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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF ARTS

School of Humanities



**Unmaking the remake: Lacanian psychoanalysis, Deleuzian logic, and the problem of
repetition in Hollywood cinema**

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May, 2010

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS
SCHOOL OF ENGLISH
Doctor of Philosophy

UNMAKING THE REMAKE: LACANIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS, DELEUZIAN LOGIC,
AND THE PROBLEM OF REPETITION IN HOLLYWOOD CINEMA

by Dan Varndell

Repetition is inherent to cinema. From the complex interweaving of genre cycles and Hollywood stars to the elementary mechanism of film projection (twenty-four times per second): *cinema is repetition*. It is perhaps little wonder then that psychoanalysis is often thought of as one of *the* discourses with which to write about film in the 20th century. However, this thesis problematises both cinematic repetition and psychoanalytic film theory, stressing that each is haunted by a spectre: the remake, and the film-philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, respectively. Despite its critical opprobrium, I explore the remake not only as a viable object of cinematic scholarship, but one necessary in moving past the *impasse* of film studies identified by Timothy Corrigan (1991) as ‘historical hysteria’. My research turns to Deleuzian film theory as a *counterpart*, rather than replacement, of the predominant Lacanian model. This is, however, neither a defence of the remake nor of psychoanalysis, but, rather, an attempt to submit both to a radical reassessment that, as Lacan says, aims at giving you a ‘kick up the arse’ (1998:49).

Eschewing the ‘example’ as a remnant of film theory’s current collapse in form, I suggest two ‘case studies’ for consideration, augmented by a cache of film references: (1) Gus Van Sant’s shot-for-shot remake (1998) of Alfred Hitchcock’s original *Psycho* (1960) as a ‘symptom’ of Hollywood’s *self-cannibalisation*; and (2) George Sluizer’s *The Vanishing* (1993), a Hollywood ‘auto-remake’ of his own Dutch original, *Spoorloos* (1988), as a ‘fetish’ of Hollywood’s desire in the European ‘Other’. Rather than expose Deleuze to a Lacanian framework I subject the one to a reading of the other in a möbius relation, turning them inside-out, so to speak. Mediating these two thinkers is Slavoj Žižek, a cultural theorist whose own ‘filosophy’ is revealed from amongst his often frenetic writings. In so doing, I expose a dark underside to Hollywood repetition, one which provides some new tools for understanding the popularity of cinema’s most critically neglected discourse.

LIST OF CONTENTS

List of figures – p. 6

Author's declaration and acknowledgements – p.8

Preface – p.10

1. Introduction – Rethinking Remaking: Psychoanalysis, historical hysteria, and cinematic repetition – p.14
2. Chapter 1 – An ‘encounter’: Deleuze and Lacan pervert the remake – p.36
3. Chapter 2 – Case study I: *Psycho* and the ‘scene’ fetish – p.76
4. Chapter 3 – Case study II: *The Vanishing* and the man who wanted to know – p.112
5. Chapter 4 – The ‘irrational remake’: Time and memory in unmaking – p.150
6. Conclusion – The four fundamental concepts of the remake – p.186

Appendices – p.200

Bibliography – p.204

Filmography – p. 214

Websites – p. 219

LIST OF FIGURES

All images are either original screen shots or else have been retrieved from a creative commons source.

All sources have been duly acknowledged.

- 0.1. *Psycho* (1960) and *Psycho* (1998)
- 0.2. Andy Warhol, 'Marilyn' (1967), image reproduced courtesy of oddsock, uploaded on 17/02/2006, at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/oddsock/100943517/> [retrieved 01/12/2009]
- 0.3. Andy Warhol, 'Marilyn Monroe's Lips' (1962), image reproduced courtesy of Cle0patra, uploaded on 09/01/2008, at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/cle0patra/2180521574/> [retrieved 15/01/2010]
- 1.1. M. C. Escher, 'Moebius Strip II (Red Ants)' (1963), image reproduced courtesy of Mistico, at <http://my.opera.com/utraj/albums/showpic.dml?album=150700&picture=2194085> [retrieved 10/01/2010]
- 1.2. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978)
- 1.3. *The Invasion* (2007) and *Body Snatchers* (1993)
- 1.4. *Alien* (1979)
- 2.1. *Raiders of the Lost Ark: The Adaptation* (1989) and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981)
- 2.2. *Psycho* (1960) and *Psycho* (1998)
- 2.3. *Psycho II* (1983)
- 2.4. *Psycho III* (1986)
- 2.5. Shower scene tabulation
- 2.6. *Psycho* (1998)
- 3.1. *L'homme qui voulait savoir* (1988)
- 3.2. *Spoorloos* and *The Vanishing* (1993)
- 3.3. *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) and *À bout de souffle* (1960)
- 3.4. *Spoorloos* and *Nattevagten (Night Watch, 1994)*
- 4.1. *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991)
- 4.2. *The Conversation* (1974)
- 4.3. *Psycho* (1960)
- 4.4. *Psycho II* (1983)
- 4.5. *The Conversation* (1974) and *Psycho II* (1983)
- 4.6. *Les Diaboliques (The Fiends, 1955)* and *Psycho* (1960)
- 4.7. *Psycho* (1960) and *Psycho* (1998)
- 5.1. Hans Holbein, *The Ambassadors* (1533), image reproduces courtesy of kerim, uploaded on 03/02/2005, at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/kerim/4212198/> [retrieved 01/02/2010]
- 5.2. *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991)

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Dan Varndell, declare that the thesis entitled ‘Unmaking the remake: Lacanian psychoanalysis, Deleuzian logic, and the problem of repetition in Hollywood cinema’ and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- none of this work has been published before submission.

Signed:

Date: 21/05/2010

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PREFACE

“It’s the same movie, only completely different. It follows the same plot, except where it changes everything.”

– Desmond Howe (1993)

Critically scorned, and yet (paradoxically) commercially successful, remakes have never been half as popular in academia as they have in cinemas. In fact, critics and academics seem united in their mistrust of the remake, with most lamenting the end of ‘original stories’ in Hollywood resulting in an increasingly “rear-view mirror culture” (Groen, 1998). However, like them or loathe them, remakes are more popular than ever, are here to stay, and deserve not only the acknowledgement of film studies, but a serious theory to read them with. In fact, in accordance with the möbius topology of this study, one should be directed first to my appendix, for it tells its own story about the proliferation of the remake across film history, space, and genre. One is inclined to reach for Freud to deal with this phenomenon, given his advancement of repetition compulsion, the return of the repressed, and the Oedipus complex, however, Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic film theory has fallen out of favour of late as cinema theorists increasingly turn towards Deleuze and Foucault to break the perceived sovereignty of the psychoanalytic discourse. A deadlock exists between these two seemingly incompatible and antagonistic schools of thought. Perhaps we should reach instead for Deleuze then, as the incumbent thinker of film theory? Alternatively, maybe we should attempt to reconcile the two by inviting them both to the cinema for the latest remake, and see what happens? This thesis suggests something far more explosive.

If Freud and Lacan are missing from recent Deleuzian theoretical contributions from philosophers like Daniel Frampton (2006), and presumed dead by film theorists like Steven Shaviro (1993), it at first seems tempting – as a psychoanalyst – to send out the search party and apply the kiss of life. However, what if we assume instead that these obituaries are *fully appropriate*? Our only correction would be to state that psychoanalysis is not simply dead, but, rather, it is *undead*, like the protagonists of so many horror remakes. Compounding this, what if Deleuze – far from emerging as the father of a new rebirth in film theory – has yet to be fully conceived; is *unborn*, so to speak? The problem with Deleuze is that he is mostly known through his work on *Anti-Oedipus*, which as the name suggests, is highly critical of psychoanalysis, and attempts to move past the oedipal family and reject Lacan’s forms.

However, Alain Badiou has stated that Félix Guattari was Deleuze's "bad influence",* and Žižek has called their collaboration on *Anti-Oedipus* "arguably Deleuze's worst book" (2004a:21). Perhaps there is 'another Deleuze' beneath the popular one, a Deleuze waiting to be born into film theory, one who is much closer to Freud and Lacan than is currently assumed. Was it not, after all, Deleuze's earlier works, *Repetition and Difference* (1968) and *The Logic of Sense* (1969), that led Michel Foucault to proclaim that "one day, perhaps, this century will be called Deleuzian" (1970)?

This thesis takes a serious look at Hollywood cinema's remake compulsion and develops a rigorous remake model based on a theory that takes in both an unknown Deleuze and a Lacan known all-too-well. It is neither reconciliatory nor dialogic (are not all dialogues hermetically sealed in academia?), but is rather what Slavoj Žižek (2004) calls "an *encounter*". While demonstrating the pointlessness of throwing the psychoanalytic baby out with the film theory bathwater, it offers a truly mixed methodology aimed at testing and provoking debate on a body of films suffering from 'historical hysteria', whose symptoms include self-differentiation, paradox, and ultimately, schizophrenia. Now is the time then for film theory itself to become self-differentiated, paradoxical, and schizoid.

And for those who still cannot conceive of a Deleuzo-Lacanian film theory, let them recourse to Lacan himself, who once said: "Let's try to practise a little brain-washing on ourselves" (1992:307)...

A note on conventions

Lacan often insisted that his neologisms (notably '*jouissance*' and '*objet petit a*') remain untranslated in English, thereby attaching to the terms a semantic status, a tradition I follow. In addition, most of Freud's German concepts are represented with their conventional English translation and the German in parenthesis (for example, 'death drive' [*todestrieb*]). However, as with Lacan, some Freudian concepts remain without translation also (for example, *id*) for the same reasons above. Some psychoanalytic terms, most notably the concept of 'the uncanny' (*das unheimliche*), contain considerable differences between translations (on which Freud writes at length), and in these cases, while I use the terms interchangeably, in every single case – irrespective of the specific terminology and its dual meanings – it is Freud's description of the term to which I refer (unless explicitly stated otherwise). Moreover, I keep Freud's spelling of the word 'phantasy' when referring specifically to the sense of the term as denoting an imaginary 'scene' in which an unconscious

* See Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamour of Being* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

desire is played out for the subject. I retain the English spelling, 'fantasy', for all instances of a subject's fantasising in the sense of *conscious* imaginings. Similarly, the word 'Trieb' is rendered throughout this thesis as 'drive' rather than 'instinct' (as it appears in Deleuze's translations, some of Lacan's, and James Strachey's *Standard Edition*). It is Lacan himself who points out the important distinction between Freud's 'Trieb' and the German 'Instinkt', when he writes that "*the word Trieb... is much more revealing of urgency than the word instinctual. Trieb gives you a kick up the arse, my friends – quite different from so-called instinct*" (1998:49). Also, I refer mainly to Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis only, and so when using terms like the death drive I am not referring to Melanie Klein's interpretation, or Laplanche and Pontalis's revisions, etc., unless explicitly stated. I will at all times distinguish between Lacan and Freud's ideas on psychoanalysis as they differ, especially when Lacan is developing what he calls Freud's 'intuitions'.

Furthermore, when using foreign film titles for the first time I use the common English translation with the original title in brackets, for example, *The Ring (Ringu)*, and the English title thereafter. Exceptions to this rule include foreign titles more commonly known by their original-language title (for example, *Les Diaboliques*), and my case study, *Spoorloos* and its Hollywood remake, *The Vanishing*. The former will always be referred to using the Dutch title, while the latter will be referred to using the English translation, for reasons that will become clear in the study. Where originals and remakes share a title, for example with *Psycho*, the former will be referred to as the 'original', or 'Hitchcock's' *Psycho*, and the latter the 'remake' or 'Van Sant's' to avoid confusion, even though part of the remit of this study is a rethinking of both the terms 'original' and 'remake'. Nonetheless, for the sake of the reader's (and my) sanity, these qualifying terms will be employed in this instance, and not (as is frequently the convention in remake theory) a title identified by the date at which the film was released (for example, *Psycho'98*, *Psycho'60*), for reasons that will again become clear.

Finally, I have used gender neutral language throughout this study. However at certain points, when for example I am discussing either a specifically male or female subject (or object), as is frequently the case in psychoanalysis, I will use pronouns accordingly, but do so very specifically and never anachronistically.

INTRODUCTION

RETHINKING REMAKING: PSYCHOANALYSIS, HISTORICAL HYSTERIA, AND CINEMATIC REPETITION

Only the mutations of the strong survive. The weak, the anonymous, the defeated leave few marks [...] history loves only those who dominate her: it is a relationship of mutual enslavement.

– Salman Rushdie, *Shame* (1983)

Has Freud really fallen off his Viennese pedestal? The ‘undead’ zombie-analyst

It is perhaps one of the 20th century’s greatest ironies that while film is undoubtedly the psychoanalytic subject *par excellence*, the ultimate ‘patient’ on the ‘couch’ of cultural theory, Freud wanted nothing to do with the silver screen – never once undertaking an analysis of film. That the year 1895 is the shared birthday of the publication of Freud’s first major work on psychoanalysis and the Lumière brothers’ first screening in a Parisian café further adds to this irony. As early as 1914, Freud’s disciple Otto Rank had noticed that cinematography “in numerous ways reminds us of the dream-work” (cited in Sabbadini, 2003:12n), so why was Freud so mistrustful of the cinematic apparatus, despite using examples of ‘parapraxes’ (minor intrusions of the unconscious) from every other cultural form including literature, plays, art, sculpture, memoirs, fairy tales, and of course, even jokes? Not only do psychoanalysis and cinema share the same birthday at the *fin de siècle*, but according to Christian Metz, both anticipated the onslaught of fascism and were “peculiar to a historical epoch (that of capitalism) and a state of society, so-called industrial civilisation” (2001:3). Mass-production and wide-spread hysteria (in both arenas) seemed to posit these two as soul-mates, like childhood sweethearts. It was more than a source of frustration for psychoanalytic film scholars to know of Freud’s abstention from analysing film himself, even reportedly turning down \$100,000 from Hollywood producer Samuel Goldwyn to write or give his advice on a screenplay about love (Lear, 2005:xv). However, while Freud refrained from hystericising film, it seems early film directors certainly did not refrain from filming hysteria.

It is Laura Mulvey (2003) who provides the most plausible rationale, that, perhaps, it was their very *coincidence* that prevented film from being a viable subject for analysis, that film, for Freud, was much too modern, a celebration of “the newest technology, the novelty, speed and glamour of urban life and, indeed, the robotic, androgynous body of the young modern woman” (Mulvey, 2003:xvii). It could be of no use to a discourse in need of a subject who, by definition, has been “through the mill”, so to speak. Mulvey argues that for Freud,

film had not yet become hystericalised. Of course this has all changed today, with the cinematic apparatus properly consigned to a full century of new forms, revolutions, and collapses, and now taking on a degree of uncanniness (*unheimlichkeit*). It is with no small sense of relief then that contemporary psychoanalytic film scholars can reconcile themselves with the suspicion that today Freud might have had much to say on the medium.

It is not only film itself which has become uncanny, for film *theory* also has become somewhat uncanny, which as Freud wrote is a requirement for any model of repression where “the finding of an object is in fact a *refinding* of it” (2001:222). Psychoanalytic film theory gained considerable weight following the adaptation of Lacan’s revitalisation of the waning discourse when he proposed his famous “Return to Freud”. While Lacan also shied away from interpreting the silver screen, his impact on film theory is as groundbreaking as his impact on psychoanalysis itself – what Gaston Bachelard would call an ‘epistemological break’ – reacting against other psychoanalytic schools including ego-psychology, object-relations theory, and the Kleinian school, who had in his view “misread” Freud. As the enfant terrible of psychoanalysis, Lacan was promptly expelled from the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA), whereupon he founded his own rival school, *L’Ecole Freudienne de Paris* (EFP). Lacan’s work was highly influential, especially given his openness to other disciplines. François Roustang notes that while the other Freudian psychoanalytic schools were clique, only ever allowing analysts to join their elitist ranks, Lacan’s school was open: “You did not have to be an analyst, or even be in analysis, to be made a member of the School; it could even be said that the more remote from psychoanalysis your primary affiliation, the greater your chances of being warmly welcomed” (1990:6). Lacan embraced philosophers and mathematicians (lawyers even) and in doing so he opened up psychoanalysis to disciplines that previously would have been unwelcome. This inspired a wave of psychoanalytic film theory now equipped with the licence to apply the vocabulary of psychoanalysis to films that had been under the Freudian spell for over half a century, but without a theory to read them with. Following thinkers like Christian Metz and the development of feminist film studies throughout the 1970s and 1980s, psychoanalytic film theory grew, each reading film through the lens of a school of thought which proposed that the popularity of cinematic forms lay in its ability to imperfectly reflect reality and delve into unconscious dream states.

Recently however, the 100th anniversary of the publication of Freud’s magnum opus, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, was met with a fresh wave of accusations concerning the many inaccuracies of the psychoanalytic discipline. In *Killing Freud: 20th Century Culture and the Death of Psychoanalysis* (2004), Todd Dufresne claims that no other figure made more mistakes concerning his fundamental principles. Combined with Catherine Meyer’s attempt to list these mistakes in *The Black Book of Psychoanalysis* (2007), it seems that Freud really had

fallen off of his Viennese pedestal. Josh Cohen suggests that the biggest problem with psychoanalysis is its dual status: it is at once over-familiar and obscure, all-too readily accepted and firmly rejected. On the one hand, for example, we get positive reactions as diverse as open acceptance (“Of course we believe in Freud”), and ironic reflexivity (“Of course I harbour secret incestuous desires, what’s the big deal?”). On the other hand however, we get negative responses ranging from the indignant (“Of course it’s all nonsense!”), to incredulousness (“My *mother*, are you sick?”) (Cohen, 2005:2). Cohen humorously points towards the Freud action figure as an example of this problematic compromise, for ‘Action Freud’ illustrates the difficulty confronting anyone attempting to ‘get at’ the *real Freud*. ‘Action Freud’ is the perfect representation of the uncanniness of psychoanalysis, painting a picture of a discourse not unlike a popular TV show complete with catchphrases (“Tell me about your mother”, etc.). Does Action Freud indicate that psychoanalysis really is *dead* as a serious discourse with which to read film?

With Freud’s usurpation in psychotherapy, it stood to reason that criticisms of his French successor would at some point follow, and emerging from the ensuing backlash against the perceived sovereignty of Lacanian film theory emerged a new discourse with which to read film. The work of Lacan’s contemporary, philosopher Gilles Deleuze, took some time to reach many readers in the west, but is fast becoming paradigmatic in film studies. Furthermore, an impasse created by the death of psychoanalysis has led to a rise in the self-described ‘post-theory’, led by David Bordwell and Noël Carroll (1996), which seeks to “reconstruct film studies” and looks almost anywhere *but* psychoanalysis to do so. The post-theorists argue for an integrative ‘hybrid’ theoretical discourse, one which incorporates a horizontally integrated theoretical model. Alongside post-theory, two Deleuzian scholars shook the very foundations of film theory over the course of ten years: Steven Shaviro (1993) reconceptualised the fundamentals of Metz’s psychoanalytic model for spectatorship, arguing for the triumph of the cinematic ‘body’ over the cinematic ‘signifier’; then, more recently, Daniel Frampton (2006) opened these fundamentals onto new planes with his Deleuzian neologisms, ‘filmosophy’, ‘film-thinking’, and ‘filmind’. While Frampton is not so hostile to psychoanalysis (preferring to ignore it entirely), Shaviro stated that “today, the most crucial task for any theory of sexuality remains how to get away from Freud” (2000:67). Shaviro’s radical alternative to the psychoanalytic paradigm is not to establish the ‘truth’ of the cinematic experience and its apparatus, but to follow these images in their “seductive drift” away from any such truth. Shaviro’s theoretical co-ordinates are based on Deleuze’s sense that cinematic images are not representations, but *events*.

My claim here is not that this shift away from psychoanalysis towards Deleuze is proof of Freud’s death, but, rather, that it is proof of his *vitality*. It is the very fact of Shaviro’s attack on Freud and Lacan that he betrays the sense that film theory is still very much in the

grip of the symptom and the signifier. Are not the continued proclamations of Freud's 'death' in film studies akin to the nervous protagonist of the horror movie standing over the 'corpse' of the antagonist? The audience, of course, knows that 'it' will rise again, and that, finally, a simple bullet in the head is never enough – *it must be made to die twice*. This analogy is more appropriate than it first seems, for the sequel proves to us that even with this second death, our antagonist will soon return to terrorise our beleaguered victim. The question we must ask post-theory (let us drop this fiction of post-'theory' and call it by its real name, post-psychoanalysis) is the following: if psychoanalysis is dead, why continue to attack it? I think the answer to this question lies as much in the totality with which contemporary film studies has rejected psychoanalysis as it does in the incompleteness of the theory ushered in to replace it. Let us take a closer look at this new and incomplete film theory.

Gilles Deleuze adamantly rejected the claim that he was a 'critic' of 'film theory', preferring the role of 'philosopher' of 'film logic': "I was able to write on cinema, not by right of reflection, but when philosophical problems led me to seek answers in cinema, which itself then relaunched other problems" (1998:49). It is therefore a mistake to classify Deleuze's work on the cinema as 'film theory' in the traditional sense (this is the first error of post-theory). Deleuze does not enter into cinematic analysis lightly, and his two volumes on cinema – *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (2008) and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (2009) – articulate a 'logic' of film that emphasise the 'action-image', 'affection-image', and 'perception-image', ultimately teaching that cinema is not representational, nor a communicator simply of messages through the medium of voyeurism. Rather, Deleuze considered cinema to be the site of pure immanence and sensation, quite literally *its own reality*, a manifestation of pure thought (from which Frampton defines his 'filmind').

The difference between Deleuze's two volumes on cinema could almost be mapped onto the book that most influenced him, that is, Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory*. The 'movement-image' fleshed out in volume one is almost certainly concerned more with the flow of matter, that is, the direct, objective, representation of time and space, which Deleuze links to the classical form. The 'time-image' however, fleshed out in volume two, is more concerned with the flow of memory, which is to say, the indirect, subjective flow of time and space, which Deleuze links to the post-classical form (anticipated by Hitchcock). But what does he mean by considering the cinematic *image* of time? Daniel Frampton writes that

a basic metaphorical sequence will cause the filmgoer to think, cause them to receive a fairly distinct idea. A somewhat more irrational sequence will cause the filmgoer to think and receive (a less exact) idea, and the shock of this 'new' idea will cause the filmgoer to go back to the images, re-experience them, and see *within* them a belief or interpretation that caused the idea (2006:63-4).

Thus Deleuze does not treat cinema as an art representing our external reality but as an ontological practice that organises movement on the one hand, and time on the other. Deleuze was not just rethinking cinema, but using cinema as a means of rethinking movement, the image, and time in philosophy. In the second of his two volumes on cinema, Deleuze wrote that Alain Resnais had created a “cinema of philosophy, a cinema of thought, which is totally new in the history of cinema and totally alive in the history of philosophy, creating, with his unique collaborators, a rare marriage between philosophy and cinema” (2009c:201). Deleuze is interested primarily in seeing a productive encounter between philosophy and film as much as the subsuming of the one in the other. In much the same way, when he writes that ‘bad’ psychoanalysis has two ways of deceiving itself, “by believing to have discovered identical materials, that one can inevitably find everywhere, or by believing to have discovered analogous forms which create false differences” (Deleuze, 2009b:104), he is not writing against psychoanalysis but exploring its methodology, critiquing its fundamentals (not unlike Lacan). Thus contextualising Deleuze in a theory of cinema dominated by ‘bad psychoanalysis’ has proven somewhat difficult (in much the same way as placing Deleuze in the context of 20th century philosophy has proven just as problematic, an irony not lost on Foucault with his joke about the century being renamed ‘Deleuzian’). Just as Lacanian film theory evolved out of interlocutors, so too has Deleuzian film theory emerged from thinkers like Shaviri and Frampton. However, what neither of these two thinkers (among others) seem to consider is Deleuze’s lesser-known earlier works, *Repetition and Difference* (1968), and *The Logic of Sense* (1969), upon which any understanding of Deleuze’s so-called ‘filmosophy’ must surely rest.

Žižek is thus right to argue that there are two sides to Deleuze; a populist Deleuze and a hidden, secretive Deleuze. If this is true, then so too must we acknowledge the two sides to Lacan, for the latter’s work clearly falls into two groups: his weekly seminars conducted in front of audiences, and his written theoretical texts, *écrits*. Žižek points out that Lacan’s seminars and *écrits* relate like the discourse of the analysand and the analyst during treatment, and as such, the proper way to read Lacan is to “read a seminar and then go on to read the corresponding *écrit* so as to ‘get the point’ of the seminar” (Žižek, 2006a:129). This is because we are dealing with the temporality of ‘*Nachträglichkeit*’ (‘action deferred’) in the analytical process, in which the *écrits* offer precise and clear formulas that can only be understood against the background of the seminars (such as *Seminar VII on the Ethics of Psychoanalysis* and the corresponding *écrit*, ‘Kant avec Sade’). I am proposing something similar *apropos* of Deleuze’s relationship to psychoanalysis, that we must read Deleuze’s own dense theoretical formulations in his *Repetition and Difference* and *Logic of Sense* against the background of Lacanian psychoanalysis.

It is because of this precise mutual need for cross-referencing that psychoanalysis keeps returning in essays continuing to proclaim its demise, while the ‘newborn’ Deleuzian film theory seems to be somewhat premature, struggling to arrive at a workable theory of the cinematic image. Put another way, the zombie analyst seems to be haunting this new model from beyond the grave, and as my earlier metaphor of the horror movie indicated, it is in the proliferation of versions that we need to approach this ‘haunting’. This thesis suggests that we should dispense with re-burying the ‘old’ psychoanalysis and prematurely adopting this ‘new’ filmosophy. Instead, let us see if our struggle to bury Freud is linked to Deleuze’s troubled birth, and, further, consider the possibility that there may be moments in which we need the one to read the other as analyst to analysand, and back again. I hope to show that in rejecting Freud altogether, post-theorists like Bordwell and Carroll have been haunted by his spectre ever since, not to mention the irony that their so-called ‘integrative’ models are just as guilty of critical and theoretical exclusionism as the discourse they are attacking as “exclusive”. Further, in rushing into a Deleuzian alternative, scholars like Shaviro, and to a lesser extent Frampton, have missed key formative moments in the development of their new theory. Nonetheless, I neither wish to undermine new concepts like Frampton’s *‘filmind’* and Shaviro’s ‘cinematic body’, nor call for the removal of Deleuze as a new voice in contemporary film theory. Instead, I point to Andrew Haase’s description of the pleasure of psychoanalysis being located in “philosophy’s refusal to crawl around in scum and shit” (1991:188). This thesis then, merely wishes to drag Deleuze into the shit and get him a little dirty.

By extension, I am by no means attempting to suggest that psychoanalysis is alive and well, for there is more to my undead zombie metaphor than meets the eye. Insofar as philosophy needs psychoanalysis to function as its dirty underside, it is my contention that psychoanalysis needs philosophy to surpass the many misreadings upon which psychoanalytic film criticism has thus far been founded. Consider Lacan’s own self-proclaimed “anti-philosophy” and admittance that psychoanalysis always tends towards incoherence when left by itself:

Psychoanalysis is distinguished by its extraordinary capacity for drifting and confusion, which makes its literature something that, I assure you, would not require a great deal of thought for it to be placed, in its entirety, under the heading of what we call literary madness (1964:240).

Lacan even went so far as to describe himself as ‘psychotic’. Whatever could he have meant? Slavoj Žižek suggests that it is because it is not possible to integrate Lacan’s work in the field of the big Other (and one’s exclusion from the symbolic order always leads to psychosis). With this in mind, Žižek emerges as a pivotal figure in negotiating this Deleuzo-Lacanian

‘encounter’, as his vastly underrated *Organs without Bodies* (2004) has already attempted such a meeting between the ‘literary madness’ of Lacan and ‘filmosophy’ of Deleuze. As Žižek himself notes, far from adopting an impartial approach, we need to engage a properly *partisan reading*, one which relies on Lacan’s own understanding that every truth is partial. Žižek writes that “by means of his sectarian split, by cutting himself off from the decaying corpse of the International Psycho-Analytic Association, Lacan kept the Freudian teaching alive. Fifty years later it is up to us to do the same with Lacan” (2006a:6). In short, by breaking off from the bloated body of Freudian film studies with his “Return to Freud”, Lacan was able to open the psychoanalytic discourse up to the mathematicians, philosophers, and artists, etc. Žižek’s argument is that we must now sever ourselves from Lacanian film studies by introducing Deleuze, which is effectively his ‘Return to Lacan’ in a manner of speaking. In doing so, Žižek aims to avoid the danger of creating a Deleuzian school of film-thinking which misses Deleuze’s point, and the concomitant danger of dismissing Lacan before he becomes ‘undead’ as Freud.

In a final note, I propose that this thesis is in many ways also an encounter with Žižek’s own film philosophy, for while the Slovenian giant of critical theory and social studies is often prone to chaotic and digressive excursions into politics, science, art, social theory, and philosophy (to name just a few), he is continually drawn to film. Žižek has even made two films about psychoanalysis and philosophy in cinema: *Žižek!* (2005), and *The Pervert’s Guide to Cinema* (2006). From amongst his often brilliant, if somewhat magpie-like, borrowings and intuitions on other thinkers, this thesis reveals a Žižekian discourse on film, one of the first such considerations of Žižek’s own ‘filmosophy’.

Cinema on the couch: The hysteria of film historia

The pull away from psychoanalysis in film studies has left us in a strange place: theorists still evoke Freud simply because there is, in a sense, no other language in which to discuss spectatorship in film (although Frampton, among others, is succeeding in rectifying this). For Jonathan Lear (2005), this is the precise problem with psychoanalysis in contemporary theory, where its theoretical terms are invoked in isolation and cut off from clinical reality. Lear argues that the central concepts of psychoanalysis – or, “Freud at his best” – lose their vitality and ultimately their efficacy when rendered out of context. However, just as Lear stresses the importance of returning to clinical psychoanalysis, he also calls for a stronger philosophical counterpart to supplement this return to clinicism to deal with its ethical inquiries, such that Freud’s original desire to understand the ‘master-complaint’ might be

better served (Lear, 2005:10). It seems as though my move towards 'literary madness' could not be more timely.

Josh Cohen writes that "our assimilation of his [Freud's] vocabulary of the inner life coexists happily with the widespread sense that we've done, and are done with Freud" (2005:2). It is not hard to find examples of film scholars who wish to evoke the weight of psychoanalysis without marking themselves out as psychoanalysing. As such, their work almost always comes with a caveat. Krin Gabbard, for example, produces a highly interesting analysis of *The Jazz Singer* and its remakes as 'Oedipal' repetitions, but is decidedly unsure of his exact theoretical co-ordinates. "So", Gabbard writes, "I lay a few cards on the table at this point and declare my commitment to a flexible model of psychoanalysis that acknowledges the impact of cultural change on American obsessions as they are repeatedly played out in popular narratives" (1998:97). While retaining the power of its terminology, Gabbard refuses to be drawn as to what he means by 'Oedipus', omitting any overt reference to Freud except through the myth itself and its popularisation. His 'flexible' model of psychoanalysis emerges as precisely only flexible on the grounds that he can disavow himself from its (rotting) discursive base. Similarly, Timothy Corrigan begins his fascinating study of postmodern cinema, *A Cinema without Walls: Movies and Culture after Vietnam* (1991), with a comparable caveat of 'flexibility', evoking the word 'hysteria' but with the appendage: "I do not, of course, pretend to be clinically precise here; I am not trying to present film history and texts as patients on the couch of film theory" (Corrigan, 1991:142). My question to Corrigan is: Why not? Is it the film history or the film theory that is so weakened as to render any such analysis ineffectual? Perhaps it is a bit of both. It is a shame that neither Gabbard nor Corrigan wishes to engage with psychoanalysis more directly, for I think an *inflexible* model of psychoanalysis, combined with clinical precision, is more important than either wish to fully acknowledge.

Nonetheless, Corrigan's work, in spite of its reluctance to be drawn on its precise relation to psychoanalysis, has opened up a fascinating and disturbing perspective on contemporary film. Following Fredric Jameson's argument that postmodern culture is caught in a deadlock between experiencing life through a pastiche aesthetic or a schizoid rush of nonsensical images, Corrigan rethinks film's ability to render a contemporary history "in crisis". For Jameson, we now live "in a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible" where "all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with voices of the styles in the imaginary museum" (1985:115). Corrigan describes this 'alarming' pathological symptom using Lacan's observation that there is some truth in the homophony between 'history' and 'hysteria'. Corrigan then moves to argue that this 'historical hysteria' in Hollywood cinema contains four key elements: (1) the Jamesonian nostalgia for a cinematic and social history that continually draws the present to a past that can neither be contained nor

incorporated; (2) a refiguring of audiences and their positions as regards what he calls 'illegible films' which can neither be read nor understood by traditional analytical procedures; (3) the understanding that spectators now have a 'dissolved view' where genres no longer submit themselves to the laws of their classical Hollywood counterparts; and (4) that there is now a counterpoint to Hollywood's politicisation of cinema, where *American life now imitates Hollywood cinema*. As Corrigan's problems are all inherent to the key issues of the remake, I want to explore them in a little more detail, and at each point, begin to illustrate some of the key formulations of remaking that will become fundamental to this study.

Corrigan's first point is that Hollywood is in the grip of a need for nostalgia films (what Jameson called '*la mode rétro*'). This concerns the sense that while social history informs genre (e.g. such as the influence of World War II on *film noir*), genre also acts as a social commentary on cultural history, mythologising aspects of society. Rick Altman sums this up in his statement that now, and "for the first time, genre theory must accommodate itself to genre history, rather than vice versa" (1999:4). Crucial for Corrigan however, is the sense that this model has become stuck on a "drive to repeat specific signifying materials, an obsessive drive to repeat in reaction to the *resistance* of cultural history" (1991:139). This is film 'hystory', where the textual 'body' is hystericised by a film language and historical placing that is radically incompatible with its environment. Corrigan is not alone in thinking of cinema in these terms, and perhaps we would do well to remember Daniel Frampton's suggestion that "film is not *of* the world, film *is* a world (a new world)" (2006:5), such that this drive to repeat is not the sense of a complex film discourse struggling to repeat our cultural history, but, rather, of a complex film discourse struggling to repeat *its own history*. Thus our first formulation of the historical hysteria in remaking is that Hollywood cinema is obsessed with repeating its own history, and has a certain love affair with the idea of dramatising its own failure to repress, the result of which leads to 'excessive theatricality'.

Paolo Cherchi Usai (2001) has observed that at the birth of cinema in 1895, just over forty minutes of moving images existed, and most of those minutes have been preserved for posterity. Fast forward to 1999, and it has been estimated that one-and-a-half-billion hours of moving images were produced in that year alone. As a result of this excess, Martin Scorsese notes that most of these images are not being preserved for posterity, but are instead being lost through the 'vinegar syndrome', which is the natural degradation of cinema prints. As such we now live in a culture guilty of "ignoring the loss of its own image" (Scorsese, 2001), something which has led Usai to state that "cinema is the art of destroying moving images" (2001:7). The viewer then is an unconscious (and impotent) witness to this loss, and given the commercial investment in the preservation of some images over others depends to a large extent on which of those images will sell or not, s/he is also partly responsible. Usai notes that

viewers of the Model Image are unaware of the crisis or catastrophe that will shatter their trust in its integrity. Such an idyllic state is a condition for the existence of this image. As soon as history comes into play, there can still be a relative degree of bliss in watching the image, yet sooner or later some spectators will be able to foresee the rate and patterns of its destruction (2001:45).

Usai also considers the origin of film theory to be similarly based on the disgracing of the moving image. “Unlike histories of film”, he writes, “their aims are generally prescriptive; hence their ideological rationale. Film theory, too, would cease to exist in face of a Model Image” (Usai, 2001:27). This sense of the Model Image will become pivotal to our conception of the remake in this study, given each and every remake is engaged in a dual moment of self-preservation and self-effacement.

It is no coincidence that Corrigan dates the emergence of Hollywood’s hystericisation to the Vietnam War and the influx of images that flooded the US during this time (the first depiction of war in such gory detail). The cultural counterpart to the proliferation of these war images was Andy Warhol, who in 1967 emerged as a prominent figure in the Pop Art movement. He is perhaps most famous for his printed images of Marilyn Monroe, whose close-up head exaggerated the colours of her eye-shadow, hair, and lipstick. In addition to making a statement about Monroe’s star persona (as an ultra-feminine sex icon), Warhol’s endless replication of this image hystericised the work, creating a signifier of death (especially given the icon’s untimely demise in 1962).



Fig. 0.2: Andy Warhol’s ‘Marilyn’ (1967)

According to art historian Jamie James, Warhol was famous for implying “an equivalency between some of the most revered works of modern art and the disposable, banal trash designed for and read by adolescents” (2001:114). Soon after ‘Marilyn’, Warhol began replicating just Monroe’s lips as partial objects, which began floating menacingly around Hollywood, further compartmentalising her already-decapitated head.



