

Introduction

CAROLYN JESS-COOKE AND CONSTANTINE VEREVIS

TONIGHT'S SCHEDULE FOR A LOCAL cinema reads as follows:

Die Hard 4.0 (15)

Directed by: Len Wiseman
Starring: Bruce Willis, Timothy
Olyphant, Maggie Q
11:00 13:50 17:10 20:10 21:20

Hostel Part II (18)

Directed by: Eli Roth
Starring: Bijou Phillips, Lauren
German, Roger Bart
21:30

**Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver
Surfer (PG)**

Directed by: Tim Story
Starring: Ioan Gruffudd, Jessica Alba,
Chris Evans
11:00 13:20 15:30

Ocean's Thirteen (PG)

Directed by: Steven Soderbergh
Starring: George Clooney, Brad Pitt,
Matt Damon
20:50

**Harry Potter and the Order of the
Phoenix (12A)**

Directed by: David Yates
Starring: Daniel Radcliffe, Emma
Watson, Rupert Grint
10:30 11:00 11:30 12:00 13:00 13:30
14:00 14:30 15:00 16:00 16:30 17:00
17:30 18:00 19:00 19:30 20:00 20:30
21:00

**Pirates of the Caribbean: At
World's End (12A)**

Directed by: Gore Verbinski
Starring: Johnny Depp, Orlando
Bloom, Keira Knightley
17:50

Shrek the Third (U)

Directed by: Chris Miller
Starring: Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy,
Cameron Diaz
11:10 11:40 12:20 12:50 13:40 14:40
15:10 15:40 16:10 16:50 17:20 18:10
18:40 19:10 19:50 20:20¹

STRIKINGLY, EVERY FILM LISTED here is a sequel. This being summer of 2007, it is not unusual for sequels to hold a strong cinematic presence—but *every screening*? And, looking at film releases scheduled for the coming months, the horizon is filled with sequels. Previous months have been very similar: *Hannibal Rising* (Peter Webber, 2007) took \$82 million worldwide at the box office—not bad for a fourth installment—while *Spider-Man 3* (Sam Raimi, 2007) has taken almost \$1 billion worldwide since its release just three months ago.² A recent article in the *New York Times* puts this into perspective: “In the last five years, only about 20 percent of the films with more than \$200 million in domestic ticket sales were purely original in concept, rather than a sequel or an adaptation of some pre-existing material” (Cieply). What is the significance of this, we ask, and why is sequel production increasing when critics have been lamenting about the sequel’s dismal impact on originality since cinema began? What can the various “takes” on sequelization these films offer tell us about the sequel’s relation to the text(s) from which it departs? More important, what does this sequel-dominated remit suggest about contemporary film production? What are the forces governing this resurgence of sequelization?

A closer examination of the films listed here provides some clues. First on the menu is *Die Hard 4.0* (Len Wiseman, 2007), which sees Bruce Willis retake the lead as action tough-nut John McClane (at 52 years old, no less) nineteen years after the first *Die Hard* (John McTiernan, 1988).



Figure I.1. *Live Free or Die Hard* (aka *Die Hard 4.0*; Len Wiseman, 2007).
Courtesy 20th Century Fox/The Kobal Collection/Masi, Frank.

Willis has personally endorsed this venture as “better than the first one,” whereas *The Guardian* stumbles to call it a sequel “(quatrequel? tetrequel?)” (qtd. in Sciretta; see also Bradshaw). Both discussions signal the film’s unequivocal derivation of previous texts, that the film is *always in relation* to its heritage and that both its meaning and entertainment value ultimately derive from a negotiation of the first three Die Hard episodes (1988, 1990, 1995). The term “sequel” is thus invested with notions of “better-ness” and retrospectivity, but is additionally thrown into question by sequels that are not “part twos.” In this regard, discussing *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer* (Tom Story, 2007) and *Hostel Part II* (Eli Roth, 2007) as “first” sequels seems appropriate, whereas *Shrek the Third* (Chris Miller, 2007) and *Ocean’s Thirteen* (Steven Soderbergh, 2007) offer what has come to be known as the “threequel,” or third film installment, which does not close the series (like the final part of a trilogy) but which does not really take it anywhere either (see Hendrix). “Threequels” are gap-fillers, apparently, or textual bridges that keep fans interested and merchandize sales up. Purportedly, and as its title suggests, *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World’s End* (Gore Verbinski, 2007) is the conclusion of a multibillion-dollar trilogy, although the enormous range of *Pirates’* tie-ins sweeping across the globe is enough to suggest that this film’s textual boundaries take the concept of sequelization (or indeed “threequelization”) to a whole new level.³ It is likewise with *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (David Yates, 2007), the fifth film in the series, the release of which preempts by one week the release of the last book in the *Harry Potter* series. Again, the hailstorm of textual aftermaths and merchandize tie-ins surrounding, preceding, and informing this film makes differentiating between book and film, film and sequel, sequel and merchandize very difficult.

