

KATHLEEN LOOCK and CONSTANTINE VEREVIS, eds., *Film Remakes, Adaptations and Fan Productions. Remake/Remodel* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 272 pp.

In *Storytelling in Film and Television*, Kristin Thompson describes remakes, adaptations, and sequels as both “the recycling and expansion of existing narratives.”¹ In other words, and contrary to critical voices that reduce processes of cultural reproduction to commercially-driven acts of copying, Thompson points out how these cinematic forms are characterized by serial patterns of repetition and variation. This serial understanding of cultural reproduction is also emphasized in *Film Remakes, Adaptations and Fan Productions*. The volume, a collection of papers originally held at a conference at the University of Göttingen in 2010, provides a variety of critical perspectives on remakes and adaptations that “contest the idea that the remake is a debased copy of some superior original” (2). As the editors point out in their introduction, the twelve contributions seek to get a grasp on “these diverse and yet similar processes of cultural reproduction and the positive potential of ‘retromania’ in our contemporary media climate” (12). Combining the interdisciplinary perspectives of American Studies, film and television studies, as well as fan studies, the volume approaches the phenomenon from three different angles, which also make up its thematic sections: Filmic adaptations of canonical literary texts (“Adapt”), remakes of cinematic classics (“Remake”), and fan-made video productions (“Remodel”).

Frank Kelleter’s “‘Toto, I Think We’re in Oz Again’ (and Again and Again): Remakes and Popular Seriality” is not only the first essay in this section, but also an excellent starting point for the entire volume. Combining textual analysis and theoretical overview, Kelleter reads the series of transmedial Oz adaptations against the backdrop of twentieth-century American popular culture and within the context of what he calls “popular seriality.” Instead of treating the different Oz-versions in terms of “original and adaptation,” Kelleter argues that “we find opportune serializations across different artistic channels” (23). Therefore, rather than reading L. Frank Baum’s 1900

novel as the “original” Oz-text, Kelleter treats *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* already as a “re-telling” of traditional fairy tales and thus as one of many instances in the larger (serial) field of popular culture (19). Kelleter explores various facets of the popular series, but also uses his analysis of the countless Oz narratives to call for a more complex academic understanding of adaptations and remakes in general. Rather than merely asking “how a given serial text reflects the cultural situation and intentional structures of its time,” Kelleter proposes an understanding of remakes that emphasizes the agency of a given popular series “in enabling its own cultural realities and intentional follow-ups” (37). Even though most of the following contributions still correspond to the former, more common approach (yielding several relevant insights, to be sure), Kelleter’s alternative approach provides this volume with an original perspective that goes beyond much of the work being done in the field.

Even though they may be less ambitious in theoretical scope, the remaining three chapters of this section each present an intriguing analysis of the relationship between adaptation and the contested issue of fidelity. Stephanie Sommerfeld analyzes the most recent cinematic iteration of *Sherlock Holmes* and focuses especially on the discursive construction of the movie as a more faithful adaptation compared to other versions of Doyle’s detective series. Next to an analysis of *Sherlock Holmes*’s exploration of its own medial status in times of media change, Sommerfeld uses Genettian terminology to show how both the film and its surrounding promotional discourse attempt “to outdo previous television and film productions” through a self-conscious construction of fidelity (47). Given that the introduction as well as the first two chapters explicitly distanced themselves from the contested “fidelity approach” in adaptation studies, Amy Martin’s emphasis on how cinematic adaptations of Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* differ from the novel initially comes as a bit of a surprise. However, she shows how comparative analyses along these lines do not have to revert to questions of fidelity to some original text, but rather can be used to question the very idea of a stable “original.” Martin argues that despite—or maybe precisely *because of*—its deviations from the novel, the 1939 film adaptation has become the most relevant reference text for many popular engagements with *Wuthering*

¹ Kristin Thompson, *Storytelling in Film and Television* (Cambridge and London: Harvard UP, 2003), 83, emphasis added.

Heights. Thus, rather than Brontë or her novel, “Hollywood has created the myth of *Wuthering Heights* that has lasted until today” (71). Finally, taking the negative critical reactions to the most recent adaptation of Robert Penn Warren’s *All the King’s Men* as the point of departure for her analysis, Birte Otten reads the 2008 version as a self-consciously faithful adaptation of the original novel rather than a remake of the first movie version. Resonating nicely with both preceding essays, Otten’s comparative approach captures how a more “accurate” adaptation of the novel has led to a movie that is “compromised by the very aspects that are particular to Warren’s *literary* narrative and that resist easy transfer into the medium of film” (99, emphasis in the original).