Fig. 0.3: Andy Warhol, ‘Marilyn Monroe’s Lips’ (1962)

Just as Warhol’s endless repetition of Monroe transformed her iconic image into a pure, meaningless signifier containing the stain of death, so too did the endless repetition of the Vietnam War transform the conflict likewise, turning public opinion. Warhol’s art points to the somewhat different realm of artistic repetition over ‘normal’ repetition: for example, we know that artists do not replicate and repeat in quite the same way as a patriot replicates a country’s flag (an object reproduced while its concept remains the same). Artists replicate the object and combine it with another element, introducing ‘disequilibrium’ into the work. Here, we find another formulation of historical hysteria in remaking: of the symbol of death buried in the work reduced to a partial, fully fetishised, object. Like the Cheshire cat in *Alice in Wonderland* we are presented here with an obscene, yet fully complementary, paradox (the smile-without-a-cat and the cat-without-a-smile). With *Psycho*’s ‘shower scene’ we get a striking example of Warholian cinema; an image not only connoting its original but denoting it as well, *replacing it, as such*.

Meaning here is thoroughly disturbed in this textual excess. Let us address this excess in an example from Hollywood cinema itself, and prove that it really is prevalent. The example I have in mind is one to which I will return throughout this thesis, one that is no less valid for having never been remade. The film is Martin Scorsese’s *Taxi Driver* (1976), a film which “attempts to simultaneously accept and reject the signs of a given world, to claim at

once its narcissism and a release into a symbolic reality” (Corrigan, 1991:142). *Taxi Driver*’s troubled protagonist, Travis Bickle (Robert De Niro), is a mohawked Vietnam-veteran taxi driver who tries desperately to fit into, and love within, the respectable middle class society to which he aspires. Yet each of the signifiers that denote his identity ‘castrate’ him also, from ‘Vietnam vet’ to ‘Mohawk’; ‘taxi driver’ to ‘gunslinger’. Each signifier reduces down to a meaningless formula – not unlike Monroe’s lips – describing a separate history and culture resisting the previous one, and hiding behind the next. Upon its release the film caused waves of controversy for its depiction of violence and a crisis in masculinity, but for Corrigan, masculinity is not the only thing in crisis here.

The hystericism of *Taxi Driver*’s relationship with its historical and cultural reality took a bizarre turn on March 30th, 1981, when John Hinckley, Jr., allegedly influenced by *Taxi Driver*’s assassination plot, attempted to assassinate President Ronald Reagan. The uncanniness of this failed attempt illustrated the retroactive redetermination inherent to postmodern culture: history was no longer writing the movies, *the movies were writing history*. Robert Stam argues that “the point of adaptations is not to re-invent stories that resemble reality, but turn reality into a story” (2000:73). His point is made clear in this example, where life is not just imitating art as cinematic transgression, but filmic ideology and political historicism enter a möbius spiral of negativity, where “media fantasy creates the historical event” (Corrigan, 1991:202).^{*} Is this not a reversal of the *roman à clef*, whereby to approximate a cinematic and historical event, the viewer must first view and then *review* in order to have any hope of contextualising this fragmented moment? This is not simply *a* moment, but several fractured moments. A further formulation of historical hysteria in remaking then is that of the phantasmatic support of reality, where it is not that a series of films describes the ‘real thing’ behind the fiction, *but that the façade of fiction is itself disguised by the real Thing*. It will be argued that this Thing, akin to Usai’s ‘Model Image’, is the key to our understanding of the remake.

Starting with these initial formulations on Hollywood hystory, this thesis suggests that these *are* texts in need of psychoanalysing, and that it is in remaking that these ‘symptoms’ are most strongly expressed – each one is a textual Travis Bickle, so to speak. Thus in response to Jonathan Lear’s call for a return to the clinical reality of psychoanalysis, this thesis does what Corrigan stops short of, and presents film history and texts as patients on the couch of film theory.

^{*} Can the same not be said of the September 11th attacks in 2001, that these attacks were not only rendered (and continually re-rendered) by the media in the days and weeks of its aftermath, but that Hollywood films from the 1990s, such as *Independence Day* (1996) and *Executive Decision* (1996) among many others, effectively *pre-empted* the attacks in a kind of retroactive wish-fulfilment? For more on this, see Slavoj Žižek’s ‘Welcome to the Desert of the Real’ (2001), and Jean Baudrillard’s ‘*L’Esprit du Terrorisme*’ (2001). In film studies, this phenomenon has been explored in multiple studies, for example: Wheeler Winston Dixon’s *Film and TV after 9/11* (2004).

What can “warmed-over meals” tell us about the way we eat? Classic American and European cinema in the microwave

So where, specifically, does the remake fit in with ‘undead’ psychoanalytic film theory and Hollywood cinema’s film ‘hystory’? This final section of my introduction will serve not only as a preface to the historical and industry concepts of remaking, the theory of the remake, and the preliminary taxonomies that exist to categorise remakes, but it will also set up the fundamental questions facing cinematic repetition. As such, I hope you will permit me a little room to manoeuvre...

Let us begin where we left off, that is, with Hollywood’s historical hysteria, because for Corrigan at least, the remake plays a big part in this breakdown. In fact, the remake does not represent the traditional movement of narrative to reflect an organised history, nor does it represent the modernist demand to reorganise that history; rather, remakes represent “the more contemporary perspective of narrative as an unresolved plenitude where history fades into the starry images of an idyllic past or the technological nightmare of an inhuman future” (Corrigan, 1991:171). However, not all commentators are so forgiving, for while Corrigan is merely attacking the remake as fading history into oblivion (idyllic or nightmarish), many critics attack the remake as trashing that history altogether. Alain Resnais famously denounced adaptations as nothing more than “warmed over meals” (cited in Horton & McDougal, 1998:240), a sense echoed by Marc Savlov, who described remakes as “reheated depravity” (2009). I cannot help but be reminded here of Claude Lévi-Strauss’s three methods of food preparation: nature (‘raw’), culture (‘baked’), and the mediation between the two (‘boiling’). With remakes (especially in the era of the iPhone on which one can ‘watch-on-the-go’), perhaps it is about time we added Resnais and Savlov’s fast-food analogies to Lévi-Strauss’s semiotic triad, such that we get a new method of food preparation for the remake (‘microwaved’).

We have combined here a lack of originality and artistic integrity, coupled with brutal economic pragmatism. The sense that remakes are ‘cashing in’ on superior originals is summed up in Lester Asheim’s condemnation of the major question facing producers as being not “Is it art?”, but “Will it sell” (1951:292)? However, we must not forget, as Alexander Walker has pointed out, that things were not so different in classical Hollywood, which was itself “an imitative industry in which only a few creative people are tolerated at any one time. What is imitated is the last big success [...] one man’s success the night before could be another man’s imitation the morning after” (cited in Forrest & Koos, 2002:139). Furthermore, many detractors of contemporary remaking who lament the passing of the ‘golden age’ of innovation seem to have forgotten that remakes were statistically *greater* in number in the classical era than in the post-classical ‘New Hollywood’ (Simonet, 1987:154). So why is the

contemporary remake condemned as fading history either into the “starry images of an idyllic past” or the “technological nightmare of an inhuman future” when, clearly, classical Hollywood also updated its early experimentations for new audiences and also sought to exploit technological advances (such as the advent of the ‘Talkies’ and Technicolor)? The sense that classical Hollywood was remaking to stabilise its ‘Bambi’ legs with ever-improving storytelling procedures and sophisticated filming techniques has undeniably been replaced with the sense that remakes are sweeping Hollywood’s legs out from under it, perhaps proving Freud’s intuitions about early cinema correct.

Underpinning any discussion of the remake is the familiar binomial opposition, ‘original/remake’, which gives rise to the question: what is a ‘classic’ original? In Tay Garnett’s *Stand-In* (1937) a film director previews his new film to studio bosses who perceive huge flaws in the production. Unperturbed, the director turns to his disappointed audience with a flourish and exclaims that “Great films are not made, they are remade!” (implying that he will fix the problems before the film gets released). However, the dominant view of remakes in contemporary Hollywood is that remakers take this motto of “Great films are remade” much too literally. James Naremore (2000) warns that remakes and adaptations are assigned a low status by critics because they are copies of cultural treasures, of originals that have become ‘classic’. Forrest and Koos point out that the dominant perception is that Hollywood remaking is a commercial enterprise “reflect[ing] the worst in Western capitalist production” (2002:3), and, with its recent remaking and assimilation of foreign originals, many now see Hollywood as engaging in a new form of cinematic re-colonisation.

So why study the remake? Once again, there is another – frequently missed – side to the debate, and three descriptions of remaking illustrate this. Firstly, Forrest and Koos have argued that while many remakes are indeed uninspired imitations of their superior selves, some are critically acclaimed reinterpretations of their original models, especially in classical Hollywood (e.g. *The Maltese Falcon* and *Scarlet Street* for two). Indeed, for Forrest and Koos it is this ‘superior’ remake that

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 (1998:3).

Secondly, I find it somewhat difficult to improve on Lucy Mazdon’s statement on the hybridity of the remake, in which she concludes that

the process of adaptation, whose very frequency shows it to be of extreme importance, leads to cross-fertilisation, aesthetically as one art form borrows from another, temporally as works from another age are adapted, spatially as cultures adapt across national boundaries, and culturally as works shift between location in ‘high’ and ‘popular’ cultures (2000:3).

Thirdly, Carol Clover has argued that

although mass media can scarcely be characterized as in any sense less self-conscious or analytic than criticism and theory about them, the fact that the discourse *within* horror cinema and the discourse *about* it diverge on some crucial points would seem to suggest that the folks who make horror movies and the folks who write about them are, if not hearing different drummers, then reading different passages of Freud (1992:168).

While Clover is here describing the horror genre, we need only substitute the word ‘remake’ for the word ‘horror’ here for the precariousness of the remake’s status in academia to become apparent. So, we move in these three passages from superior elements of remaking, through the importance of cross-fertilisation and hybridity, to Clover’s frustration at the lack of attention in academia for those aspects of cinema considered to be of a ‘lowly’ status (do they get any lower than remakes?).

It is with this in mind that I wish now to suggest some ‘remake questions’ which I will enumerate with, where necessary, brief descriptions. These are questions every bit as crucial to the revival of psychoanalysis in film theory, the birth of Deleuzian film theory, and the working through of film history, as they are to remake studies. Make no mistake – these are *the* questions facing film studies today:

- *Is the remake the same as a literary adaptation?* Despite sharing similar hermeneutical issues, this thesis will primarily restrict itself to repetitions within the medium of film, but will explore the overlap with cross-medium adaptations where relevant. Adaptation theory has a long history which has historically excluded remakes (which seems strange, since one should surely begin with one medium before moving onto two), but this might all be about to change, for we need only substitute the words ‘remaking’ and ‘originals’ for ‘adaptation’ and ‘novels’ in Linda Hutcheon’s statement that “if you think adaptation can be understood by using novels and films alone, you’re wrong” (Hutcheon, 2006:xi), to arrive at a precise formulation of the complexity of cinematic remaking.

- *Is the remake a genre?* Frequently asked but never satisfactorily answered; this will be one of the first questions to be explored in chapter 1.
- *Why remake in the first place?* This question is frequently rendered with the expression “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”.
- *Why are some films remade while others are not?* This question concerns the criticism aimed at the tendency for remakers to pick either ‘classic’ or ‘cult’ originals (one rarely hears of a remake of a film that no one saw). My case studies will address both aspects.
- *If the original did not exist, would the remake be worth seeing?* If we ignore the Platonic warning against any such hypothetical reasoning, this question actually contains more than it appears to, not least with respect to Warhol’s art. Furthermore, Walter Benjamin has stated that “to an ever greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility [...] one can make any number of prints; to ask for the ‘authentic’ print makes no sense” (1936:218). In remaking, we move from the ‘then and there’ to the ‘here and now’, but should that be a move from the ‘there and then’ to the ‘nowhere and no-when’? Chapter 4 will engage with this ‘master question’.
- *Why do film audiences wish to see things again?* Here we have the elephant in the room. For Usai, there are three ‘motivations’ for reviewing films: (1) “The pleasure of repeating an experience of pleasure”; (2) “A desire to obtain a fuller perception of what has already been seen”; and (3) “A change of opinion” (2001: 99). While each chapter engages with this question, chapter 4 will contain a detailed analysis of remake audiences.

Remake spectatorship needs some further consideration before moving on, since the spectator will become the lynchpin of my claim to a new kind of remake theory. Anat Zanger begins to flesh out this masochistic position as being “the desire to have the already-known experience repeated [...] accompanied by the presentiment that it never will be” (2006:121). The remake spectator knows that the second viewing of a film vis-à-vis a remake will end in disappointment, that the remake will rarely open them up to a fuller perception of what has already been seen, and that it is unlikely to change their opinion. One is tempted to invoke Peter Sloterdijk’s reformulation of Marx’s famous “They do not know it, but they are doing it” as “They know what they are doing, but still, they are doing it” to describe this ‘knowing’

spectator. Sloterdijk's point is that while the Marxian subject is lost in the grip of an ideology that is obscure to him/her, the postmodern subject knows full well that s/he is in the grip of an ideological illusion, but yet, nonetheless, they continue to act *as if* they did not know. These 'as if' reformulations will become clearer as we explore the death drive and its relation to the remake, but for now, let us continue to explore the remake spectator.

Knowledge is crucial to understanding the remake, and yet so little has been written on the philosophical importance of knowledge in remake models of spectatorship. Let us look at the two predominant models of spectatorship in theory today. The classic, predominant (psychoanalytic) model of spectatorship was established by Christian Metz, wherein the spectator engages in fetishistic disavowal; the sense that "*I know very well* (that the film is not real), *but all the same* (I will believe in it as if it were)". According to Metz, film spectators engage in three 'fictions' which structure the cinematic illusion: the belief in someone who *does believe* in the film, the belief that everyone *acts as if they believe* in the film, and the general refusal of the spectator to admit that some part of them *genuinely does believe* in the filmic events (Metz, 2001:72). Metz argues that "the film is not exhibitionist. I watch it, but it doesn't watch me watching it. Nevertheless, it knows that I am watching it. But it doesn't want to know" (2001:94). The remake, however, draws attention to its status as a knowing-subject, openly contradicting Metz's description of films as 'closed objects' by invoking their former models and spectatorial relationships. If, as Metz argues, the normal cinematic relationship between the spectator and the silver screen is one that "will be fractured in its centre, and its two disjointed halves allocated to different moments in time" (2001:95), then for the remake, the two disjointed halves must be rerouted through third and fourth contingent times, each with an entirely new set of conditions – actors, director, scenes, production, etc., and audiences. In this way, we should acknowledge that the remake does not just add to, but actually *rewrites Metz's theory of spectatorship*.

Against the classic psychoanalytic model we have the spectatorship theory of the Deleuzian school, especially that explored recently by Daniel Frampton, who argues that

in film studies the rhetoric of the 'camera' has a long history of sheep-like repetitiveness. For those who idolised the technology and wanted a reflexive signal of their love to saunter through their writing, the camera offered a crucial crutch [...] the filmgoer does not see a camera, they see a film-world (2006:50, emphasis added).

The Deleuzian spectator is not passively absorbing the cinematic experience but actively co-creating it, participating in its very construction. The 'thinking' of a film, which he designates as 'film-thinking', creates a 'filmind', a neologism he himself describes as being "not an 'external' force, nor [...] a mystical being or invisible other, it is 'in' the film itself, it is *the*

film that is steering its own (dis)course. The filmind is ‘the film itself’” (2006:7). This second model of spectatorship is less troubled by the remake, since for a Deleuzian all films are multiply activated by the spectator at every point such that *there can be no definitive allocation of ‘moments’ in time.*

These two very contrasting models of spectatorship will be dissected and intersected so that we can flesh out this masochistic remake spectator in the grip of an obsession with returning to a history thoroughly hystericised. While Anat Zanger suggests a preliminary taxonomy of the remake spectator as being dynamic as opposed to static (or variable versus constant), centred as opposed to periphery (or canonical versus non-canonical), and diachronic as opposed to synchronic (2006:122-3), I think we need to go further. Other taxonomies of remaking already exist as well, including Thomas Leitch’s four categories of remaking, which include: (1) ‘Readaptations’, whose goal is fidelity to the original work upon which the remake is based (a fidelity it is assumed that all other adaptations have failed to keep), such that it ‘best represents’ the original; (2) ‘Updates’, where a classic text is considered irrelevant to a modern audience and so needs remaking to contemporise its themes; (3) ‘Homages’, which valorise an original in danger of being ignored or forgotten, representing the first contradictory claim of remakes as renouncing any claim to superiority while acknowledging the need to remake; and (4) ‘True remakes’, which contain the second contradiction of remaking as they seek “not only to accommodate the original story to a new discourse and a new audience but to annihilate the model they are honouring – to eliminate any need or desire to see the film they seek to replace” (Leitch, 2002:50). This fourth kind of remake is the most commonly identified as a ‘remake’, one which admires its model to the extent that it wishes to eliminate it as a competitor in the marketplace while selling itself off the back of that original’s iconic status. Arguably the best taxonomic classification of remakes however belongs to Robert Eberwein, whose complex and structuralist-orientated tabulation in ‘Remakes and Cultural Studies’ (1998) is, while problematic and certainly not exhaustive, an excellent start for classification purposes. As this is not our goal here I will leave it alone, but simply cite it as proof of the growing interest in organising this new discourse as it unfolds.

Having opened up the three prongs of this thesis – psychoanalytic and Deleuzian film theory, Hollywood hystory, and Hollywood remakes – I will now briefly state how the individual chapters will work. Chapter 1 begins with the möbius strip as a topographical figure for cinematic remaking, a figure explored by both Deleuze and Lacan, and one that is essential to this new film-thinking. I examine the *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956, 1978, 1993, and 2007), and differentiate between cinematic ‘making’, ‘remaking’, and ‘unmaking’, a crucial third term in the series frequently missed in dyadic remake structures. Following this, I

scrutinise one of the central paradoxes of the remake, that of its dual admiration and annihilation of an original, a paradox contained in the common Christian sentiment “Love thy neighbour”. Having examined the symptom and fetish of the remake, I then move on to the *drive* of the remake via another metaphor, this time of the facehugger in *Alien* (1979), whose life-cycle closely corresponds with that of the Hollywood remake. Herein, Lacanian *jouissance* is given renewed attention to tempt it away from its current misuse in film studies. The final part of this chapter explores the way in which Deleuze and Lacan both demonstrate a reversal of Plato’s opposition between Essence and Appearance in his forms, something absolutely intrinsic to the remake and the concept of the *original*.

The next two chapters represent *case studies* that implement the ideas compressed in chapter one. Remake theory currently falls between two camps: American-American remaking, or those remakes within the same cultural tier that remake across *time*; and foreign-American remaking, or those remakes outside of the same cultural tier that remake across *space*. In addition to being categorised along industry lines, they will be also be split into two ‘undead’ metaphors to help explain this sense of the eternal return. Chapter 2 focuses on the first type of Hollywood remake, metaphorised in the concept of the ‘zombie’. It considers Gus Van Sant’s shot-for-shot ‘art’ version (1998) of Alfred Hitchcock’s original *Psycho* (1960). I examine the sense of *Psycho* as a film for which remaking was a necessity rather than directorial hubris, and locate in Van Sant’s ‘faulty reasoning’ a psychotic edge for taking the project on. I also look at Van Sant’s ‘queering’ of the original as realising what was in the original, more than the original, and analyse the ‘big mistake’ in allowing Norman Bates to ‘come’ in the remake. Finally, I look at the shower scene as fetishistic synecdoche and the relation of *Psycho* to postmodern cinema. Alongside a cache of film references, I engage with Ken Russell’s *Crimes of Passion* (1984) as a secondary text. Chapter 3 focuses on the second type of Hollywood remake, metaphorised in the concept of the ‘ghost’ or ‘spirit’. It considers George Sluizer’s Hollywood remake, *The Vanishing* (1993), as a ‘commercialist/exploitation’ remaking of his own ‘cult’ Dutch original, *Spoorloos* (1988) – what is called ‘auto-remaking’. I examine the concept of national cinema through a reconsideration of what we mean by nationalism in film. I also consider the importance of knowledge in remaking, using *The Vanishing* as an example of the Lacanian ‘subject-supposed-to-know’ and the role of the analyst in psychoanalysis, before regarding the process of ‘Americanisation’ and, in particular, the inclusion of happy endings in Hollywood remakes of edgy foreign originals. Finally, I explore the *objet petit a* in remaking and the commercial opportunity for the remake and the importance of domestic markets. Alongside a cache of other film references, I look at Ole Bornedal’s *Nattevagten* (1994), also auto-remade as *Nightwatch* (1997), which shares an almost identical (re)production history to *Spoorloos*, as a secondary text.

Having investigated the two types of remake in my two case studies, I identify a third type of remake previously unexplored. Chapter 4 then is a kind of ghost chapter which suggests a completely new way of reading remakes in what, after Deleuze, I call ‘irrational remaking’. The concepts of time and memory, I argue, have been absent from most remake models presented thus far, and as such, this is where the remake spectator is to be fully explored. I reconceptualise James Cameron’s *Terminator 2* (1991) as irrationally remaking *The Terminator* (1984), in key scenes which undermine its industry category as a sequel. Here, the terminator itself becomes a complementary metaphor for the remake with the facehugger from *Alien* in chapter 1. I then reconsider Freud’s return of the repressed via Deleuze and Lacan, and rescue the concept in remake studies from its current ‘vulgar Freudian’ deployment. Crucial to this is the concept of the *father*, which has also been grievously ignored in remake studies. Next, the chapter proposes a key difference between remakes as simulacra-phantasms and copy-icons in line with Deleuze’s theory of repetition and difference, before moving on to what might be called a third ‘ghost’ case study in Francis Ford Coppola’s *The Conversation* (1974), which I consider as an irrational remake of *Psycho*. Thereafter, chapter 4 suggests three key rearticulations of the Lacanian theory from chapter 1: I rearticulate the Lacanian *drive* by considering the shift away from the shower scene as fetish to the exploding toilet as *pure symptom*; I rearticulate Lacanian *jouissance* in the remake by considering the foreshadowing of Hitchcock in Henri-Georges Clouzot’s *Les Diaboliques* (1955); and I rearticulate the *death drive* in light of Serge Daney’s observation that *all* American films are “ageless”, and the contribution of the remake to this longevity of the Idea.

My conclusion elaborates on what I am calling ‘The four fundamental concepts of the remake’, based on Lacan’s four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis, which are: *the unconscious*, *repetition*, *the transference*, and *the drive*. I also explore three levels of remaking that exceed the industry category of ‘the remake’: *institutional*-repetition, *spectatorial*-repetition, and *structural*-repetition, using the example of *Twelve Monkeys* (1995) to make my point and re-evaluating the structure of the thesis itself as a möbius loop. Finally, I suggest that the starting point for any consideration of the remake is to be found in the concept of the Real father, which Lacan designates as the ‘Great Fucker’, and which I explore in the obscene object of death hiding in the corner of every version of a work. It is the same as the death skull lurking in the corner of Hans Holbein’s *trompe-l’œil* painting, ‘The Ambassadors’, which I put forward as the perfect conceptualisation of the shift in perspective necessary to approach the concept of remaking in cinema. In so doing, this thesis calls not for answers to the questions raised in this introduction, but for a fresh consideration of the questions themselves.

I am, of course, well aware of the resistances to such a questioning of the questions in film studies. Suffice it to recall the very fundamental resistance to film theory known to

anyone who has taught Film to undergraduate students, a resistance based on the perceived destruction of the pleasure in watching films through their close analysis and denotation. Let us take confidence from the theorists themselves: Christian Metz advised us to divorce ourselves from the “pleasure” of watching films, and in doing so, wrest the Symbolic from the Imaginary. Alternatively, Pierre Janet’s advice to a patient fearing that reading would get “the books dirty” (Janet, cited in Rodowick, 1991:135) was to do just that. If we are to get anywhere with remakes, we must be prepared to approach their symbolic dimension, and, failing that of course, get over our own fear of getting our screens dirty.

CHAPTER 1

AN 'ENCOUNTER': DELEUZE AND LACAN PERVERT THE REMAKE

"I will show you how the whole trend of your previous education and all your habits of thought are inevitably bound to make you into opponents of psycho-analysis."

– Sigmund Freud (1915)

Opening thoughts: What is an 'encounter'?

Žižek observes that Deleuze was well known for his aversion towards debate, stating that when a true philosopher hears someone say "Let us debate this point a little bit!", he or she should jump up and run away as fast as possible (Žižek, 2004:ix). Deleuze's fear reflects the deadlock of Freud's famous 'talking cure', which follows a pattern that we can perhaps all identify in common conversational gambits such as, "That's enough about me, what about you? What do *you* think of me?" Self-love here, along with narcissistic attachment, gives the impression of a relationship to the other which is in fact just another relationship to the self (mediated, of course, by the analyst). Deleuze's insistence on privacy however, extended beyond a simple defence mechanism. For instance, when interviewed about his esoteric personal life he responded:

What do you know about me, given that I believe in secrecy? [...] If I stick where I am, if I don't travel around, like anyone else I make my inner journeys that I can only measure by my emotions, and express very obliquely and circuitously in what I write. [...] Arguments from one's own privileged experience are bad and reactionary arguments (Deleuze, 1995:11-12).

The quite Kantian opposition between public and private life here seems to encapsulate Deleuze's observation that "if there is nothing to see behind the curtain, it is because everything is visible, or rather all possible science is along the length of the curtain" (2009b:12). For Deleuze there is literally 'nothing' beneath the veil, but, rather, it is the veil itself which should be of interest.

Similar to Deleuze, Lacan was also very conscious of his public persona. Žižek tells the story of an attempt by Lacan's closest friends to figure out how Lacan was in his personal, private life, as opposed to the public image he carefully cultivated (the master analyst unbearable to be around, courteously distant yet demanding to the point of cruelty, etc.).

Those who knew him personally tried to penetrate the hard ‘social’ mask of his exterior and get to the true, ‘private’, interior to ensure that he was indeed “human, like the rest of us”. However, they were in for a shock, since beneath Lacan’s public mask there was no warm personality: rather, he stuck fastidiously to the public image in private also, acting in precisely the same way. Žižek reads Lacan’s persona not as his assumption in private of the symbolic role for which he was known (over-identifying with the social bond), but that “the public symbolic role itself, as it were, collapsed into pathological idiosyncrasy, turned into a contingent personal tick” (1993:271n). For Žižek, Lacan – like Deleuze – was not simply hiding anything behind the veil of his public persona but, rather, the only truth existed *in the performance of the role itself*. The truth, it seems, is the fiction.

It is Jean-Claude Milner who points out that Lacan’s body of work contains a fundamental paradox, again quite Kantian in its reversal of the private into the public. Where one’s oral seminars are usually aimed at a small, inner circle, and one’s written texts aimed at the general public, “Lacan’s *écrits* are ‘elitist’, readable only to an inner circle, while his seminars are intended for a wider audience, and, as such, are much more accessible” (Žižek, 2006a:128). Deleuze writes that it is never of interest to us to ‘psychoanalyse’ the work or its author, but, rather, authors should be considered as more like clinicians than patients, not of their own case, but, rather, the ‘case’ of civilisation. Thus, “from the perspective of Freud’s genius, it is not the complex which provides us with information about Oedipus and Hamlet, but rather Oedipus and Hamlet who provide us with information about the complex” (Deleuze, 2009b:273). Whereas a neurotic’s novel is merely the externalisation of symptoms and nothing more, the artist’s novel is, by contrast, a movement from the surface on which symptoms are played out to the metaphysical surface on which the pure-event stands; going from the cause of the symptoms to the quasi-cause of the *œuvre* itself. For Deleuze, the singular text is not enough to pose the question properly, an entire body of work is necessary, not in order to answer the question but in order to compose the event which makes it into a question (that is, to shift to the position from which the *correct* questions can be posed). In this way, “the artist is not only the patient and doctor of civilization, but is also its pervert” (Deleuze, 2009b:274). As Žižek suggests of Lacan then, his “seminars and *écrits* relate like the discourse of analysand and analyst during treatment” (2006a:128); that is, one must move between the discourse of the patient to the discourse of the analyst, from public to private, and back again, in order to make any sense of them.

In the same vein, this chapter moves back and forth, not to find the right answers to the remake questions, but to interrogate the subject-position of the *questioner* him/herself. As such, many of the examples I use in this chapter are not remakes, but nonetheless expose aspects of cinematic repetition intrinsic to remake theory. This chapter will show exactly why Joan Copjec is wrong when she described Žižek’s psychoanalytic work on Deleuze as his

going into “enemy territory”. The book Copjec was referring to is his *Organs without Bodies* (2004), a book which claims that, against the popular image of Deleuze as co-author of *Anti-Oedipus*, there is ‘another Deleuze’, one “much closer to psychoanalysis and Hegel, a private Deleuze whose consequences are much more shattering” (Žižek, 2004:xi). The publishing history of Deleuze’s translation into English tells its own story here, for while *Anti-Oedipus* was translated into English in 1984, *The Logic of Sense* and *Difference and Repetition* were not published until in 1990 and 1994 respectively. This is especially interesting given the original French versions appeared in 1969 and 1968, while *Anti-Oedipus* was not originally published until 1972. Thus it is clear to see how Deleuzian scholarship in Britain has been shaped by the canonical Deleuze as he is co-authored by Félix Guattari. Deleuze writes that “repetition displays identical elements which necessarily refer back to a latent subject which repeats itself through these elements, forming an ‘other’ repetition at the heart of the first” (2009a:28). Does this not point to the ultimate irony in the Freudian ‘talking cure’; that is, the need to continually repeat oneself? After all, is not Deleuze’s aversion to debate based on his concerns over who might be listening?

I wish to end this introduction with a quick analogy for this chapter, an analogy of the thesis itself, in Pascal Bonitzer’s description of the *trompe-l’œil* (‘trick the eye’) genre of art. In these works – most popular in the Baroque period, on which Deleuze wrote in *The Fold* (2006) – the painting first establishes a scene before suddenly revealing itself as “a system with a false bottom, which turns the representation into a ‘conceit’ and surreptitiously places the spectator in front of an unfathomable and terrifying reality” (Bonitzer, 2002:179). Bonitzer links the *trompe-l’œil* to the cinema of Hitchcock, arguing that while his films seem to disguise themselves with an aestheticised and ‘glossy’ mask hiding a deeper metaphysics, it is rather the case that Hitchcock’s metaphysics actually form part of the disguise. I claim that the remake works similarly, not that it aestheticises the genuine Idea of the original, but that it contains that Idea in its aestheticisation. Similar to the *trompe-l’œil*, we can only view this stain of the Idea via a shift in perspective, in which the Real might hope to be encountered. But how can we achieve this? Not by looking at remakes directly, for as with the *trompe-l’œil*, once lost in its illusion, we miss it. Deleuze argues that “repetition is truly that which disguises itself in constituting itself, that which constitutes itself only by disguising itself” (2009a:19); therefore, let us not get lost in the disguise, and look to its periphery, at the echo of its impact. I think this is the only way to approach the remake, especially given Deleuze and Lacan’s preference for privacy, and their aversion to debate.

A frog embracing a bottle of beer: From making to remaking via ‘unmaking’

If this chapter is to expose a hidden Deleuze and Lacan, it must be said to have the topology of the *möbius band*; in fact, this is also the topographical figure of the remake too. The möbius band illustrates how opposites converge and diverge, where one side meets the other without traversal. As such, this non-orientable surface subverts Euclidean space and time, and is represented in the perpetuity of M. C. Escher’s marching ants for whom there is no underside, which we can represent with the symbol for infinity, ‘∞’.

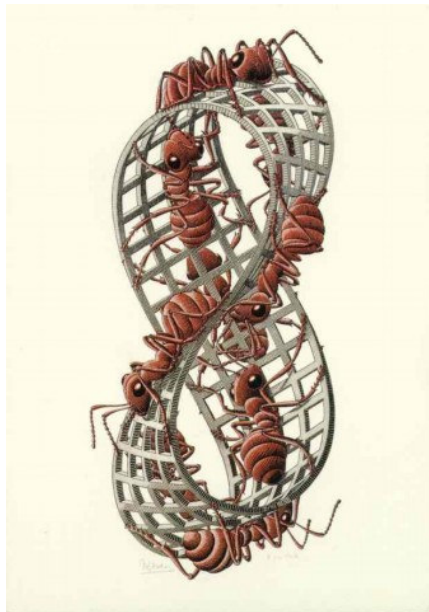


Fig. 1.1: The möbius band in M. C. Escher’s ‘Moebius Strip II (Red Ants)’ (1963)

We can discern a möbius topology in Deleuze’s thinking, particularly when he writes that “by sliding, one passes to the other side, since the other side is nothing but the opposite direction. [...] It suffices to follow it far enough, precisely enough, and superficially enough, in order to reverse sides and to make the right side become the left or vice versa” (2009b:12). For both Deleuze and Lacan, the figure of the möbius strip problematises various binary oppositions, including inside-outside, love-hate, signifier-signified, truth-appearance, etc., making it possible for one to traverse from reality to fantasy and beyond to the site of the Real.* Ultimately, the möbius band formulates a model of remaking in which the original and remake become part of the same structural event.

It is with Deleuze’s structure of the möbius in mind that the problem of remaking should be posed in terms of ends rather than origins. These ends diverge from their

* For a more detailed exploration of the möbius band in Žižek’s work, go to <http://art3idea.psu.edu/boundaries/documents/bolagrams.html> on ‘Bolagrams’ (Boundary Language Diagrams).

beginnings rather than reproduce an archetype of the Other, and as such we should feel confident to begin at the end, a reversal in logic that is going to be the key to our overturning current trends in remake theory that assume the sovereignty of the original. It is also one of the first instances of the Deleuzian twist already inherent to psychoanalysis: a reversal of causality. Even in Freud's earliest work on hysteria and repression, causality is in trouble, made problematic. Take the case of the patient 'Emma' from 'Project for a Scientific Psychology' (1895), a young woman whose hysterical symptoms included a fear of entering shops alone, an awkwardness concerning her appearance (especially her clothing), and the laughter of shop assistants. These motifs were soon discovered to be the distorted restaging of an earlier event where Emma was sexually violated by a shop keeper as a young child. One of the reasons Freud's analysis seems odd is because he labels the repressed traumatic event (the earlier sexual assault as a child) as Scene II and the consciously-remembered hystericised event (the fear of entering shops as an adult) as Scene I. What is strange about this reversed chronology is not that the scenes are reversed in the first place (memories precipitating hysteria are typically recalled in reverse chronological order), but, rather, that Freud does not correct the order following his unveiling of the earlier traumatic event. Freud keeps the reverse order precisely because, as Josh Cohen points out, in many ways "this *is* the correct order" (2005:20). The earlier scene has no psychological reality for Emma without the later scene, such that it is through the repetition of the memory that the memory is itself born.

In this way, Deleuze is absolutely Freudian in his insistence on events or series being fragmented, disordered (and reordered) by the subject. Deleuze writes that "it is essential that the first or pregenital stage [...] should not be understood as such" (2009b:267n), that the originary moment is dislocated. Žižek suggests that time is disordered in this way because of an unconscious 'Thing', a blockage causing hysteria, which is not an inert presence curving symbolic space by introducing gaps and inconsistencies, but an effect *of* these gaps and inconsistencies. For him, it is the *gaps in the symbolic that create the Real* (Žižek, 2006a:73), not the other way around. Žižek gives the example of Freud's famous Russian patient, the Wolf-Man, who marked out an event from his childhood in which he witnessed parental *coitus a tergo* (sexual act in which the man penetrates the woman from behind) as a traumatic moment which led to later sexual perversions. However, Žižek reveals the Lacanian (and Deleuzian) logic of reversal here when he observes that initially there was nothing traumatic about this first experience in-and-of-itself; only later, when the Wolf-Man became obsessed with infantile sexual theories such as "Where do children come from?" did he draw out this memory as a traumatic scene embodying the mystery of sexuality. Unlike Freud's case of

Emma*, “the scene was traumatized, elevated into a traumatic Real, only retroactively, in order to help the child to cope with the impasse of his symbolic universe (his inability to find answers to the enigma of sexuality)” (Žižek, 2006a:73-4). Compare the example of the Wolf-Man with Deleuze’s own example from Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*), in which the hero undergoes a series of amorous experiences as a child with his mother, before undergoing another series of sexual encounters with Albertine. For Deleuze, “the pregenital series has already put into play, in a mysterious noncomprehensive or pre-comprehensive mode, the adult model of Swann’s love for Odette” (2009b:268), such that the pregenital object of love is reconstructed *after* the adult love.

This paradox of reversed temporality requires repression, without it, the earlier scene is not Scene I or Scene II; it is no Scene at all. With the remake, the key paradox pointed out by Thomas Leitch is that it seeks to accommodate the original story to a new discourse *and* annihilate the model it is honouring, “to eliminate any need or desire to see the film they [remakes] seek to replace” (2002:50). This dual desire to honour and eliminate finds its apogee in two examples of the death drive at work in Hollywood remaking, which figuratively consume their templates in an extreme act of union so violent that cinematic history itself is destroyed and reborn in the process. In 1987, Hollywood producers Stanley R. Jaffe and Sherry Lansing employed James Dearden, the scriptwriter of a British TV thriller called *Diversion* (1980), to pen a Hollywood remake which became *Fatal Attraction* (1987). At the same time, the producers of *Fatal Attraction*, Paramount studios, attempted to purchase and destroy all known copies of *Diversion* on video to restrict the competition and establish their version as the original. Worse still is the example of George Cukor’s 1944 version of Thorold Dickinson’s *Gaslight* (1939), where the studio (MGM) remade the film after purchasing the rights to the negatives of the original, which they promptly destroyed, ensuring their version would remain definitive. Luckily they were unsuccessful, but these brutal moments of commercialist exploitation nonetheless confirm Lacan’s answer to the question “What is a father?” as being: “It is a dead one” (Lacan, 2003:343). Quite simply, there is no remake without a dead original, just as there is no original with a living remake. This should become a tautology of remaking (perhaps with the addition of the prefix ‘un’ to the word ‘dead’).

