Robert Ray claims that *Flying Tigers* (Miller, 1942) is "actually a remake of *Only Angels Have Wings* [Hawks, 1939], with no credit given to Hawks" (119). Indeed, he contends that Hawks "should have sued for plagiarism."⁶ Ray adds that *Flying Tigers* was not alone in this full-scale lifting from Hawks; "All of the major combat films were, in effect, remakes of *Only Angels Have Wings*" (120). If we consider *Flying Tigers* alone in its chronological relation to *Only Angels Have Wings*, it is undoubtedly a remake. But in relation to other World War II combat films using Hawks's blueprint—*Destination Tokyo* (Daves, 1943), *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* (LeRoy, 1944), and *The Purple Heart* (Milestone, 1944), etc.—*Flying Tigers* loses its remake status and becomes the first of many actualizations of the combat film subgenre,

of which *Only Angels Have Wings* serves to activate the American myth at the heart of all genre films. According to Robert Ray, the myth that structures all genre films is that of an illusory but reassuring resolution, with the viewer liberated from the necessity to choose between conflicting modes of behavior, as in the individual versus the group/community (56–57). The remake and the genre film may share precisely the ability to dramatize this familiar American paradigm, with the difference that the remake can jump from genre to genre (as in Warner's B-movie producer Bryan Foy and his ten remakes of *Tiger Shark* [Hawks, 1932]), adapting its formulaic structure to the genre at hand.

And yet, not all American remakes take their cues from typically American scenarios. In the late 1980s, Hollywood appeared to step up vigorously its remaking activity, especially of foreign films (among which French films figure prominently), and as a consequence, the accusations relating Hollywood's seemingly shameless and dishonorable commercialism to cultural piracy and political imperialism escalated. Critics jumped to reveal, if not the political agenda of the remake, then its political repercussions. While little issue is made of domestic remakes, with reviewers limiting themselves to remarks on whether the new version is better or worse than the original, remakes of foreign films are a sore spot of contention. Reviewers from both sides of the Atlantic cried out in disgust against the practice, denouncing Hollywood's rapaciousness, its plundering of ready-made foreign products in the bankruptcy of its own creative reserves. Sharon Waxman echoes many of these critiques in her summary of the average American moviemaker's viewpoint:

For Hollywood, American moviemakers say, remakes are a way of investing in a concept that has already proved itself with an audience, in a business where millions are at stake with each movie deal. And why release a foreign original, they figure, when they can make much more money remaking it with American stars and to American tastes? (C1+)

Vincent Canby, too, points an accusing finger at the American film industry of the new Hollywood, which is actively pursuing this business tactic, and in the process "swallowing up other countries' movies with a desperation unknown in the past, and never before to such muddled effect" (2: 1+). Terrence Rafferty predicts the short-lived nature of this trend, taking for granted a general critical and popular consensus regard-

ing his unflattering review of *Diabolique* (Chechik, 1996), the remake of Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Les Diaboliques* (1955), hoping that because *Diabolique* is "unlikely to repeat the success of 'Twelve Monkeys' and 'The Birdcage,'" it "may slightly dampen Hollywood's enthusiasm for Franco-American hybridization experiments" (102). For Rafferty, experiments in "hybridization" illustrate that such efforts can and will only end in failure, because cultural difference is the ultimate obstacle to the homogenizing culture of Hollywood. Ginette Vincendeau, for example, locates the very failure of American screenwriters to adapt *Mon Père ce héros* (Lauzier, 1991)⁷ in the uniqueness of the French "family narrative," which, "far from being universal, [is] deeply rooted in cultural difference" (23). She makes the case for the untranslatability of certain "cultural" aspects of French films, aspects which their American versions brazenly assume can be made universal, citing their disappearance in the remade versions. *Point of No Return* (Badham, 1993), in her argument, replaces the "symbolic father-daughter dyad [which] is deeply rooted in both French cinema and culture," here making "Bob" and Maggie closer in age, thereby orchestrating the introduction of sexual rivalry between "Bob" and Maggie's young man. And *Sommersby* (Amiel, 1993), the remake of *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (Vigne, 1982), "removes the fundamental point of the French film, the unknowability of an individual" (23), reconceptualizing the hero in terms of the recognizable thematic paradigm of the Western's loner. Once again, the American remake reveals its affinities with American culture as articulated in film genres. It would be safe to assume, however, that French remakes of French originals reproduce those generic qualities peculiar to the French mythical imagination found in their films, as would German remakes of German films, and so on.