From this relatively small list of films emerges a wide range of textual categories, cues, and connections that challenge any existing theory of intertextuality or even, as Gérard Genette puts it, *transtextuality*, his definition of “everything that brings [one text] into relation (manifest or hidden) with other texts” (*Architext* 81). This list also challenges previous notions of the film sequel as a “part two” or continuation of a previous “original,” insofar as the term “sequel” comes to mean, in some cases, the continuation of a continuation, whereas the concept of “originality” is swiftly unmoored from its safe corner in the harbor of literary (and film) theory and set adrift amid the squalls of narrative recycling. If this list is anything to go by, things have gotten a lot more complicated in critiquing textuality.

This book confronts the complications film sequels and their discursive aftermath(s) pose. Taking a range of sequels as case studies, the following chapters propose dynamic new critical approaches to emergent shifts across the spectrum of textual relations. Vigorously contending

with the sequel's industrial, aesthetic, cultural, political, and theoretical contexts, these chapters open new vistas on the exciting landscape of textual transposition. As one of few books dedicated to the subject of film sequelization,⁴ this collection discusses the sequel's investments in repetition, difference, continuation, and retroactivity, and particularly those attitudes and approaches toward the sequel that see it as a kind of figurehead of Hollywood's commercial imperatives.

For indeed the sequel—like the cinematic remake—has been largely disparaged throughout cinema's history as a textual leech, a formulaic financial format, and the assassin of "originality" (see Berliner; Castle; Greenberg; Hoberman; Verevis). Claire Perkins provides the example of the trailer for the 2006 Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF), and the way it valorizes the novelty and cultural value of its programming by contrasting it to the assumed dearth of originality in contemporary Hollywood:

[The MIFF trailer] features a scruffy, bespectacled teenager sandwiched between two suited Hollywood executive-types in the back of a limousine. As the car moves through a neon-lit streetscape, the execs use a non-question initially directed at the kid—"OK, so your script is a sequel, right?"—to launch into a breathless exchange concerning the relative economic benefits of sequels, prequels and post-sequel prequels before deciding between themselves that a sequel remake (which they term a "sequel-sequel") is the way to go with this project, and turning again to the kid to ask him how much he wants for the trilogy or—better—the tetralogy, reassuring themselves and him that "he can stretch . . . he'll stretch . . . we'll stretch it . . . yeah, yeah." The scene fades to black over their final mumblings, and the tagline for MIFF 2006 comes up: "It's a long way from Hollywood." (14)

In a similar way a spate of recent commentaries use terms such as "hackneyed," "avaricious," "unnecessary," and even "sucky" to discuss the sequel and project sequelization as a purely capitalist endeavor with terrifying outcomes for originality (see Coates; Nelson; Sullivan).⁵

Yet before we continue to rant about originality, we should really consider whether it ever really existed in the first place. Sequelization, we argue, operates not only as a secondary film venture but, as many highly self-reflexive and resolutely metareferential sequels denote, as a deconstructive framework within which such sweeping generalizations and fundamentally problematic terms such as "originality" and "intertextuality" can be unpacked and repositioned in the new contexts within

which contemporary film is produced. Closer examination of sequel criticism reveals the real argument often *not* to be about sequelization, but about a variety of Hollywood activities and reception practices under the cloak of a dubious “villain.” Indeed, most of the articles and reports that decry the sequel in such terms tend to cite it as a “recent” cinematic virus that has reached a peak, and in many ways it appears that the term “sequel” is employed—often mistakenly—to describe a whole range of imitative, derivative, appropriational, and remaking activities, as well as to define various processes of exchange between film studios and audiences (see Friend, “Copy Cats”; Silverman; Simonet). In short, the sequel’s discursive circulations are overloaded with accusations and definitions that otherwise demand closer scrutiny.

This book unpacks the cynicism and misinformed definitions surrounding sequelization and goes on to examine its more critical registers. We have titled this book *Second Takes* in recognition of the ways in which the sequel recapitulates features of an “original,” but additionally offers something new to its source. In contradistinction to the remake, the sequel does not prioritize the repetition of an original, but rather advances an exploration of alternatives, differences, and reenactments that are discretely charged with the various ways in which we may reread, remember, or return to a source. Concomitant with the gamut of merchandizing tie-ins, cross-media platforms, and film franchises that inform contemporary Hollywood cinema, the sequel is primarily a site within which communal spectatorship and paratextual discourses may be circulated, and by which the experience of an “original” may be extended, revisited, and heightened.