The volume’s second part continues to problematize simplistic understandings of concepts such as “original” and “copy,” yet subtly shifts the focus from processes of inter-medial adaptation to those of intramedial remaking. Kathryn Schweishelm compares the 1975 movie version of *The Stepford Wives* to its 2004 remake and succinctly illustrates how the differences between both films reflect the development of the women’s movement from the second wave of feminism to contemporary postfeminism. Schweishelm argues that the 2004 movie contributes to a broader remaking of the understanding of feminism in American culture through a reflection of postfeminism’s “flattening out of power relations and its corresponding emphasis on individualism” (118). By comparing *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and its numerous adaptations and remakes since the 1950s, Kathleen Loock also shows how different versions of the same story reflect their respective historical context. However, in line with Kelleter, Loock does more than that; next to an impressively comprehensive analysis of all versions in one short essay, she places special emphasis on those features of the first movie that make it such a fitting text for processes of serial remaking along the lines of “repetition, variation, and continuation” (124). In contrast, Sonja Georgi focuses on “the ‘adaptation’ of cultural discourses” evident in the 2004 remake of *The Manchurian Candidate* (147). Reading the most recent version in terms of cyberfiction, Georgi shows how the Cold War anxieties reflected in the 1962 movie are translated into current debates on globalization and terrorism, yet continue to express anxieties about the political and cultural Other. In the final chapter of this sec-

tion, Constantine Verevis leaves Hollywood behind and introduces the formally most self-conscious remake of the entire book. He carefully traces how *H Story*, a faux-documentary about the attempt to remake Alain Resnais’s *Hiroshima mon amour*, performs the process of remaking as postmodern play. In his analysis, Verevis offers a compelling case for connecting *H Story*’s problematization of how to remake *Hiroshima mon amour* with the latter’s emphasis on the impossibility to represent the reality of Hiroshima.

Even though they stress the elements of adaptation and remaking to varying degrees, the first two parts are similar in their focus on close readings of professional movie versions of earlier filmic or literary texts. The third part, in contrast, considerably broadens the scope of the volume by explicitly focusing on the realm of fan productions. In “Remaking Texts, Remodeling Scholarship,” Robin Anne Reid uses the example of “fan vidding” to critically (re-) evaluate the role of scholars in the emerging field of fan studies. Through an analysis of fan videos that address issues of racism and sexism in *Firefly* and *Serenity*, Reid convincingly shows how academia can profit from an acknowledgment of critical work being done in fandom as well as more intersectional approaches that combine critical analyses along the lines of race, class, and gender. After Reid’s rather programmatic essay, Sibylle Machat analyzes so-called fanfic trailers and shows how they remake and remodel their source text, in this case the BBC-series *Merlin*. With the help of four case studies, she elucidates this recent phenomenon and offers a classification of the different creative possibilities of this fan-based process of remodeling. The last two chapters are each devoted to fan-created parodies of pop-cultural texts. Lili Hartwig analyzes fan-made parodies of, among others, Kubrick’s *The Shining* to illustrate the function of these texts in the wider cultural and commercial logic of Hollywood cinema. Thankfully avoiding any temptation to romanticize the role of fans in popular culture, Hartwig’s essay provides a comprehensive overview of typical features that helps get a grasp on a rather recent cultural phenomenon. The same is true for Daniel Stein’s contribution, which brings together many of the aspects analyzed so far and nicely bookends the volume. In his analysis of fan-based as well as professional spoofs of recent *Spider-Man* and *Batman* movies—that is, films that already adapt and remake previ-

ous texts—Stein both captures the individual qualities of his case studies as well as the larger (pop-)cultural and serial processes that engender them in the first place.

With its successful integration of close readings and theoretical reflections, Stein's essay exemplifies how Loock and Verevis's volume captures the complex phenomenon of remaking across different media, disciplines, cultural spheres, and national contexts. While some chapters more obviously relate to others (the contributions from the context of the research group "Popular Seriality: Aesthetics and Practice" obviously share common ground), the more singular essays also fit well within the larger scope of this volume. And even though some of the rather short chapters introduce promising thesis statements without being able to fully develop their arguments—which is most likely due to the fact that we are dealing here with conference proceedings—each individual contribution presents a relevant case study and provides

various concise insights into the current state of research. Furthermore, it is the volume's self-proclaimed emphasis "on remaking as an *audience* category" that makes the book such a valuable contribution to the critical debate on cultural reproduction (3, emphasis in the original). The editors' decision to include fan perspectives and productions emphasizes the productive potential of reception within *and* beyond the realm of fandom and convincingly shows how any adaptation or remake is always already the product of reception. Even for readers not particularly invested in fan studies, this proves to be a crucial element of the volume's take on adaptations and remakes. Together with the accessible language and structure of the individual contributions, the volume provides its readers with valuable material for the classroom as well as further research on the topic of cultural reproduction in times of "retromania."

Hannover

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