Point of No Return did not need to be reworked to fit into a familiar generic narrative, because, as Vincendeau points out, the original was already an "Americanized" French film, whose "cultural references" were those belonging to "supposedly international generic codes" (25).⁸ The film's international success, she adds, should have ultimately precluded any need for a remake. On the other hand, *Le Retour de Martin Guerre*—a generic period drama, yet hardly an "Americanized" film—had remaking potential precisely because of its adaptability to the generic norms of American frontier mythology. The dynamics of the original were altered precisely in those areas that did not correspond to the norms of the American generic formula.

In her recent discussion of American remakes, Vincendeau distinguishes between American and French cinematic traditions, asserting that the former privileges “clear-cut motivation, both of causality (no loose ends) and character (good *or* evil),” whereas the principle of the latter is “ambiguity” (23). The American remake of a French/European film⁹ serves to reveal this difference primarily through film endings, with the former providing a comforting resolution altogether absent in their European counterparts. The incompatibility of the two cinemas emerges equally in the dissimilar relations the remake establishes with its characters; American cinema deals in black-and-white oppositions with the neat elimination of all the grays. In this sense, the remake functions as the ideal point of cultural comparison between the two cinemas with one intended ostensibly for the supposedly naive, childlike American, the other for the ironic, adult European.

While the sociology of the original versus the remake makes for rich findings regarding the fundamental cultural differences between, for example, the French and the Americans, it compensates little for the often successful domestic and international distribution of the remake of a foreign film at the expense of the original. In his 1952 “Remade in USA,” André Bazin deplors the practice of remaking that has absolutely nothing to do with the updating of an old picture and everything to do with geography (56). He cites as examples the remakes of *Pépé le Moko* (Duvivier, 1937)/*Algiers* (Cromwell, 1938), *Le Jour se lève* (Carné, 1939)/*The Long Night* (Litvak, 1947), and *Le Corbeau* (Clouzot, 1943)/*The Thirteenth Letter* (Preminger, 1951), of which only the first truly corresponds to the temporally immediate “geographic” category, the remakes of the Carné and Clouzot films appearing eight years later, and with World War II serving as the generally acknowledged demarcation, not only between two cinemas, but between two worldviews as well. For Bazin, this is clearly a case of plagiarism and economic terrorism, easily remedied by adequate distribution, a tactic that Hollywood, he adds, seems loathe to perform. He summarizes the American producers’ attitude as indicative of an aggressive ideological conspiracy arising from the conclusion that the lack of success of, for example, *Le Jour se lève* in foreign markets has less to do with inadequate distribution and more to do with its divergence from American filmmaking styles. With the rights purchased, the film is then remade in Hollywood studios in the signature Hollywood style, and “throw[n] back on the market with a U.S.A. countermark” (“Remade” 56–57).¹⁰ What Bazin finds particularly irritating is

the way American producers copy the images rather than work merely from the basic storyline, as did Duvivier in his lifting of certain gangster film elements, most notably those established by Hawks's *Scarface* (1932). From the "American social mythology" of the gangster genre, Duvivier only retained universally accessible aspects of a "certain tragic romanticism of the bandit in the city" ("Remade" 57). Everything else, Bazin contends, is recast in a French sociologically specific context, that of the French imaginary of colonial North Africa. Duvivier's adoption of George Raft's coin-tossing becomes citation, while Cromwell's decision to keep the Algerian context, and his almost identical recreation of the decor are plagiarism. But truthfully, it becomes difficult to distinguish between the two practices, since one could say just as easily that *Sommersby* "rethinks" or reconceptualizes *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* in the American frontier context. And if Cromwell's remake of *Pépé le Moko* kept the French cultural baggage, it is precisely because that context corresponded to the transposition of familiar generic locales (the city for the gangster film, the frontier for the Western) to other, often exotic sites.¹¹ What did change in remaking *Pépé le Moko*, however, was its genre; Duvivier's pseudo-gangster film was refashioned as a romance, which in its later incarnation, *Casbah* (Berry, 1948) became a musical.