The link between the paradox of reverse causality and Leitch’s paradox of the remake is provided by Anat Zanger, who argues that it is in remakes that we can “identify these chains of repetition and variations as symptoms of those areas over which the master narrative has lost control” (2006:23). For Zanger, remade originals contain primordial ‘unknowns’ that

* It is vital here that we distinguish *symbolic trauma* from *actual traumatic experience* as the two are not to be confused. Lacan differentiates between them using the terms ‘structural trauma’ in the case of the former, and ‘historical trauma’ in the case of the latter.

terrify and disturb cinematic history like Freud's Wolf-Man, a disturbance that results in a compulsive need to remake. Freud noted that "there is at least one spot in every dream at which it is unplumbable – a navel, as it were, that is its point of contact with the unknown" (2001:186n). I claim that the remake paradoxes enumerated above provide the basis for any filmic understanding of Freud's most contentious theory of the 'death drive' (*todestrieb*). The naïve understanding of remakes and the death drive would be that remakes represent the death of original thinking in Hollywood. However, this reading could not be further from the truth of the matter, for the death drive is not simply a drive on its own in opposition to life drives (*Thanatos* against *Eros*), but, rather, it is a vital component of *every* drive, given every drive pursues its own extinction, involves the subject in repetition. In film, this sense is beautifully rendered in David Fincher's *Fight Club* (1999), where having narrowly escaped a car crash one of the characters, Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt), exclaims "God Damn! We just had a near-life experience, fellas", a reversal of the common phrase, "near-death experience". Here, there is an indication that 'near death' experiences actually bring about their reverse, something approaching real living, that is, the feeling of being *alive*.^{*} This is the meaning of Freud's statement that "'the aim of all life is death'", that "'inanimate things existed before living ones'" (2001:37-8). It is not that the aim of life is nihilistic but the opposite: life, that is, *real* life, involves going to the *edge*. But how can the brink of self-destruction get us closer to life?

Possibly the most famous of Freud's examples of the death drive comes not from his couch but from his grandchild's cot. In this example, Freud recalls a game he witnessed the young toddler play: first, he threw a cotton reel over the edge of his cot so that it disappeared. He accompanied this with the lamentation "*fort*", the German word for 'gone'. Soon after, the toddler pulled back the reel, greeting its reappearance with a gleeful exclamation, "*da!*", the German word for 'there' (Freud, 2003:52-3). Freud interpreted this game as the child's attempt to master, through repetitive re-enactment, the trauma of being separated from his mother. Even though this game of disappearance and return is effectively revisiting the trauma, in repeating it he activates himself *within it*. Where before he was passively helpless as his mother came and went, here he has control over the object's disappearance and its return. In shifting from object to subject, this rudimentary game illustrates the fundamental activity of the death-drive as the mediation between both failure and success in the psyche. Its inadequacy is a part of the element of self-preservation and self-extinguishment in one all-consuming moment of repetition.

Is the remake, therefore, the equivalent of Freud's grandchild playing the game of *fort/da* in response to the original version's 'real' mother, who disappears over time? Not so, for Lacan argues that Freud's interpretation of his grandchild's game of loss and return is of

* Something similar is explored in Joel Schumacher's *Flatliners* (1990), where medical students induce near-death experiences to encounter the afterlife.

only secondary importance. For Lacan, the child is not objectivising his mother in the cotton reel, thereby becoming the master over her disappearance, but, rather, he sees the reel as a small detachable part of himself which, while having been discarded, still remains connected to his body – a bodiless organ, as Žižek would say. Thus, this partial object is designated the subject, the *objet petit a* (Lacan, 1998:63). In remake terms, this sense of self-compartmentalisation and simultaneous fragmentation gives rise to a complex alternating between ‘here’ and ‘there’, the aim of which, as Lacan puts it, “is simply that of being the *fort* of a *da*, and the *da* of a *fort*” (1998:63), or in other words, of being what is *not there*, of finding desire at the same point at which we are born into Language.

It did not take us long to arrive at language, and it is here that we begin to truly break some new ground with the remake, for what is a remake if not the rearticulation of an original; a speaking-repetition, so to speak? Lacan is famous for his statement that “the unconscious is structured like a language” (Lacan, 1998:149), but it is here that we run up against another block. Josh Cohen questions whether it is possible to detect the death drive given “its silence and invisibility [...] renders it simultaneously everything and nothing, a blank absence and an uncanny presence” (2005:110)? The death drive hides itself so insidiously in amongst the life drives that it is completely undetectable: no wonder then, that it took Freud so long to discover it! Perhaps Deleuze has the answer, since he describes this silent hidden stream within the work of art as a ‘phantasm’, whose structure is that of ‘grammatical perspectivism’, a concept that will become paramount to this new conception of the remake.

What is grammatical perspectivism though? For Deleuze, this orientation around a phantasm is illustrated by a shift around an infinitive verb, such as ‘to live’, ‘to die’, etc. We can add to this list of infinitives some psychoanalytic equivalents in: ‘to repress’, ‘to beat’, ‘to seduce’, etc., and as remake theorists also: ‘to repeat’, ‘to recreate’, ‘to readapt’, etc. The leap is not so great from grammatical perspectivism to Freud’s famous phantasy structure (exemplified by the beating phantasy), where the infinitive verb emerges in-between the present progressive phase of “My father is beating a child (whom I hate)” and the asubjective phase “A child is being beaten”. In-between these two consciously remembered phases Freud detected an unconscious, intermediary phase linking these two statements, recovered during analysis: “I am being beaten *by my father*”, which shifts the fantasist from being the *subject of the enunciation* to being the *subject of the statement*. The infinitive verb, ‘to beat’, links these three phases via what Deleuze calls the phantasm. This phantasm is un-writable, unspeakable, and has to be fleshed out from between the two consciously-remembered phases via the shift from possessive personal subject, “My (father)”, to the impersonal object, “A (child)”, via the unconscious fully active subject “I (am)”. Identity here is unstable, and Deleuze calls this

phantasm a “disjunctive synthesis”, which goes “from the sexual pair to thought via castration” (2009b:251).

The link to the *objet petit a* of the child’s *fort/da* game will become clear with an example. Žižek describes an Australian beer commercial as beginning with the familiar fairy tale encounter between a young woman who, upon meeting an ugly frog, kisses and subsequently transforms him into a handsome young man. The twist comes when the man thirstily draws the woman to him to kiss her, and yet, rather than ending with the fantasy coupling, transforms the girl into a bottle of beer (which he triumphantly holds in his hand). Žižek is right to point out that this popular advert illustrates Lacan’s premise that “There is no sexual relationship” (“*il n’y a pas de rapport sexuel*”), because while the young woman transforms the frog into a handsome man full of phallic presence, he transforms her into a partial object, an ‘organ-without-a-body’, if you will, not unlike Freud’s grandchild. Žižek’s point is that there is always an unconscious third coupling that remains unspoken in any relationship: in this beer commercial it is the fully unconscious coupling of *a frog embracing a bottle of beer* (2006a:56). Žižek imagines a Magrittesque painting of this scene of a frog and a bottle of beer with the title ‘A Man and a Woman’, or ‘The Ideal Couple’. This vision is a staging of fantasies that are “radically desubjectivized, that cannot ever be enacted by the subject” (Žižek, 2006a:57), because the couple exclude themselves by having incompatible desires.

Deleuze states that it is the same as thinking of how a couple may ‘project itself’ (independently of children), “the way we go from the couple to *the thought constructed in the mode of the couple*” (2009b:251). The remake is similarly between two surfaces, and if we continue to look at it as two sides of a ‘fantasy’ (with an ‘f’), we miss the entire element intrinsic to ‘phantasy’ (with a ‘ph’) of the unconscious ‘third’ supporting the two. If Deleuze is right in saying that “the thinker of depths is a bachelor”, “the depressive thinker dreams of lost betrothals”, and “the thinker of surfaces is married or thinks about the ‘problem’ of the couple” (2009b:251), then we remake theorists must all become thinkers of *surfaces*, not depths. We must move beyond singular terms (as bachelors), dualisms (as lost betrothals), and look instead to the cracks in the surface (the ‘problem’ of the couple) into which we might fall. Remember the lesson of the Holy Grail in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989), where Indiana (Harrison Ford)’s girlfriend, Elsa (Alison Doody) attempts to “have her cake and eat it” by stealing the Grail, and is consequently swallowed by cracks which magically appear in the ground. As she slips away, Indiana himself becomes possessed by this *objet a* also, before his father coolly reminds him to “let it go”. This is the lesson of the death drive in psychoanalysis: one must follow the *objet a* to the ends of the earth, but God help you if you find it. In remake terms, we must be careful not to become preoccupied with false depths in searching for the ideal couple in an original and its remake, for to do this is to only

see the beautiful man and woman; rather, we look along the surface and see *the remake frog embracing a remake bottle of beer*. Now we are ready for an example.

The remake series I wish to use to explore this notion of grammatical perspectivism is the remakology of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, which as Dave Kajganich argues, is a film which seems to require remaking every 20 years or so because it articulates something about the “human condition” (speaking in Matthies, 2008). The series loosely follows the same plotline of a group of people in society who begin to suspect that their friends and neighbours are not who they are, that they have been assimilated or possessed by some alien ‘other’. The recurring phrase of the series is “My son is not my son [or father, daughter, etc.]”, because these emotionless neighbours – even lovers – walk, talk, and act like ‘themselves’. The aliens are only betrayed by some tic or inexplicable leftover of otherness (often an inhuman glint in the eye) which gives them away. Soon, whole communities seem to be afflicted, and the ‘normal’ humans are in the minority, attempting to resist their own assimilation by pretending to be “one of them”, that is, by obeying rules such as not showing any emotion...

The first version – adapted from Jack Finney’s sci-fi novel *Body Snatchers* in 1956 – has undergone no less than three assimilations: in 1978, 1993, and again in 2007. Rather than psychoanalysing the story or narrative, which rather goes against my methodology, I wish to look instead at the difference and repetition of their promotional materials. Thus what follows is an analysis of the taglines, titles and poster art using Freud’s beating-phantasy framework and Žižek’s Australian beer commercial to show four separate cycles: (1) how the 1956 version is a woman with a frog; (2) how the 1978 version is a woman with a handsome man; (3) how the 2007 version is the man with a bottle of beer; and (4) how the 1993 version is the unconscious underlying phantasmatic support of the frog embracing a bottle of beer.

The tagline for the original *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* in 1956 read: “They come from another world!” Alongside this tagline we should read the tagline for the first remake of the same name in 1978: “The seed is planted... terror grows”. Both are in the third person, and are *anticipatory* of an incoming threat. There is a strong emphasis on ‘us’, the humans, and ‘them’, the alien invaders. The publicity posters confirm this reading, as both share the markedly similar image of two groups: those foregrounded are distinctly identifiable as humans running desperately from the background group of nondescript, formless ‘others’ who bear an uncanny resemblance.



Fig. 1.2: Publicity posters for *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) & *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978)

However, with the latest remake in 2007, *The Invasion*, the entire emphasis is shifted from the *distance* of other to self, to the *proximity* of other to self. *The Invasion*'s tagline read: "Do not trust anyone. Do not show emotion. Do not fall asleep." Here, rather than an anticipatory threat of impending invasion we have the sense that we have already been invaded, and instead what we get are the rules for surviving this new world populated by alien beings (which amount to the instruction "Pretend to be like one of 'them'").* The humans must not run or scream in this version, but learn the rules and live *as if they were the other*. In another remake however, we have yet another type of assimilation. This fourth version is simply titled *Body Snatchers* (1993), a film rarely acknowledged in the Invasion canon (hence why I list it fourth). However, despite its minor status, it was directed by Abel Ferrara, a New York auteur figure responsible for critically acclaimed independent art-house hits like *Bad Lieutenant* (1992) and *The Addiction* (1995), the latter of which was filmed in black-and-white. However, despite *Body Snatchers* premiering at the *Cannes Film Festival* and receiving critical admiration from the likes of Roger Ebert, who described it as "skilled and knowing, and deserves the highest praise you can give a horror film: It works" (1994), the film was

* Just like the 'rules for surviving a horror movie' in Wes Craven's *Scream* (1996), which features such rules as: "Don't answer the phone. Don't answer the door. Don't try to escape", etc. These are unequivocally 'postmodern' in the strictest sense.

dropped like a stone, receiving only a limited theatrical release from its distributor, Warner Bros, and in some instances going ‘direct-to-video’. Why is this version excluded from the Invasion canon? The *Body Snatchers* tagline is perhaps the most disturbing of them all: “Imagine... You’re gone and someone else is living inside your body”. Here, the film enjoins its viewers to imagine they have already *been* assimilated, such that we *are*, and *always have been the other*. Compare the two posters (see fig. 1.3 below): is not the frozen look on *The Invasion*’s star, Nicole Kidman, that of a woman trying to fake her otherness in front of a crowd of alien onlookers, searching for the difference that will betray her (the AA motto “Fake it ‘till you make it” seems a crude but appropriate point of comparison here)? By contrast, the *Body Snatchers* image utilises the Real truth of the story: that beneath the mask of otherness we are already ‘other’, in the extremist sense of the word. This is the frog and the bottle of beer, the ultimate negation of the sexual relationship which is, here, invalidated (what need have we for sex when we can reproduce without it – i.e. in vitro fertilisation, etc?). *Body Snatchers* merely anticipates a world in which sex no longer performs a function.



Fig. 1.3: Publicity posters for *The Invasion* (2007) & *Body Snatchers* (1993)

Even the titles in this series mark them out as operating in different ways: the 1978 version repeats the title, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, whereas *The Invasion* in 2007 and *Body Snatchers* in 1993 each present one half of the story. Here, we have a rare titular example of the symbol overtaking its signification, standing in for the whole; we know even

with the title '*The Invasion*' that this has a textual antecedence.* We could even go so far as to say that *The Invasion* and *Body Snatchers* assimilate the different parts of the *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* films like the aliens in their stories, leading to the perverted sense that "My film is not my film". Proof of the repressive nature of the *Body Snatchers* remake can be seen with a quick look at my filmography, for where the other films are listed under 'I' this one comes under 'B', although this title is closest to the original title of the novel, *The Body Snatchers* from 1955, which also points to the suppression of the literary source in the other film versions (completed with *The Invasion*). While the source text featured a happy ending in which the aliens left earth due to the level of resistance they encounter, the first two film versions end somewhat obliquely, neither happy nor downbeat. *The Invasion* contains a properly saccharine 'happy ending' where the invasion is not only stopped but reversed (that is, all the assimilated humans are returned to their natural states). Only *Body Snatchers* features the properly pessimistic ending contained in the Idea of the story, what Zanger referred to as the primordial 'unknown' that terrifies and disturbs the series, or what Freud noted as the "unplumbable" navel of the dream's contact with the unknown. Ferrara's version is the only uncompromising vision of an inhuman alien future with no subjects. Furthermore, it is also the only version in which the alien invasion disturbs a family that is already disturbed: the protagonist of *Body Snatchers*, Marti (Gabrielle Anwar), is already confronting the unknown terror of a crisis of identity, in which the overtures of late-capitalist paranoia play over the twentieth century breakdown of familial reciprocity. Ultimately, the film's final statement holds true whether the alien life forms succeed or not: "Where you gonna go? Where you gonna run? Where you gonna hide? Nowhere... 'Cause there's no one like you left"; in other words: *you* are now the other.

It is only through the minor remake then that the true horror at the heart of the original *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* story comes to the fore. It creates a productive short-circuit that could perhaps *only* be achieved in a low-budget movie, where darker endings are not as costly as they can be on the big screen in terms of audience ratings. For Žižek, short-circuits can be productive as they illustrate the faultiness of objective reasoning, such that by taking a major classic (author, text, notion), and reading it through the lens of a minor one, we can reveal the essence of the major text, or as Lacan would say, what is in the text, more than itself (its 'real' unspeakable message). Deleuze understands a 'minor' text not as a text of lesser quality necessarily, but of one that is "marginalized, disavowed by hegemonic ideology, or dealing with a 'lower', less dignified topic" (Žižek, 2006b:ix). If the minor text is well chosen, such a procedure can lead to "insights which completely shatter and undermine

* Illustrated by over 15 examples which establish an intertextual link by replicating the first part of the title: '*Invasion of the...*' with a changing object: '*... Body Stealers*' (1969), '*...Girl Snatchers*' (1973), '*...Fleshhunters*' (1980), '*...Bunny Snatchers*' (1992), and so forth.

our common perceptions” (Žižek, 2006b:ix). As it is seemingly well-hidden in the 1990s, the *Body Snatchers* remake is undoubtedly a ‘minor’ text in the Deleuzian sense, and yet it is here that the death drive is most visible.

Another example uncannily similar to that of the *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* remakology is that of the film adaptations of Richard Matheson’s sci-fi/horror classic, *I Am Legend* (1954). In the book, one man alone survives a holocaust which sees the earth overrun by vampiric creatures. The book ends with the hero, Neville, glimpsing a future where infection is normal and he is a murderous biological deviation, such that a reversal of the old world (where the vampires were the murderous deviants) is fully realised. Alone, Neville ends his life to become the ‘legend’ to the vampiric race now inhabiting the world, the legend they themselves once were to humans. The adaptations of *I Am Legend*, of which there are currently three, follow the same pattern as the *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* films: the first, *The Last Man on Earth* (1964), included an ambiguous ending where Neville (Vincent Price) discovered a cure for the remaining half-infected survivors, who kill him in their ignorance. In the second and third versions, *The Omega Man* (1971), and more recently, *I Am Legend* (2007), a false ‘happy ending’ is introduced whereby Neville (Charlton Heston and Will Smith, respectively) finds a cure for these other humans, which they embrace. Each of these versions alters Neville’s relationship to the legend: in the book he is the human legend for the vampires as the last surviving human in a vampire world; in the first film version Neville dies ignominiously in the eyes of the Others, such that there can be no legend; in the other two versions, particularly the 2007 version, having saved the other survivors by finding a cure with his sacrifice, Neville destroys the vampires and becomes the human legend for *humanity*, entirely inverting the proposition. Of course, to complete the tetralogy there is a fourth version which is, like *Body Snatchers*, properly unconscious. *I Am Omega* (2007) was a direct-to-DVD version released in the same year as the big budget Will Smith version, specifically produced to capitalise on that film’s substantial marketing campaign. As such, the film drew huge amounts of criticism for its cynical and exploitative parasitism. The title even betrays its insecurity, being a *portmanteau* of the other two versions, *I Am Legend* and *The Omega Man*. I would argue that *I Am Omega* is less cynical than it might first appear, for is there not a sense that there is more to these TV and DVD versions than meets the eye? Do they not point to the brutal economic capitalism at the heart of almost every remake hoping somehow to assimilate a model to pass itself off as its superior other self?

Deleuze provides the key to these different versions in his statement that “I make, remake and unmake my concepts along a moving horizon, from an always decentred centre, from an always displaced periphery which repeats and differentiates them” (2009a:xix). Although Deleuze is not describing film remakes here, his sense of ‘unmaking’ arising out of first making and then remaking might as well have been written about them. There is a link

here to the psychoanalytic triad of ‘construction’, ‘repression’, ‘reconstruction’. As with the unconsciously repressed third, ‘unmaking’ is not the third stage on from the previous two but the hidden kernel emerging from the ‘making’ and its ‘remaking’. I think the critics of *I Am Omega* were more bothered by the fact that this version, far from merely leeching off *I Am Legend* with its cheap production, mirrored the big-budgeted Hollywood film *too closely*. This instance of finding oneself sharing space with a neighbour whose proximity has become too much to handle is a problem shared by every remade text. Let us place this figure of the neighbour under some intense scrutiny in an attempt to uncover the reason as to why *I Am Omega* might have caused such a big stir.

Love thy (evil) neighbour: on the symptom and fetish of the remake

The question that permeates the Invasion films is: How do we detect which of our neighbours have been assimilated, and which are still human? Many other films feature a similar problem, and not just in the science fiction canon. Every time a character is double-crossed or betrayed, every time an antagonist is revealed to be the protagonist’s lover or best friend, we find ourselves in the territory of Lacan’s theory of the *evil neighbour*. Marcus Harney has remarked that it is no accident “that remakes are often of texts whose plot involves a remaking of personages, in the form of reeducation, imposture, shape-shifting, metamorphosis, rebirth, role-playing, etc.” (2002:81). While Harney’s observation has its problems (there are non-remakes that feature these themes and remakes that do not) it is nonetheless an observation that rings true of most remakes, and certainly of the Invasion series. What is it though about the concept of the neighbour that disturbs us so? Lacan describes Freud’s understanding of the Christian motto to “love thy neighbour” as a reflection on the understanding that God is dead, in that “Man tried to satisfy his need for aggression at the expense of his neighbor, to exploit his work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to appropriate his goods, to humiliate him, to inflict suffering on him, to torture and kill him” (Freud, cited in Lacan, 1992:185). Whatever could Freud mean here, and why does Lacan cite this as proof that “*jouissance* is evil” (1992:184)? Firstly, we must ask the question: What is *jouissance*?

French Lacanians like to tell the following story as to why Lacan resisted the English translation of *jouissance* into ‘enjoyment’: upon his first trip to America, Lacan was one day confronted with a television commercial featuring the well-known motto “Enjoy Coke!” and, dismayed at its vulgarity, he emphatically insisted that his ‘*jouir*’ was not the same as this ‘enjoy’ (Žižek, 2008c:xvii). However, Žižek writes that in many ways this is wrong, for “against this argument, one should claim that ‘enjoy’ in the unfortunate ‘Enjoy Coke!’

precisely is the *jouir* in its superego imbecility” (2008c:xvii). This refusal of popular culture on the part of French Lacanians fails to recognise the true status of the mass-media symbols of America: Coca-Cola does not just connote an American ideology, the ‘spirit of America’, but is the very *signifier of this American spirit*, its signifying representative. The link to Hollywood has been clearly made by Forrest and Koos, who describe the remake as an effort to “Coca-Cola-ize the world” (2002:29).

So how is *jouissance* – the superegoic drive to enjoy – evil? Žižek aims to rescue the concept of the ‘neighbour’ from its nauseating conception in TV comedies such as *Friends*, which he argues to be a false conception of neighbourly love. By contrast, Žižek’s concept of the ‘neighbour’ is someone who appears non-threatening and even ego-reinforcing in a narcissistic way, such that they are “Like me...”, yet with the qualification, “...but somehow different”, giving rise to the question: “What obscene secret are they hiding? Why do they bug me so much?” This difference, this irreconcilable aspect of the neighbour that eats away at us, is the Lacanian kernel/nugget he called the *objet petit a*. It is an alien element that “remains an inert, impenetrable, enigmatic presence that hystericizes me” (Žižek, 2006a:43), and it is both disgusting and fascinating in equal measure. This is the ‘it-Thing’ (*das Ding*) of the Coke commercial; not a pulsating, oozing monster-thing from 1950s ‘creature features’, but the insidious ‘Thing’ lurking inside our neighbour who looks alright on the outside, but inside is a whole other kettle of fish.

Compare Leitch’s paradox of the remake wishing to both honour and eliminate its original with Žižek’s deliciously devilish joke about a Slovene peasant who is told by a good witch that “I will do to you whatever you want, but be warned, I will do it to your neighbour twice!” The peasant thinks for a moment, and then replies with a cunning smile: “Take one of my eyes!” (2006a:36). The peasant’s answer illustrates the hidden meaning behind Lacan’s famous question, “*Che vuoi?*” (2003:345), which does not just translate to “What do you want?”, but also, “What’s bugging you?”, and why does this uncertainty bother me? Consider the common parlance “Keeping up with the Joneses”. We cannot help but hear this phrase in the words of Alexandre Kojève who said that the subject creates and preserves “its own reality by the overcoming of a reality other than its own, by the ‘transformation’ of an alien reality into its own reality, by the ‘assimilation,’ the ‘internalization’ of a ‘foreign,’ ‘external’ reality” (1980:4). Is not the trauma of modern day middle class existence to be found in the ‘suburban thriller’ genre, which features the situation of new neighbours moving in next door? The genre includes such films as *The ‘Burbs* (1989), *The Stepford Wives* (1975, remade in 2004), *Your Friends and Neighbours* (1998), and *Arlington Road* (1999). In each example, the real trauma is not that the neighbours move in with their bizarre behaviour, but that the neighbourhood soon begins to change, such that the oddballs become the ‘Joneses’, and the protagonist becomes the oddball. The remake is similarly an evil neighbour who ‘looks like’

its original version and yet contains the imperceptible trace of difference in its repetition, an internalised dissemblance that bugs us. The closer the remake is to looking like the original, the more disconcerting its premise (with the ‘shot-for-shot’ remake topping the list), and its influence over other contemporary films.

The most common phrase concerning the neighbour is the Christian one: “Love thy neighbour as thyself”, which on first glance seems to work against Žižek’s version of the evil neighbour. However, if we look deeper, we can see that this phrase is actually to be taken thoroughly seriously in the context of the evil neighbour, for it is in Lacan’s concept of love that the traumatic dimension of the neighbour really takes off. Lacan writes that “my neighbour’s *jouissance*, his harmful, malignant *jouissance*, is that which poses a problem for my love” (1992:187), and as such, for Lacan, “*jouissance* is evil” (1992:184), *love is suffering*. To complement the ‘suburban thriller’ genre, we have the ‘psycho-thriller’ genre, where this time, a diabolical neighbour assimilates the style of the protagonist herself.* This is perhaps the most uncannily terrifying neighbour narrative of them all, for as the common phrase “good fences make good neighbours” indicates, without a fence we find ourselves in a spot of bother. One such example is *Single White Female* (1992), which captures this sense perfectly when a heartbroken woman, Allie (Bridget Fonda), advertises for a new housemate, an advert answered by Hedy (Jennifer Jason Leigh). At first they get on fine, until Hedy becomes pathologically obsessed with copying Allie’s life, from wearing her perfume and jewellery, to trying on all of her clothes. However, the best scene of the film occurs when the girls go for a hair-cut together. In a truly sublime moment, Hedy descends the stairs of the salon with her matted brown curls cut short into a dyed-red bob, just like Allie. More than any other scene of bloodshed, this flash of red (seen in the mirror no less) is the one that gets to the heart of just why the neighbour is so terrifying.†

The problem with the Christian phrase of “Love thy neighbour as thyself” is that finding oneself in the position of the beloved is sometimes just as violent and traumatic a discovery as being rejected having declared one’s love for another. Lacan explains that the reason love is so terrifying to receive is that it is the act of “giving away something one doesn’t have”, his point being that we love a certain person because they contain an unfathomable ‘X’, literally some ‘Thing’ (*objet a*) that causes this love arbitrarily, something approximating the sense of “Out of everyone, why choose me?”. Žižek supplements Lacan’s definition of love (as “giving away something one doesn’t have...”) with “...to someone who doesn’t want it” (2006a:44), bringing the two elements of threat implied in the suburban and

* ‘Herself’ specifically because the ‘suburban thriller’ and ‘psycho-thriller’ genres are split down gender lines for reasons I have not got time to enumerate here.

† Other films with similar themes include: *Black Widow* (1987), *Basic Instinct* (1992), and *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle* (1992).

psycho thriller genres together. Žižek offers a starkly beautiful example of the violence of declaring love in Alejandro González Iñárritu's *21 Grams* (2003), in which a dying man, Paul (Sean Penn), declares his love for a woman, Cristina (Naomi Watts), whom he has just met. Shocked, she reproaches him saying: "You can't just walk up to a woman you barely know and tell her you like her. You don't know what she's going through!" The problem is not that Cristina does not reciprocate Paul's affection but the opposite. Between the lines, Cristina is asking: What right do you have to stir up my desire? Lacan writes that "*I love you, but, because inexplicably I love in you something more than you – the objet petit a – I mutilate you*" (1998:268). It seems that whoever wrote the phrase that "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery", was wrong. Perhaps "Mutilation is the sincerest form of flattery" would be more accurate.

In Hollywood cinema, this trauma at finding oneself in the position of the beloved is nowhere more apparent than in remaking. The remake not only moves into the original's 'neighbourhood' with its bizarre practices and behaviour (new actors and scenes, different endings, altered *mise-en-scène*, etc), and seeks to destroy that original and establish itself as the proprietor of this new style, but it also declares its loving intentions overtly. As with Cristina's complaint of Paul's declaration of love, the original is right to question the right of the remake to stir up its desire, the 'Thing' of its *jouissance*. It is not the imitation, but the declaration, that causes the problems here, for as Andrey Konchalovskiy has said of *Psycho*, the reason remakes cannot be considered forgeries is because *they are signed* (speaking in D-J, 1999). Is there not an additional threat implied with the remake's blatant appropriation of the original title that is not present in the genre film, which also steals and allegorises scenes and themes? Žižek questions the declarative dimension of statements, wanting to know "What more does this statement contain, that has caused you to make it" (2006a:19), or in remake parlance: Why not just remake the film as a genre picture, why signal the identity of the original overtly? Deleuze also notices the traumatic dimension of a loving declaration, stating that "If you are caught up in another person's dream, you are lost" (cited in Žižek, 2005a:212). For Deleuze, the type of perversion inherent to the detective is a kind of psychoanalytic deadlock that, studied in isolation, cannot be resolved. The declarative dimension to remakes in 'speaking' themselves into a double existence is thus a perversion written in the language of the cinematic unconscious.

The idea of being lost in another's person's dream (or should that be nightmare) in which one is both subject and pervert is brilliantly illustrated in David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (1986), a story about an inquisitive young man, Jeffrey (Kyle MacLachlan), who while daydreaming finds a severed ear in a field which leads him into a dark world just beneath the glossy sheen of his idyllic suburban street in small-town USA. His investigation leads him to Dorothy Vallens (Isabella Rossellini)'s apartment where he witnesses a dangerous

psychopath, Frank Booth (Dennis Hopper), who has kidnapped and mutilated Dorothy's husband, engage in sadistic sexual games with her. Jeffrey's voyeurism awakens something in him that both disgusts and fascinates him in equal measure. Timothy Corrigan has even argued that Jeffrey's invasion of Dorothy's apartment leaves audience members in a different, exotic world, but that, "as the subsequent discovery of Jeffrey reveals (voyeuristically hiding in the closet, watching the rape of Dorothy), those viewers become strangely at home there, made 'neighbors'" (1991:71). This, for Corrigan is exemplified by the fact that "in these neighbourhoods there is only one nature for Jeffrey to discover, a horizontal rather than vertical 'second nature' that flattens and evacuates all human and natural depths" (1991:72).

Corrigan questions how the viewer is to properly receive *Blue Velvet*: "What is the proper response here? Nervous laughter? Bemused horror" (1991:76)? In one particular scene Jeffrey's cover is compromised and he is confronted by Frank, who insists on calling him 'Neighbour', and warns him off Dorothy, unconsciously speaking in Lacanese (a language David Lynch seems to be fluent in):

Don't be a good neighbour anymore to her. I'll have to send you a love letter! Straight from my heart, fucker! You know what a love letter is? It's a bullet from a fucking gun, fucker! You receive a love letter from me and you're fucked forever! You understand, fuck? I'll send you straight to hell, fucker! In dreams... I walk with you. In dreams...I talk to you. In dreams, you're mine... all the time. Forever.

Frank openly realises here the danger of the love letter, and, taking his lead, we should draw from this that every remake is a love letter to its original shot from a gun. There is a real impotency implied in this scene from *Blue Velvet* observable in the remake also, for while Frank threatens Jeffrey with wild posturing and gesticulation there is no real indication that he can even achieve sexual climax with Dorothy (while "Baby wants to fuck!", 'Daddy' ultimately cannot perform). However, Jeffrey on the other hand clearly can: he is young, virile, and innocent, knowingly and insidiously tricking his way into Dorothy's apartment. In one scene in the film Frank tells Jeffrey, "You're like me", following a particularly nasty sado-masochistic sex scene where Jeffrey beats Dorothy in a moment of pure transgressive becoming. It is Jeffrey who is the evil neighbour with good intentions here, not Frank; he is Deleuze's perverted neighbour, one who ends up becoming the very cause of his own investigation. This is proven in another scene when Jeffrey's nicer-than-nice girlfriend, Sandy (Laura Dern), tells him: "I can't figure out if you're a detective or a pervert", to which Jeffrey responds: "Well, that's for me to know and for you to find out."

Corrigan's question at the heart of *Blue Velvet*, as to whether we should regard it with "nervous laughter" or "bemused horror", is the same as the question facing remake theorists:

is the remake simply an “innocent detective” hoping to probe the depths of an original with which it is enamoured, or is it a “guilty pervert” hoping to replace this previous version with its own style and aspirations to (or delusions of) grandeur? The Lacan/Lynchian answer is simple: Jeffrey is both innocent detective *and* guilty pervert, and so too is the remake.

However, this is not the complete picture of the neighbourly dimension of the remake, for alongside Lacan’s evil neighbour we have Deleuze’s *good neighbour*. If the former is a kind of symptomal exception that disturbs the surface of false appearance, then the good neighbour is a fetish. The idea of the symptom is that it allows us to manage our most traumatic experiences by repressing them. Thereafter, we are bothered by the symptom only, rather than the traumatic memory. The fetish, on the other hand, is the inverse of the symptom, where rather than repressing the traumatic experience the subject fully assumes this knowledge and yet displaces it onto an everyday object. Žižek observes that fetishists are not dreamers lost in their own private worlds, but “thoroughly ‘realists’, able to accept the way things effectively are – since they have their fetish to which they can cling in order to cancel the full impact of reality” (2008c:x). If the evil neighbour is the symptom of the remake, the pervert waiting to explode out of the closet and disturb the glossy sheen of cinematic originality, what is the remake fetish?

Just as the Wicked Witch of the East in *The Wizard of Oz* does not function without the Good Witch of the North, neither does our evil neighbour function without its good supplement. Deleuze has described this vision of the good neighbour as our “strange mirror” (2009b:325), a reflection of the self that the speaker hopes will reveal something hidden inside him/herself. One is confronted in Lacan with a choice that illustrates a dilemma: “Either I refrain from betraying my neighbor so as to spare my fellow man or I shelter behind my fellow man so as to give up my *jouissance*” (Lacan, 1992:190). Some choice! The Deleuzian good neighbour is not faced with a choice but a contradictory dual action, caught between holding an aggressor off with one hand while inviting them with the other. Consider the etymology of the word “fetish”, which, prior to Freud’s use to the term, denoted “an inanimate object worshipped for its supposed magical powers or because it is considered to be inhabited by a spirit” (Soanes and Stevenson, 2003:638). The word originated in West African tribal tongues and denoted on the one hand their primal fears of the undead zombie (‘*zumbi*’), and on the other, the concept of ‘cultural creation’, or ‘made by art’ (*facticius*, now ‘factitious’). While the evil neighbour contains something, some *je ne sais quoi* that hystericises, African tribesman considered the double, or “good neighbour”, by contrast as containing a fetishising spirit that *sustained* them. Theirs was a neighbour in which, via a *folie à deux*, they experienced themselves in an ‘other’ whose status as having no discernible life-force provided the ultimate reassurance against their own destruction.

It is clear to see in these ‘primitive’ beliefs the seeds of Freud’s theory of narcissism, which he described as “a libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self-preservation” (1987:66). However, in Deleuze this lifeless uncanny double or ‘strange mirror’ is similarly reflected in the sense that a group’s kinship is sustained by gravitating around a specific object as fetish. Once this object is ignored by others it ceases to capture our own gaze, to fascinate us, hence this is an object linked through the *gaze*. Deleuze writes that

the Other assures the margins and transitions in the world. He is the sweetness of contiguities and resemblances. He regulates the transformations of form and background and the variations of depth. He prevents assaults from behind. He fills the world with a benevolent murmuring. He makes things incline toward one another. When one complains about the meanness of Others, one forgets this other and even more frightening meanness – namely, the meanness of things were there no Other (2009b:345).

However, it is important to note that, just as there is an innocent or naïve countenance to Žižek and Lacan’s evil neighbour, who knows not why his or her declaration of love is so violent, there is an *evil* dimension to the good neighbour also. Just as the good neighbour redoubles my existence, and as such reassures against my destruction, in doing so, s/he also poses the ultimate threat to the uniqueness of my being: *at any single moment the double could replace me without anyone noticing*.

A whole body of cinema is emerging with this very theme, examples of which include: *Angel Heart* (1987), *The Usual Suspects* (1995), *Lost Highway* (1997), *Fight Club* (1999), *Memento* (2000), *The Others* (2001), *The Machinist (El maquinista)*, 2004), and recently, *Shutter Island* (2010).^{*} Where before, our protagonist’s neighbourhood was invaded by an evil foreign other, here it is the protagonist him/herself who is foreign-to-him/herself. One of the best examples is David Fincher’s *Fight Club*, which proved something of a landmark with its depiction of an unnamed protagonist (Edward Norton) who meets a bizarre soap salesman, Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt), with whom he introduces underground ‘fight clubs’ to a brutal American subculture seething with unchecked rage. Soon, Tyler’s behaviour becomes (more) erratic as he begins to assimilate the narrator’s life, until that is, the climactic ending reveals that the protagonist *is* Tyler Durden, that *he himself is his own neighbour*. We soon realise that every inconsistency and inaccuracy in the film up to that point can be attributed to the protagonist’s psychological inconsistencies. Thus in the context of Freud’s description of narcissism as denoting “the attitude of a person who treats his own body in the same way in which the body of a sexual object is ordinarily treated” (1987:65), the narrator in

^{*} The example in classical Hollywood is *Harvey* (1950), in which Elwood P. Dowd (James Stewart) befriends a six-foot rabbit.