From such critical registers the collection’s first chapter departs. Constantine Verevis’s chapter examines the strategies of multiplication and serialization that inform multifilm franchises and series. Seeking ultimately to overcome the limitations of purely taxonomic definitions that seek to differentiate sequels from remakes, series, and sagas, the film sequel is interrogated here as a function of a network of commercial interests, textual strategies, and critical vocabularies. By looking to the ways in which this network is played out in George A. Romero’s (living) Dead trilogy—*Night of the Living Dead* (1968), *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), *Day of the Dead* (1985)—and its various off-shoots, including Romero’s recent *Land of the Dead* (2005) and *Diary of the Dead* (2007), Verevis argues for the inseparability of the sequel’s commercial, textual, and critical imperatives, at the same time calling for an overturning of the historical prioritization of an “original” text, offering the political and authorial modes at the heart of sequelization as much more compelling critical frameworks.

Such discussions of the sequel's various categories and textual relations outlined in Verevis's chapter are expanded on in Jennifer Forrest's chapter, in which she defines the idea of a "true" sequel as distinct from other forms of film serialization. Looking principally to a group of films from the Hollywood studio era, Forrest proposes discrete differences between the series and the true sequel. Negotiated through the example of *Four Daughters* (Michael Curtiz, 1938) and its sequels—*Four Wives* (Michael Curtiz, 1939) and *Four Mothers* (William Keighley, 1941)—Forrest's definitions prove vital for an analysis of contemporary industry practices that increase the audience for a product (sequels that are in reality a series) by appealing deceptively to a more sophisticated spectator—one that is conditioned to consume film "originals." Telling the difference, Forrest argues, is not always in the studios' interests.

Textual transpositions—whether between sequels and serials or originals and sequels—are, first and foremost, understood as industrial products. Yet Thomas Leitch's chapter adds a new form of textual transposition to the mix—"sequel-ready" fiction—which highlights the "marriage" that has taken place in recent years between literature and media, or rather the conditions by which this union has taken place. Although literary adaptation has been a dominant cinematic force since its inception, one may argue that the course of appropriation has not been entirely smooth. In the case of Helen Fielding's novel *Bridget Jones* (prefigured in Fielding's columns for the *Independent*) and its filmic incarnations—*Bridget Jones's Diary* (Sharon Maquire, 2001) and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (Beeban Kidron, 2004)—Leitch argues that the source text contains those elements that are necessary for an easy filmic transaction and, more important, for an apparently "natural" stream of sequels to emerge. By examining the matrix between the narrative dynamics that make fictional texts peculiarly hospitable to sequels and the cultural, social, and indeed sexual shifts that produce these texts, Leitch demonstrates movements between text and screen that orient the concept of "sequel" firmly within the "original."

Both the considerations of sequelization as distinct from serialization and the sequel as connective tissue across a textual collective as Forrest and Leitch explored are readdressed in R. Barton Palmer's chapter. Here Palmer notes the methods by which an "original" is constructed as such specifically by those "part twos" and derivations that offer retrospectively interpretive contexts. In turn, the sequel is constructed as a mechanism of reorientation within several related texts. As demonstrated by *The Godfather* and its *Parts II & III* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972, 1974, 1990), Palmer's notion of reorientation seeks to address the forces binding the Godfather texts together. The sequel is identified as a method

by which we can more fully understand and explore this collectivity, in the same moment as the singularity of each film is maintained and redefined through the sequel's textual imperatives. Palmer's considerations of "before" and "after" additionally inform his analyses of the films as he identifies the process of "sequeling" at the films' commercial and textual levels to be a key factor in the texts' narratological and aesthetic operations. From this vantage point, a broader perspective is shed on the process of sequelization in terms of the treatment of beginnings and endings that are encountered throughout adaptational successions.