There are, of course, important considerations that Bazin has not entertained in the carbon-copying of the visuals of 1930s foreign products. First, Hollywood had become during the Classic period an international cinematic community with the arrival of foreign artists and technicians to southern California. Indeed, with the failure of multilanguage film production,¹² Hollywood invited many of these artists to come and virtually recreate their successes for the American screen. While Duvivier did not direct the American version of *Pépé le Moko*, he did direct *Lydia* (1937), his adaptation/remake of *Un Carnet de bal* (1938). Anatole Litvak directed *The Woman I Love* (1937), which is a remake of his French film *L'Equipage* (1935). And if Fritz Lang directed the remake of *La Chienne*, it is only because Jean Renoir refused. "Geographic," image-duplication remaking during the 1930s, therefore, must also be considered as both a residual practice inherited from the perspective of multilanguage film distribution as well as a realistic effort to maintain stylistic consistency in the domestic and international distribution of what was essentially a commercial film product. Robert Ray observes that the continuity system of the Classical Hollywood film aimed to efface the visible traces of style, a system that broke down considerably with the postwar introduction of style and the

way it drew attention to its artificial nature (153). Foreign films prior to 1945 very often did not meet the level of craftsmanship (sound, lighting, eye-line continuity, reverse-angle shots, etc.) required of Hollywood's standardized "invisible" narrative form, nor did they conform to the ideology of what Ray calls the tension between the outlaw hero and the official hero (individual versus the social/communal code, adventure versus domesticity, the frontier versus the settlement), in which films attempt to resolve the contradictions between the two codes, ultimately favoring the outlaw over the official. Ray contends that we must recognize the role Hollywood played during the ascendancy of the Classic cinema in establishing American cinematic norms as the international standard:

By also dominating the international market, the American Cinema insured that for the vast majority of the audience, both here and abroad, Hollywood's Classic Period films would establish the definition of the medium itself. Henceforth, different ways of making movies would appear as aberrations from some "intrinsic essence of cinema" rather than simply as alternatives to a particular form that had resulted from a unique coincidence of historical accidents—esthetic, economic, technological, political, cultural, and even geographic. Given the economics of the medium, such a perception had immense consequences: because departures from the American Cinema's dominant paradigms risked not only commercial disaster but critical incomprehension, one form of cinema threatened to drive out all others. (26)

While Bazin complains about the image lifting that takes place in much of Hollywood's remaking of French films, and Vincendeau refers to how Hollywood remakes "streamline their source material" (23), it is not only a question of Hollywood appropriating as much from the original as possible while expending the least amount of energy and expense possible. This equally points to the formal structure of Hollywood movies themselves and the way in which Hollywood creates the seamless quality of its films, first by the "systematic subordination of every cinematic element to the interests of a movie's narrative," and second, by the effacement of conscious style in order to "establish the cinema's illusion of reality and to encourage audience identification with the characters on the screen" (Ray 32, 34). Operating on the principle that consumers buy what looks familiar, Hollywood affixes its stylistic signature in the remaking of a foreign

film in order to ensure the success of its international and domestic reception. It would seem, therefore, that Hollywood in the 1930s and 1940s did not noticeably alter the visual construction of a foreign film because it was effective. It did, however, “correct” the foreign film’s sub-Hollywood craftsmanship and its deviations from the familiar and highly marketable Hollywood narrative.