Fight Club created his evil ‘neighbour’ to relieve the pressure of being alone (in the strictest Deleuzian sense).

The link to remaking here is paramount to our consideration of the cinematic ‘other’. While one aspect of the remake is akin to Žižek’s evil neighbour who looks, sounds, and acts like the original while containing some nugget of hystericising difference, the other aspect is this sense of the good neighbour as a self-willed creation reassuring against the original’s destruction (and containing the seeds of that destruction). The concept of disguise is fundamental here, for the remake must meticulously conceal its identity from itself by creating linguistic ramparts around its newly constructed world. The good neighbour is akin to what Deleuze calls the “dark precursor”, a figure who is invisible and imperceptible, and not unlike the death drive itself (2009a:119-120). Žižek describes this dark precursor as a kind of “‘vanishing mediator’, a mechanism for mediating the two series [...] a point of passage between the two” (2004a:112). Tyler Durden is the vanishing mediator in *Fight Club*, helping the narrator to rebuild his life while at the same time threatening to take control of it and smash it to pieces. The vanishing mediator appears in every example of a ‘good neighbour’ film: *The Usual Suspects* (1995) features a protagonist, Verbal Kint (Kevin Spacey), whose flawed account of the events surrounding a major crime scene eventually reveals him as its grand orchestrator (vanishing mediator – ‘Keyser Soze’). *Memento* (2000) charted the search of an amnesiac detective, Leonard (Guy Pearce), for his wife’s murderer that revealed him as the very figure he had been searching for (vanishing mediator – ‘John G.’).^{*} In each case the vanishing mediator is nothing more than a zero element extrinsic to the narrative that is merely produced in order to resolve some deadlock, leading the protagonist into resolution whereupon the mediator disappears (these are then, in a sense, elaborate Hitchcockian MacGuffins, *par excellence*).

How does this vanishing mediator operate in remakes? If we take a closer look, the majority of these films revolve around a mysterious and indecipherable phrase, one that instigates the investigation. For example, David Lynch’s underappreciated masterpiece, *Lost Highway* (1997), revolves around the phrase “Dick Laurent is dead”. The film begins with Fred Madison (Bill Pullman) staring into a mirror before he is disturbed by his intercom. When he pushes the receiver down, he hears a mysterious voice pronounce the meaningless phrase, “Dick Laurent is dead”. However, when he goes to investigate the street is empty and a police siren fades into the background. Then, after a series of mind-bending events featuring Fred’s double, Pete (Balthazar Getty), the film culminates in Fred actually murdering a

^{*} We can add other vanishing mediators to these: ‘Johnny Favorite’ in *Angel Heart*, ‘The Army of the Twelve Monkeys’ in *Twelve Monkeys* (1995), ‘Rollo Tomasi’ in *L.A. Confidential* (1997), ‘The Mystery Man’ in *Lost Highway*, ‘Ivan’ in *The Machinist (El maquinista)*, and most recently, ‘patient 67’ in Martin Scorsese’s *Shutter Island* (2010).

gangster named Dick Laurent (Robert Loggia) before arriving back at his own house and ‘repeating’ the phrase “Dick Laurent is dead” before fleeing from the police. The narrative of *Lost Highway*, as with each of the ‘good neighbour’ films, begins and ends at the same point in time and space. Rather than the usual ‘character arc’ of a protagonist’s journey from one point in space and time to another, these narratives go nowhere in the normal Euclidean sense, but rather travel through the protagonist’s own change in perspective. Where *Blue Velvet*’s Jeffrey literally travels into a severed ear in a field, triggering his investigation of Dorothy’s apartment, *Lost Highway*’s Fred travels only in his psyche. Žižek writes that this film contains the structure of the möbius loop, and is the precise journey of the patient during analysis:

At the beginning, the patient is troubled by some obscure, indecipherable, but insistent message (the symptom) which, as it were, bombards him from the outside, and then, at the conclusion of the treatment, the patient is able to assume this message as his own, to pronounce it in the first person singular (2002a:18).

These films are based on the impossible notion of the protagonist encountering himself via the Deleuzian dark precursor. In a sense then, the ‘good neighbour’ represents the analyst, whose role is to facilitate the subject/patient in – not learning any new knowledge, *per se* – but, rather, identifying with the knowledge they already ‘knew’, but did not know that they knew.* In this way, Lynch’s sustained allusions to *The Wizard of Oz* across his films (from ‘Dorothy’ in *Blue Velvet* to *Wild at Heart*’s homage) each rethink the *idée fixe* that “There’s no place like home”. In Lynch, it is not that the subject is alienated from his home, but that *homeliness is itself revealed to be alien*. The goal of the Lynchian protagonist is not to return to the safety of the home, but identify with, and accept, the uncanniness (Freud’s *unheimlichkeit*) at the very heart of the home itself. In many ways, the message of these films is “Welcome home”, but not in the sense of “Home is where the heart is”, but the Lacanian sense of “Home is where the heart is not”.

The sense is the same as that contained in Lacan’s translation of Freud’s statement, “*Wo es war, soll ich werden*”, which is often translated as: “Where the id was, so the ego shall be”. However, for Lacan, a more accurate translation is: “Where the subject was must I become” (2003:141-2), and he does not stop here, for his ultimate version contains a directive: “There where it was, *it is my duty* that I should come into being” (2003:142, emphasis added). The rephrasing of this statement with the added element of ‘duty’ is the link to the Delphic injunction, ‘Know thyself!’, which is the challenge put to every Hollywood remake. Harold Bloom offers his own translation of Freud’s *Wo es war* in relation to

* Another classical Hollywood equivalent is the meaningless phrase “Rosebud” in Orson Welles’s early masterpiece, *Citizen Kane* (1941).

adaptation, which he writes as “*Where it, the precursor’s poem, is there let my poem be*” (1997:80). All we need do is insert the word ‘film’ for ‘poem’ and we have an accurate approximation of the remake process. However, rather than ask if the remake can pass for the original by virtue of its similitude, we should be asking if the original can stand up to its own value (or ‘event’) in contemporary culture. The question is: can the remake pass for itself to new audiences?

In Žižek’s example of Ernst Lubitsch’s World War II comedy, *To Be or Not to Be* (1942), a *troupe* of actors in Nazi-occupied Warsaw use their abilities to disguise themselves to trick the occupying troops. As part of an intricate plot, one of the Polish actors impersonates a notorious Gestapo butcher by exaggerating his features (laughing excessively, gesticulating wildly, etc.). His act pays off however when the real Gestapo butcher turns up and behaves in exactly the same way, acting as if he were his own caricature. This amounts to him looking like himself, and the point is not simply the degree to which the actor managed to pull off the impersonation, but the extent to which the predicate itself is determined through the symbolic network of its own symbolisation (the exaggerated laugh and wild gesticulation). In *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* one scene in particular seems to resonate with this misrecognition when the protagonist, Miles (Kevin McCarthy), enquires as to how a patient’s uncle Ira is not her uncle Ira. The patient answers: “That’s just *it*; there is no difference you can actually see. He looks, sounds, acts, and remembers like Ira”, to which Miles simply responds: “Then he is your uncle Ira.” Žižek cites an almost identical line of dialogue from one of the Marx brothers’ films wherein Groucho, having been introduced to a stranger, remarks: “Say, you remind me of Emmanuel Ravelli”. “But I *am* Emmanuel Ravelli”, the stranger replies, to which Groucho responds: “Then no wonder you look like him!” For Žižek, “we must first let ourselves be caught in a trap, become the victim of an optical illusion in order to reach the turning point at which, all of a sudden, the entire perspective shifts and we discover that we are already ‘on the other side’, on another surface” (2005a:32). In going ‘through the mill’, so to speak, that is through the dialectical process, the thing becomes what it is (after all, we can easily imagine a ‘remake mill’ which rephrases Groucho: “Say, that *Psycho* remake reminds me of the original *Psycho*”; “But it *is* the original *Psycho*”; “Then no wonder it looks like the original *Psycho*!”, and so forth...). Our experience of first-year Film students confirms this when, having watched a classic Hollywood film for the first time, such as *Casablanca* or *On the Waterfront*, featuring such lines as Humphrey Bogart’s “Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine”, and Marlon Brando’s “I could’ve been a contender”, they behave like Groucho and exclaim: “No wonder that line sounded familiar!”

This particular understanding of repetition is inherent to Žižek’s formulation of the Lacanian *disguise*. Žižek’s point is that it is not just the double that is disguised, but the

original also, for pure appearance is at its most radical the ultimate disguise (the sense contained in the phrase “Hiding in plain sight”). This is exactly what Lacan is aiming to show with the example of a competition in ancient Greece between two painters, Zeuxis and Parrhasios, who contrived to see who could paint a more convincing illusion. Zeuxis painted a picture of grapes so realistic that hungry birds attempted to eat them, but Parrhasios won the competition by painting a curtain on the wall of his room. When Zeuxis came to see his rival’s attempt, he asked him to “Please draw the curtain and show me what you painted” (Lacan, 1998:103). Zeuxis’s illusion was so convincing that it was mistaken for the ‘real thing’, but it is Parrhasios’s painting that is appearance redoubled, for the answer to the question: “What is behind the curtain?”, is simply: “Nothing” (in the most literal sense), which is the same answer to the question: “What is behind the disguise of the remake”: Nothing; *a void*.

The *libido* as pure life: Zombies and ghosts in the (remake) machine

John Patterson criticises the adaptation when he writes that “there is no more wretched or ephemeral an endeavour than the adaptation of a great novel to celluloid” (2007). If we take a bit of theoretical licence here and apply the same formula to the remake (that is, that there is no more wretched or ephemeral an endeavour than the remake of a great film), we can discern two metaphors which I would like to put forward to represent two kinds of remake. The first metaphor is contained in the sense of ‘wretched’ remaking, for which I suggest the zombie, a soulless body. The second metaphor is contained in the sense of ‘ephemeral’ remaking, for which I suggest the ghost or spectre, a bodiless soul. Patterson even draws the link himself when he writes that adaptations are an “unconquerable strain of bibliographic herpes [...] so atrocious it’s likely to reanimate the corpse of the writer and have them shuffling zombie-like toward Beverly Hills with vengeance in mind” (2007). There is an undeniable sense of insistence here, thus we should think of this sexually transmitted disease in terms of the psychoanalytic notion of the drive. Where post-theorists call for film scholars to think outside of the Lacanian box, I think perhaps we should look *inside* the box. Let us begin then with the zombie.

For Lacan, the identity of the other is always a concern; we can never ask him/her, because “he lacks everything needed to know the answer, since if this subject ‘I’ was dead, he would not [...] know it. He does not know, therefore, that I am alive. How, therefore, will ‘I’ prove to myself that I am” (2003: 350)? In this sentence we move from the evil to the good neighbour in one remove: our musing on the status of the other ultimately leads to a musing

on the status of our-self. This densely philosophical turn of phrase can be unpacked in Daniel C. Dennett's description of the philosopher's notion of a zombie:

[A] zombie is or would be a human being who exhibits perfectly natural, alert, loquacious, vivacious, behaviour but is in fact not conscious at all, but rather some sort of automaton. The whole point of the philosopher's notion of zombie is that you can't tell a zombie from a normal person by examining external behaviour. Since that is all we ever get to see of our friends and neighbors, *some of your best friends may be zombies* (cited in Žižek, 2004:135).

For Žižek, the philosopher's zombie is, like the assimilated neighbour in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, indistinguishable from other people. We can point to countless filmic examples in which this impossibility of differentiation is at the core of a narrative, from Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) to Steven Spielberg's *Artificial Intelligence: A.I.* (2001). In both, anyone is potentially a philosopher's zombie. Ultimately however, as these films attest, the core of Dennett's anxiety in the philosopher's zombie is not that the other is an automaton but, rather, that the 'human' characters are.

The link between Dennett's 'philosopher's zombie' and the zombie of popular fiction is provided by Žižek via Kant's distinction between negative and indefinite judgement, where a positive statement has both a negative opposite, and a 'third' intermediary statement. For instance, Žižek plays around with the responses to the positive statement "The soul is mortal", to which "we can either deny a predicate ('the soul is not mortal'), or affirm a non-predicate ('the soul is non-mortal')" (2006a:46). The difference is exactly the same as that known by the horror aficionado between "He/she is alive", "He/she is dead", and "*It is undead*". The shift in personal pronoun from 'He/she' to impersonal 'It' opens up a third position beyond the simple alive-dead binomial, once again returning to Deleuze's sense of grammatical perspectivism. The 'undead' are neither alive nor dead, but, as illustrated by George A. Romero's zombie classic *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), somewhere in between. Along with our Deleuzian differentiation between 'making', 'remaking' and 'unmaking', this affirmation of a non-predicate brings to mind Freud's differentiation between the different levels of consciousness between the 'conscious', 'pre-conscious', and 'unconscious'. In particular, the zombie metaphor relates to Lacan's description of the analyst, who at a specific point in an analysis with a patient must intervene in the dialectical inadequacy (the point of deadlock) by pretending he or she is dead, or as Lacan puts it, "by cadaverizing his position" (2003:154). In this moment, the analyst is in the same position as the undead; between two states that restores the balance of the analysis.

The first place to start with zombie film theory is Steven Shaviro, who starts off with Deleuze and Guattari's statement that zombies are "the only modern myth" (1983:335), and it

is here that Shaviro seems to take his cue as he describes the zombie's characteristics. Note how similar this description of the zombie is to the descriptions of the remake from our introduction, not to mention Žižek's concept of the evil neighbour:

[Zombies] continue to participate in human, social rituals and processes – but only just enough to drain them of their power and meaning. For instance, they preserve the marks of social function and self-projection in the clothes they wear, which identify them as businessman, housewife, nun, Hare Krishna disciple, and so on. But this becomes one of the films' running jokes: despite such signs of difference, they all act in exactly the same way. The zombies are devoid of personality, yet they continue to *allude* to personal identity. They are driven by a sort of vestigial memory, but one that has become impersonal and indefinite, a vague solicitation to aimless movement (Shaviro, 2000:85-6).

Given Thomas Leitch has described remakes as “old stories incarnated in a new discourse” (2002:53), this description of Hollywood zombies could almost be a review of a Hollywood remake. It is the *discourse*, not the content, which alters between the living and the dead, for these zombies have a residual and yet all-too substantial half-life, one which reproduces itself as a body which becomes all appearance and no depth. The zombie loses its personality but retains the basic marks of social consciousness (signifiers alluding to prior substance). This is a precise description of Lacan's sense of the failed second death, where the biological body has died but the socio-symbolic body remains. It is the registers themselves that have become defunct here (or as Fredric Jameson would say, the profiles), stripped of their usual meaning.

Shaviro writes that zombies are “empty shells of life that scandalously continue to function in the absence of any rationale and of any interiority” (2000:86). William Goss repeats this almost verbatim *apropos* of the difference between the original and remake of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (2008), of which he writes that while the original “had sincerity, the remake is an empty shell of a story” (2008). It is here that the vague contours of the zombie counterpart, the ghost, appear, for in any example of a ghost story there is the distinction between body and spirit as empty shell and subject, recalling the sense that we are not our body, but, rather, we ‘have’ our body, it is our possession. If the remake can be said to work similarly – that is, with the spirit of an original possessing a new textual ‘vessel’ – then three central questions arise: (1) is the death of the substitute/remake a signifier of the triumph of life over death, or the inhabitation of life by death? (2) Does the presence of the remake signify that the corpse of the original has been resurrected, or has the living body of the

remake been turned into a corpse? (3) Is the first (original) dead version alive or is the (remade) living version dead by virtue of repetition?*

One filmic example (out of many) that deals with these questions is Tobe Hooper's *Poltergeist* (1982), a possession masterpiece that features a house haunted by spirits angered by the desecration of an ancient burial site on which the house was built. Any psychoanalyst watching *Poltergeist* is likely to be reminded of Freud's suggestion that his discovery of the unconscious has deprived our ego of ruling in its own house. In fact, Freud argued that not only does the ego (law-abiding home-owner) not rule, dealing as it does with the unconscious 'squatter' claiming rights on the home, but even the land on which the home is built is owned by another (the *id*), and made using the squatter's materials.[†] Indeed, the film's tagline and memorable line, "They're here", should be subject to the proper Lacanian qualification: it is not that the spirits suddenly arrive unexpectedly on the family's 'property', but that the family's property always-already belonged to the spirits. Is this not the message of Alejandro Amenábar's *The Others* (2001), a film in which a family seemingly terrorised by undead 'others', turn out to be themselves dead, and the others living? This is the precise meaning behind Lacan's analysis of the Freudian dream of the father who does not know he is dead (1998:57-9), that when one awakens from a terrifying dream, sometimes the only function of the awakening *is to continue dreaming, that is, to avoid the Real of the dream* (1998:60).

Deleuze notes something similar, stating that there is always a split in repetition between the one who dies and the other, who "never succeeds in, or finishes, dying" (2009b:255). Žižek argues that this is the real meaning behind the phrase '*memento mori*' (often translated as "Remember you must die"), which should actually be read as "Don't forget to die!" (2008a:148).[‡] For readers more familiar with cartoons than horror films, the same knowledge applies here also. When, for example, Wile E. Coyote is chasing Road Runner and runs off a precipice without realising, he continues to run in mid air for a few moments until, realising he is going nowhere, he looks down; then and *only then* (often with a resigned shrug) does he begin to fall. For Žižek, these cartoons illustrate the fact that it is as if the Real has "forgotten its knowledge" (2008a:148). Once Coyote remembers he must follow the laws of nature he does indeed fall, and in remakes the self-conscious and absolute adherence to the symbol of the original has the same self-reflexivity. Žižek describes this as

* These questions are adapted to the remake from Elizabeth Bronfen's interrogation of the 'second death' in psychoanalysis (1992:329).

† Life seemed to imitate art on the set of *Poltergeist* with reported tensions between director Hooper and a very 'hands-on' producer, Steven Spielberg. Some contend that Spielberg directed much of the film himself (after all, his auteurial mark *is* evident in the film's direction). In some ways, possession is even evident in the production notes.

‡ Chris Nolan's film, *Memento* (2000), inverts this logic as: "Don't forget to kill!"

that which “reintroduces the dimension of DEATH into organic life” (2004a:120), which is also a traversal of points in time. Again, the link to Deleuze is clear, particularly in his analysis of Alain Resnais’s *L’amour à mort* (1984), of which he writes there are two deaths, a ‘clinical’ one from which the hero returns and a ‘definitive’ one from which he cannot. “Between the two”, writes Deleuze, “in the in-between, it is as if zombies peopled the brain-world for a moment [...] beings who have passed through a death, who are born from it, and go on towards another death, perhaps the same one” (2009c:200-1). Finally, Deleuze writes that this philosopher-zombie is one who has returned from the dead “and who returns to the dead in full consciousness [...] Hence zombies sing a song, *but it is that of life*” (2009c:201). In each of these examples from *Poltergeist* to *The Others*, the sense is that the dead do not know they are dead, such that self and other are radically reversed. True knowledge can only be attained from a *return* to life, such that a shift in subject-position can come into effect. In much the same way the remake reintroduces death into the organic life of the original source that ‘owns’ its story. It is with Deleuze’s remarks on Resnais’s philosophical zombie that his earlier statement that “reflections, echoes, doubles and souls do not belong to the domain of resemblance or equivalence. [...] If exchange is the criterion of generality, theft and gift are those of repetition” (2009a:1), can be understood. The original is an ‘empty shell’ as much as the remake, yet another vessel inhabiting a pre-ontological excess awaiting symbolic reinscription, and the remake marks the point at which that inscription is attempted.

The key term from Deleuze’s many neologisms that Žižek is most interested in exploring is his term “body without organs”, which despite many commentators linking primarily to *Anti-Oedipus*, actually appears as early as *Repetition and Difference*, and is thoroughly explored in *Logic of Sense*. For Žižek, the term resonates far beyond the common understanding of its use to denote the idea of the empty shell eviscerated of its contents, to be contrasted with Lacan’s insistence upon the primacy of the signifier and the partial object. Žižek argues that the only real way to conceive of Deleuze’s body without organs is to see it as the evacuated vessel of Lacan’s ‘organs without a body’. Rather than seeing the process as ending with the body being flushed of its contents and transformed into a radical producing machine, Žižek is interested in what happens to those contents once they are pushed out, and the indelible trace they left behind on the body that expelled them. If the metaphor of the zombie is the Deleuzian body without organs, a ‘pound of flesh’ with no consciousness, then the metaphor of the ghost is the Žižekian organ without a body, the ghost in the machine.

The link to remaking can be found in Lacan’s mirror stage, in which the subject gets caught up in the lure of spatial identification and the ensuing internal thrust precipitates from ‘insufficiency’ to ‘anticipation’, moving them into ‘reality’ (*Umwelt*). This change from organism to reality is what establishes the two body-images of the “I-ideal” and the “Ideal-I”: one fragmented and the other a form of totality which takes on “the armour of an alienating

identity” (Lacan, 2003:5). According to Lacan, the fragmented body (I-ideal) “appears in the form of disjointed limbs, or of those organs represented in exoscopy, growing wings and taking up arms for intestinal persecutions” (2003:5); effectively, they are bodiless organs. David Cronenberg’s remake of *The Fly* (1986) exemplifies Lacan’s mirror stage perfectly, particularly the scene where, having accidentally spliced his DNA with that of a common house-fly, Seth Brundle (Jeff Goldblum) looks into his bathroom mirror and peels off parts of his body which are slowly rotting off. And where do these body parts end up? In the bathroom cabinet behind the mirror of course, where bits and pieces of the ‘BrundleFly’ are stored like exhibits.*

Timothy Corrigan describes Hollywood hysteria as “various versions of ‘disembodiment’” (1992:175-6), and examples of this disembodiment occur in almost any film when an iconic ‘scene’ which exceeds its textuality is ‘detached’, and ultimately becomes a synecdoche for the rest of the film. Consider the following iconic ‘scenes’, ‘sequences’, and even ‘shots’ which contain signification even without the film title appendages: the “chest-burst scene” (*Alien*), the “shower scene” (*Psycho*), the “Odessa steps sequence” (*Battleship Potemkin*), the “crotch shot” (*Basic Instinct*), and so forth. These are not films that are on the whole remade, but are themselves eclipsed by their iconic moments which themselves spin off into microcosmic-remakings in other films, commercials, cartoons, and parodies. Darren Aronofsky was so mesmerised by one such ‘fetish scene’, that he decided to spend a significant part of his meagre budget for *Requiem for a Dream* (2000) on buying the remake rights to the Japanese *anime* thriller, *Perfect Blue* (1998), just to remake one single overhead shot of a woman screaming underwater in a bathtub. This is the cinematic organ without a body *par excellence*, an organ that functions of its own volition, remaking itself anew even across different cultures.

This is why when Thomas Elsaesser (2001) establishes *Psycho* as a commodity through the fetishisation of the “shower scene”, he is right to make a distinction between the film’s ‘text’ and the film’s ‘event’. Anat Zanger (2006) does likewise, suggesting that *Psycho*’s event takes place solely around the shower scene, such that the first half builds up to it and the second half attempts to deal with it. Metonymically, the entirety of *Psycho* is evoked through this one scene, leading Kenneth Marc Harris (1992) to suggest that the film is ‘externalised’ through the scene’s fetishisation. Ritualistic repetition and obsessive fetishisation in popular culture have led to the extraction of the text from its socio-historic place and time. However, the Lacanian views of Elsaesser, Zanger, and Harris do not take into account the Deleuzian twist that *we do not repeat because we repress, but, rather, we repress because we repeat*. Thus Žižek’s thesis is not that we should reject Deleuze’s body

* The scene was remade in Eli Roth’s *Cabin Fever* (2002) in a particularly squeamish scene involving a character having a shave...

without organs in favour of the Lacanian organs without bodies, but, on the contrary, that we should supplement the one with the other in möbius homology, provoking the contradiction.

What Elsaesser, Zanger and Harris miss out on is the question of what happens to the *body/text left behind*, a crucial point for any remake theorist dealing with an original whose organs have literally been evacuated into such ‘fetish scenes’. The question becomes: What happens to *Psycho* when it is eviscerated of the shower scene? The relationship of the autonomous partial object to the body it leaves behind has been explored in many films, primarily in two main versions separated across gender lines: (1) we have the “speaking vagina” narrative, whose examples include *Pussy Talk* (1975), *Chatterbox* (1977), and to an extent, recent comic-horror, *Teeth* (2007). In each example, these sexual organs are frequently an (often violent) embarrassment to their subjects, speaking the ‘vagina-truth’ of the subject’s unconscious (in an inversion of the common phrase, “Men only think with their dicks”, here we have the phrase “Women only talk with the vaginas”). (2) In addition, we have the ‘possessed hand’ narrative, which originated in Robert Wiene’s *The Hands of Orlac* (*Orlacs Hände*, 1924), a film twice remade (*Mad Love*, 1935 and *The Hands of Orlac*, 1960), and the inspiration for a host of other films, including *The Beast with Five Fingers* (1949), *Hands of a Stranger* (1962), and *The Hand* (1981). More recently, the theme has appeared in Jim Carrey’s physical comedies, *Liar Liar* (1997), and *Me, Myself and Irene* (2000). Most memorably perhaps though is a scene from *Fight Club* in which the narrator’s hand is suddenly possessed, causing him to violently punch himself in the face. In each example, the expelled partial organ returns to attack it, to prove that it can function with its own autonomy. However, the fact remains that these autonomous organs are attached to the bodies to which they belong, and as such are dependent on them as much as the unfortunate protagonist is often dependent on the outburst of her/his autonomous organ to become socially functioning.

I have one last example of the body-less organ, in yet another film that while not having been remade as such, nonetheless provides us with perhaps the best example of cinematic remaking. In particular, it is the alien ‘facehugger’ (which looks both vaginal *and* hand-like) which is of interest here. The film follows the crew on a mining ship in deep space after they intercept a foreign beacon and land on an unidentified planet (later designated as LV4-26) to investigate. In what appears to be an alien vessel, one of the members of the exploration team, Kane (John Hurt), discovers a chamber filled with eggs. Upon investigating one such egg, he is attacked by the creature as it wraps itself around his face, rendering him comatose. In an effort to release Kane, one of the crew decides to cut the thing off, whereupon it bleeds acid which eats through the ship’s floors one by one. Soon after, the creature disappears and Kane feels fine, but unfortunately for him and the crew, it left something in his chest, something determined to get out...

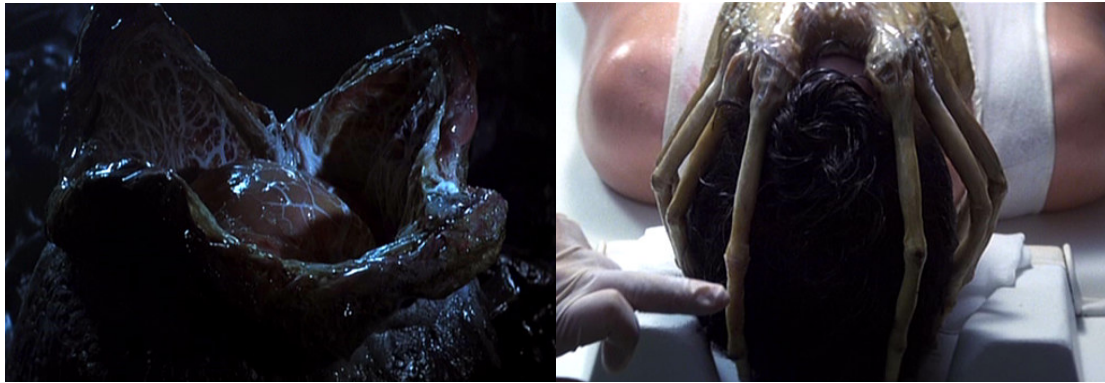


Fig. 1.4: The remake cycle: from the unfathomable Thing through interspecies rape...



...to the analysis of the 'perceived' death of the Thing to the birth of the New

Both Deleuze and Lacan seem to anticipate the facehugger from *Alien* many years before it is even released with an almost uncanny precision. Deleuze writes that what he calls 'covered' repetition is akin to "the abandoned snake skin, the envelope emptied of what it implicates, the epidermis which lives and dies only from its own soul or latent content" (Deleuze, 2009a:361). For Deleuze, this type of repetition is the second, 'clothed' repetition, which masks a 'bare' repetition of its cause, concealed at its base. However, Žižek (2006a:61) has pointed out an even closer approximation of the facehugger from *Alien* in Lacan's description of the *objet petit a* as a '*lamella*', a description that predates the film by ten years:

Whenever the membranes of the egg in which the foetus emerges on its way to becoming a new-born are broken, imagine for a moment that something flies off [...]

The lamella is something extra-flat [...] it is, like the amoeba in relation to sexed beings, immortal – because it survives any division, and scissiparous intervention. And it can run around.

Well! This is not very reassuring. But suppose it comes and envelops your face while you are quietly asleep...

I can't see how we would not join battle with a being capable of these properties [...] It is the libido, *qua* pure life instinct, that is to say, immortal life, or irrepressible life, life that has need of no organ, simplified, indestructible life (Lacan, 1998:197-8).

Lacan's description of the *lamella* here is the perfect description of the alien facehugger, for Hollywood remakes do not simply repeat aspects of an original with which we can draw similarities. There is an external repetition that echoes a secret internal repetition (or vibration) within the singular. Our mistake is to assume that the original is without its own libidinal charge – far from it. A better assumption (for we must always assume in the unconscious) is that even before the remake, *repetition exists in the original, repetition that the remake acknowledges and feeds off*. Thus the remake does not add a second or a third time to the first original time, but continues the first time to the 'nth power': remakes do not repeat their originals, but, rather, the originals repeat all the remakes in advance. Does not Lacan state something similar *apropos* the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* (the non-representative-representative) when he writes that repetition is the unfolding within a subject of a whole series of "a, a', a'', etc." (1998:221)? Lacan also states that "whenever a new term is introduced, one always runs the risk of letting one or several of the others slip between one's fingers" (1998:226) – can we not see exactly this occurring in *Alien*, where each new version of the 'Thing' escapes the crew's grasp due to the fact that they do not consider the alien as a *series in time*? Furthermore, each alien birth is based on the impregnated host (in *Alien*³ a dog is the host so the alien born resembles a dog).

This sense of the non-representative-representative has also been described by Anat Zanger, who argues that many remade films comprise a history of attempts to deny their problematic aspects, while at the same time retaining an "inner core" of the story to be "smuggled" in. The language of *Alien* continues here, as Zanger explains that this core is the representation of a primordial unknown, a "terrifying, disturbing hole which culture has to clarify" (2006:128). Ultimately, the original version contains this destructive element which, like one of Hegel's subjects, is "gripped and shattered by something intrinsic to their own being" (Hegel, cited in Butler, 2000:xi). Does not the alien life cycle in figure 1.4 correspond exactly with the life cycle of the Hollywood remake? It is pure life, the libido in its absolute traumatic intensity, and the link to the zombie is clear in Žižek's observation of the paradox of being undead, which is that "the place of the living dead is not somewhere between the dead and the living: precisely as dead, they are in a way 'more alive than life itself', having access to the life substance prior to its symbolic mortification" (2008c:131). It is here that we must be careful not to confuse the remake with Colin McArthur's description of genre as "a constantly growing amoeba, assimilating stages of its own development" (1972:8). Rather, we would do better to consider the multiplicity of cells in remaking as properly *cancerous*. In this way, we can conclude philosophically (rather than speciously), that the remake really is the cancer of Hollywood cinema.

Looking inside the wheelbarrow: Reversing Plato with the cinematic ‘imitator’

As with the crew in *Alien*, the problem with the remake is ultimately the subject’s relationship to *knowledge*: how can we know what this primordial Thing buried in the original is? When Kane is released by the facehugger he believes all is well; that is, until he sits down to a meal with the rest of the crew. This is a knowledge that cannot be known, and yet it demands to speak (and be heard). The problem we have in interpreting this unconscious speech is well known to the psychoanalyst, as Lacan writes that “I speak without knowing it. I speak with my body and I do so unbeknownst to myself. Thus I always say more than I know (*plus que je n’en sais*)” (1999:119). This leads Lacan to conclude that there is “no such thing as a metalanguage” (1999:118), and one of the best examples of this is to be found in the bizarre speech of the Man from Another Place (Michael J. Anderson) in David Lynch’s *Twin Peaks*. The key to unlocking the dwarf’s alien language is to realise that it is neither ‘gobbledygook’, nor simply ‘in reverse’, but, rather, that the actor had to speak his lines in reverse which when also played in reverse created an other-worldly ‘inside-out’ dialect (via a double-reversal). The subtitles Lynch gives us to understand this ‘mirror speech’ act like the big Other, who translates for us what the (literal) little other is saying. We might call this ‘folded speech’, for we are not simply witnessing the transformation of an inside into an outside here, but, rather, the contamination of the two. This is how Deleuze’s statement that “what always matters is folding, unfolding, refolding” (2006:158) should be understood: we are here in Jean Baudrillard’s world of the doppelgänger, a world “without mirrors or projection or utopias as a means of reflection”, a world in which “we can no longer move ‘through the mirror’ to the other side, as we could during the golden age of transcendence” (1991:312). Why not? Why does Lynch have the dwarf speak in this specific way rather than simply reverse his speech?

The Thing which contaminates two opposing terms is what Deleuze calls ‘the phantasm’. I want to take the step of linking this phantasm to the Lacanian sense of the death drive. Deleuze exemplifies this phantasm in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, which also features a proposition that when extracted, suspends its affirmation and negation, for example: “The smile without a cat” or “The flame without a candle”. These two paradoxes form “the two terms of an alternative: one *or* the other” (Deleuze, 2009b:38), and it is precisely this ‘or’ that Deleuze argues we need to reject if we are to make any headway with complex repetition. Like the cat-less smile in *Alice in Wonderland* or the speech of the Man from another Place, remakes go in two directions at once, ever existing in a subdivided double direction. As such, they defy this either/or formula. Meaning, according to Deleuze, is cancelled out when one opts for one *or* the other, so against the formula for “good sense” Deleuze proposes another formula for “*logical sense*”, the formula of the paradox, wherein “both are found in either” (2009b:91). Deleuze states that it is necessary for us to “relate the

event *twice*, since both are always *at the same time*, since they are two simultaneous faces of one and the same surface, whose inside and outside, their ‘insistence’ and ‘extra-being’, past and future, are in an always reversible continuity” (2009b:40-1). While the cat fades, the smile remains, but without the statement “the cat fades”, the smile loses its impact. This is why it is so wrong to claim that the dwarf’s speech in *Twin Peaks* is either forwards or backwards: it is organically forwards and mechanically backwards at the same time, and therein resides its uncanny impact.

The Lacanian side to this sense of a subject fading and remaining in one gesture is contained in his term ‘*aphanisis*’ (fading, disappearance), which he describes as the fading of the subject, or his/her division from which the dialectic of desire arises. Lacan’s *aphanisis* literally means the ‘fading’ of the subject in the face of what he calls ‘extimacy’ (‘*extimité*’ – the combination of ‘exterior’ and ‘intimacy’), whereby a subject’s most intimate thoughts are rendered transparent. This is seen in the sense that the very fiction in which one is lost has become suddenly strange, contained in the statement that “The story I tell myself and others about myself no longer makes any sense to me...” Essentially, Lacan’s *aphanisis* occurs when a subject is faced with the terrifying possibility of reaching their goal, such that they must disappear to avoid this possibility. What we have here is the articulation of the ‘remake paradox’: how can the text, like the smile-without-a-cat, be divided into two places at once? Remember our discussion of the organ-without-a-body, in which fetish scenes proliferate outside of their textual base. The common phrase that sums up this contradictory state of affairs is “To have one’s cake and eat it”, and in the unconscious we can do just that (have the cake I have just eaten – not another cake that looks the same, but *that exact same* cake I have just consumed). Does the remake not also attempt to have its cake and eat it? There is a phenomenological impossibility in the idea of watching a film for the first time twice, and yet the unconscious remainder left over from the original in this Deleuzian phantasm offers us this very possibility in a new version. Freud writes that dreams enjoy the privilege of being “exempt from mutual contradiction” (2001:186), such that when two conflicting impulses appear simultaneously, they do not cancel each other out but combine to form a compromise (the two methods of compromise are ‘condensation’ and ‘displacement’). Via metaphor and metonymy, the genre film condenses and displaces in a similar way, but the remake does not, *it repeats the life substance itself, bypassing these procedures*. It is, in many ways, folded speech not unlike the dwarf in *Twin Peaks*; organically forward but mechanically in reverse.