Considerations of "beforeness" and "afterwardsness" are additionally explored elsewhere in the collection throughout their spectatorial and hermeneutic contexts. Calling on the Warner Brothers' Batman film franchise—in particular *Batman Begins* (Christopher Nolan, 2005), Paul Sutton's chapter explores the notion of the *prequel*, drawing on the notion of "afterwardsness" as a way to approach the prequel's theoretical, cultural, and economic boundaries. Despite its semantic registers of "beforeness," Sutton notes that the prequel is most often made after an "original," and, accordingly, negotiations of "before" and "after" underscore the prequel. Yet far from remaining as an internal logic, the prequel's skewed temporality spills over into its external operations. The guiding light of this chapter is the idea of "afterwardsness" as an expression of the reconstructive and re-creative nature of spectatorship. This process of spectatorship, Sutton argues, re-creates or remakes the films it "remembers," while at the same time enabling the "autotranslation" of the viewing subject. The prequel emerges from this study as a categorical process that takes place *outside* of the modes of film production and within the boundaries of audience reception.

Among the most critical issues informing the film sequel are its imbrications in cross-cultural dialogues. Daniel Herbert's chapter notes the important cultural interactions circulating among Japan, South Korea, and Hollywood, throughout the remaking and sequelization of Koji Suzuki's novel *Ring* in a cycle of films that includes *Ringu* (Hideo Nakata, 1998), *Rasen* (Jôji Iida, 1999), and *The Ring* (Gore Verbinski, 2002). Cohering within a "macro-regional" textual geography, these films—which evoke an entire wave of Hollywood remakes of Asian films that has become a significant trend within the global cultural industries—function to thread together connections and expose tensions between the cultures from which the texts derive. Herbert artfully composes a metaphor, geographic as well as economic and cultural: namely that of *The Ring* Intertext as the Pacific Rim. His chapter not only demonstrates the ways in which these interactions circulate among *The Ring* cycle's aesthetic strategies, transnational identities, and technological erasures,

but also reminds us that sequelization is by no means a phenomenon limited to Hollywood filmmaking.

Simon McEnteggart's chapter looks to cultural anxieties within the sequel in relation to the superhero subgenre, with a specific emphasis on films of the first decade of the twenty-first century and of the post-9/11 landscape. Whereas superhero films are often regarded cynically as filmic ventures aimed at a specific fan-base, McEnteggart argues that the superhero sequel registers cultural anxieties during the era of production. As an example, *Superman: The Movie* (Richard Donner, 1978) vocalizes concerns regarding the post-1960's decline in religious ideology and the "invisible threat" of the cold war throughout the narrative. In turn, its sequels focus on an actual attack by the cold war ideology on American ideals and institutions (*Superman II*, 1980), the anxieties regarding the advancement of technology, corrupt bureaucracy, and masculine duality (*Superman III*, 1983), and the fears involving nuclear power (*Superman IV: The Quest for Peace*, 1987). Whereas superhero films made prior to 9/11 typically contain internal battles of "good versus evil," McEnteggart argues that sequels created in the post-9/11 period—*Superman Returns* (Bryan Singer, 2006), *Blade II* (Guillermo del Toro, 2002), *X-Men 2* (Bryan Singer, 2003), and *Spider-Man 2* (Sam Raimi, 2003)—feature greater external threats posed by the "other" and are symbolic of the "war on terror" that President George W. Bush proposed. In examining superhero sequels, valuable theoretical frameworks regarding cultural and historical anxieties are revealed, as well as the evolving state of political awareness in popular culture texts.

Interrogating a different aspect of US filmmaking, Claire Perkins considers cultural difference in terms of the processes of exchange and dialogue established between two historical periods and their attendant cultural resonances. By considering several recent films, such as *The Royal Tenenbaums* (Wes Anderson, 2001), *Lost in Translation* (Sofia Coppola, 2003), and *The Squid and the Whale* (Noah Baumbach, 2005), Perkins juxtaposes this "smart" cinema with the commercial system of the Hollywood blockbuster. Perkins proceeds to reveal the American "smart" film as a sequel to the "New Hollywood" of the late 1960s and early 1970s, primarily in terms of its method of repeating themes of alienation—typified in Jerry Schatzberg's 1971 film, *Scarecrow*—and by substituting irony and nihilism for the nostalgia and anger (or activism) of the earlier period. By arguing that "smart" cinema signals a kind of cultural transition (facilitating the creation of a "new image" in commercial filmmaking), Perkins further suggests the sequel as a type of critical lens through which to rethink the formal and political crises of the first "New Hollywood."