But this is only a partial picture. It can be inferred from Bazin and Vincendeau’s critiques that audiences, special interest groups, and governments in other countries don’t have any say in the types of films that are exhibited in their movie theaters, as well as not having any influence in the types of films that are made. But there is no historical or economic foundation to this claim. For example, we know that in the pre-World War II period, Germany imported only those films that were “‘German’ in character” (Balio 35). And while the “moral” concerns at the root of the foundation of the Hollywood Production Code are generally assumed to come exclusively from American puritanical prudishness, they actually reflect both American *and* foreign demands. For example, as Richard Maltby points out, “Hollywood’s married movie stars slept in single beds [in films] to meet a requirement of the British Board of Censors,” and not those of the Production Code (38). Lest sleeping arrangements seem like an insignificant modification, consider that the British Board of Censors would equally not approve any film with the slightest hint that a character was insane, a condition that radically determines the shape an entire film can take (Maltby 37). Maltby goes on to note that, in the 1930s, “More than 60 percent of domestic sales, together with virtually the entire foreign market, were made in territories under ‘political censorship’” (72), circumstances which affected exhibition first, but eventually production as well, as the creation of the Production Code confirms. The same holds for today’s Hollywood. Foreign censors as well as American reformers then and today look at the American films distributed worldwide as entertainment, hence as business, not as art. And as articles of popular entertainment aiming to appeal to the largest possible audience, they are held to different, stiffer moral standards than art, so as to ruffle the least amount of feathers. While American commercial films promote a distinctly American ideology, the audience helping to mold the form that ideology takes is decidedly international.

Bazin understands the dynamics of the market, acknowledging that, because half the world is accustomed to consuming films that possess a certain American flavor, America must make films that bear the

made-in-the-USA label. Nevertheless, he finds that “Americanization” takes on a more menacing aspect in the misguided American industrial mentality that anything can be reproduced. According to Bazin, Hollywood producers approach foreign films according to a naive logic that presupposes that the original’s success lies solely in its visual form and that the retracing of those images will undoubtedly and inevitably reproduce that success in a different market. Still, Bazin does not hold these producers entirely responsible for this strategy, acknowledging that they too are the passive representatives of the larger economic and sociological phenomenon of Americanization (“Remade” 56).

Bazin operates under the assumption that remaking is a purely American practice, his rhetoric implying that this practice is a product of the standardization of filmmaking practices and the monopolization of the world market by the American cinema during the Classic Hollywood period (1930–1945). His historical orientation is manipulated to reflect the Classic Hollywood cinema as a political apparatus, which it was and is, but willfully ignoring that remaking has taken place on both sides of the Atlantic, dating back to the birth of the cinema in 1895. European remakes escape from the pejorative judgment against remaking practices as an example of the predatory nature of capitalism when juxtaposed to the sheer quantity and scope of the international distribution of American films.¹³ Because European films cannot compete or are financially and politically blocked from competing with the huge American film distribution machine, they assume a noncommercial aura. Those who cooperate with this machine by agreeing to have their films remade are seemingly forced to compromise their artistic status for the sake of staying alive in the business. Vincendeau notes that French filmmakers who coproduce in the American remake of an original French film realize that they can make more on a coproduction than they can on the original. The danger, however, is that, while they may have no other recourse than to collaborate with Hollywood in order to reap full financial benefits from their product, they may be doing an even greater disservice to their national cinema: they diminish even further the already paltry foreign distribution of French films through increasing the dominance and reception of the Hollywood narrative as the only acceptable model (24).

Most recent critiques of American remakes spring from such political considerations, primarily from the French fight to keep its national and cultural identity during negotiations for the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), with France trying to control the influx of

American films and their “ideology/propaganda” into its borders. Roger Cohen describes this backlash against America as the European defense against a “marauding commercialism from [a] Hollywood intent on standardizing the world’s tastes at the level of ‘Jurassic Park’ or the techno-thrills of Sylvester Stallone in ‘Cliffhanger.’” Marin Karmitz, a French film producer interviewed by Mr. Cohen states that,

Of course the U.S. movie industry is a big business, . . . but behind the industrial aspect, there is also an ideological one. Sound and pictures have always been used for propaganda, and the real battle at the moment is over who is going to be allowed to control the world’s images, and so sell a certain life style, a certain culture, certain products and certain ideas. (2: 1+)

Indeed, so great is the threat that “the conviction is clearly growing in Europe that, as the French writer Mr. [Regis] Débray puts it, ‘an American monoculture would inflict a sad future on the world, one in which the planet is converted to a global supermarket where people have to choose between the local ayatollah and Coca-Cola.’” He paints the portrait of a France ideologically and economically pressured from both sides either by an extremist fundamentalism or by the tyranny of American uniformity. Such options would certainly make national and cultural integrity of primary importance to any country.