The problem is that we cannot simply play a game of ‘spot the difference’ as some remake theorists do, for how can we know definitively if the ‘cake’ we have is the same cake we just ate, especially if it looks and tastes the same and contradicts good and common sense (we should link this to the zombie that looks like its former self). Lacan writes that

what Freud recognises as desire, is...the alteration of the need that it signals itself, it is in so far as what is fundamental is masked, articulated into something which transforms it, which transforms it into what (2004:2)?

This final question has no simple answer since we can never know what it is transformed into, for as we have already seen, the disguise merely conceals yet another disguise behind it. Is this not the same problem identified by Plato, who continually warned of the distinction between 'essence' and 'appearance', 'Idea' and 'image', and 'original' and 'copy'? However, the problem is different for Deleuze, who insists that these propositions are not equivocal. The distinction wavers between two kinds of images:

Copies are secondary processors. They are well-founded pretenders, guaranteed by resemblance; *simulacra* are like false pretenders, built upon a dissimilarity, implying an essential perversion or a deviation (2009b:294).

It is in this sense that Deleuze divides image-idols into two categories: on the one hand there are '*copies-icons*', and on the other hand there are '*simulacra-phantasms*'. The latter, according to Deleuze, should be repressed and submerged, "preventing them from climbing to the surface, and 'insinuating themselves' everywhere" (2009b:294); Žižek likens this to the Hegelian triumph of the 'spirit' over the 'letter'. Deleuze takes God's creation of man as an example: originally, man was a copy of God, resembling Him in His image; through sin however, man lost the *resemblance* to God while retaining the *image* of god, hence becoming simulacra and forsaking moral existence in favour of aesthetic existence (Deleuze, 2009b:295). Remakes can therefore either remain faithful to the letter of the original, its aesthetic *image* (the *simulacra-phantasm*), or remain faithful to the spirit of the original, its resemblance, its inner Idea (the *copy-icon*). Most remakes, it can be seen, clearly fall into the former category as commercialist simulacra forsaking the *essence* of the original in order to market themselves off the back of the *appearance* of the original.

In cinema studies we have the great duo of the 'producer' of the film (that is, the writer, director, actors, etc., with the text as the construct) and the 'user' of the film (that is, the audience, with the 'text' as the product). However, Deleuze reminds us of the great Platonic trinity of "the user", "the producer", and "*the imitator*" (2009b:295, emphasis added). Is there not a serious omission in the cinematic version of this Platonic trio? The problem with the cinematic 'user' (or audience/viewer) is that the simulacrum he or she is encountering implies huge dimensions of depth and distance to understand, which they ultimately cannot master (recall Zanger's statement about the master-narrative losing control). The ultimate aim of Platonism is to bring about the triumph of icons over simulacra, yet how

can this happen in cinema studies if the role of the ‘imitator’ – or ‘repeater’ – is continually under-explored? ‘Genre studies’ is perhaps the closest we get to this third aspect of filmic reality, but if this is the case then it is certainly high time that ‘remake studies’ established itself as going beyond genre criticism in fleshing out the philosophical implications of a cinematic realm of the ‘imitator’.

First and foremost, we must dispel with this myth that repetition not only resists new and original forms but actively suppresses them. Žižek points out something striking of repetition, that “far from being opposed to the emergence of the New, the proper Deleuzian paradox is that something truly New can *only* emerge through repetition” (2004a:12). For Žižek the opposite holds just as true, in that *only old things come out of change*. Lacan also stated, in response to Søren Kierkegaard, that “repetition demands the new” (1998:61). Thus it is not that the cinematic ‘imitator’ is devoid of new ideas, but that in order to truly create a new idea we must return to the source, what is in the original more than itself. An unavoidable consequence of repetition is that the original is always altered in the process, creating a Kierkegaardian ‘inverted memory’ affecting all versions of the story. Remakes then, affect the content of the old stories on which they are based as much as they affect the discourse used to remake. Let us take an example from classic Hollywood.

Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (1958) follows a private investigator, ‘Scottie’ (James Stewart), who after suffering from vertigo following a traumatic death he inadvertently caused, decides to “take it easy” by taking a job offered to him by a wealthy old acquaintance. The job seems simple at first: follow this man’s wife, Madeleine (Kim Novak), and report back on her behaviour. However, Scottie’s assignment is complicated after he falls deeply in love with Madeleine, and is further traumatised when she then throws herself off a bell tower, leaving him helpless to reach her because of his vertigo. After emerging from a deep hysterical depression, Scottie meets a ‘dead ringer’ for Madeleine in Judy Barton (Novak again). They fall in love, but Scottie becomes obsessed with dressing and styling Judy in the fashion of Madeleine. However, something is wrong – the essence (in Lacanese, the *objet petit a*) of Madeleine is missing, and the twist in the film comes when we realise that Scottie has been fooled: *Judy was always Madeleine*, dressing as her from the beginning in an elaborate scheme to con Scottie into believing that Judy was Madeleine, the *real* version of whom was actually murdered up on the bell tower by her husband. Žižek argues that the murderous fury that seizes Scottie at the film’s climax is the fury of the deceived Platonist who realises that the original he wanted to remake into a perfect copy is already a copy. For Žižek, the shock here is not that the original turns out to be just another copy (something Plato continually warned of) but that of a deeper deception, that “(what we took to be) *the copy turns out to be the original*” (2004a:157). The film concludes with Scottie eventually forgiving a penitent Judy up the same bell tower as before, when a shadowy figure emerges and frightens Judy

into toppling to her death. The figure is revealed to be the Mother Superior, and Scottie is left once more in the grip of a hysterical breakdown (here we get a succinct image of the memento mori – the reminder to die).

Can we not see the shadowy figure of the Mother Superior as the appearance of the Deleuzian phantasm, the stain of the Real of Judy's deception? The simulacrum is not a degraded copy, but, rather, "harbours a positive power which denies *the original and the copy, the model and the reproduction*" (Deleuze 2009b:299). Gone are the old Platonic distinctions between Essence and Appearance, or Model and Copy; what we now have to consider is the Nietzschean sense of the 'Twilight of the Idols', where at least two divergent series are internalised in the simulacrum such that neither can be designated original nor copy, a state where the image ceases to be secondary to the 'original' model. This, according to Deleuze, is the true meaning of Nietzsche's phrase "to reverse Platonism", which he regards as the ultimate task of contemporary philosophy, for "behind each cave [there is] another that opens still more deeply, and beyond each surface a subterranean world yet more vast, more strange" (Nietzsche, cited in Deleuze, 2009b:300). Deleuze comments on this Nietzschean sense when he writes that

the artificial is always a copy of a copy, which should be pushed *to the point where it changes its nature and is reversed into the simulacrum* (the moment of Pop Art) [...] For there is a vast difference between destroying in order to conserve and perpetuate the established order of representations, models, and copies, and destroying the models and copies in order to institute the chaos which creates, making the simulacra function and raising a phantasm – the most innocent of all destructions" (2009b:303).

And what more innocent a destructor is there than this Mother Superior from *Vertigo*?* At one of the first screenings of a film in Russia in 1896, Maxim Gorky famously stated that film is "not life but its shadow, it is not motion but its soundless spectre" (cited in Frampton, 2006:1). The point is not to try and observe this soundless spectre in the remake but, rather, shift our perspective in the fashion of *Vertigo* such that the either/or dialectic becomes a both/and one; such that the remake is not viewed as the partial smile to the original's absent cat, but as the transition from the one to the other in time.

There are, according to Deleuze, three paradoxical and complimentary requirements of this process of flux between 'text' and 'event' that we can use in remake theory:

1. It must give repetition an original and positive power.

* This 'phantasm' pervades each of Hitchcock's films around the end of classical Hollywood, including: the nun in *Vertigo* (1958), the avian creatures in *The Birds* (1963), and of course, the shadowy mother figure in *Psycho* (1960).

2. The power must be autonomous and disguising.
3. And it must have an immanent meaning in which terror is closely combined with the movement of selection and freedom (2009a:21-2).

Packed in these three paradoxical criteria for repetition is the same paradoxical drive in every remake between ever-lasting life, liberation, and faithfulness on the one hand, and brutal destruction, enchainment, and transgression on the other. It is a violent example of Hollywood's economic drive enchainment to the desperate pleas of a crumbling historicity. With this destruction we have the birth of an event characteristic of language to "take back into itself the frozen scene, to make a 'spiritual' event out of it, or rather an advent of 'spirits'" (Deleuze, 2009b:329). Deleuze's turn of phrase here suggests that it is only through repetition that the multiple can be authenticated, only through repetition that frozen scenes like the 'shower' or 'chestburster' scenes can become *spiritual events*.

Let us consider one more example before we disturb the curtain and look a bit deeper into (or should that be 'across'?) these Deleuzian folds in my two case studies. Slavoj Žižek (2006) tells of an old joke about a factory worker suspected of stealing. Every evening after work a security guard inspects the worker's wheelbarrow as he leaves the factory, but alas, the wheelbarrow is always empty. Eventually the security guard get wise: the worker was stealing wheelbarrows. For Žižek this joke reflects Lacan's entire philosophy regarding communication and interaction, namely that we "should not forget to include in the content of an act of communication the act itself, since the meaning of each act of communication is also to reflexively assert that it is an act of communication" (2006a:21). The unconscious is not hidden in the wheelbarrow, *it is the wheelbarrow*; cinematic repetition is not hidden in the remake (in the similarities and differences), *it is the remake* (the act itself as process). The hapless security guard in Žižek's joke is like many remake theorists in contemporary film studies who miss the message contained in the wheelbarrow itself.

It is no coincidence that remake theory has thus far utilised a language of repetition (of "theft", "taking-without-consent", and "borrowing", etc.), and not of the language of genre ("exchange", "substitution", "allusion", "allegorisation", etc.). We must acknowledge Jean-Luc Godard here, who claimed, "I don't invent: I steal" (cited in Horton & McDougal, 1998:1). Given Godard was famous for paying homage to classical Hollywood cinema, I think Thomas Leitch is correct when he writes that the homage is in many ways the most brutal form of commercialist remaking, for while it purports to reify its original it secretly acts to feed off it like one of Shaviro's zombies. As we will see in the next chapter on *Psycho*, the homage is perhaps the most dangerous neighbour of them all; that goes double for one that is 'shot-for-shot'. When Leitch states that "the most faithful homage would be a re-release [of the original]" (2002:47), we should add that the most faithful genre film would be

a remake, for it is only in remaking that a filmmaker admires its original so much that it is willing to sacrifice it to the phantasm. Thus my challenge to genre critics is for them to please acknowledge the fact that they too are stealing wheelbarrows.

What could be more Lacanian than that?

CHAPTER 2

CASE STUDY I: *PSYCHO* AND THE 'SCENE' FETISH

Zombie – noun a corpse said to be revived by witchcraft.

- *informal* a person who is or appears lifeless, apathetic, or completely unresponsive to their surroundings.
- DERIVATIVES **zombielike** *adjective*.
- ORIGIN early 19th cent.: of West African origin; compare with /Kikongo *zumbi* 'fetish'
- **Zombify** /'zɒmbɪfaɪ/ – verb (**zombifies, zombifying, zombified**) [with obj.] [unu. as adj. **zombified**] *informal* deprive of energy or vitality (OED)

Opening thoughts: Raiders of the lost art in 2005

“*Si vous êtes pris dans le rêve de l'autre, vous êtes foutu*” (“If you are caught up in another person’s dream, you are lost”)

– Gilles Deleuze

For cinema historians, the so-called ‘noughties’ might as well be renamed ‘the decade of the horror remake’, with almost its entire horror genre output a rejuvenation of earlier slasher or zombie genre fare. One only need look at appendix a. for proof of the prolificacy of horror remakes in Hollywood during this period. However, the most controversial of horror remakes is to be found in the 1990s, with Gus Van Sant’s 1998 shot-for-shot remake of Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960). Van Sant was reportedly so keen to stick to Hitchcock’s original blueprint that during filming he screened the original *Psycho* on a monitor as a guide to shot-length, pacing, camera positioning, etc. He took this mandate to the extent that when he occasionally spotted a mistake (such as a door opening without a key) he remade that mistake in his own version also. Shot-for-shot remakes are not common, but in 2005 (something of a peak-year for the remake), two appeared at once: (1) an act of CGI remaking for the fan-boy generation, a remake so close to its original that it incorporated the original scenery using digital effects; (2) an act of DIY remaking for the video generation, a remake by a group of school children that took sixteen years to emerge.

While Hollywood was busying itself with remakes of 1980s horrors, digital effects wizard David Lee Fisher was busy delving somewhat deeper into the horror archive. Indeed, Fisher’s *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (2005) is the re-aestheticisation of Robert Weine’s German classic, *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (1920), widely regarded as the first horror

movie. Like Van Sant's *Psycho*, Fisher's remake was panned not only because he chose a 'sacred' horror classic as the object of reanimation, but also because he also remade it shot-for-shot. As a remake of a black-and-white tinted silent film, Fisher's remake sought to revive the aesthetic of the original. As such, he shot the remake against a green-screen with the original 35mm backdrops of the original artwork scanned in behind modern actors playing the original parts. However, while sticking fastidiously to the visual of the original, Fisher updated one element that was to be his downfall: where Van Sant's *Psycho* was attacked for bringing colour to a black-and-white film, Fisher's *Caligari* was attacked for bringing sound to a silent one. Indeed, Emmet R. Sweeney rightly comments that most of the interest in this "ill-advised remake [...] lies in the production notes" (2006). There are, however, some good points about the film: in the original, much of the terror hinged on the two-dimensionality of the backdrop, especially in the famous scene where the somnambulist Cesare (Conrad Veidt) slides along a white wall with expressionist angles and jarring black-and-white tones. In Fisher's remake this scene is redoubled as it is clear that the new Cesare (Doug Jones) is incapable of interacting with the digital background, reducing it to a proper virtual dreamland.

Rewind twenty-three years to 1982, when three amateur film directors from Mississippi – Chris Strompolis, Eric Zala, and Jayson Lam – began shooting a shot-for-shot remake of *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981). They were twelve years old. It took seven years to make (from 1982-1989), and was shelved and forgotten until 2003 when discovered by Eli Roth and made famous by Harry Knowles on *Ain't-It-Cool News*. Spielberg himself is said to have acclaimed the production, titled *Raiders of the Lost Ark: The Adaptation* (1989), and it received rave reviews following the world premiere on May 5th 2005, at the Anthology Film Archives. Jim Windolf argues that we watch *Raiders of the Lost Ark: The Adaptation* "with a double perspective, partly rooting for Indiana Jones to beat the Nazis, and partly rooting for the kids on-screen to pull off each film-making feat" (2004).



Fig. 2.1: Raiding Hollywood history: *Raiders of the Lost Ark: The Adaptation* (1989) and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981)

While this chapter is to focus on Van Sant's multi-million dollar remake of *Psycho*, the spirit of the chapter belongs to any attempt to recreate shot-for-shot, including another 1998 version of *Psycho* called *Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho* by Kirstin Bianchi and Richard Ferrando (1998), a 17-minute black and white homage, not to mention the countless 'Youtube' remakes of the shower scene. What cannot be denied is that directors all over the world (young and old, experienced and inexperienced) are replicating old classics and intervening between the dualisms of story/narrative and technicality/discourse. They circumvent copyrights and legal barriers with their shot-for-shot guerrilla art aesthetic.* This chapter is dedicated to these young raiders of the lost art; boys (now grown men) who over the course of 23 years created one of the most patient and inspiring remakes of all time. Ultimately, the lesson of Strompolis, Zala, and Lam's *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark: The Adaptation* is that the zombie remake is not always motivated by commercial gain. Sometimes, the film just returns.

A "twice-only film": From Hitchcock to Van Sant... and back again

"To me, 'remake' meant to remake it, y'know, it didn't mean to change it around because then it wouldn't be a remake."

– Gus Van Sant (speaking in D-J, 1999)

Why use *Psycho* for a case study? Has it not been used (and abused) in academia enough? The same criticism has been levelled at Žižek for his repeated use of the same examples, and I think his reply is appropriate here. For the Platonic-idealist, examples never perfectly render what they are supposed to exemplify, and as such they should not be taken too literally. For the materialist however, there is always more in the example than in what it exemplifies, and as such it threatens to undermine the whole argument since it gives body to the repressed content buried deep inside the 'notion'. Žižek writes that

this is why the idealist approach always demands a multitude of examples – since no single example is fully fitting, one has to enumerate them to indicate the transcendent wealth of the

* Michel Gondry's *Be Kind Rewind* (2008) is in many ways a film about such an approach to remaking: in this film, a worker in a video rental store, Mike (Mos Def), is faced with a dilemma after his clumsy and paranoid friend, Jerry (Jack Black), accidentally wipes all of the tapes in the store. The two friends resolve to remake all of the films themselves, from *Ghostbusters* to *Rush Hour 2*, which soon become cult comedy viewings among the locals.

Idea they exemplify, the Idea being the fixed point of reference of the floating examples. A materialist, on the contrary, tends to repeat one and the same example, to return to it obsessively [...] each time providing a new interpretation (2008c:xi-xii).

This is why I keep returning to the same secondary examples in *Taxi Driver*, the cinema of David Lynch, *Memento*, etc. and is also why *Psycho* and *Spoorloos* are listed as *case studies* and not *examples*. Far from positing a Platonic-idealist approach to a multitude of examples as each partially explaining an idea, my case studies represent the Idea itself. Such case studies are what Žižek calls *universal singulars*, for it is the ‘singular’ of *Psycho* that remains the same in all symbolic universes, the insistent symptom which demands to be explored by continually changing notions, like moths around a flame; fly too close though, and like the moth you can get burned...

Gus Van Sant’s remake of *Psycho* was one such moth, but it was by no means the first. Even Hitchcock was intrigued enough by the effect of *Psycho* on audiences that he asked the Stanford Research Institute to satisfy his curiosity as to the precise locus of its disturbing content. However, as Linda Williams notes, “When he found out they wanted US\$75 000 to do the research, he told them that he was not that curious” (2000:353). It is the proposal of this chapter that the satisfaction of Hitchcock’s curiosity need not cost so much, provided we utilise the Deleuzian and Lacanian remake models we have been thus far fleshing out. Like a good materialist, I hope to provide a reading of *Psycho* that provides several interpretations around what is possibly one of the most mystifying ‘universal singulars’ in the history of film. I present this analysis as an alternative to the ‘blow-by-blow’ method of remake analysis favoured by theorists such as Thomas Leitch, whose ‘101 Ways to Tell Hitchcock’s *Psycho* from Gus Van Sant’s’ (2000) simply plays an elaborate game of ‘spot-the-difference’ not uncommon in analyses of shot-for-shot remakes.

Both Alfred Hitchcock and Gus Van Sant’s *Psychos* (1960 and 1998) begin with a famous bird’s-eye-view crane-shot which pans across the Phoenix skyline until, almost arbitrarily, it settles on a particular window of a hotel, and enters. Inside, Marion Crane (Janet Leigh and Anne Heche) and her lover Sam Loomis (John Gavin and Viggo Mortensen) are getting dressed in the aftermath of illicit sex, discussing their financial problems. Shortly after, Marion steals a significant amount of money (\$40,000 and \$400,000) from her boss in an attempt to start a new life with Sam, but while on the run she is forced to seek refuge at the Bates Motel, home to one Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins and Vince Vaughn) and his mysterious mother. Having acquainted themselves in amongst Bates’s weird collection of taxidermy, Marion leaves Norman to take a shower, and the rest, as they say, is film ‘hystory’. Following Marion’s death the film shifts gears into a whodunit mystery involving a private detective, Arbogast (Martin Balsam and William H. Macy), who is also killed at the

hands of the mysterious 'mother' figure. Also embroiled in the hunt for Marion is her sister, Lila Crane (Vera Miles and Julianne Moore), and Sam, who finally discover that it was Norman who dressed as his mother – herself taxidermied for posterity – to commit the murders in a state of psychological imbalance, for which he is eventually incarcerated.*

That *Psycho* announces itself in 1960 as “a new – and altogether different – screen excitement!!!”, is somewhat ironic given it has gone on to be continually remade in one form or another ever since. It has become as ingrained in our culture as Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, and is so deeply embedded that it seems we have forgotten a time when showers ever were 'safe', or a time when the name 'Norman Bates' had no meaning. This 'new' and 'altogether different' film has become etched *linguistically* and *semantically* via its induction into American mythology, smuggling its own repressed secrets into each new version. *Dracula* is in fact a good comparison, for Ira Konigsberg has argued that the figure of Dracula exceeds Stoker's original representation in much the same way as Bates does with Hitchcock's. Furthermore, Konigsberg suggests that the original *Dracula* is somehow disavowed from its historicity, in much the same way as *Psycho*'s shower scene is from its own. Konigsberg also stresses the importance of contemporary audiences' insatiable thirst to see this legendary monstrosity rearticulated time and again, to the extent that “if Bram Stoker had not invented him, Dracula would have existed anyway” (1998:250). Can we not rewrite this statement as “if Hitchcock had not filmed him, Norman Bates would have existed anyway”. After all, Konigsberg is wrong here: Bram Stoker did not create Dracula, but merely gave the myth form in 1897, which as Deleuze argued freezes the scene and makes a spiritual event out of its being. This sense is echoed by Alain Badiou, who has written that “it is vain to suppose that we can invent anything at all – and all truth is invention – if nothing happens, if ‘nothing takes place but the place’” (cited in Hallward, 2003:107). For him, every radical departure in the field of culture has its origin at one point, and it is here that truth *happens*. The original *Psycho* also establishes the 'event' of *Psycho* beyond its *textual* being; it freezes the shower scene, as it were, as the truth of its being.

When Gus Van Sant remade *Psycho* in 1998, he was in some ways addressing this sense, not that his version is the *difference* between the original and the remake, but, rather, between the original and itself. The distance that separates the remake from its original is exposed in all its arbitrariness, and via a möbius switch, the part and the whole collide. Did the same thing not happen in the reception for the original movie? Despite being released to unprecedented commercial acclaim, smashing box office records and altering the way

* I have deliberately presented this synopsis of the *Psychos* in tandem so that when we come to analyse the key scenes in some detail, the limitations of this compare-and-contrast style can be seen.

audiences could see films,* Hitchcock's *Psycho* was heavily criticised by many reviewers (especially in England). However, over time (as the film became canonised in cinematic repetitions), those same critics re-reviewed the film, and all revised their opinions: Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* originally described *Psycho* as falling "quite flat", and a "blot on an honorable career" (1960), but later listed it in his top ten list of 1960 films (Leigh, 1995:105-6); *Time* magazine switched their opinion from "Hitchcock bears down too heavily in this one" (*Time*, 1960), to "superlative" and "masterly" (Leigh, 1995:106). This example of 'remade criticism' reflects Walter Benjamin's statement that "the technique of reproduction [...] substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence [...] and] it reactivates the object reproduced" (1936:215). It seems that the first remake of *Psycho* took place in the review columns, proving perhaps that the original was undead from the very beginning.

If William Rothman's claim that *Psycho* participates in "a medium of taxidermy" (2001:39) renders it a film concerned with the appearance of death, then Gus Van Sant is a taxidermist director, *par excellence*. There is an effective redoubling going on in Van Sant's *Psycho* as he is not only recreating Hitchcock's most 'undead' work, but he is also recreating Hitchcock himself in shooting the film shot-for-shot. To Freud's 'zombie analyst' it seems we must now add the 'zombie director'. It could be said that Hitchcock has an obsession with taxidermy, since he used the motif in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956) before Norman's birds in *Psycho* (and even those birds seem to reanimate themselves in *The Birds* in 1963). It should be no surprise to us that *The Man Who Knew Too Much* is an auto-remake and that *The Birds* is to be remade by Dennis Iliadis.

Hitchcock's obsession with taxidermy also reflects the sense that he was a director who, as Stuart McDougal observes, "was continuously and obsessively remaking his own work" (1998:52), leading McDougal to describe him as 'the director who knew too much'.[†] He often remade a single shot or a transition between shots and even remade his own casts, frequently re-recruiting actors like James Stewart and Vera Miles, who was under contract with the director. Stephen Rebello points out that on first glance it seems curious that neither Perkins nor Leigh were summoned for an encore (1991:190). However, when the sheer impact of *Psycho* is taken into account, perhaps it is not so curious after all, as Janet Leigh

* Upon its release, signs greeted patrons at cinemas establishing that "It is required that you see *Psycho* from the very beginning", thus altering the previous viewing habits of the public, and exhibition practices of cinemas.

[†] It is interesting to compare McDougal's description of Hitchcock as a director obsessed with remaking himself to Marcus Nispel, a director who is fast gaining a reputation as a 'remake director'. All of Nispel's films are remakes or adaptations: two are based on famous slashers – *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003) and *Friday the 13th* (2009), one on *Frankenstein* (2004) (TV); another is his remake of a Norwegian original, *Pathfinder* (2007), and his forthcoming remakes *Conan* (2010, of *Conan the Barbarian* [1982]) and *The Last Voyage of Demeter* (2011, based on *Dracula*). Rather than remaking himself however, Nispel is carving out a career remaking *others*.

herself acknowledges: “I would have *loved* to have worked for him again. But I understand why not. Marion was a one-time role. She made such an imprint that Hitchcock could not bring her back to life. And *Psycho* was a once-only film” (cited in Rebello, 1991:190). The film’s dialogue even seems to anticipate its own status as a singularity, where in the scene when Norman says to Marion the famous line “We all go a little mad sometimes. Haven’t you?”, Marion replies “Yes, sometimes just one time can be enough.”

How can *Psycho* be a ‘once-only film’ if it has been continually remade, time and again? Rebello notes that Hitchcock found *Psycho* a tough act to follow, and suddenly found himself in a newly changed Hollywood which contained a dearth of good writers and a legion of other directors all hoping to “do a Hitchcock”, as it became known. Following the success of *Psycho*, Rebello notes that Hitchcock was plagued by the question: “Is this too much like *Psycho*” (1991:191)? Clearly the film had already become a cinematic event to which the director was tied. Thus it is not simply that *Psycho* was a ‘once-only film’, but that every film he looked to make thereafter was to be measured against it. With Gus Van Sant however, the question is not so much, “Is this too much like *Psycho*?”, but, “Is it *enough like it*?”

Whatever pressure Hitchcock felt on his reputation following *Psycho*, Van Sant must have felt double before his new version. Perhaps it is the sense of having to ‘live up to’ Hitchcock that led to Van Sant’s complex reasoning for taking the project on, a reasoning that reveals an inner logic almost as self-contradictory as Norman Bates himself. At first, Van Sant defended his intention to remake Hitchcock by stating that his version of *Psycho* was to “[hold] up a mirror to the original film [...] sort of its schizophrenic twin” (Van Sant, cited in Verevis, 2006:72). However, *Psycho*’s schizophrenic twin already existed in Douglas Gordon’s video installation, *24-Hour Psycho* (1993), which presented the entirety of *Psycho* slowed-down to just a few frames-per-second. In the background, the film was reflected in a large mirror positioned on the opposite wall, effectively reflecting the film back at itself and throwing the illusion of space into chiasmic and psychological instability. However, while Gordon is literally reflecting *Psycho*, his reasoning is as follows, that the work is

more like an act of affiliation... it wasn’t a straightforward case of abduction. The original work is a masterpiece in its own right, and I’ve always loved to watch it. [...] I wanted to maintain the authorship of Hitchcock so that when an audience would see my *24 Hour Psycho* they would think much more about Hitchcock and much less, or not at all, about me (2008).

Gordon is adamant that he not be regarded as “abducting” *Psycho* or Hitchcock, and like every good psychoanalyst we should quote Žižek and ask: “What more does this statement contain, that has caused you to make it” (2006a:19)? Just as Van Sant seems to want to reflect the schizophrenia of Norman Bates within the textuality of the remake, so Gordon seems to

want to reflect the crime scene of Marion's murder itself within the textuality of his. This process of 'meta-textual traversal' led Daniel Frampton to argue that Gordon's artistic project works by "revealing the expressionism of the [original] film; showing the *workings* of that style, that thinking" (2006:207). Each scene is performed as a version of *Psycho* in itself, a microcosmic metonymic which illustrates that *actual* production and reception must, following Deleuze, be considered as complimentary to the *virtual* re-production and re-reception that follows.

For Van Sant however, no such complementarity existed, and his complex reasoning behind his *Psycho* remake is anything *but* balanced. In fact, it goes through three highly conflicting stages. (1) His first statement insists on a remake that would keep "intact [an] undeniable classic [...] part tribute to Hitchcock, part new introduction for younger audiences, part bold experiment" (cited in Verevis, 2006:71). Here, we can see some of the different remake ideologies crashing together already, from directorial hubris to slavish homage through re-adaptation and updating. (2) Van Sant's second reason for remaking *Psycho* paints a somewhat different picture:

You can't copy a film. If I hold a camera, it's different than if Irving Penn holds it. Even if it's in the same place, it will magically take on his character. Which was part of the experiment. Our *Psycho* showed that you can't really appropriate. Or you can appropriate, but it's not going to be the same thing (1998).

This view points out the paradox of attempting to step into Hitchcock's shoes. In addition to slightly contradicting his first reasoning, it also contradicts an earlier statement by Van Sant, that his 'art' should be anonymous, made "for the people [...] without the hindrance of my own style" (1998). Jeffrey M. Anderson does not criticise the *Psycho* remake, but Van Sant himself, or rather his reputation, stating that "if a fourth-rate hack had tried it, it would have been laughed at, or ignored, out of existence" (2008). The problem here is that Van Sant is not a fourth-rate hack, but a reputable director with a real flair for the visual and technical aspects of filmmaking. Thus the implicit fear in Anderson's desperate pleas against remaking Hitchcock are not born from a fear of him being butchered by a 'fourth-rate hack', but of him being *successfully reproduced* by an auteur with his/her own visual style which might corrupt the work. (3) This brings me to my third and final quote from Van Sant, an indignant response to a question by an interviewer who asked him "Why remake *Psycho*?", to which he answered, "[Because] no one else would" (1998). However, Van Sant later qualifies this statement on his website by phrasing his answer slightly differently as, "So no one else would have to" (2008). Both answers seem cautionary and claim the burden of responsibility. There is a hubris here that belies a sense of *need*, a sense that the project was inevitably *going to*

happen. The message here is clear: in the case of the first version of this third quote, Van Sant stepped in to remake *Psycho* because no other director would dare touch it; in the case of the second version, it is the project itself that demands to be made and Van Sant recognises the burden of responsibility – in taking on this burden himself he prevents the ‘fourth-rate hacks’ from messing it up. Van Sant begins here by transforming the project of remaking *Psycho* into a burden to be shouldered, and then shifting that burden onto himself. In short, while many critics claimed the project to be “redundant and unnecessary” (Berardinelli, 1998), Van Sant is claiming the opposite, that the project is unavoidable and essential, and that it is his ‘duty’ to pull it off. There are echoes here of Lacan’s reworking of Freud’s *Wo es war, soll ich werden*, such that Van Sant is saying: There where the original *Psycho* was, it is my duty that this remake should come into being.

We can clearly discern in Van Sant’s contradictory reasoning the three stages of Freud’s Oedipus complex: (1) Between the mother and son there is the affirmation of the unrestricted sexuality of the primal father (Hitchcock tribute/new audiences); (2) then, in a jealous rage the father is killed or repressed by his son (although a shot-for-shot remake, this is always going to be a Van Sant film since Hitchcock cannot be behind the camera); (3) and finally, the father returns in the form of a totem or law forbidding patricide (Van Sant’s insistence on the Historical Necessity of the project, and his doing it to ensure it is not ‘hacked’ up by someone else). Implicit here is the vital pathological phenomena described by Freud as the “miscarriage of repression, of irruption” (Freud, 1911:171), and it is with Freud in mind then that we should read Van Sant’s desire to hold up a mirror to the original film as a ‘schizophrenic twin’ with utter seriousness: he is not simply using the schizophrenic mirroring allegorically, nor is he hystericising the original; rather, he is holding a mirror up to the hysteria *already implicit in the original*. This is a *failure* to repress.

Van Sant’s ‘mirror’ here needs to be read with the full weight of Lacan’s mirror stage, for we can also discern Lacan’s three orders of the Real, Imaginary, and Symbolic in this tripartite reasoning: from the raw and unformed ‘Real’ with the collection of almost incoherent parts (“part this, part that, part another”) of the first reasoning; via the mirroring of the ‘Imaginary’ ideal-other (“If I hold a camera, it’s different than if Irving Penn holds it”, or to be more precise, Hitchcock) of the second; to the definitive, inescapability of the Law in the ‘Symbolic’ order (“I must do it [because no one else would] / [so no one else would have to]”); in the third. J. Hoberman’s comment about Van Sant’s *Psycho* is that “the response for anyone familiar with the original *Psycho* is likely to be restricted to a narrow range between briefly enjoyable *déjà vu* and mild disappointment” (Hoberman, 1998). Here, Hoberman succinctly hits the nail on the head as to why this film is so *important*. The disappointment felt is precisely that of the Lacanian child on entering the mirror stage and learning, tragically, that the unity he or she had experienced until that moment has been abruptly cut short by the

intrusion of language and the symbolic order, into which this shot-for-shot version drags the original, kicking and screaming. The brief enjoyment in the sense of *déjà vu* has, in film history terms, come to an abrupt end here, for the shot-for-shot remake takes *Psycho* out of the realm of the pure symbolic event, and returns it, in a möbius relation, to its origins in 1960s being.

We can learn more about Van Sant's three-part reasoning by looking at what Freud called 'faulty reasoning' in the joke about the borrowed kettle, which for him illustrates the structure of the unconscious. A man returns a borrowed kettle to the lender with a hole in it, but when confronted, replies with three reasons as to his innocence in the matter: (1) The man argues that he never borrowed the kettle in the first place; (2) that it had a hole in it already when he borrowed it; and (3) that he had given it back undamaged and without a hole (2001:204-5). The ineptitude of his reasoning is comic insofar as the man makes no attempt to conceal or compensate for its faultiness despite the mutual exclusivity of his arguments. Rather, it displays multiple strands of thought (each one perfectly valid on its own) in open contradiction. One can fully imagine the kettle borrower in this joke demanding to have his cake and eat it. According to Josh Cohen, the reason why Freud's jokes are always unfunny is that they dance the same fine line between reality and disavowal as that of the *psychotic*. For Cohen, "this may explain why [...] spoken properly, [the joke] can insinuate an eerie break in the audience's laughter. It may conversely explain why 'mad people', against our better judgement, tempt us to nervous laughter" (2005:55). Just as Freud's unfunny jokes cause us to shift somewhat uncomfortably, psychosis can often *make us want to laugh*.

One of the best cinematic examples of the kettle joke's faulty reasoning as comic lunacy can be seen in John Landis's *The Blues Brothers* (1980), where illogical rationalising momentarily subverts logical sense. In one scene, Jake (John Belushi) is caught in a lie by his homicidal fiancée. In a last ditch attempt to reason with her, Jake exclaims that it was not his fault, to which she replies: "You miserable slug, you think you can talk your way out of this? You betrayed me." Jake's response is legendary:

No I didn't, honestly. I ran out of gas, I had a flat tyre, I didn't have enough money for cab fare, my tux didn't come back from the cleaners, an old friend came in from out-of-town, someone stole my car, there was an earthquake, a terrible flood, locusts! It wasn't my fault I swear to God!!

Rather than shooting him, Jake's estranged fiancée smiles and embraces him, clearly overwhelmed by his response. Josh Cohen explains that the borrowed kettle joke illustrates that where the lender sees the situation from the point of view of external reality (consciousness) and thus sees an 'either-or' situation, the borrower speaks from the point of

view of psychological reality (unconsciousness) and knows only a 'both-and' situation. When faulty reasoning is provided, the result is precisely 'nothing', the terms negate one another and we are left with a terrifying abyss. First, the lender denies the act of borrowing the kettle, then his responsibility for its condition, and finally he denies the condition itself. In much the same way, Van Sant denies the act of remaking, his responsibility for its failure, and then the condition of failure itself.

When Anderson notes of the *Psycho* remake that if a fourth-rate hack had tried it, it would have been laughed at, or ignored, out of existence, we should simply remove the 'if', for Hitchcock has been 'hacked up' like one of his leading ladies almost continuously. The etymology of the word 'hack' shows that it has many modern meanings. It originated from 'hackney', a horse let out for hire, and thus became a derogatory way to describe a mediocre writer-for-hire. In technology, the word 'hack' refers to the reconfiguration of a computer system to function in way not intended by its designer. Finally, and perhaps more generally, it originates in the German word '*hacken*', meaning someone who makes furniture with an axe (to "hack to pieces"), implying a lack of *finesse*. The link between 'hacking' and the undead is to be found in Oliver Goldsmith's epitaph on Edward Purdon, who knew well what the life of a 'hack' was:

Here lies poor Ned Purdon, from misery freed,
Who long was a bookseller's hack:
He led such a damnable life in this world,
I don't think he'll wish to come back (1774).

Perhaps we should take Goldsmith's epitaph as that of the cinematic remaker also. Van Sant's 'faulty kettle' rationale is based on the idea that the slasher genre killed the 'master of suspense', not by 'Doing a Hitchcock' but by *doing too many*, by reducing him to a standard formula (what Lacan calls a *sinthome*). A quick glance at appendix b. illustrates that no less than 19 acknowledged Hitchcock remakes exist to date, and this is a number that you can multiply with the countless unofficial remakes, and the numerous remakes to come. Ultimately, Van Sant's remake illustrates that in laughing at or ignoring out of existence the butchering of Hitchcock we deny the 'undead-ness' of the zombie director. In showing the 'nothingness' that subsists in remaking, Van Sant shows that what Hitchcock remakers really need to worry about is preventing his Deleuzian 'eternal return', by leaving him to the simulacra-phantasms. In a strange way, Van Sant's *Psycho* might be a somewhat uneasy bedfellow of *I Am Omega* from chapter 1 – both causing equal distress in critical circles. Perhaps we should read the practice of 'Doing a Hitchcock' in its proper remake light, as "Doing Hitchcock in!"