Hollywood's self-appropriation and canonization is the subject of Joyce Goggin's chapter. As Goggin sees it, the original, the remake, and the sequel serve as showcases for popular stars rather than as sites of adaptation for any revered artistic antecedent. By investigating the Ocean's films—*Ocean's Eleven* (Lewis Milestone, 1960) and its Steven Soderbergh directed remake (*Ocean's Eleven*, 2001) and sequels (*Ocean's Twelve*, 2004, and *Ocean's Thirteen*, 2007)—Goggin considers autoreflexivity in these films as the promotion of the famous stars who act in them. The sequel's commercial dimension is further considered in the light of the Las Vegas context, in which the narrative emphasis on gambling, stealing, and materialism is seen to serve as a uniquely referential portrait of the sequel's economic purposes. The “nowness” on which the Ocean's series banks is therefore constituted by the temporality of the gambler, and the logic of “presentness” extends to the films' trademark, self-conscious humor (predicated on the stars' awareness of their own popularity at the time of production). These films not only construct a kind of “nowness” through the hype of Las Vegas, gambling, and pop-cultural icons, but also return to themselves for source material, thereby bringing the past repeatedly into the present.

Turning to the film-television interface, Ina Rae Hark explores the dynamics of resurrection inherent in the sequel phenomenon by looking to *Serenity*, the 2005 feature film sequel to Joss Whedon's hybrid science fiction/Western television series *Firefly*, cancelled by the FOX network after only eleven episodes had been broadcast in 2002. Universal approved the follow-up film in part because it served as a loss leader to persuade Whedon to sign a picture development deal with the studio, but the studio also held out the possibility of a series of film sequels if *Serenity* became a box-office success. Whedon thus had to craft a film that provided fitting closure for fans of the truncated series—the “decent burial” of the chapter's title—yet one that also left open the possibility of “resurrection.” Hark's chapter draws on fan discourse to demonstrate the ways in which *Serenity* and *Firefly* deal with death, loss, and mourning, and how they provide a unique perspective on the metatextual bereavement process that sequels to past television programs invariably enact.

Nicholas Rombes speculates on how new and emerging digital mediums and interfaces—ranging from DVDs, to video cell phones, to the video iPod—are reshaping traditional notions of the sequel. As this chapter observes, imagining “before” and “after” is becoming increasingly difficult as the ubiquity of communication technologies and media interfaces means that narratives are in a continually “present” state. During the classic cinema era viewers had relatively little control over, or physical interaction with, the screen. Sequels were released and viewed according to the wishes of the studios. Today, however, what does it mean to release

a sequel when audiences exercise a much greater degree of control not only over the film cycle that includes sequels, but also over the temporal dimensions of individual films themselves? Furthermore, the numerous bonus features, added material, and alternate endings and footage included in DVDs today contribute to the dissolution of the sequel.

Finally, the sequel's role in an ever-increasing landscape of media convergence and franchising is considered in Carolyn Jess-Cooke's chapter. With a focus on the *Pirates of the Caribbean* (Gore Verbinski, 2003, 2005, 2007) films, merchandizing, and related media outputs, this chapter looks to the forms of consumer participation across the franchise as what she calls "sequelized" spectatorship. Sequelized spectatorship is considered in terms of the many forms of interaction and participation with which the Pirates's spectator engages, which include a long list of secondary spectatorial encounters, as well as role-playing, secondary performance, and generational correspondence. The primary method by which the franchise achieves this, Jess-Cooke argues, is by creating another kind of sequel: that is, a sequel to the ideological and cultural architecture of the film's production house, the Walt Disney Company. Operating as a process of ideological exchange and perpetuation, the sequel thus enables the retransmission of Disney values throughout the *Pirates* franchise, while the qualities of community and synergy attributed to piracy across its textual history rereads the Walt Disney Company as an institution for the community, or one in which a sense of belonging and collaboration can be located. Citing Disney's collaborative structures as a means by which its films and media platforms are perpetuated across generations, the chapter posits sequelized spectatorship as the way in which the text invites the spectator to rewrite it across multiple media arenas, activities, physical territories, and generational boundaries.

Notes

1. See <<http://www.cineworld.co.uk/reservation/ChoixResa.jgi?DATE=20070713&CINEMA=53>>. Accessed 12 July 2007.

2. The exact figure is \$886,140,575. See <<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=spiderman3.htm>>. Accessed 20 July 2007.

3. Since the time of writing (2007), a fourth installment—*Pirates of the Caribbean 4*—has been projected for release in 2011.

4. Others include Budra and Schellenberg, eds., *Part Two: Reflections on the Sequel*; Drew, *Motion Picture Series and Sequels: A Reference Guide*; Husband, *Sequels: An Annotated Guide to Novels in Series*; Jess-Cooke, *Film Sequels: Theory and Practice from Hollywood to Bollywood*; Nowlan and Nowlan, *Cinema Sequels and Remakes, 1903–1987*.

5. See also <<http://www.comixtreme.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-15344.html>>. Accessed 22 July 2007.