By the end of World War I, the rules for what constituted a film—film length, narrative structure, camera and lighting techniques, film speed, shot length/editing—came for the most part from the American filmmakers, who implemented the technology and the techniques that, in turn, had a tendency to make all other national cinemas seem less advanced and their product consequently less accomplished or effective in their “reproduction” of reality. Alexander Walker points out that at the end of the silent era, the American movie industry furnished “eighty-two per cent of the world’s film entertainment. The foreign circulation of American-made features accounted for forty per cent of the films’ total gross” (45). Although silent films had a greater capacity for communicating internationally than the new talkies, the impressive figures for the international distribution of made-in-Hollywood images supports Ray’s contention that American cinema possessed a capacity for seeming more “real” than other national industries (365). Even in the United States during the early years of transition from silence to

sound, the illusion of reality to which audiences were accustomed was ruptured, and audiences soon tired of technically inferior sound production. The temperamental microphone cut down on camera and actor movement, making all the more evident to audiences what they felt was the superiority of the seemingly seamless or visually superior production quality of the silents.

However, the representation of Hollywood as a rogue King Kong, bombarding the world with a certain American ideology, squeezing out weaker cinematic voices with the overwhelming output of its film product begs to be modified by a consideration of the historical factors that allowed the American cinema to get such a considerable lead on its European competitors. During the post-World War I period, while it is true that American studios controlled exhibition in the United States—they owned a significant number of first-run theaters and, thereby, controlled the networks of distribution—it is equally true that “Europeans devoted their limited capital and purchasing power to rebuilding their shattered economies; little was left to rehabilitate their home film industries” (Balio 32). And during the first decade of talking films, although America virtually lost its European market on the continent due to political disruptions, its domestic market was large enough and commercial activity relatively unfettered for the American cinema to maintain its status as the major film industry in the world.

Nevertheless, one cannot deny the depth of America’s ethnocentrism and chauvinism. In the 1928 discussions by film production personnel regarding the move from silence to sound, director William C. de Mille struck a positive note and countered the doomsayers—producers, directors, actors/actresses, and technicians who feared that they would lose the royalties accruing from overseas sales—with a pep talk based on the international appeal of American products in general:

In as much as the introduction of American films into Europe has resulted in Europeans wearing American hats and shoes and almost everything else, so we may be sure that in a couple of generations from now, all Europeans will be speaking English so that they may continue to see and understand American films. (Walker 66)

Walker adds that, “Hollywood’s role as ‘America’s overseas empire’ has seldom been as confidently stated before or since” (66). Any number of contemporary critics would undoubtedly agree.