Would the real *Psycho* please come out? Abducting Hitchcock with the queering camera

Harold Bloom (1997) describes the Oedipal pressure of authors who live in the shadow of their influences as the ‘anxiety of influence’, whereby these authors paradoxically select a role-model both to imitate *and* compete with. The result leaves the newcomer with the wish to triumph over (although as a result of) his/her precursor and Bloom uses the term ‘*clinamen*’ to explain the alteration necessary to accomplish this. Specifically, this *clinamen* is the effect of the later author ‘swerving’ to correct his or her precursor, suggesting that the earlier work was correct up to a certain point but then went wrong somewhere (that is, it should have swerved in the direction the new version takes it). Both Deleuze and Lacan are interested in the concept of *clinamen*, the former in the element of “chance” affecting *plurality* (Deleuze, 2009b:307), and the latter in the element of “inclination” affecting our relationship to *nothing* (or to put it more accurately, not-nothing, 1998:63-4). Thus, *clinamen*, or the swerving through time of the repeated work, involves both plurality and the (not) nothingness of the repetition.

For Bloom, the anxiety of influence comes out of a complex act of strong misreading. It is not that this misreading occurs because of the anxiety of finding oneself in the shadow of one’s influence, but, rather, it is the cause of the anxiety. The idea that an author or director carries with them the spectre of his or her precursor is not particularly new, but Bloom has considered the problem in a unique way, writing that

in ways that need not be doctrinal, strong poems are always omens of resurrection. The dead may or may not return, but their *voice comes alive, paradoxically never by mere imitation*, but in the agonistic misprison performed upon a powerful forerunner *by only the most gifted of their successors* (1997:xxiv, emphasis added).

As Bloom suggests, while the dead may or may not return the voice of the voiceless nonetheless comes *alive*, and only in the most gifted of successors (so not in fourth-rate hacks). The issue of authenticity and theft is much more prevalent in the remaking of *Psycho* than in any of the other remakes churned out by Hollywood. Here it is the very talent of Van Sant as a ‘visionary’ director that deepens this anxiety of influence, not the talent of Hitchcock. After all, are we not all subjected to, and by-products of, our social *imprimaturs*?

The complement to Bloom’s consideration of influence is that of ‘intention’. Daniel Frampton considers intention of vital importance in understanding that films are not created in a void, which is paramount to our understanding of the Deleuzian filmind. This is significantly affected when we consider Bloom’s anxiety of influence on the redoubled

anxiety of remaking: not only does the remaker have the pressure of the original director and legions of fans affecting his or her intention for a work, but there is added pressure in the fact that the film is being explicitly acknowledged as such. This is to be contrasted with a genre director who disavows his or her sources while all the same implicitly acknowledging them through codified signs (allegory, allusion, generality, etc). The problem arises when we show that there are unconscious, disavowed elements intrinsic to remaking also, that a work is never fully conscious or intentional.

For those film directors who experience Bloom's anxiety of influence, Hitchcock seems to be the cinematic equivalent to Shakespeare. One director noted for his Hitchcock homages is Brian De Palma, who said that "dealing with Hitchcock is like dealing with Bach – he wrote every tune that was ever done. Hitchcock thought up practically every cinematic idea that has been used and probably will be used in this form" (cited in Rebello, 1991:192). De Palma's anxiety over Hitchcock's influence is clearly an aspect of what Bloom calls 'Apophrades' (when the dead return to re-inhabit their old houses). This is where a later director, already burdened by an imagined solitude that is almost solipsistic, holds his or her own work so open to a previous version that it is almost as though we were back in the later author's "flooded apprenticeship", before his or her own unique "strength" begins to assert itself (Bloom, 1997:14-6). Given Douglas Gordon's statement that his *24-Hour Psycho* is an "affiliation" rather than a "case of abduction", Van Sant's remake becomes the directorial equivalent of the killer from *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), Buffalo Bill (Ted Levine), who, sitting in wait with duct tape stretched out, is preparing for the kidnapping of something big...

For Frampton, films do not need implied authors or implicit narrators in order to adequately function in telling their stories. There is instead a more abstract notion of 'narration' which functions perfectly well, one intrinsic to the filmind. William Rothman has argued for an authorial theory of narrative (to be kept distinct from 'auteur theory'). He writes that "Hitchcock's structures are expressions of his unwillingness or inability ever to forsake his mark, ever to absorb himself unconditionally in the destinies of his characters, ever to leave his own story untold" (Rothman, cited in Frampton, 2006:29). Thus *Psycho* contains other internal repetitions in the form of Hitchcock's own "murderous camera" (Frampton, 2006:28), which shapes his film. For example, according to Stephen Rebello, Hitchcock was only half joking when he told the press, "If I made Cinderella, the audience would be looking for a corpse to turn up in the coach" (cited in Rebello, 1998), an obvious nod to this murderous camera. David Bordwell also describes Hitchcock's authorial mark, commenting that one type of meaning audiences construct from his films is the "repressed or symptomatic" one, an unconscious or involuntary meaning whereby,

taken as individual expression, symptomatic meaning may be treated as the consequence of the artist's obsessions (for example, *Psycho* as a worked-over fantasy of Hitchcock's). Taken as part of a social dynamic, it may be traced to economic, political, or ideological processes (for example, *Psycho* as concealing the male fear of woman's sexuality) (1989:9).

On the one hand, we get a *Psycho* personal to Hitchcock, and on the other, we get a *Psycho* similar to David J. Skal's description of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* as "a lightning rod for prevailing social anxieties" (2008), an objective text representing societal unease. Either way, there is a sense that the anxiety of influence in Van Sant's remaking is massively complicated by the differentiation between Hitchcock's authorial stamp and his own. While Hitchcock reproduced in each of his films a 'murderous camera' as Frampton puts it, there is an undeniable mark reproduced in each of Van Sant's films also, and the *Psycho* remake is no exception: we might call this a 'queering camera'.

One need only glance at Van Sant's work to note that his sexual politics are self evident (he is openly homosexual), from *My Own Private Idaho* (1991) to his most recent film, *Milk* (2008). But how is he able to 'queer' a film he is remaking shot-for-shot? Michael Koresky notes that while Hitchcock's Norman Bates has changed from androgynous automaton to frustrated (heterosexual) man in Van Sant's version, seemingly every other character is given some form of homosexual 'baggage'. This includes his choice of casting for the roles, given Anne Heche's public persona as an 'out' actress (in 1998 at least) and the intimations of Lila's lesbianism, which Julianne Moore (an actress famous for feisty, dominating roles) reportedly kept in mind. In addition, the opening shot of the film depicts Viggo Mortensen as the sexual object: he is sweaty, bronzed and partially nude, not to mention shot from behind and clearly the object of the gaze (as opposed to Heche). Another particularly striking example is Heche's Marion, for in the original Leigh was a hyper-sexualised turn-on for all of the male (and lesbian) audience members, with a hitherto unseen bra-and-slip shot in the opening scene. Leigh was a huge publicity draw for the film, and while there is a blurred shot of her breasts in the shower scene, audiences were left gagging for more (and punished forthwith by her sudden murder). However, with Heche, a nude shot is handled with near indifference compared to Mortensen's nudity. Furthermore, the aforementioned blurred shot of Leigh's breast in the original is absent in the remake. In its place is Heche's hand reaching up, which for Koresky rightly points to the conclusion that Van Sant had "little visual affection for the boyish Heche" (2008). We can already see the Žižekian evil neighbour creeping in here.

However, not forgetting Deleuze's good neighbour, we must remember the important point that a whole section of Hitchcock studies is devoted to the exploration of the homosexual undertones implicit in *Psycho*, including Robert Samuels's *Hitchcock's Bi-*

Textuality: Lacan, Feminisms, and Queer Theory (1998), Theodore Price's *Hitchcock and Homosexuality* (1992), and Richard Dyer's 'Queer Noir', in *The Culture of Queers* (2002), among others. As Koresky notes, "the perceived redundancy of queering *Psycho* is thus neatly inverted" (2008), such that for all the academic papers spent scrutinising the original for homosexual references, finally they got what they wanted. The overt sexual politics in Van Sant's *Psycho* remake thus contain something of Lacan's sense that subjectivity is often too great to carry over from one work to another, such that the paradox of their simultaneity always overcomes the signifier and ultimately gives over to excess. Žižek argues that "authentic fidelity is the fidelity to the void itself – to the very act of loss, of abandoning or erasing the object" (2004a:13). This erasure actually results in a stabilising effect, so in swerving (*clinamen*) from Hitchcock's blueprint Van Sant betrays the Letter of the original, and yet is faithful to its Spirit in fleshing out the 'unspeakable' elements buried therein. It is along these same lines that Žižek imagines a hypothetical remake of *Gilda* (1964) which updates its sexual politics. In Žižek's fantasy version, Johnny (Glenn Ford) and Ballin (George Macready) form the homosexual libidinal axis of the film based around the Lacanian notion of the son's relationship with the 'anal father'. In Žižek's version, the *femme fatale* of the piece, Gilda (Rita Hayworth), is not the surplus figure attempting to derail the normal relationship but the *normalising* figure attempting to rescue the heterosexual bond from the grip of the anal father. For Žižek, the title of the famous song by Gilda should be changed from "Put the Blame on Mame", to "Put the Blame on the Anal Father"! (2008c:164n).

The suggestion here is that by deviating from the Hegelian Letter of the original, we remain faithful to the Hegelian Spirit of the original, and this is how Deleuze attacks historicist 'contextualisation'. One often hears from historians that the only way to understand a work of art is to know its context, its historicity. However, the Deleuzian counterclaim is that too much historical context obfuscates the work 'in itself', in its fashion. On the contrary, Deleuze argues that we should analyse the art of the work as a means for providing the context in which to understand a given historical situation. Thus when Maitland McDonagh reviews Van Sant's *Psycho* she unwittingly hits the Deleuzian nail on the head when she writes that "Van Sant's film feels as dated as Hitchcock's, and Hitchcock's has the better excuse" (1998). Van Sant's remake does appear dated while at the same time its sexual politics feel bang up to date. Žižek argues that the popular notion of Hegel's thesis-antithesis-synthesis is of the resolution of a deadlock (between thesis and antithesis) from the *outside* which reconciles two opposing terms. Against this, Žižek argues that Hegel's synthesis is actually based on the fact that the synthesis always-already exists in the thesis, which only an antithetical shift in perspective can reveal.

It is in this way that Ebert is right to describe Van Sant's *Psycho* remake as an invaluable cinematic experiment which demonstrated the pointlessness of remaking shot-for-

shot, since “genius apparently resides between or beneath the shots” (2004). Ebert’s rhetoric here is almost word for word the same as Deleuze’s when he argues that “if repetition is possible, it would appear only between or beneath the two generalities of perfection and integration” (Deleuze, 2009a:5). Ebert is only wrong in stating that this type of remaking is pointless, for in shedding new light on those ‘genius’ aspects of *Psycho* that have fallen between, or reside beneath the shots of the original, Van Sant has succeeded in the act of *clinamen* (swerving, or should that be *queering*?) and stayed true in this sense to the Spirit or Idea contained in the original, more than itself. Hollywood mogul Samuel Goldwyn used to say, “Let’s have some new clichés!”, and with his queering camera, Van Sant has produced just that.

Master-Bates “gets off” in the remake: Seeing into the guts of the machine

Timothy Corrigan argues that the remake marks a flattening of space and time, such that its very repetition reduces (or fully dismisses) any need for narrative motivation and naturalisation. Instead, he writes that the remake comprises a string of self-sustaining action sequences that are merely better animated through technological perfectionism. The shared narrative between an original and its remaking eliminates any need to construct a story, and as such the characters in remakes are less fully formed than their originals. For Corrigan, these characters become shoes into which remake actors must step, flattened and two-dimensional ‘roles’ much closer to a ‘cartoon discourse’, where

the representationally reduced image of the characters replaces questions of motivation (any attempt to explain *why* Batman, Superman, or Roger Rabbit do what they do is clearly an imported after-thought), while the episodic logic (from day to day) follows the paralogical leaps of separated performative frames (1991:169).

Apart from the idea of Norman Bates as a cartoon seeming somewhat ridiculous (not to mention disturbing), there is a serious point here, as each new sequel further caricaturises Norman. The *Psycho* sequels even follow the same formula: Norman begins as a reformed character who is once more tempted to commit murder after a troubled young woman arrives at his newly-renovated motel stirring up his darkest repressed fantasies. Can we not imagine a weekly TV series with the same concept? Each week, a ‘reformed’ Norman Bates is released from prison after serving time for the previous week’s murder of a guest starlet. Then, having cleaned the motel after the previous week’s carnage, Norman is tempted once more by a young woman in trouble, etc., etc. We can even imagine a whole host of catchphrases from

“We all go a little mad sometimes” prior to the weekly shower scene, to Norman stumbling into the bathroom’s bloody mess exclaiming “What the hell...? Oh, mother, *not again!*”^{*}

One of the most fascinating elements of the *Psycho* remake is that many of the unforced changes made by Van Sant to the original concern Norman’s character. Michael Koresky notes that “Anthony Perkins’s introverted self-loathing becomes Vince Vaughn’s calculated performativity, stork-like shapelessness now absurdly buff and brawny” (2008). While most of the characters are ‘queered’, Norman is overtly ‘heterosexualised’ in the remake. We should think of Vince Vaughn as Anthony Perkins’s mirror double, his Žižekian ‘neighbour’ – the same, but different. Also, Van Sant has Norman respond to Lila’s flirtation like a dirty old man, awkwardly gurning and smirking his way through each scene. It seems as if Van Sant is disinterested in this hyper-sexualised Norman, who far from retaining the androgyny of his predecessor, is “very distinctly a frustrated *man*” (Koresky, 2008). One scene in particular, known as the ‘masturbation scene’ (possibly the most criticised of the entire film), verifies this reading.

The famous scene in the original occurs when Norman silently spies on Marion as she undresses for her ill-fated shower, his frustration and impotence building to anticlimax. In the remake however, Norman begins to pleasure himself, and before long achieves the climax Perkins’s Norman never could. It is a mistake however to simply dismiss Norman’s climax as yet another example of the ‘cartoon discourse’, for there is more going on here. Roger Ebert sums up the critics’ main concern when he states that the inclusion of a masturbation scene is “the most dramatic difference” between it and the original, which is “appropriate, because this new ‘Psycho’ evokes the real thing in an attempt to re-create remembered passion” (1998). In many ways, Ebert is completely wrong in his condemnation of this scene, and in other ways, he is absolutely right, and here is why. Firstly, while misplaced, Ebert’s criticism is correct from the point of view that there is indeed a shift from Norman being *in* the ‘scene’, to Norman’s exit *from* the ‘scene’. The key difference is exemplified by Lacan’s argument that when Freud’s German term ‘*Agieren*’ is translated as ‘*passage à l’acte*’ (passage to the act) in French the meaning of the original is obscured. For Lacan, Freud’s *Agieren* is better translated as ‘acting out’, which involves a subject who is addressing a message to the big Other, but who still remains in the ‘scene’. The ‘*passage à l’acte*’ on the other hand is an (often violent) exit from the scene altogether, such that the Other is not only excluded from the scene, but from ‘discourse’ itself (marking an entrance into the Real). We can differentiate between these two terms by viewing Travis Bickle’s two main acts of violence in *Taxi Driver*:

^{*} There was in fact an attempt to create a TV series based on *Psycho* called *Bates Motel* (1987), but it was not optioned and was turned instead into a TV movie. In a further redoubling, after Anthony Perkins declined to appear in the pilot, Norman Bates was played by Kurt Paul, Perkins’s stunt double in the sequels.

the first is the attempted assassination of the presidential candidate, in which he ‘acts out’ a message to the middle class ‘big Other’ to relieve the pressure of hysterical neurosis. However, having been thwarted in his assassination attempt, Bickle’s impotence removes him from the very discourse of ‘class’. He thus exits the scene altogether when he shoots up the brothel, which is a message addressed to no-one, an exit from, and passage out of hysteria and into psychosis, his *passage à l’acte*. In this second act, Travis identifies with the pure *objet a*, resulting in his attempted suicide at the end. Is it any wonder that Travis is bemused at the reaction to his actions in the press? For him he is neither hero nor villain; his violence is not mediated but is, like Norman’s, a pure transgression.

Therein resides the true difference between the original and remade shower scenes in *Psycho*. In the original, it is Norman’s *passage à l’acte* borne out of the failure to act out the fantasies stirred up by Marion. If you remember from chapter 1, we had Cristina in *21 Grams* complaining about the fact that Paul has ‘stirred up’ her desire and turned her on; well, Norman it seems complains with a knife. In the remake however, the inclusion of a masturbation scene negates this failure by turning it into a success (resulting in orgasm, which is also a failure for Lacan, but one mediated by the presence of the big Other). Thus while 1960 Norman does (in a psychotic sense at least) have the right to complain about his arousal, 1998 Norman does not. Against Ebert’s reading, Michael Koresky argues that the masturbation scene “goes a long way to re-establishing a more virile masculinity to the character, as well as localizing his sexual urges on the derobing of a woman (it’s difficult to imagine Perkins’s formless eunuch having the ability to manipulate that part of his anatomy at all)” (2008). Like Ebert however, Koresky is also partly right and partly wrong at the same time. While Ebert is right in regarding it as a mistake, but gives the wrong reasons, Koresky is wrong in regarding it as a good update to the character, but gives the right reasons. If Norman were capable of getting an erection, let alone stimulating it, he would effectively have registered his message with the big Other, and there would be no need for the murderous *passage à l’acte*. The fact that Norman masturbates *and* murders Marion in the remake betrays the staging of the phantasmatic scene, for the scene of the phantasy is like the stage in a play; framed by an arch, curtains, etc., with the ‘real’ space beyond. Norman tearing through the fabric of the shower curtain is the equivalent of tearing through the curtain in a theatre – of an actor running amok through the audience. This is why Norman’s Brechtian *passage à l’acte* is so shocking, and why Van Sant should not have included the masturbation scene: *not* because he attempts to recreate ‘remembered passion’, but because he *neglects to recreate ‘forgotten failure’*. There is no remembered passion, only the shocking events which unfold thereafter in the shower scene proper. In short, the psychoanalytic answer is that when the phallus is undermined, everyone suffers and in Koresky’s description of the “formless Eunuch”, the phallus is undermined. Thus if we reverse Ebert, the scene is correctly rendered:

“the masturbation scene is *inappropriate*, because this new ‘Psycho’ evokes the *unreal* thing in an attempt to re-create *forgotten failure*”.*

One often hears critics ask: What would the original director think of this remake? Perhaps it was this question that influenced Van Sant’s decision on how to treat Hitchcock’s cameo appearance from the 1960 *Psycho*. In the original, Hitchcock’s cameo is very near the start of the film at Marion’s workplace, where in the background outside the director can clearly be seen, wearing a Stetson. In the remake, Van Sant repeats Hitchcock’s cameo but splits the figure in two, such that he himself is in the scene *with Hitchcock*.



Fig. 2.2: Hitchcock’s cameo in *Psycho* (1960)...



...and zombie cameo #1 in the *Psycho* remake (1998)

In the DVD commentary, Van Sant suggested that he is being scolded by Hitchcock in this scene for his directorial shortcomings. All of the critics who claimed Hitchcock would be ‘turning in his grave’ at the thought of a shot-for-shot remake of *Psycho* are thus proven

* On a side note, it is fascinating that Koresky makes the (possibly deliberate) error in labelling “Perkins” and not “Norman” as the “formless eunuch” in the above quote. This alters Corrigan’s view of remade characters as shoes waiting to be filled by new actors, suggesting that in many ways the role of Norman Bates always belonged to and consumed Anthony Perkins (at least in a symbolic sense).

wrong: he is in fact helping to direct it! One can only wonder as to what the undead director had to say, but we can be sure that Van Sant's taxidermist reanimation of Hitchcock enters the realm of the Žižekian undead, confirming Hitchcock's status as the zombie director, *par excellence*. Has there ever been a starker realisation of Bloom's anxiety of influence in cinematic history?

The significance of Hitchcock's cameo in the *Psycho* remake is redoubled when we consider that Žižek argued the cameo in the original to have been the ultimate cause of the unfortunate events leading to Marion's death:

For a brief moment, we see him [Hitchcock] through the window pane standing on the pavement; then, seconds later, the millionaire enters the office from the very place occupied by Hitchcock, he wears the same Stetson – he is thus a kind of stand-in for Hitchcock, sent by him into the film to lead Marion into temptation and thus propel the story in the desired direction (1992:219).*

We can supplement Žižek's reading of the original cameo here with the remake extension: that he is himself an additional vanishing mediator, a Deleuzian dark precursor of the filmind. The doubled cameo is almost like a glitch in the system, as though some kind of *déjà vu* has rendered an intrusion of the real (as happens in the sci-fi film *The Matrix*, where *déjà vu* signals that the machines have changed some crucial part of our reality).

Towards the end of Hitchcock's career his cameos were always included at the very beginning because audiences would otherwise sit and wait to spot the famous director rather than focus on the story, although it never stopped him from doing one. In fact, it seems that even death could not stop the master of suspense from making a cameo, and Van Sant's *Psycho* is not the only film to feature one such appearance by the deceased director. In *Psycho II* (1983), three years after his death, Hitchcock briefly appeared in the very first scene of Norman's mother's room. Before they turn the lights on, Alfred Hitchcock's famous portly silhouette can be seen, almost hidden in amongst the *mise-en-scène* on the wall to the far right.

* François Truffaut has pointed out something similar in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, that the cymbalist who ultimately marks the moment at which the assassination is to take place is also a 'dead ringer' for the director (1983:231)...



Fig. 2.3: Zombie cameo #2 (bottom right) in *Psycho II*

This cinematographic stain of Hitchcock emerging like the phantom of the Mother Superior from *Vertigo* gives the effect of the director watching over each new version of the film, like Bloom's sense of *Apophrades* (when the dead return to inhabit their old houses). This is one of the best illustrations of why this thesis is not simply separated into two distinct parts: there is a spectral aspect to the zombie metaphor, just as much as there is a zombie aspect to the ghost metaphor, something that will become clearer as this thesis progresses. Žižek uses the example of Alberto Cavalcanti's, *Dead of Night* (1945) to illustrate the idea of a subject being taken over by the object. The film features a ventriloquist's dummy that gradually begins to control the ventriloquist such that he must strangle the dummy to free himself from its grip. However, while convalescing from his ordeal in hospital, the ventriloquist opens his mouth, and in a moment of terror, speaks in the high-pitched voice of the dummy. Here, the ventriloquist has made the transition from subjective 'I' to subjectivised object, 'a' (partial autonomous object, or organ without a body). Does not the final scene of *Psycho* revisit this uncanny moment when Norman thinks with the high-pitched voice of mother? As Pascal Bonitzer argues, Norman's mother's voice "has entered the son, [and] tears him apart and possesses him in a murderous fashion" (1992:179). One need only recall that, as Žižek points out, the only way to get rid of the partial object is to *become that object*, to pronounce it as the first person 'I'.

One such object is the shower curtain itself, which changes in between the two versions, leading Koresky to ask the question: "Why retain the original dialogue and recreate camera moves, yet replace the film's essential props" (2008)? In the original, the curtain is plain, whereas in the remake it is patterned with a prismatic effect and made from a different fabric. Here, as with the inclusion of a masturbation scene and a cameo, we should conclude that the different shower curtain signifies that Van Sant is a director incapable of leaving things alone. I like to think of Gus Van Sant in the same way as Christian Metz likes to think of the *cinophile* who also likes to analyse films:

I shall let the words on these pages come from the person who likes to see these films in quotation marks, who likes to savour them as dated allusions (like a wine whose charm lies partly in our knowing its vintage), accepting the ambivalent coexistence of this anachronistic affection with the sadism of the connoisseur who wants to break open the toy and see into the guts of the machine (1982:92-3).

Gus Van Sant is the ultimate example of Metz's wine connoisseur, a schizoid figure who at once wishes to savour the vintage of Hitchcock's *Psycho*, hoping to collect and preserve it for generations to come, while at the very same time wishing to smash it open and fiddle with the parts, adding his own queering mechanisms. This is absolutely to be aligned with Leitch's remake paradox about the remake simultaneously honouring and eliminating the model on which it is based. Van Sant is both faithful husband and adulterous lover in one disavowing subject of repetition. Freud was right when he remarked that the normal person is not only more immoral than he/she thinks, but more moral than they suspect. We can quite easily imagine Hitchcock chiding Van Sant in his zombie cameo, accusing him of needlessly changing elements of the original, and Van Sant replying in the same way that Marion replies to Norman after she offends him by suggesting he put his mother in an institution, saying "I tried to mean well". We can also imagine Hitchcock replying as Norman replies, that "People always mean well. They cluck their thick tongues, and shake their heads and suggest, oh, so very delicately." Ultimately, Van Sant, like Marion, has good intentions, but as Lacan once wrote: "people with good intentions – they're much worse than the ones with bad intentions" (1973:64). Lacan's comment here is echoed by Deleuze, who writes that people with "good intentions are inevitably punished" (2009b:233). In the case of Van Sant, perhaps they were both right, but Van Sant should simply be pleased that Žižek is not in charge here, for in quoting from Brecht's poem, 'The Interrogation of the Good', he makes a suggestion as to what should be done with the 'well-intentioned man':

Step forward: we hear

That you are a good man. [...]

This is why we shall

Now put you in front of a wall. But in consideration of your merits and good qualities

We shall put you in front of a good wall and shoot you

With a good bullet from a good gun and bury you

With a good shovel in the good earth (Brecht, cited in Žižek, 2008:33).

Hitchcock, it seems, was an avid reader of Brechtian verse.

Cleaning up after Norman: the shower scene as fetish

It is a mistake to think that Van Sant has only filmed Hitchcock's shower scene once. In fact, he first filmed the shower scene, shot-for-shot, in 1979 for the Our Lady of Laughter theatre group as part of the *Rabies!* show. The show featured a mock commercial for shampoo, and perfectly replicated the shower scene up until the slow zoom out of 'Marion's' dead eye, where sitting next to her lifeless body was a bottle of shampoo over which a voice-over stated: "New Psycho shampoo: It takes care of dandruff, and then some." This commercial proves what Anat Zanger has argued, which is that *Psycho* 'participates' "in a pleasurable game of repetition which has contributed to turning the film into a fetish" (2006:16). Zanger suggests that we deal with this pleasurable game on two levels: (1) she proposes to examine the "dynamics of repetition (and pleasure)", and (2) a fetishistic return to the film's "central element", the shower scene (2006:16), just as Van Sant has. On the surface of things, Zanger is right, and while this entire chapter is devoted to the first level, it might seem on first reflection that this short section will deal with the second. However, Zanger is mistaken if she thinks we can separate these two levels, for the one always contaminates the other. Just as the shower scene is an inseparable part of *Psycho*'s dynamics of repetition (it has lurked behind every corner of this chapter thus far, even in Van Sant's history as an early filmmaker), so too are the dynamics of repetition inseparable from the shower scene. This is not, therefore, going to be the nth analysis of the shower scene. In fact, I want to purposefully avoid an analysis of the shower scene in both the original and remake, and head straight into an examination of the shower scene in other versions, including the first two *Psycho* sequels and Brian De Palma's homage, *Dressed to Kill* (1980). In doing so, I hope to avoid the standard scene-by-scene, shot-for-shot, stab-by-stab analysis that has been done a thousand times already, steer clear of the detailing of Hitchcock's use of editing to convey the panic and disorientation of the scene, and ultimately move into an alternative analysis that reads Zanger's two levels of *Psycho*-analysis together.

First and foremost, let us return to taglines, for each and every one of the *Psycho* sequels has, at some point in its marketing, featured the line: "Just when you thought it was safe to go back into the shower!", which itself paraphrases the tagline, "Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water...", from the first *Jaws* sequel (1978). From the very beginning then, the shower scene is already a part coinciding with the whole, a synecdochic extension of its own place in the body of the narrative. In scientific terminology the shower scene works like fractals, which are particles that infinitely tessellate into new forms that constitute macrocosmic versions of their component parts. The implication in the repeated tagline from each of the films is that the scene is reset after each film, reinforcing my point about the possibility of a 'Norman Bates show' television series beginning with the

cleaning of the bathroom. Put simply, our reproach to the *Psycho* sequels' tagline is that, as with 'the water' following the original *Jaws*, no one ever thinks it is safe to go back in the shower; showers have not been, and probably never will be safe again.

To illustrate this, I want to draw attention to the fact that the sequels, Richard Franklin's *Psycho II* (1983) and Anthony Perkins's own *Psycho III* (1986), contain not one, but *three* shower scenes. These scenes not only tell us something unique about the fetishism of the shower scene and the 'fractal universe' of *Psycho*, but they can also be mapped onto one another in three 'times'. First of all, let us recall the similar 'pattern' of each sequel: in each version, a supposedly 'reformed' Norman Bates works at a local café while attempting to renovate the motel for reopening. A beautiful and hysterical young woman with short blonde hair arrives to stay, and soon enough the deep rumblings of mother awaken in Norman some repressed desires...

Shower scene 1: The first shower scene in both of the sequels is *the original shower scene* from Hitchcock's *Psycho*. Indeed, the very first scene of *Psycho II* begins in black-and-white, with Herrmann's original score, and, startlingly, Janet Leigh taking a shower. Did I miss something? Has Leigh reprised her role from 1960, 22 years later? Of course not, and seconds later the film reveals that it is in fact a replay of the original film. It is not a 'scene within a scene', but an actual revisit to the original moment itself. This direct replaying of the original shower scene mediates between the sense that we need reminding of the brutality of the scene, and the sense that we have never left that bathroom, that we are still stuck there. Once the scene is over, the title sequence starts and the film slickly moves from Hitchcock's black and white to Franklin's colour. In *Psycho III*, the original shower scene is also directly replayed near the beginning, this time with even more artistic flair. While daydreaming in a local café, Norman is distracted by a beautiful blonde with short hair, who drops her suitcase and reaches down to collect it. The film suddenly jump cuts to Hitchcock's black-and-white original as Norman's view of the young girl reaching her hand down to the floor is inter-cut with Marion's murder, followed by a shot of the new girl lying in Marion's 'death pose', before the shot slowly moves back into colour. This scene is a scene-within-a-scene, and is presented as a sudden jump into Norman's conscious imaginings.*

* Both films obtained the right to the original footage as they shared the same production company, Universal.

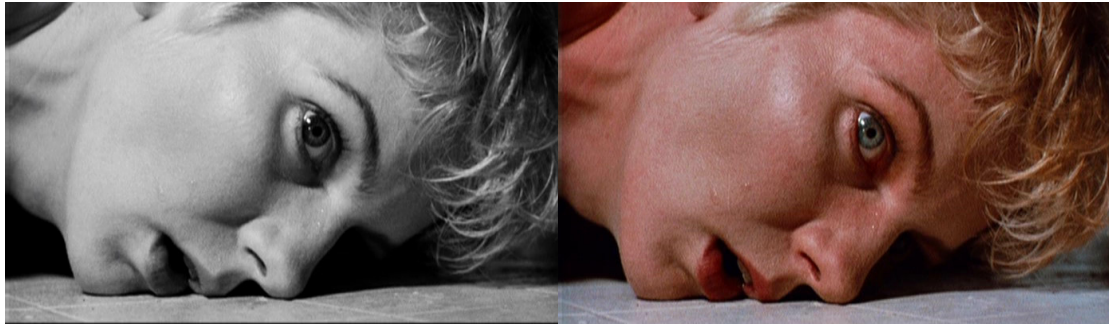


Fig. 2.4: The 'death pose': A new shower scene for *Psycho III*

Shower scene 2: The second shower scene in both sequels is really a *faux* scene, which thoroughly inverts our expectations. In *Psycho II*, the film remakes the moments leading up to Marion's death from the original: a beautiful woman, Mary (Meg Tilly), deliberately turns Norman on and then gets undressed for a shower. A newly-reformed Norman Bates anxiously peeps in on her through a hole in the wall, but just as the scene is supposed to take a violent turn, Mary steps out of the shower very much alive and dries herself off. In *Psycho III* the *faux* shower scene comes much closer to the real thing, but with yet another twist in the tale. This time we see Norman actually don his mother's wig and dress and creep into the bathroom, carving knife at the ready. The audience is absolutely sutured to Norman/mother's point-of-view here (unlike the original which was tied to Marion), and this time the shower curtain conceals the female object herself. However, when the curtain is pulled away, the shock is Norman's: the girl is already lying in a pool of blood in the aftermath of an attempted suicide. A further twist sees Norman *save* the girl's life by taking her to a hospital (having, we assume, changed at some point out of his mother's clothes).

Shower scene 3: In *Psycho II*, the third shower scene is an inversion of the *faux* shot where, having survived a shower in the Bates motel (no mean feat), Mary suspects that something is up and that Norman may be up to his old tricks. She attempts to play him at his own game when she finds his peep-hole in the bathroom, and looks to spy on *him* as Norman did in the original. However, instead of becoming the subject and gazing at Norman in his mother's room, Mary's gaze is violently reflected back by another eye looking in from the other side, shattering her Peeping Tom illusion of privacy. In *Psycho III*, shower scene number three is a shot-for-shot replica of the original shower scene except that it takes place in a phone booth where, having escaped death once already, a partying teenager is violently stabbed to death.

The reason each of these scenes should be construed as partaking in the realm of the 'shower scene' as fetish is that they participate in the codified images that rendered the original scene, the Lacanian 'sinthoms' that are here rearticulated and destabilised. The key to unlocking the significance of the 'three times' of the shower scenes in these sequels however,

lies in Brian De Palma's Hitchcock homage, *Dressed to Kill* (1980), which also has three shower scenes. The first shower scene opens the film, when sexually frustrated housewife Kate Miller (Angie Dickinson) takes a shower as her husband shaves. The camera moves into the shower and we get several steamy shots of Kate washing and arousing herself. She looks to her husband, longing for him to join in, but he ignores her. Suddenly, she is groped from behind by a fully clothed mystery man who materialises in the shower, and while she pleads with her husband for help he merely looks on dispassionately. The scene ends with Kate waking up beside her docile husband, clearly frightened and aroused in equal measure by her dangerous and hyper-sexual fantasy dream. The second shower scene is shot-for-shot with the original *Psycho* shower scene, but transports the scene to an elevator. As with the shower scene in the original *Psycho* it occurs about mid-way through, kills off the film's star, and features a feminine killer shrouded in shadow with a carving knife. The third and final shower scene occurs after the revelation that, as per *Psycho*, it is the timid Doctor Robert Elliot (Michael Caine) who is revealed as the Bates-esque murderer with a 'mother' personality (Bobbi). Soon after, his attempted victim Liz Blake (Nancy Allen), traumatised by her experience, takes a shower. Although Elliot has been locked up in an asylum (as per *Psycho*), Liz is attacked by him just before the credits roll, with no satisfying conclusion about the reality or otherwise of the scene (did she dream it as Kate did in the beginning, or is this one real?).

How do the three shower scenes in *Dressed to Kill* relate to the three in the *Psycho* sequels? They relate on their differing levels of reality along the Lacanian triad of the Real-Symbolic-Imaginary: the first 'time' in each of the films is the Real scene, which in the *Psycho* sequels is the original shower scene, and in *Dressed to Kill* is the scene in which Liz is attacked in the final scene of the film. This scene is utterly ambiguous like the unconscious, a product of *phantasy* and the ultimate representation of the filmind as *objet petit a*. The second 'time' of the shower scene in each of these films is the Imaginary scene, which in *Psycho II* is the scene where Mary looks through the peephole only to have the gaze reflected back at her, in *Psycho III* is the shot-for-shot scene when the partying teen is murdered in the phone booth, and in *Dressed to Kill* is the shot-for-shot scene when Angie is murdered in the elevator. The scene is unambiguous and represents the Lacanian mirror stage where the original is reflected back onto itself via *homage*. In each of these 'scenes' we get the restaging or inversion of the original shower scene as iconic moment. Finally, the third 'time' of the shower scene is the Symbolic scene, which in *Psycho II* is the scene when Mary emerges alive from her shower, in *Psycho III* is the scene when Norman encounters the girl following her attempted suicide, and in *Dressed to Kill* is the opening dream sequence in which Angie fantasises about being raped and possibly killed by a stranger in the shower. This scene is the warning, a *fantasy* sequence illustrating the dangers of "getting what we wish for", wherein

both the fantasist and the audience are reproached by the big Other for their dirty fantasies. The key Lacanian term here is the restoration of the *nom-du-père* (name-of-the-father), a symbolic intervention in the dialectic between child and mother.