If it is generally assumed that recent remakes of foreign films participate in American global colonization, is there any way for a remake to respect both a country's cultural integrity and a director's authenticity? Literary translation provides an interesting parallel to the problem of cultural translation to which Vincendeau refers. Literary translation falls into two different practices which the cinematic remake can be said to follow; on the one hand, *literal* translation remains faithful to the letter of the text, but loses the style intrinsic to its source text; on the other, *free* translation remains generally faithful to the spirit of a source text while adapting it to the aesthetic, moral, and cultural concerns of a target culture. While imitation of model texts from antiquity and the later classical periods was encouraged up to the end of the eighteenth century until the invention of "originality," translation has always been looked upon as a necessary but often unfortunate fact of international and intercultural communication. Free translation is especially pernicious in that it either has the capacity or actively strives to replace the original. For example, during the French Romantic period, "translation was presented not as a source but as an example: it was to function as a full-fledged original work in the target language. This was how [Alfred de] Vigny's translation [of *Othello*] was in fact received" (Woodsworth 77). In addition, there exist ideological complications in the translation from a colonized culture into the language of a colonizer in the effort to erase the cultural and linguistic differences of the other, which is more or less the critique that has been lodged against Hollywood's "imperialistic" habit of appropriating foreign films and adapting them to the Hollywood "thematic paradigm."¹⁴ According to this paradigm, the ambiguity of Martin Guerre's identity which is central to *Le Retour de Martin Guerre*, is displaced in the remake onto the familiar image of the outlaw hero who already has a strong identity upon his arrival in the community to which he restores harmony, and then leaves (or in the case of *Sommersby*, is hung), his own code and identity intact. This version is then distributed worldwide, indoctrinating the world's imagination into American ideology. From this perspective, resistance is not only in the national/cultural "narrative patterns" to which Vincendeau refers, but as well in a Hollywood ideology that acts as a censor to values that challenge its own. Cultural difference serves as irreconcilable proof both of the indelible nature of national/cultural identity and of the vulnerability of that same identity to effacement, the first argument suiting the needs of romantic ideology, the second those of a Marxist one.

The capacity of American cinema to “colonize” through its control of the image makes the struggle between the two cultures quite imbalanced. Historically, however, industries that have been squeezed out of competition in one sector of the market normally react with a reconceptualization of their market, as in a shift from mass production to that of quality. The resistance of French narrative patterns to translation of which Vincendeau speaks ultimately calls upon the quality/quantity dichotomy, which in turn invokes the superiority of the original versus the inferiority of the copy opposition. Indeed, Terrence Rafferty makes a cultural distinction between highbrow and lowbrow viewers, between cultured and popular, between literate and illiterate, between the filmgoers of yesterday (“of the fifties”) who were the “genteel subtitle readers” of Clouzot’s *Les Diaboliques*, and those of today’s *Diabolique* who “demand more stimulation” (102). In this scenario, not only are mainstream filmmakers predatory capitalists, but their audiences are decidedly vulgar, endowed with the short attention span of a 4-year-old child and the overactive libido of a 17-year-old boy (for whom the bodies of the film’s female stars are fetishized).

The high versus low culture bias emerges characteristically in the separation of French and American moviemaking into two categories, the art film and the commercial film. France makes quality films, it is said. America is concerned with the quantity of films it produces in order to dominate and glut the market. Daniel Toscan du Plantier, the president of Unifrance, defines the two systems according to their relation to profit: “The United States is a market that reasons in terms of profit. We in France are aware of profit but not obsessed by it. We are driven by intangible values. That difference is clear in the movies we make” (Cohen B1+). Roger Cohen elaborates this position; “The French, in other words, see cinema as an art, a vehicle for the poignant exploration of emotion and ideas, passion and existential dilemmas. Hollywood, they argue, generally reduces movies to crass assemblages of gags and thrills built around a star” (B1+). Needless to say, as Pamela Falkenberg points out, publicizing a film’s “art” status is in itself a form of marketing that attempts to hide its strategies, for “under capitalism, art is precisely that commodity whose exchange value depends upon its denial of its status as a commodity” (44). Indeed, the art cinema as we know it has not been a staple of European cinema from the medium’s beginnings, but is a product of the postwar “fragmentation of the mass audience” into, on the one hand, the small art-house filmgoers and, on the other, the “old-fashioned, enter-

tainment-seeking-moviegoers” (Ray 138). Richard Schickel notes that, prior to 1945, “A Renoir, a Chaplin, an Eisenstein, or a Griffith aimed for the largest possible number of viewers, at a kind of universal communication. There was no great temptation to appeal to a small group of cognoscenti” (162). The American audience may have subsequently split, but the viewers going to see European art films were not such a minority to have no influence on American cinematic trends. On the contrary, Ray observes, “in the early 1960s . . . more and more foreign movies worked their way to the top of the box-office lists” (269) forcing American filmmakers to adopt and adapt some of the European art film’s visual style, most notably that of the French New Wave—like *cinéma vérité* (jump-cutting, handheld cameras, long tracking shots, rapid editing, and so forth). Ray notes, however, that this influence soon metamorphosed into empty stylization in the hands of Hollywood filmmakers.