Version	'Time'	Scene
<i>Psycho II</i>	Real time 1	Original scene from <i>Psycho</i>
	Imaginary time 2	Reflected gaze
	Symbolic time 3	Mary alive from shower
<i>Psycho III</i>	Real time 1	Original scene from <i>Psycho</i>
	Imaginary time 2	Teen murder phone booth
	Symbolic time 3	Suicide attempt
<i>Dressed to Kill</i>	Real time 1	Liz attacked in final scene
	Imaginary time 2	Angie's elevator murder
	Symbolic time 3	Angie's dream in opening scene

Fig. 2.5: Shower scene tabulation for *Psycho's II, III, and Dressed to Kill*

The 'Real' shower scene is always going to be the dislocated core of another place, just as the 'Imaginary' scene is going to be a representation of the original seen through the looking glass (to recall Lewis Carroll). The 'Symbolic' shower scene is a Freudian totem, a representational warning prohibiting the very desire which gives rise to it (mapping these three 'times' onto the three 'times' of the Oedipal conflict is not hard to imagine).

How can this new understanding of the three shower scenes help us read Van Sant's remake? Constantine Verevis argues that while Van Sant's version of *Psycho* might well follow the original in narrative and form,

each of the aforementioned *other* revisions of *Psycho* suggests that the 'original' text is never fixed or singular and that Van Sant's *Psycho* remake differs textually (from this larger circuit of remakings) not *in kind* but only *in degree* (2006:74).

Zanger is almost showing her Deleuzian sympathies here, for this sense of *Psycho* shifting by *degrees* but not *in kind* is a precise rendering of his 'grammatical perspectivism'. Ultimately, we should conclude that Van Sant also produces three shower scenes, except they are all included in the one single scene, not *despite* being shot-for-shot, but *because* it is shot-for-shot. How can there be three shower scenes in a shot-for-shot remake of an original which had just one? The first 'Real' shower scene is, like the *Psycho* sequels, the direct replay of the original (the elements that achieved shot-for-shot assimilability), which while textually different, nonetheless replicates the Hegelian Letter of the original. The second 'Imaginary' shower scene is to be found in the aspects of the original which are unavoidably enhanced,

inflected or extended, including: Anne Heche, colour, Marion's pupils dilating (an effect Hitchcock could not achieve in the original), the digital effects of blood from the stab wounds, and the newly prismatic curtain. Finally, the third 'Symbolic' shower scene is located in the *new* shots Van Sant inserts into his updated version, including: a masked nude woman and storm clouds, totems or warnings replicating the Hegelian Spirit of the original.

It is this fragmentation at the heart of the new shower scene that accounts for the uncanniness of Van Sant's use of colour. Despite this being a colour version of *Psycho*, at times it looks as though some aspects are *drained* of colour, while at other times the colours are vivid and over-saturated. Jean Baudrillard wrote that we have to "put in place 'decentred' situations, models of simulation, and then to strive to give them the colours of the real, the banal, the lived" (1991:311). In Van Sant's *Psycho*, there is nothing banal about the colours of the real. Hence, while the blinding whites and sterile greys of the sky recall Hitchcock's black-and-white photography, the dizzying intensity of the blood in the shower scene, Marion's neon orange and lime green bras, and her nail varnish all seem to somehow pierce through to the *Real* of the original's black-and-white.



Fig. 2.6: Marion in the remade shower scene: like a dream, all of the colours are drained except for the deep colouring of her nail varnish. Also notice the newly prismatic shower curtain.

Michael Koresky observes that colour has completely altered the universe of *Psycho* with "the Bates Motel neon sign no longer just a beckoning, glowing light in the dark but now a bright, lime-green danger sign; chocolate syrup swirling down the gray bathtub's drain makes way for strawberry sauce, emblazoned against austere white" (2008). In a way, the paradoxical intensity of Marion's colouring in the *Psycho* remake, set against the subdued background colours acts as a presentiment that she will be killed, and sets up the separate levels of reality

over which this death is to be played.* She is at once ghostly pale and yet her nail varnish, bras, etc. glow like the newly-coded danger sign of the Bates Motel. It is interesting that Perkins originally suggested that *Psycho III* be shot in black-and-white, but thankfully Universal opposed it. If he had gotten his wish perhaps this entire mediation between the old and new, the conscious and the unconscious, would have been lost.

I have three very short final observations to make elsewhere in the *Psycho* remake, each of which reflect the shower scene. Firstly, there is the anomaly (disguised as an in-joke) of the new “Bates Motel” sign, which now reads: “Air conditioned. Clean rooms. Newly renovated. Color TV.” The in-joke plays on the 10-minute clean-up scene following the shower murder, and resonates even further with those familiar with the sequels, for in each sequel Norman begins the film actually renovating the motel. On first glance, the added irony in the remake is that there is nothing to renovate yet, it is only in the (dirty) minds of the audiences that there is any cleaning to be done. Thus it is not the hotel that has been renovated, but the textual edifice itself.

My second observation requires some imagination. Let us picture for a second that for the remake, Van Sant had to decide between a Lacanian shower murder scene and a Deleuzian shower murder scene. How would Norman’s approach to cleaning these bathrooms differ? For the Deleuzian scene, the bathroom should not need cleaning since Norman already cleaned it in the original, evacuating the ‘organs’ and purging the body/scene of any incriminatory marks of the crime. For the Lacanian scene, the bathroom would still need cleaning even after Norman had cleaned it, because the evacuated organ would remain as an autonomous partial object (like the arterial spray in a Tarantino-style shower scene, it would be impossible to clean every drop of blood). One can extend this to other discourses as well: for example, we can easily imagine a Derridean murder scene, which, having been evacuated of its bloody insides still leaves a trace or remainder in the very *différance* at the heart of the scene’s cleavage through the cinematic fabric. Like a Fontana canvas, Derrida’s bathroom murder scene would carve up the discourse of the object, ever mindful of its passage through the act. Quite simply, a Derridean crime scene would *look* clean, but would contain the trace of its crime hidden in the act itself. Perhaps the original scene is Derridean then, since as Žižek has meticulously observed:

While watching this scene recently, I caught myself nervously noticing that the bathroom was not properly cleaned – two small stains on the side of the bathtub remained! I almost wanted to shout, Hey, it’s not yet over, finish the job properly! (2008c:239).

* Is not the same technique used by Spielberg in *Schindler’s List* (1993) with the famous ‘Girl in the Red Coat’?

Such a simple procedure of imagining the trace of the partial object can highlight the differences between Deleuze and Lacan: while Deleuze's evacuated bathroom is spotless even before cleaning has taken place (like so many Hollywood horror films hoping to achieve a rating certificate that would maximise their audience), Lacan's would be filthy no matter how hard Norman scrubs and wipes. Van Sant's remake is a renovation that seeks to wipe clean – not the bloodstains – but the very stain of the original act itself, its historicity, by restaging a murder that has not only yet to happen, but is already etched into the memory of cinema history. Van Sant's film exposes the fragility of *Psycho*'s historical hysteria and reveals the obscene and indestructible *objet a* of *jouissance* that continues to envelope new forms and impregnate them like the facehugger from chapter 1. For Van Sant, the shower scene is both Lacanian and Deleuzian (perhaps with a Derridean twist).

My third, and final observation is of the last image of *Psycho III*, which offers us the clearest vision of Lacan's *objet petit a* yet. It also proves that the shower scene exceeds the 50-or-so quick cuts between the flushing toilet and Norman racing down from his house. In both *Psycho II* and *III*, Norman ends the film losing his mother's corpse (in the first sequel it is taken away and in the second he destroys it himself). At the end of *Psycho II* Norman murders again, this time his 'real' mother, and begins once over the taxidermist process of preserving her. In *Psycho III* however, Norman is arrested for his crimes and seems to have lost his mother's corpse once and for all after he literally rends it limb from limb ("I'll be free... I'll finally be free", he cries). However, in a brilliantly unnerving moment (the best of the film), as Norman sits in the back of a police car on his way to jail, the camera pans down to reveal him stroking the severed hand of his mother, a Žižekian fetish organ-without-a-body, *par excellence*. In the original script, this scene did not exist but was added at the behest of the studio after they deemed the original conclusion to be anticlimactic (so the final shot is itself an attachment of sorts). As well as being one of the starkest images of Norman's investment in his mother, it is also perhaps one of the most sublime, succinct images of the 'Real' shower scene yet.

**The only way to say "We all go a little mad sometimes" in a postmodern world:
Recasting Norman Bates as big Other**

One of Hitchcock's favourite quotes was reportedly Oscar Wilde's "Each man kills the thing he loves". In the image of Norman stroking his mother's hand at the end of *Psycho III*, it seems the reverse of this is also true. François Truffaut once pointed out that when he considered Hitchcock's style, "it was impossible not to see that the love scenes were filmed like murder scenes, and the murder scenes like love scenes... It occurred to me that in

Hitchcock's cinema... to make love and to die are one and the same" (1974). Here is the clearest indication of Hitchcock's interplay between sex and death, between '*la petite mort*' ('the little death' following orgasm) and '*la grande mort*' ('the big death'), something Van Sant clearly did not understand in his inclusion of the masturbation scene. Besides Hitchcock, postmodernity has also taken a stab at love, and it is Umberto Eco who reveals that there is only one way left to say "I love you" in a postmodern world:

I think of the postmodern attitude as that of a man who loves a very cultivated woman and knows he cannot say to her, 'I love you madly', because he knows that she knows (and that she knows he knows) that these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland. Still, there is a solution. He can say, 'As Barbara Cartland would put it, I love you madly'. At this point, having avoided false innocence, having said clearly that it is no longer possible to speak innocently, he will nevertheless have said what he wanted to say to the woman: that he loves her, but he loves her in an age of lost innocence (1984:67-8).

In Wes Craven's *Scream* we get the psychotic equivalent to "As Barbara Cartland would put it, I love you madly" when Bates alumni, Billy Loomis (Skeet Ulrich), tells one of his victims, "We all go a little mad sometimes, Anthony Perkins, *Psycho*". Two things are significant here: (1) Billy is being more than simply self-reflexive in appending the famous quote with its source, "Anthony Perkins, *Psycho*". Rather, the referential nature of the quote is hyper-reflexive where, in acknowledging the source, he too has avoided false innocence and nonetheless said what he wanted to say to the woman: that he wants to kill her, but kill her in an age of lost innocence. (2) It is also significant that Billy references "Anthony Perkins" and not Norman Bates (like Michael Koresky – see p.94n). In this hyperreal postmodern reference system, textual precedence is almost inconsequential: it is *para-textual* precedence (that is, the effect of *Psycho* on the slasher canon and cinematic history), that is being referenced here.

This film history *coda* perverts the cinematic fabric and places Anthony Perkins himself into a kind of psychotic collusion with Norman Bates, into which Billy means to tap. At another point in *Scream*, Billy says "You hear that Stu? I think she wants a motive. Well I don't really believe in motives Sid, I mean did Norman Bates have a motive?" Once more, the logic of senselessness turns on its own head: Billy's motive in *Scream* is Norman Bates's *motivelessness* in the original *Psycho*. To put this into Hegelese, Billy's motive is the need to become the instrument of a historical, objective need to explain the unexplained, to give form to that which is without form, and to speak of what cannot be spoken. Billy is here an instrument of what Lacan called Historical Necessity, or the subject's becoming an instrument of the big Other's Will, and as such, he shifts the blame onto Norman Bates as his influence

(one is tempted to recall John Hinckley Jr. and *Taxi Driver* here). Just as Eco's postmodern man is confronted with the dilemma of announcing his love to the other in an age of lost innocence, Billy is confronted with the dilemma of announcing his intention to kill the other in an age of lost *culpability*.

Ken Russell's neo-noir gem, *Crimes of Passion* (1984), completely reconceptualises the role of Norman Bates beyond the old clichés and perfectly encapsulates this position of Historical Necessity and the supreme will of the big Other. Anthony Perkins brings all his 'Norman Bates' baggage to a film that introduces us to a family man (Bruce Davison) whose marriage is failing and who finds solace in a mysterious prostitute, China Blue (Kathleen Turner). Perkins plays a disturbed preacher, Reverend Shayne, who decides to save China Blue from her life of sin, but clearly has difficulties reconciling his own sexual desire for her. However, while this seems to contain the same (although slightly seedier) sexual politics of *Psycho*, it is in fact markedly different on the important point of *perversion*. The key to understanding the dialectic of desire in this film is the appearance of Perkins as a psychotic preacher in a scene-stealing performance clearly negotiating between the modes of Lacanian 'desire' and 'drive'. In *Psycho*, Norman's impotency prior to the shower scene 'forecloses' the desire of the other, and he is thus incapable of identifying with the *nom-du-père* (Name-of-the-Father) so crucial in avoiding psychotic disturbance (leading to his *passage à l'acte*). In *Crimes of Passion* however, Perkins's preacher is fully submitted to the *nom-du-père* (represented here as God Himself), and is now in the role of the pervert whose instrumentation is the will of the big Other (that is, God's Will). Rather than exiting the Freudian scene in the *passage à l'acte*, the preacher is fully within the 'other scene', acting out his dirty fantasies under the guise of spiritual salvation. This is illustrated in the final scene of *Crimes of Passion*, where Perkins recreates his own cross-dressing finale from *Psycho* as the preacher. However, whereas Norman's cross-dressing cannot be assumed by an agent since it is an impotent act in the 'Real', the preacher's cross-dressing is clearly rooted in the *Symbolic order*.

In this cross-dressing finale, the preacher attacks China Blue with a distinctly phallic vibrator/crucifix capable of a double penetration both sexually and fatally, a precursor of the horrific phallic extension used to punish the sin of 'Lust' in David Fincher's *Se7en* (1995). These phallic symbols are not merely representations of the coincidence of sex and death, but are also the symbolic equivalent of the *nom-du-père*, the vengeful, sadistic part of the superego that imposes its condemning judgement on the subject for their transgressions (is this not the perfect description of *Se7en*'s 'John Doe'?). Lacan wrote that

Strictly speaking, [perversion] is an inverted effect of the phantasy. It is the subject who determines himself as object, in his encounter with the division of subjectivity [...] It is in so

far as the subject makes himself the object of another will that the sado-masochistic drive not only closes up, but constitutes itself [...] the sadist himself occupies the place of the object, but without knowing it, to the benefit of another, for whose *jouissance* he exercises his action as sadistic pervert (1998:185).

Is this not what happens in *Crimes of Passion*? The difference between *Psycho* and *Crimes of Passion* ultimately resides in the small quantum of knowledge that keeps Norman and the preacher apart as assimilable entities: the preacher knows of his possession of the symbolic phallus (*nom-du-père*), and, as Lacan poses perversion as a problem of ‘knowledge’ (*savoir*), he should be considered the ultimate pervert. Norman however, is no pervert, for he has passed from perversion to *subversion*; he does not know he is ‘mother’, hence his reaction to the murder scene (“Mother, what have you done?!”). He is, rather, caught up by the knowledge that does not know itself. We should conclude that Norman is the only true psycho here, whereas both Billy and the preacher are perverts, twisting Anthony Perkins’s historic/hysteric *role* of Norman Bates into a *deus ex machina*.

All remakes are instrumentations of another’s Will or *jouissance* (enjoyment), *without exception*. The relevance of this revelation should completely alter the way we consider Norman in the remake, for when Vince Vaughn winks and sneers with a ‘knowing’ nod he instrumentalises the Will of the big Other also – not of the original Norman Bates, but of *Anthony Perkins*. When Billy is revealed as one of the killers in *Scream*, his girlfriend screams in astonishment: “You sick fucks, you’ve seen one too many movies!” Billy, however, responds: “Now Sid, don’t you blame the movies: movies don’t create psychos, movies make psychos more creative!” In the *Psycho* remake, every hyper-textual wink and nod, the new Bates motel sign, altered dialogue, etc., is a coda to ‘the movies’, and on the level of perversion they are wholly appropriate. They designate a crucial knowledge that denies the position of the subject who has exited the scene, acting out a Hitchcockian paradigm as perversion. As Žižek puts it, “the sadistic pervert answers the question ‘How can the subject be guilty when he merely realizes an objective, externally imposed, necessity?’ by subjectively assuming this objective necessity, by finding enjoyment in what is imposed on him” (2006a:105-6). Fully subjected to the paternal law, Perkins as the preacher is finally able to *enjoy* in the same way that Vaughn’s Norman can in the masturbation scene, while enjoyment is thoroughly denied to Anthony Perkins in the original *Psycho*.

The *Psycho* remake and *Crimes of Passion* both work on this dual level, explicitly ‘knowing’ (and knowing that their audience knows also), and this self-reflexive (or dual-regressive) knowing is integral to both filminds. Against the traumatised and psychotic filmind of the original *Psycho*, we should posit these filminds as fundamentally perverted like their subjects. J. Hoberman observes that Van Sant’s *Psycho* is “less hyperreal than perversely

fastidious” (1998), acknowledging its perversity. Raymond Durnat is also right in observing that “for first-time viewers, Mrs Bates kills Marion; for second-time viewers, Mrs Norman Bates kills Marion” (2002:124), such that while the shower scene is one event, it has two story points running in parallel, illustrating the distinction between story-time and discourse-time pointed out by Seymour Chatman (1980). For the ‘first time’ audiences in 1960, the story point was largely right, but wrong in its essentials (audiences ‘got’ enough to interpret the rest incorrectly), whereas for second time audiences, hindsight changes the meaning of major plot points and nuances (such as Norman’s excusing his mother to Marion: “She isn’t herself today”). It seems that one cannot cross the same river twice, or for that matter watch the same film twice. Durnat points out that *Psycho* represented a first for Hollywood of audiences returning to the cinema for a repeat viewings, significantly affecting the box office since “the second viewing *adds* another layer, which doesn’t invalidate the first but *interacts* with it” (2002:102). We will see in chapter 4 how this can be reversed in other types of remake.

It is this same level of interactivity that leads us to conclude that Billy has not made a mistake in *Scream* by attributing the quote, “We all go a little mad sometimes”, to Anthony Perkins instead of Norman Bates. Hitchcock himself made a similar slip when he told Truffaut that “Obviously, *Perkins* is interested in taxidermy since he’d filled his own mother with sawdust” (cited in Truffaut, 1983:282, emphasis added). Is it any wonder Anthony Perkins was typecast by the role of Norman Bates with this level of hypertextuality? In many ways, this is Deleuzian complex differentiation at its most succinct: Anthony Perkins is the repetition, the coda; it is in his movements, his bird-like appearance, and his countenance that Norman Bates resides. In taking the role he destroyed the very innocence that enabled him to do so, such that we can conceive that it is not Anthony Perkins who directs *Psycho III* at all, but *Norman Bates himself*, via his mother, as the literal ‘psycho director’. Is this not the beginning of a remake theory of the auteur/star?

This is why we should conclude that Linda Williams is wrong when she contends that *Psycho* is one of the first postmodern films, marking the end of ‘classical’ Hollywood cinema (2000:351). Rather, we would do better to situate it – as Žižek does – in a thoroughly *modernist* context, and we can prove this by looking at two things: the film’s architecture, and mother/Norman’s final soliloquy in which s/he says: “Let them see what kind of a person I am. I’m not even going to swat that fly. I hope they are watching... They’ll see and they’ll know, and they’ll say, ‘Why, she wouldn’t even harm a fly...’” Those critics who argue that Norman is thoroughly divided in this final sequence should look again. Instead, this final line proves that Norman really has become harmless now as he is fully consumed by his mother personality; that is, he has effectively become “really himself”. Here, Norman has withdrawn into his own private world and become an undivided subject in alienation. Žižek proposes that

Norman's ongoing antagonism with his mother can be seen in the architecture of his world, since he is constantly torn between two buildings: the 'horizontal' modern motel, and his mother's 'vertical' Gothic house (the fact that Marion works for an estate agency and the \$40,000 is payment for a house are often overlooked ironies). Norman is always rushing between the two places, never finding a place of his own away from his mother's superegoic injunctions. As such, Žižek observes that "the *unheimlich* character of the film's end means that, in his full identification with the mother, he has finally found his *heim*, his home" (2008c:241).

In modernist architecture, this split is still visible as in the differentiation between the motel and the house, but in postmodern architecture, such as the work of Frank Gehry, old fashioned family homes are distorted by modernist curvatures, materials, or supplements. Žižek observes that

if the Bates Motel were to be built by Gehry, directly combining the old mother's house and the flat modern motel into a new hybrid entity, there would have been no need for Norman to kill his victims, since he would have been relieved of the unbearable tension that compels him to run between the two places (2008c:242).

One might say that Norman would not even harm a fly in such a place. The point is, this final scene in the asylum effectively establishes the transference from modernism to postmodernism, denying *Psycho*'s successors any access to the modernist disjuncture intrinsic to his psychosis. Did not Deleuze already consider this when he remarked that Hitchcock was at the juncture of two cinemas, such that he "perfects" the classical form and, in turn, "prepares" for the modernist form that will succeed it (2008:xii)? The shot-for-shot remake would have to be perfectly imitative of the original as to render this split apparent by reinstating the *unheimlichkeit* (un-homeliness) of the text itself. Van Sant's *Psycho* fails to accomplish this division. In fact, Van Sant's *Psycho* really is a postmodern version, given it redesigned the Bates house for the remake to update it. However, the new house is not postmodern because Frank Gehry designed it, but because it did not *replace* the old house. Instead, the film's set designers simply built the new house *directly in front of the old house from the original*, effectively signing a love letter to Hitchcock which includes the textuality of that original into its very construction.

Thus we should consider the fact that in order to reconcile death with love in contemporary postmodern culture we need only three people: Frank Gehry, Anthony Perkins, and Barbara Cartland.

CHAPTER 3

CASE STUDY II: *THE VANISHING AND THE MAN WHO WANTED TO KNOW*

Ghost – noun an apparition of a dead person which is believed to appear or become manifest to the living, typically as a nebulous image.

- A slight trace or vestige of something: *she gave the **ghost of a smile***. – a faint secondary image produced by a fault in an optical system or on a cathode ray screen, e.g. by faulty television reception or internal reflection in a mirror or camera.
- ORIGIN Old English *gāst* (in the sense ‘spirit, soul’), of Germanic origin
- **Ghosting – noun** [*mass noun*] the appearance of a ghost or secondary image on a television or other display screen.

Opening thoughts: *Paris, nexus, or rethinking national cinemas*

When describing the facehugger’s attack in *Alien*, the film’s co-creator Dan O’Bannon used the phrase “alien interspecies rape” (speaking in Abbott and Leven, 2001). Out of the steady stream of invectives and tirades used to describe Hollywood’s trans-national remaking of European cinema, “alien interspecies rape” is, while from a different context, just about the most evocative of them all. If you recall, chapter 1 provided a metaphor for Lacanian *jouissance* in the motto “Enjoy Coke!”, which is exactly what horrified Lacan upon his arrival in the USA. Žižek continues with this metaphor when he writes that, in some ways, Coca-Cola is a signifier for America, such that it could easily be advertised as “America, this is Coke!” Herein, Coke is figured as the ‘it’ of America, the object-cause of desire sustaining the ‘American dream’ (Žižek, 2008a:106). In this chapter, we will be exploring alien interspecies rape, but I want to keep Lacan’s vision of America in the background at all times, perhaps embodied in this vulgar “Enjoy Coke!” In fact, let us play around with Žižek’s metaphor a bit, for what if, upon returning to France, the same “Enjoy Coke!” commercial greeted Lacan there too? The effect would be properly uncanny, no? It would be as if his very visit to America brought back with it a new symbolic universe, or an all-too familiar instance of cultural imperialism...

This is our way in to the trans-cultural remake, for Carolyn Ann Durham has noted that when Euro Disney opened in Paris this exact reaction was provoked in the French people, who acutely perceived the oncoming “Disneylandization” of French culture (1998:1). While France’s cultural heritage had been perceived in the media as “under threat” from the onset of Hollywood’s expansionist approach to remaking, the fear of ‘Americanisation’ waned in the

1980s due to France's integration into Europe (which softened the blow regarding the dilution of French culture). However, as Richard Kuisel notes, with Euro Disney opening in 1992 the dilemma about Americanisation focused "more than ever, on the issue of culture" (1993:230). Lucy Mazdon uses Barry Norman's discussion of John Badham's *Point of No Return* (1993), the Hollywood remake of *Nikita* (1990), as an example of remake theory's "unproblematic valorisation of the source film" (Mazdon, 2000:1) over the (unproblematically demonised) remake. In the review, Norman writes that *Point of No Return* is "another example of Hollywood's unfortunate tendency to remake fine Continental fare and turn it into sensationalist pap. [...] what was once witty if somewhat vacuous entertainment has become plain, one-dimensional thrills" (cited in Mazdon, 2000:1). Mazdon notes that Norman's remarks seem confused: on the one hand, the remake itself – that is, *Point of No Return* – is condemned as "plain" and "one-dimensional", alongside the *general activity of remaking*, seen as "sensationalist pap"; on the other hand, the original – that is, *Nikita* – is regarded as "vacuous entertainment", but the foreign original generally is labelled "fine Continental fare." Mazdon's point is that Norman is collapsing two arguments – the *specific* case of *Point of No Return* and *Nikita* and the *general* case of trans-national remaking – into one. Such an approach cannot help but overlook some of the issues at hand here.

Not all critics consider Hollywood's remaking of "fine Continental fare" as "unfortunate" like Barry Norman. Some even defend the Hollywood remake by pointing out the hidden benefits to European cinema and culture, like David Ansen who expresses the hope that "perhaps, as Hollywood continues to retread and recycle, we'll develop a renewed appetite for foreign flavors" (1990:86-7). Carolyn Ann Durham (1998) points out that if one includes Hollywood remakes of French originals as a part of France's cinematic output then their global standing in the US is actually quite decent. In addition, the revenue made from the sales of European remake rights to Hollywood help to fund its domestic cinema, a kind of narcissistic protection of the European 'ego' through the self-destruction of its originals, or to put it in Hegelese, a being-for-remaking.

However, cracks soon appear in these arguments: Ansen's point about trans-cultural remakes developing a renewed appetite for foreign flavours is undercut by the process of 'Americanisation' that each European original undergoes in the process of being remade, such that any foreign flavours are quickly swamped (one is reminded of the move in some parts of America to replace 'French fries' with 'Freedom fries' during the perceived lack of support for the Iraq invasion in 2003). In addition, Durham's point about remakes generating domestic revenue is undercut by the fact that production companies in the US buy the remake and distribution rights to foreign originals they plan to remake, before remaking the film *without distributing the original*. As Josh Young puts it in his article, 'The Best French Films

You'll Never See', "clever French comedies end up being used as animated scripts" (1994:17). For Young, the verdict is unquestionable: the remake is "guilty as charged".

However, while the critics seem to have reached a unanimous verdict, the jury is still out in some of the most recent remake theory debates. For example, Andrew Higson has questioned the very concept of a 'national' cinema, which he argues cannot be drawn on the basis of cinematic production alone. In fact, Higson argues that the term 'national' in discourse about cinema should be drawn "at the site of consumption as much as at the site of production [...] on the activity of national audiences and the conditions under which they make sense of and use the films they watch" (1989:36). This shift from producer to user is reflected in Durham's description of the difference between originals and remakes and their reception in different cultures:

If, on the one hand, each film [original and remake] has initiated comparable commercial success in its country of conception, neither film, on the other hand, has been fully able to duplicate this audience appeal in the country of its model or copy. However, paradoxically, this situation would seem to reflect the simultaneous presence and absence of significant cross-cultural interests (1992:774).

This is the perfect conceptualisation of Deleuzian complex differentiation, for here we have resemblance that differs and difference that resembles. Why, for example, was French comedy, *3 hommes et un couffin* (1985), successful in France but not America, and its Hollywood remake, *3 Men and a Baby* (1987), successful in America but not in France? To put the question in Lacanese: What small quantum of *jouissance* separates the two in their distinct 'nationalisms', or, where is the 'Coke' here signifying 'America'? Marc Mancini observes that Coline Serreau, the director of *3 hommes et un couffin*, was originally set to direct the Hollywood remake as well until she pulled out at the last minute for "health reasons". Mancini states that suspicions were aroused by this explanation because it is well-known that Hollywood producers prefer American directors to remake foreign originals as they are better able to capture the "American cultural idiom" (1989:33). Perhaps the problem is the same as the one identified by François Truffaut in *La nuit américaine* (*Day for Night*, 1973), when he says "I speak English very well, but I don't understand it." The question from a remake perspective is: Do American directors even speak French (let alone understand it)? Durham (1992) notes the irony that while the word 'remake' is bilingual ('*le remake*'), cultural meaning is often lost in the process of cross-national translation.

This case study looks at *Spoorloos* (1988), for with a text like this we have two complications to add to those above: (1) the original is a mix of both French and Dutch dialogue, locations and actors, making the *original* a nationally split picture in-and-of-itself;

(2) the original director, George Sluizer, also directed the Hollywood remake, *The Vanishing* (1993), so it is an *auto-remake*. Although rumours persist to this day that *The Vanishing*'s Hollywood producer Paul Schiff wanted an American to remake *Spoorloos*, Sluizer and the author of the original novella, Tim Krabbé, held the rights, so Sluizer managed to fend off the mysterious 'health problems' that plagued Coline Serreau. Finally, just as Higson has stated that the term 'national' in discourse about cinema should be drawn at the site of consumption as much as the site of production, so too should the term 'national' in discourse about cinematic *audiences* be drawn from the site of reception. Thus in referring to 'American viewers' I mean all audiences who make sense of and use the films under discussion.

Ultimately, this chapter is interested in the following observation by Hitchcock, who once suggested that "if you've designed a picture correctly, in terms of its emotional impact, the Japanese audience should scream at the same time as the Indian audience" (cited in Truffaut, 1983:320). Well, either Hitchcock was wrong, or these pictures are not being designed correctly...

Raymond the Rat Man: Lacan's supposed subject of knowledge

"To get right to the point – knowledge is an enigma"

– Lacan, 1999:137

Roger Ebert describes *Spoorloos* as "a thriller, but in a different way than most thrillers. It is a thriller about knowledge – about what the characters know about the disappearance, and what they know about themselves" (1991). The original Dutch film introduces us to Rex Hofman (Gene Bervoets) and Saskia Wagter (Johanna ter Steege), a couple travelling around France. However, their idyllic holiday soon turns into a nightmare when they stop for petrol and Saskia suddenly vanishes without a trace, leaving Rex helplessly searching for her. Just as soon as the viewer adjusts to the sudden shift in pace, the narrative is subjected to an anterior jump-cut to some months prior to the abduction, introducing us to Raymond Lemorne (Bernard-Pierre Donnadieu), a bizarre middle-aged family man who experiments with kidnap techniques including deception and chloroform at an empty second home in the country. Having introduced Raymond, the film jump-cuts forward three years to a point after Saskia's abduction, where Rex has become obsessed with finding out his lost love's fate. It is an obsession that begins to fascinate Raymond, and what soon follows is a cat-and-mouse tale as both men become involved in one another's obsessive behaviour: Rex wants to know what happened to Saskia, and Raymond wants to know what drives Rex's obsession to know. The

climactic and shocking conclusion has since garnered its cult status among fans and critics alike. Having revealed himself to Rex as Saskia's kidnapper, Raymond reveals that he will never *tell* Rex the truth behind her disappearance, but must *show* him; thus Rex must go through *the exact same experience as Saskia*. In the final scene, after knowingly and willingly drinking a coffee laced with tranquilisers at the scene of Saskia's disappearance, Rex awakens in the dark to the sound of earth pounding wood. The noise becomes less and less audible until finally there is only silence. Then, with his lighter, Rex lets out a blood-curdling scream as he discovers he has been buried alive, greeted with one final vision of Saskia. The film ends with Raymond staring at nothing, and a newspaper headline which documents the vanishing of the man searching for his vanished girlfriend.

After rewrites by Todd Graff, the remake changed, despite following largely the same plot: the location shifted to America, Rex became 'Jeff' (Keifer Sutherland), Saskia became 'Diane' (Sandra Bullock), Raymond became 'Barney' (Jeff Bridges), and the timeline became linear (thus no jump cuts). The biggest difference, and the sticking point of this analysis, is the fact that *The Vanishing* speeds up the pace of the original plot and adds a *fourth act*, a 'happy ending' in which Jeff is rescued from his earthy prison by his new girlfriend, Rita (Nancy Travis), in a significantly extended role. The film ends with Jeff killing Barney and strolling off into the proverbial sunset with his new girlfriend. While the film did modestly well at the box-office, it was a critical disaster, failing to match the original in either depth or substance. Nonetheless, many living-burial films emerged thereafter in Hollywood, and while *The Vanishing* cannot be directly linked to these as an undisputed influence, it seems clear that these two films resonated with their American audiences.*

Where do we begin with an analysis of such a remake, which adds the complication of national difference into the remake equation? Higson argues that we should begin by comparing, as I have begun above, the similarities and differences between the two versions, a process of *description*. While I think that this approach is better than that of *prescription* (stating what a national cinema *should* be like), I think there are better ways of approaching the text in and of itself. Let us start instead then with the remaking inherent to any film prepared for foreign audiences, that is, with the translation of the film's Dutch title, for it is a well-known motto that poetry is 'lost' in translation.

Much can be learned from the differences between the translations of titles, and the translation of '*Spoorloos*' is exemplary in unearthing key cultural differences. A quick analysis of the Dutch title, for instance, reveals much as regards the repetitions that go on

* Besides *The Vanishing*, here is a list of Hollywood's own 'living burial' films: *Damien: Omen II* (1978), *Buried Alive* (1990), *Don't Say A Word* (2001), *Kill Bill: Vol. 2* (2004), *The Descent* (2005), *Captivity* (2007), *Buried Alive* (2007), and *Buried* (2010). Also, see the following for *Spoorloos*-style theme of kidnap: *Where Truth Lies* (1996), *Ransom* (1996), *Breakdown* (1997), *Oldboy* (2004), *Se7en* (1995), and *Hostel* (2005).

even before remaking begins. The Dutch word '*spoorloos*' has meaning beyond its Anglo-American translation here as 'the vanishing', which connotes little of the ambiguities present in this delightful term. 'The vanishing' is suggestive of an ongoing *event*, an uncertain past tied to a very specific place, bound as it is by the definite article. The Dutch '*spoorloos*' however, means 'vanished (without a trace)', which suggests the opposite, namely an event that belongs to another space but rooted to a specific (past) moment. The Dutch title questions whether the 'thing' that vanished (without a trace) was ever fully there in the first place, whether it is always-already a vanished object, and what such an indeterminate 'place' would resemble. The lack of any specific historicity in the Dutch meaning reinforces it as an 'event' (in time), though spatially detached, a 'no-where' or 'everywhere', taking place 'back then'. In contrast, the Anglo-American title (reused for the remake) reinforces the place as being specifically 'there' but taking place 'no-when', or 'always'.

Which of these titles best sums up this "thriller about knowledge", to recall Ebert? The Deleuzian and psychoanalytic answer is, of course: both are best. For the full meaning of the 'event', we must look at the traversal of these two moments, the shifting of grammatical accidence *from* the Dutch title *to* the Anglo-American one. We must not forget the importance of the feminine subject here, for it is always a woman who is vanishing or vanished. Kathy Acker provides the link between the vanished/vanishing woman and death when she writes that "if a woman insists she can and does love and her living isn't loveless or dead, she dies. So either a woman is dead or she dies" (1986:33). This statement not only fully recognises the contingent nature of the vanished/vanishing woman's status, but also illustrates that this death has to do with love and its repetitions (which takes us back to Žižek and Deleuze's figure of the neighbour). The accidence here between *being* vanished and *always* vanishing is consistent with the accidence between *being* dead and *always* dying (to bring back the zombie). Therefore, all that is missing from the Anglo-American translation is the self-reflexive rhetorical question mark, as in, '*The Vanishing?*', since this title is always questioning, just like its protagonist: is the woman vanishing/dying or is she vanished/dead?

The differentiation in *Spoorloos*'s title does not stop here. If the Dutch original title represents a moment locked into a past that cannot contain it, but spatially tangential, the Anglo-American translation vice-versa, and both linked explicitly to the marginality of a feminine experience of death, then the French title inverts everything (including the gender). When translated into French, the translators took a little liberty with the original title, thus the vanishing/ed became *L'homme qui voulait savoir* (*The Man Who Wanted to Know*). The French title solves the deadlock between the Dutch and Anglo-American titles using the same method with which we untie a Borromean knot: that is, it cannot be simply untied but must be cut (recalling Hitchcock's legendary 'cure' for a sore throat...). Lacan acknowledges something similar *apropos* of Freudian love that "psychoanalysis alone recognizes this knot

of imaginary servitude that love must always undo again, or sever” (2003:8). In the French title, we get an effect of severance in the shift of focus from the desired object onto the desiring subject. Is this not the ultimate experience of love in a Lacanian sense; that is, of a male subject who must go to his desire, *the object of his love*, and identify with it (even if that means being buried alive or having his throat cut)?