Part of the distinction between the two cinemas—the art and the commercial—is, as Vincendeau notes, that Classical Hollywood cinematic structure is determined to a significant degree, first, by the use of stars, and second, by recourse to generic notions of story (23). French cinema, it is claimed, is less inclined to find vehicles tailored for the star, and French “art” films create the illusion that they are genre-free. In other words, Hollywood markets products that will sell, which means that persuasive packaging—reworking familiar generic formulas, providing spectacular special effects, the presence of a star (i.e., the persona such a star brings from other films)—is everything. French/European cinema, on the other hand, seemingly operates in the market only indirectly and unwillingly, its primary concern being the creation of a quality work of art whose seriousness, willingness to “realistically” address contemporary (or historical) issues, and whose open ending and stylistic discontinuity challenge the complacency and passivity of the spectator. The audience at an art film does not get a mimetic image of itself. Instead, audience members are made uncomfortable by the film’s refusal to fall into familiar and reassuring patterns, ones that in genre deceptively strive to reconcile collective and personal moral contradictions. The commercial cinema is one of masks, the art cinema one of truth.

This ideological stance can be directly linked to the *Cahiers du cinéma*’s “politique des auteurs” of the early 1950s, which served to establish the art cinema in opposition to France’s own Hollywood, the tradition of quality, an attack orchestrated strangely enough from references to American directors, some iconoclastic like Orson Welles, others

ballplayers like John Ford, but all with distinctive cinematic signatures. According to Ray, the “politique des auteurs” of the *Cahiers du cinéma* critics was less the cause for the separation into two cinemas than a response to the already existing “gap between popular and critical tastes that originated in the fifties” (141). While the 1950s were indeed the heyday of the *ciné-club* phenomenon in France, the concept of offering specialized screenings to an informed audience originated in the 1920s in the writings of the French film theorist Louis Delluc, and with the early examples of Le Ciné-Club de France (founded in 1924 by Germaine Dulac, Jacques Feyder, and Léon Moussinac) and La Tribune Libre du Cinéma (founded in 1924 by Charles Léger). At the same time, specialized cinemas like the Studio des Ursulines, the Studio 28, L’Oeil de Paris, and the Studio des Agriculteurs began to appear in Paris, whose programs featured noncommercial, avant-garde fare, as well as, particularly in the case of the Ciné-Latin, revivals of previously released films. This tendency continued through the 1930s and, following World War II, developed extensively, such that by 1946, eighty-three Parisian *ciné-clubs* could boast membership of over 50,000 subscribers. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the conventional *ciné-club* format of a screening followed by discussion and debate fulfilled an important goal of the process of “educat[ing] the viewer” (Pinel 41). These screenings, of course, were dominated by old films deemed worthy of multiple viewings. For Bazin in the 1950s, *ciné-clubs* were instrumental in the creation and development of a cinematic canon in which film was no longer a disposable consumer object, but rather a temporally resistant cultural product comparable to the other arts (“Reprises” 53). Although claims for the artistic status of films dates back to the early silent cinema, it is in the 1950s, at the moment that *cinéphiles* and institutionalized cinema critics emerge, that one finds oneself referring to and studying film as a mode of artistic expression.¹⁵

In his 1951 article, “A propos des reprises,” to support his argument that film had finally come into its own, Bazin compares the relation of filmgoers of the Classic periods to the films they viewed with that of the postwar era. Unlike literature whose imaginary realm materializes in the minds of its readers, and unlike theater where old plays can be, and are very often, updated in meaningful ways through direction and set design in order to facilitate greater spectator accessibility, films are fixed, sometimes embarrassingly so, in their own social context, conventions, and outmoded technology. These factors constituted a significant impediment

to a film's box-office longevity beyond its initial runs. Bazin notes that great directors responded to the dated nature of their works, reissuing some of their films by adding sound to silents (as D. W. Griffith did with *Birth of a Nation*), or by cutting or adding footage (as Abel Gance did with his *Napoléon vu par Abel Gance*), so as to make them conform to the "latest fashion," such that the relative obsolescence of its formal techniques and mise-en-scène cease to inhibit the spectator's ability to access its more essential aspects ("Reprises" 53).¹⁶ Bazin recognizes, however, that these modernized versions were quite different fish than the earlier ones. He notes, for instance, that when Chaplin updated a film, he withdrew the original from circulation so that the two would not be in financial competition with each other. But with the emergence of the *ciné-club* audience—a critically sophisticated and realistically minded group, he suggests—such factors would no longer be an obstacle.

Bazin complains in his 1952 "Remade in USA," about the short span of time between the runs of an original French film and its American remake, joining this article ideologically together with the earlier, "A propos des reprises." Simply put, if there exists an audience for old and foreign films, then there is no need to remake. If remaking occurs, there can be no other explanation than the ruthlessness and greed of Hollywood industry executives. Bazin assumes either that the art-house group is representative of the entire cinema-going public, or that all French filmgoers belong to that group. Whatever the case, he leaves out of his assessment the "old-fashioned, entertainment-seeking moviegoer" for whom the "aging" would continue to be a barrier to the amusement experience. We should not forget that most of French film production equally falls into the latter category. As Daniel Toscan du Plantier admits, "only about 20 of the 150 French films made a year are worth watching," which probably means that only 20 can qualify for the art-film classification, the rest falling into the mainstream commercial group (Cohen 2: 1+).

The issue of financial competition, along with that of the datedness of films from prior years, reminds us that the cinema, more visibly so than any other medium, is an industry whose product's style is often made more modern in order to maintain mass-market appeal. Bazin contends that the attraction of new film releases is the way in which they avail themselves of the latest technology in order to create an even greater illusion of reality. Two recent remakings/updatings illustrate the important role played by an evolving illusion of reality. The filmmakers of the recent re-release of the *Star Wars* trilogy addressed the issue of the originals' outdated technology

by beefing them up to meet the exacting tastes of the 1990s viewer, who has already been on a steady diet of sophisticated computer digitalization. And John Carpenter's *Escape from L.A.* (1996) takes the same story structure, even much the same character breakdown of *Escape from New York* (1981), and transposes them to Los Angeles, compensating for the original's modest budget and less advanced technology to bring it up to 1990s standards. Are these new films remakes or simply updating along the lines of Chaplin's addition of sound and René Clair's and Gance's addition of new or restored footage to old films? Most would agree that the new *Star Wars* is an updating because the structure of the original is only minimally modified. *Escape from L.A.* is a remake because it is a new production, with a different cast and location, and a modified story line. Or it is a sequel? Or is it both?

Bazin subscribes to an evolutionary model of the cinema, and comments that old films, even ones from the not too distant past, draw attention to the premature obsolescence of film technology and style, thus asserting the regular if not constant mobility of cinematic conceptions of reality and, thereby, filmic aesthetics of realism. He modifies this model, however, pointing to the artificial nature of its construction. While Bazin identifies the filmgoers desire for greater and greater cinematic realism as an operative aspect of the cinema's success, he underlines the conventional, and ultimately artificial nature of what each successive period accepts for realism in the technology and the stylistic techniques currently at the industry's disposal. So in terms of the commercial cinema, if a film's story continues to have a market potential that is only unrealized because of its "technical infirmities" ("Reprises" 54), updating/remaking appears justified. But in the eyes of the art cinema audience, remaking violates the sanctity of an original work. As noted earlier, Bazin decries "stupid" Hollywood producers who desecrate the code of imitation by reproducing an original film's images, when they should be reworking the story and endowing it with a director's personal style ("Remade" 57). As a film critic with a great appreciation for the filmic art, Bazin cannot reconcile the economics of film production with the romantic notion of the inviolability of the original, a notion which most art-house patrons aggressively embrace, and this contradiction forces him, as well other critics, to make distinctions between true and false remakes, distinctions which are made to conform to a general auteurist critique.

The "true," and censurable, remake, therefore, is the film that copies the way that the original's images are presented on the screen. The