Another link can be established in this growing chain of titles, for does the French title not recall Alfred Hitchcock’s own auto-remake, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934 and 1956)? Not only does *The Man Who Wanted to Know* invert Hitchcock’s title, but the original British version of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* also featured a young girl who was abducted, described as being “In a little hole in the ground somewhere” by her captor (Peter Lorre). That the kidnapped girl became a kidnapped *boy* in the 1956 remake also points towards the shift in gender implicit in this interlocking of fantasies. In a sense, while these titles designate a single film, they are remaking its subjective focus at each remove.* Already, national cinemas are being defined even before Hollywood purchased the remake rights: while both the Dutch and French titles connote an event in the past that must be understood (Who vanished without a trace?; Which man wants to know?), they mark a shift in perspective drawn across *gender lines*; the Anglo-American experience of the film, by contrast, typically cannot deal with its grief, and so shifts the event, rather than the subject, of the experience. Knowledge links each of the films in this chain, to which we should add the Coen brothers’ *The Man Who Wasn’t There* (2001), which takes an entirely different stance in which nobody wants to know (hence the protagonist is excluded from the social order, escaping punishment for a crime he committed and confesses to, but eventually being executed for a crime of which he is innocent). Knowledge is clearly a dangerous commodity in the wrong hands. *The Man Who Knew Too Much* featured the tagline, “A little knowledge can be a deadly thing!”, something that was proven in Hitchcock’s *Rear Window* when the hero, Jeff (James Stewart), asked his girlfriend Lisa (Grace Kelly): “Why would Thorwald want to kill a little dog?” Lisa replies: “Because it knew too much”. Even a little dog, it seems, can know too much, and a remake always ‘knows’ more than it ‘thinks’.

It is in the French title of *Spoorloos* that we get the most pronounced shift from the Dutch to the Anglo-American title, in much the same way that it is through the crucial phase “I am being beaten by my father” that we get the shift from “A child is being beaten” to “My father is beating a child (whom I hate)” in Freud’s beating-phantasy. Suddenly, the protagonist of the phantasy becomes the *object*, rather than subject, of the event, where before s/he was either the subject of the gaze (Dutch title) or excluded entirely (Anglo-American title). This is the ultimate lesson learned by Rex at the end of *Spoorloos*: that it is not Saskia’s

* As a side note, there is much to be said of the *subtitles* constructing their own versions also; consider the fact that *every* version of *Spoorloos* contains some subtitling, whether French, Dutch, or English.

fate with which he should be concerned, but the precariousness of his own fate in the face of such a phantasmatic framework, evoking the sense of “Be careful what you wish for”, or Jenny Holzer’s famous dictum, “Protect me from what I want”.

This differentiation in remade titles provides our first link to the ghost in the remake, for where the *Psycho* remake behaves like a zombie – looking and sounding the same but behaving ‘differently’ – these ‘versions’ of *Spoorloos* behave like ghosts of one another – they are *exactly* the same as the original version, yet speak from different subject-positions. We will see how language plays a part in this shift later, but for now, consider how Freud’s essay on ‘The Uncanny’, a notoriously ambiguous text itself, varies depending on which translation one is reading. For instance, John Fletcher points to the insufficiency of the translation of the German idiom “*es spukt*” into the English “it spooks”. Instead, Fletcher argues that this simple translation ignores the added dimension of the thing itself ‘spooking’, and gives Derrida’s example of the two senses of “there are ghosts which haunt a house”. On the one hand, “ghosts spook the house”, and on the other hand “*the house itself ‘spooks’*” (Fletcher, 1996:33). Have we not also determined a sense in which there are ghosts which spook remakes, such as Van Sant’s ‘queered’ *Psycho*, and remakes themselves which ‘spook’, as with *Spoorloos*? Derrida writes that “when the very *first* perception of an image is linked to a structure of reproduction, then we are dealing with the realm of phantoms” (cited in Fletcher, 1996:33). The key to unlocking the remaking of *Spoorloos* to ask the following question: where else do we get a dialectical shift in subject-position, the desire for knowledge, and a ‘spooking’?

The answer is the psychoanalytic process itself. For Lacan, a successful analysis requires the process of the *transference*, something he lists as one of the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis. For a successful transference, the analyst must be designated as holding all the answers, such that he or she must become what Lacan called a ‘subject-supposed-to-know’ (*sujet supposé savoir*). This knowledge is, for the patient, the key to his/her recovery, the solution to their problem, and so the counterpart of the subject-supposed-to-know is the ‘subject-supposed-to-believe’, who is of course the analysand him or herself, the one for whom this knowledge is of utmost importance. However, Lacan warns us against trusting the knowledge of this subject-supposed-to-know when he writes that “those in the know are in error” (“*Les non-dupes errent*”), and that “there’s no such thing as a knowing subject” (Lacan, 1999:126). What does he mean here – how can the analyst be in error if s/he holds the key to unlocking the patient’s symptoms? Quite simply, the analyst actually knows nothing; he or she is merely the instrument through which the patient must enter a fiction of reciprocity, where eventually s/he will come to assume the traumatic kernel of their unconscious being, the ‘knowledge that does not know itself’. It is for this reason that Stuart Schneiderman suggests the alternative English translation of the term as “‘supposed subject of

knowledge” (1980:vii) on the grounds that it is the subject, as well as the knowledge, which is supposed. If the analysand refuses to allow him/herself to get caught up in the symbolic fiction which structures his/her world, then they miss the *reality* in fetishistic disavowal.

I am reminded here of Žižek’s reading of Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster) as the ‘analysand’ to Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins)’s ‘analyst’ in Jonathan Demme’s *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991). Why is it, Žižek asks, that Hannibal is the most frightening figure in the film despite being largely locked up in a maximum security prison, when another vicious killer, Buffalo Bill (Ted Levine), is on the loose and has a victim? In fact, despite his escape being the crux of the movie, once free Lecter simply vanishes from the diegesis, almost forgotten, until the final scene. For Žižek, Hannibal is terrifying because his cannibalism represents the “Idea of the analyst”, not in the physical sense of eating the flesh of his victims, but in relation to Clarice herself, *of eating her desire*. Consider Hannibal’s proposition to Clarice for information on Buffalo Bill: “If I help you, Clarice, it will be ‘turns’ with us too. *Quid pro quo*: I tell you things, you tell me things. Not about this case, though; about yourself. *Quid pro quo* – Yes or no?” What Hannibal wants is to get to the inner core of Starling’s desire, her inner being, what Heidegger referred to as a subject’s *Dasein* (being-there). Therefore, as Žižek notes, Hannibal’s proposition to Clarice is: “I’ll help you if you let me eat your *Dasein!*” (2002b:263), which is exactly what happens when she tells him of her childhood memories of the spring lambs screaming while being slaughtered. However, despite maliciously toying with Clarice in this scene, Žižek writes that “Lecter is not cruel enough to be a Lacanian analyst: in psychoanalysis we must *pay* the analyst to allow us to offer our *Dasein* on a plate...” (2002b:263).

The relationship between Raymond and Rex seems to be that of the analyst and analysand in *Spoorloos* also. Once again, the French version’s promotional materials are telling. Firstly, we have the French poster (below), from which Rex is absent and Raymond’s calculating head, half in light and half in shadow, dominates. This poster seems to indicate the supposed knowledge of the evil analyst with its depiction of Saskia being subdued by a demonic hand that seemingly ‘grows’ out of Raymond’s head.

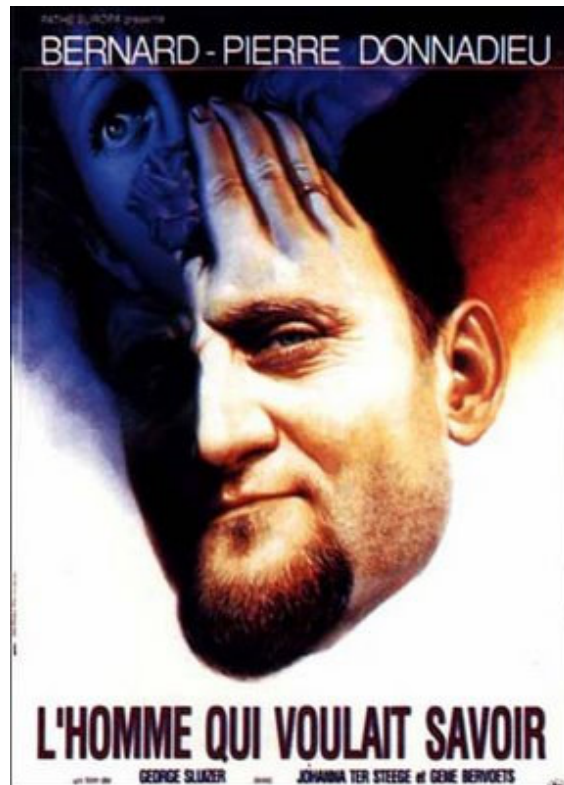


Fig. 3.1: French poster for *The Man Who Wanted to Know*

Secondly, we have the French trailer, which also seems to confirm this reading of Raymond as the master-analyst, for he dominates the trailer also, and even seems to break the fourth-wall just as a voice-over asks: “What if the man who wanted to know... were you?”, suggesting Raymond as a cannibal analyst hungry for *Dasein*. In fact, we should risk asserting that only a cinematic analyst could break the fourth-wall, as Hannibal Lecter does in the scene when Clarice first meets him. Actor Anthony Hopkins reportedly suggested the brief transgression to director Demme in order to portray Lecter as “knowing everything”, like the Framptonian *filmind*.

However, despite this evidence, I must insist that *Raymond is not a Lacanian analyst, nor Rex his patient*. The relationship is simply different, and here is why. Simply put, I think we should read these French promotional materials differently, for while they seem to build on Raymond as a figure of pure knowledge and in complete control, our experience of the film paints a different picture. Firstly, Raymond dominates the poster art and trailer because, in France, Bernard-Pierre Donnadiou was a star, while Dutch actor Gene Bervoets, who plays Rex, was virtually unknown. Secondly, what if we read the line “What if the man who wanted to know... were you?” and Raymond’s breaking of the fourth wall alongside the final scene of the film, where he stares blankly into space? Suddenly, the entire scenario of the French trailer shifts: Raymond is no longer the subject-supposed-to-know in possession of the ultimate knowledge, but the inquiring subject-supposed-to-believe. *He* is the subject of the

knowledge – the voice-over is asking *him*. Take as an example, a great scene from the remake which unconsciously acknowledges this shift in perspective, when Barney tells Jeff: “Your obsession is my weapon [...] you don’t care anymore if she’s alive or dead you’re just afraid that without the search you won’t know who you are [...] Who is Jeff Harriman if he’s not the guy looking for Diane?” The question we should ask is: Who is Barney Cousins/Raymond Lemorne if he is not the guy who *knows where Diane/Saskia is*? Another perceptive addition to the remake is Barney’s motivation to seek out Jeff: in the original, Raymond approaches Rex because his obsession has consumed him entirely, whereas in the remake Barney approaches Jeff because his obsession has *waned*, which we see in the scene where Barney is frustrated that no new ‘missing’ posters have been pasted on the walls in the city.

In a sense, when Rex asks Raymond: “What have you done to Saskia?”, what he is really asking is: “Can you do it to me as well?!”, so that he can finally know the truth. However, Raymond is in a similar position, as more analysis of the films’ dialogue proves. When Rex asks Raymond why he kidnapped Saskia, Raymond tells him that he decided to do so after he saved a little girl from drowning in front of his daughter, who lauded him as a hero. Raymond, however, saw himself differently: “My daughter was bursting with pride. But I thought that her admiration wasn’t worth anything unless I could prove myself absolutely incapable of doing anything evil”: absolutely *incapable* of doing evil. In the Hollywood remake, Barney’s reasoning shifts slightly:

In that moment she thought that I was a god. That would make most people feel great, but instead I suddenly panicked [...] Saving a person’s life may have made me a hero but did it make me a good person? I had to prove to myself, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that *I was as capable of evil as I was of heroism*. Real evil: the worst thing that I could imagine, otherwise I would not deserve my daughter’s love (emphasis added).

While Raymond has to prove himself incapable of doing evil, Barney has to prove himself capable of doing evil. What a change in logic! When we add to this that Raymond and Barney both reveal that they are claustrophobic, we soon begin to realise that being buried alive is their “worst thing” imaginable (“For me, to kill is not the worst thing that I could imagine”). However, while Barney succeeds in proving himself capable of evil, it is important to note that Raymond’s success in burying Saskia and Rex alive results in a critical failure.

Raymond’s logic is similar to Freud’s observations on his patient the ‘Rat-Man’, a patient whose neurotic contrivances were expressions of a basic ‘master question’: “Am I a great man or a great criminal?” (Lear, 2005:229n). This master-question was all-consuming for him, transforming even the most basic of deeds into a guilty act following the same pattern: “Should I feel guilty? But it wasn’t my fault! Maybe it was? What a bad person I

am!” The difference of course is that Raymond is aware of the “slight abnormality” in his personality as he tells Rex: “You can find me listed in the medical encyclopedias under ‘Sociopath’ in the new editions”, even acknowledging the contemporaneity of such a description. Barney, however, reverses the Rat-Man’s logic: “Do I deserve my daughter’s admiration? But it *was* my fault that I have committed these terrible acts! Maybe it wasn’t (it is pre-destined)? What a good person I am!” My point is that Raymond is articulating his own patient-discourse here, and he is thus a möbius mirror double of the Rat-Man’s neurotic *subject-supposed-to-believe*, a patient working out his own hysterical symptoms. Barney, on the other hand, is on a different plane altogether, one where evil is for-itself a predisposition, once more proving the thesis that American cinema is populated by black-and-white, good-versus-evil. It is here that we should read the difference between the films and their relation to knowledge in the titles: *Spoorloos* marks the shift from the Dutch to the French title, since Rex goes through the möbius traversal of a living nightmare into bliss and reconciliation with Saskia in death (the transference of a man who now ‘knows’ his own fate), while Raymond fails and still does not know; the remake however, always remains trapped in the ongoing ‘vanishing’ of the Anglo-American title. No ‘man’ ever knows in this version, and Diane remains nothing but a mound of earth signifying a failed transference.

Either way, Raymond is still a strange analyst figure. While Rex ends the film in blissful reconciliation, Raymond sits alone staring into an empty space. In one of the better plot points of the final act in the remake, Barney is forced to drink his own drug laced coffee by Rita (Jeff’s girlfriend), who claims to be holding his daughter hostage, telling him: “If you wanna know what happened to her, you’re gonna have to go through exactly what she did: drink”. Perhaps the ultimate American remake would have been to conclude with *Barney* waking up, buried alive in his own “worst thing imaginable”. If, after all, we approach this knowledge of the real we are in a precarious situation, in danger of our very ontological consistency dissolving into nothing. Fletcher argues that the concept of the Derridean phantom invokes “a bewildering range of local or regional relations: the relation to the dead and to the past; to the stranger or the foreigner as other; to the future and the unborn” (1996:33). Is this not what we mean when we say that the trans-national remake itself ‘spooks’ like a haunted house? To bring about a transference, we must traverse the fantasy, and in the final scene of the original, Raymond only succeeds in becoming the Rat-Man. One cannot help but think that the only way he could face his own unconscious fears would be to *freely choose* to drink his own drug laced coffee and bury himself alive; only then would he truly know the extent of his own evil...

**Doesn't everybody like a good happy ending? Choosing between 'Americanisation' or
alienation (or, *Le père ou pire*)**

Steven Jay Schneider complains that the reception of *The Vanishing* depended to a large extent on whether the original had been previously seen, such that

for those who *did* see *Spoorloos* first, its US remake ranges from a pale imitation, too painful to sit through, to an embodiment of everything that is wrong with Hollywood's appropriation and assimilation of foreign films and worldviews (2007:8).*

This assimilation of films and worldviews has been described by many remake theorists as 'Americanisation', or as Marcus Harney describes it, "Disneylandisation" (2002:74). Harney also speaks of the process of Americanisation in trans-national remaking as *mise-en-état* ('putting into the state'), where an original must be resituated before it can be consumed by American audiences (the homophony with "Putting into the States" seems appropriate). The obvious aspect of *mise-en-état* is the elimination of subtitles, which Durham notes to be supposedly loathed in Anglo-American audiences (second only to dubbing). Durham also points out that Europeans (specifically French) and Americans define the term 'translation' differently: where Europeans think of translating a foreign text *into* the mother tongue, the Anglo-American sense is of translating a foreign text *from* another language (1998:5).

Leitch however, argues that *mise-en-état* goes much further than simply translating a text from another language. He writes that the strategy of separating an original from its ancestry is reinforced by a "colonisation" that insists on

textualising not only the predecessor films but the foreign culture itself, which is divided along textual lines into a positive culture to be acknowledged as romantic, exotic, dangerously unregulated, and a negative culture to be repudiated as uncompromising, difficult, and ultimately unresponsive to the demands of American consumers (Leitch, 2002:57).

Michael Brashinsky sees this process in a positive light, stating that "as a postmodern artist has no other way to 'interview' reality but through an interpreter of another culture, it is hard to imagine a remake made within the same cultural tier as the original" (1998:169). Is this not a globalisation twist on Umberto Eco's postmodern problem of the man who can no longer simply say "I love you madly" in an age of lost innocence?

* However, for those American audiences who *did not* see *Spoorloos* first, its US remake was found to be an "above average" thriller, grossing over \$14.5 million at the US box office...

We can already see two very distinct attitudes towards ‘making’ films in Europe, and ‘remaking’ those films in Hollywood, but what of European ‘remakes’; do these attitudes extend to the remaking of its own cinematic history, or indeed of American originals? It seems not – in fact, Werner Herzog even went so far as to claim that his *Nosferatu the Vampyre* (1979) was not a remake of Murnau’s *Nosferatu* (1922) “In the American sense of the word” (cited in Millet, 1999:97). His statement prompted Raphaël Millet to sarcastically wonder what the ‘European sense’ of the word ‘remaking’ might be. Millet – a European critic – considers Herzog’s film to be not only a remake, but a ““step by step, shot for shot remake of Murnau’s *Nosferatu*’, in the American sense of the word” (1999:97). Herzog’s view is astonishing given the degree to which he appropriates Murnau’s original film, and yet there is some sense that by virtue of the very fact that he is remaking a European film in Europe that this is not a remake ‘*a l’Américaine*’; *in some ways he is right*. Herzog perceives the ‘American sense’ of remaking as a purely commercialist exploitation of the original lacking its own artistic integrity, but this is not to say that a remake in the ‘American sense’ is only concerned with the box-office, nor that it cannot be artistic. I think Herzog’s statement about his remake of Murnau’s classic is further complicated when we consider E. Elias Merhige’s *Shadow of the Vampire* (2000), which fictionally documents the making of Murnau’s original *Nosferatu* with the “What if...” premise that the reason Max Schreck (Willem Dafoe) was so convincing as Graf Orlok in the classic German horror is because he actually *was a vampire*. Of course, while Murnau (John Malkovich) is in on it, he soon finds handling the star of his film becomes somewhat more difficult than he imagined...

If Merhige’s *Shadow of the Vampire* is to be excluded from the “American sense” of remaking due to its complex meld of remaking, homage, and original horror fantasy, should we not also discount Gus Van Sant’s *Psycho* as an “American” remake on the same grounds? If so, is there not a sense that it is only the trans-national remake that constitutes the “American sense” of remaking (and only in the direction of Europe-America, never America-Europe)? Producers of the Hollywood remake of *Les Diaboliques* argued something similar to Herzog when they claimed that “Americans have never seen the film with Signoret in it [*Les Diaboliques*]; therefore we are not making a remake” (Forestier, cited in Durham, 1998:180); clearly, there is some confusion not only between original and remake but between *production* and *reception* also.* Perhaps we should consider remakes in the “American sense” then for as Andrew Higson reminds us, national cinema should not be defined by its place of production, nor should it be prescriptive in its distinction. Higson suggests that we should

* *Les Diaboliques* has been remade at least three times, mostly for television, in *Reflections of Murder* (John Badham, USA, 1974, TV), *House of Secrets* (Mimi Leder, USA, 1993, TV), and most notoriously for the cinema in *Diabolique* (Jeremiah S. Chechik, USA, 1996).

analyse each example and consider them separately; but by what criteria, and against what model?

Forrest and Koos argue that the success or failure of the Hollywood remake of the foreign original is dependent on the translatability of the original theme when it becomes 'Americanised'. They argue that *Sommersby* (1993), the remake of *The Return of Martin Guerre* (*Le retour de Martin Guerre*, 1982), failed because its distinctly French theme of the 'unknowable individual' did not map onto the "recognizable [American] thematic paradigm of the Western's loner" (Forrest & Koos, 2002:7). On the other hand, the aforementioned *3 Men and a Baby* successfully translated the theme of paternal nightmare in *3 hommes et un couffin*, not by altering the theme but by simply amplifying it. For instance, in the scene from the original where looking after the baby causes one of the men to miss an important meeting, the same scene in the remake results in the loss of a multi-million dollar contract. It seems that the 'American sense' of remaking operates under the motto: bigger is better (an ideology exemplified by another US export – McDonalds and "supersizing"). The other type of successful foreign language remake occurs when the European original is already 'Americanised', containing an American theme from the outset, or what Genette Vincendeau calls an "international generic code" (1993:25). One example includes *Point of No Return* (1993), a remake of *Nikita* (1990), and even this needed some *mise-en-état*. It is not hard to see how *Spoorloos* has been 'Americanised' in *The Vanishing*. Schneider points out that there are three main changes that Hollywood remakes make to an original in order to achieve the necessary *mise-en-état* to sell it to domestic audiences: (1) change the ending; (2) change the setting; and (3) change the language (2007: 7). I will come to the change of ending last, so let us first focus on the change of setting and language.

The film was shot mostly in Seattle, which as Schneider observes, removed any doubt for the audience as to where they were:

In the opening scene, Jeff and Diane drive near Mt. Saint Helens; Jeff kicks around a hackysack while waiting for Diane at the gas station, which is located next to a Dairy Queen; Jeff's car keys are attached to a Bullwinkle Moose keychain; etc. (2007:7).

Schneider notes that the effect of the film's setting, along with its English dialogue, is to domesticate the text and eradicate any alienation on behalf of the viewer. However, while on the surface this seems somewhat tautological, it betrays the fact that alienation is fundamental to the original: the film is set in France and Amsterdam, plus it features three different languages (Dutch, French and English) and is thus always subtitled for monolingual audiences. Just as the remake removes any doubt for the audience as to its American setting, so too does the original remove any doubt for its native Dutch audiences as to its French

setting: road signs are continually pointed out, Rex and Saskia are the only two speaking Dutch, and coverage of the *Tour de France* can be heard throughout the opening scenes on the radio. For Anglo-American audiences, these differences might be reduced to the common observation: “Well it’s all foreign to me”, but there is a huge distinction here between French and Dutch culture. If one needs any more evidence, observe that while *Spoorloos* was nominated for an Oscar in the ‘Best Foreign Language Film’ category, it was promptly removed from the list on the technicality that the film from the Netherlands had more French dialogue in it than Dutch (50.1 against 49.9%). A deflated Sluizer remarked that “We were eliminated, or should I say we vanished from America, for the moment” (2003). So while the remake worked hard to remove all traces of alienation from the text during the cross-over from Europe to America, it seemed to forget that the original contains alienation at its very heart, something most of the (Anglo-American) criticism seems to have forgotten or ignored also.

Alienation in *Spoorloos* is not even restricted just to its *mise-en-scène* and dialogue; specific plot points revolve around the culture clash also. In one scene Raymond is shown desperately trying to learn English to widen his net of potential victims, and when he eventually meets Saskia she insists on testing her limited French on him (the irony of course being that if she spoke no French at all she would not have become his victim). At another point in the film, Rex curses in Dutch and Raymond asks him to translate, admitting: “Ah, yes, we’re not big on languages in France. It’s difficult”. He admires Rex’s French pronunciation, and remarks that “It makes *this* easier”. Sluizer could almost be accused of being a Francophobe given the murderer is a (famous) Frenchman, and the French language not only makes Raymond’s life ‘easier’ and co-opts Saskia into his chloroforming grip (recall the French poster), but eliminated the film from the Oscars. Even the French title seems to describe the film better than the Dutch one...

Another scene that stands out in the original is the one following Rex and Raymond’s first meeting in Amsterdam, whereupon they drive back to France. Just as the film seems to be veering towards a climactic conclusion, in the middle of everything Rex turns to Raymond and asks: “Can we take a break?” As Rex and Raymond stretch their legs from the long journey, the plot does likewise, and a fascinating ten-minute scene of trivial dialogue between the two rivals ensues. Initially, the scene is quite tense, but Raymond soon disarms Rex when he playfully banters about the meaning of Dutch names, asking him if he is familiar with the Dutch *Tour de France* rider, “Zoltemèque”. “Know him?” queries Raymond, adding that it “doesn’t sound Dutch. Sounds more like a Mexican god”. Rex, however, is quick to correct him: “It’s Zoetemelk. Zoe-te-melk. Couldn’t be more Dutch.” While some critics might accuse this long discussion in the middle of the drama as an unnecessary break, one which slows the pace of the film, I could not disagree more. In the same way that the thesis of

transgression in *Psycho* is contained in the ten-minute break where Norman cleans the bloody bathroom, so too is the thesis of alienation in *Spoorloos* contained in Rex and Raymond's 'rest break'. At the heart of this film is the post-ideological thesis that in a globalised community, one is forever locked in-between two (or more) cultures, and it is a thesis that the remake disavows. Perhaps this is what Julia Kristeva meant when she said that "a person in the 20th century can exist honestly only as a foreigner" (cited in Corrigan, 1991:80). The film's Dutch audiences exist as foreigners in its Parisian location, majority French dialogue, and French star, Donnadieu; the film's French audiences exist as foreigners in its Dutch protagonist, dialogue, and story origins.

We must, however, resist the conclusion that the remake made a mistake in redacting this alienation effect. Durham is right to reject the standard notion that regards Hollywood remakes as mindless assimilations intent on making nothing but money. She writes that Hollywood remakes are "attracted to foreign films precisely to the extent that they resist foreignness and represent concerns and interests fully consistent with the cultural climate of the United States" (Durham, 1998:200). It is not simply the sense that (what the remake producers took to be) the translation of something foreign into something familiar betrays the fact that it was foreign even to the 'foreigners', nor is it even the sense that they missed the distinction between different types of 'foreignness' in the foreign; rather, it goes back to Durham's point about Europeans regarding foreign adaptation as bringing an alien text *into* the mother tongue and the Anglo-American sense of receiving an alien text *from* another language. The former implies a historicism based on the immutability of European (particularly French) culture, a culture so rigid in its historicity that it is wary of any attempts to adapt it. The latter, by contrast, implies from the outset a sense of the *émigré*, of a 'crucible culture' in its infancy constructed from the discourses of innumerable immigrants. Does not Lacan conclude something similar when he states that "whatever, in repetition, is varied, modulated, is merely alienation of its meaning" (1998:61)? Lacan and Deleuze are at their most resonant here, for Deleuze writes that "the cinema author finds himself before a people which, from the points of view of culture, is doubly colonized: colonized by stories that have come from elsewhere, but also by their own myths become impersonal entities at the service of the colonizer" (2009c:213). In every sense then, it is in the notion of colonisation that we see the most radical diversity constituted via the very mythmaking procedures inherent to any culture attempting to articulate a history for itself barely 200 years old.

Perhaps the horror of *Spoorloos* is to be located in the perversion of the French language and its culture, which the film registers with a beautifully delicate touch in the 'Dutch-ness' of its approach. Quite simply, the American version need only allude to this difference in several near-imperceptible moments. One such moment of differentiation between the original and remake can be seen in the moment when Raymond deceives Saskia

into believing that he is a salesman by opening a box of wall tiles he says contains key-chains. Saskia assumes that the word “*Tiles*” on the side of the box is a French word for “Key-chain”, and gets in to his car, believing the ruse. When this scene is replicated in the remake, the same situation occurs, except this time Barney tells Diane that the product is French itself, and that the name is French also. Diane then asks for “*Un tile infinité, please!*” in a French accent, the pun of course, being that it sounds as if she has said “Until infinity!”, or “To infinity (and beyond?)”! Another touch of the foreign in *The Vanishing* remake can be seen in Jeff Bridges’s decision (if his) to give Barney a vaguely European accent despite being American (according to his birth certificate, he was born in Seattle). On the one hand, the foreign accent cements him as the archetypal villain (are not all villains foreign in American popular culture?), but on the other hand, there is a sense that Barney *is* all-American, and his accent is the trace of difference left over from the lost thesis of the original.

Having discussed the change of setting and change of language, let us now consider the happy ending: is this an affect of remake alienation also? Roger Ebert writes that “the ending of the original ‘Vanishing’ is of a piece with the rest of the film. It is organically necessary to it. No other ending will do. That is why this Hollywood remake is so obscene” (1993). Sluizer is unambiguous about the reason for the change in ending, and attributes it to “a change of power at Fox” where “the deal I had originally made when I reshot the remake was not kept. So the problems were more high level power games than a change of opinion about the end of the movie” (2003). Ultimately, Sluizer states that the American producers felt that since “redemption [is] important in America” the “villain should be punished” (2003). Thomas Leitch considers *The Vanishing*’s happy ending in two ways: on the one hand, it “corrects the error that made the earlier film so bleak and unsettling by providing a happy ending for American audiences”, and on the other, it presents “Kiefer Sutherland, a star in whose welfare they [American audiences] could be expected to have a residual investment” (2002:57).^{*} Ebert and Leitch are both right and wrong here: Ebert is right to regard the original ending as “organically necessary”, but wrong to regard the remake’s ending as “obscene”, and Leitch is right to assert that as redemption is important in America, the “villain should be punished”, but is wrong to suggest that this “corrects the error” of the original. If we combine their arguments we get the correct rendering: while the original ending was organically necessary to the European text, redemption is important in America, so the villain should be punished in the remake.

^{*} As a side note, neither actress playing the vanishing woman was known prior to making these films: despite finding fame after, Sandra Bullock had only television roles prior to *The Vanishing*, and for Johanna ter Steege, the role of Saskia was her debut.

Forrest and Koos point out that Hollywood likes happy endings because American audiences tend to prefer the clear-cut, black-and-white narrative to the open and ambivalent (European) one. They suggest that this means that

the remake functions as the ideal point of cultural comparison between the two cinemas with one intended ostensibly for the supposedly naïve, childlike American, the other for the ironic, adult European (Forrest & Koos, 2002:8).

While Forrest and Koos identify this popular idea of American audiences as “naïve” and “childlike”, they are like many other remake theorists, uncertain as to whether they agree with it or not. Roger Ebert complains of the “insult” paid to American audiences, asking: “[Do] American producers believe the American movie audience is so witless it will not accept uncompromising fidelity to a story idea? Are Europeans deserving of smart, cynical filmmaking, but Americans have to be approached on a more elementary level” (1993)? In light of Andrew Higson’s suggestion that national cinemas should not be reduced to just the place of production, I tend to agree with Ebert, finding this view of American audiences not only insulting but oversimplified and reductive. As we will see, there is a clear indication that some American audiences at least are ready to leave the crèche (and have been for some time), and that perhaps the problem is to be located elsewhere, in something much more sinister.

When George Sluizer was asked in an interview to compare the original and remake of *Spoorloos* he replied that when it came to adapting the film for the American market the producers struggled most with the “concept of Eternity”, which, Sluizer said “we [Europeans] understand better than Americans” (2003). This constitutes a most crucial difference between the two versions, as Sluizer remarks: “As I sometimes joke: ‘You exchange things in America, everything is a bit of plastic and you can throw it away and take someone else. Like you get rid of your girlfriend and take another one’” (2003). We can reframe this using Lacan’s lesser known formula, “*le père ou pire?*”, inadequately rendered in English as “The father or worse”. “*Le père ou pire?*” marks the point at which a subject has to decide, ultimately, to join a community and give him/herself over to the symbolic law of the father, thus giving way to their desire, or, on the other hand, to repeat a previous choice as an ethical act, and exclude oneself from one’s community altogether. Since Lacan wrote that “the only thing one can be guilty of is giving ground relative to one’s desire” (1992:321), Žižek observes that this “forced choice is not between good and bad but between bad and *worse*” (2008c:87).

There are three choices in *Spoorloos* and *The Vanishing* which mirror the three ‘times’ of the shower scene from the previous chapter. The first choice is the same in both

versions where, having run out of petrol in a dark tunnel, Rex/Jeff decides to leave Saskia/Diane in order to find some more. When he returns, she is distraught by the experience and makes him promise never to leave her again. The second choice is also the same in both versions and is an imaginary one: having confronted the possibility that he may never know her fate, Rex/Jeff admits to his new girlfriend that sometimes he imagines Saskia/Diane to be alive and happy somewhere far away, “and then, I have to make a choice: either I let her go on living and never know, or I let her die and find out what happened; so... I let her die.”* The third and final choice is where Lacan’s “*le père ou pire?*” comes into play. But what is this choice? If ‘*le père*’ (the father) designates the betrayal of one’s desire in accepting the symbolic law of the *nom-du-père* (the name-of-the-father), then ‘*pire*’ (worse) is the refusal of the symbolic and rejection of the terms of the original choice itself. Lacan uses the example of Antigone’s suicidal “No!” to King Creon after he demands that she choose between renouncing her betrayal of his order or be buried alive. Rather than submitting to his rule, she opts for worse, ‘*pire*’, and is buried alive, thus repeating the earlier forced choice (when she buried her dead brother against Creon’s order). Žižek points out that there are examples of figures in Hollywood of choosing *pire* and the ‘proper’ ethical act, noticeably in the final Russian roulette scene from *The Deer Hunter* (1978), in which a traumatised Vietnam prisoner-of-war, Nick (Christopher Walken), is forced to play Russian Roulette for his life and later plays again for money until he is killed playing the game. Žižek argues that Nick must continue to play the deadly game after escaping in order to ‘pay off’ his debt to death, such that in repeating an earlier choice he squares his guilt, whereas his friend, Michael (Robert De Niro), despite enduring the same ordeal, struggles to function after rejoining the community.†

The key difference between the endings of *Spoorloos* and *The Vanishing* are contained in this image: Rex passes through the mirror to the other side, not to the abyss, but to Saskia and ‘eternity’; Jeff, on the other hand, stays on the side of the Law, accepting the patriarchal codes of Hollywood endings.‡ Once again, this is illustrated by what we might call

* These lines are repeated near-verbatim in the otherwise rather poor neo-noir, *8MM* (1999), another film about a man who ‘wants to know’ the whereabouts of a vanished girl.

† Examples in literature are to be found in William Styron’s *Sophie’s Choice* (1979) about a woman forced to choose between her two children, and Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, about a pair of lovers forced to choose between their families, the Montagues and the Capulets. In both cases, the choice of ‘*le père*’ would have resulted in them giving way to their desire; however, both Sophie and the “star-crossed lovers” choose ‘worse’/*pire* and commit suicide.

‡ Marc Foster’s *Stranger than Fiction* (2006) provides the perfect narrative accompaniment to this fantasmatic ‘happy-ending-over-harsh-reality’ sensibility in Hollywood, where an author can either kill off the protagonist of her novel and confirm it as her magnum opus, but live with the consequence of killing a real man, or have a happy ending and save this man, but consign her masterpiece to the status of popular fiction; she chooses the latter and ruins her book and reputation.

the ‘French connection’, for Michel Chion (1992) has pointed out that it is no coincidence that there is congruence between the French words for ‘embodiment’ (*mise-en-corps*), ‘coffining’ (*mise-en-bière*) and ‘burial’ (*mise-en-terre*). We can add to Chion’s triad our own English equivalents in ‘womb’, ‘tomb’, and ‘home’. Is there not a sense that, like Norman at the end of *Psycho*, Rex finds his *heim*, his home, in his tomb? The link to nationalism is provided by Benedict Anderson, who argues that the Unknown Soldier in an unmarked tomb is the most arresting emblem of modern society’s “imagined communities”. Anderson writes that the most perverse act of sacrilegious desecration would be to fill such a tomb with real bones, for these cenotaphs are “saturated with ghostly *national* imaginings” (1991:9). Anderson thus begins to consider “the cultural roots of nationalism with death” (1991:10), since one could not imagine a tomb of the ‘Unknown Marxist’, or a cenotaph for “fallen Liberals”. The Unknown Soldier *always* has a nationality, and as such, nationalism is inextricably bound to death. Perhaps we should propose the term ‘*mise-en-abîme*’ (‘placing into infinity/the abyss’) then, the commonplace meaning of which is the visual experience of being between two mirrors and seeing a chiastic replication of oneself reproduced into infinity. This is the image of the living dead, of the subject who chooses *pire*, the subject who excludes him or herself from his or her community. It is perhaps more difficult to imagine what Jeff, who chooses *père*, sees when he looks in the mirror.

But what kind of choice do Rex and Jeff actually have – is it any more of a choice than Saskia and Diane? The answer to this question lies in Lacan’s rethinking of the Highwayman’s phrase “*Your money or your life!*”, in which he reminds us that if one chooses money, one loses both, but if one chooses life, one must go on living without money, or as Lacan puts it “a life deprived of something” (1998:212). Where does alienation come in to this however, for one can surely live without money? It is here that Lacan offers the first rephrasing of the Highwayman’s challenge, one rethought in terms of Hegel’s notion about man’s entrance into *slavery*, bound up in the phrase: “*Your freedom or your life!*” Suddenly, this alienating dimension becomes clear: the slave can choose ‘freedom’, and immediately forfeit his or her life, losing both, or s/he can choose ‘life’ and continue living but with the sacrifice of freedom. Hegel’s point here is that in order to have anything at all, the slave must *choose to give up his/her freedom, must choose slavery (père)*. Lacan calls this the “*lethal factor*” (1998:213), but it is not until he introduces the element of death into what becomes his final rephrasing of the Highwayman’s challenge that we get the familiar shift from one side to the other in the möbius band. Thus, with Lacan’s last notion, “[*Your*] *freedom or death!*”, the twist is that in choosing either proposition, *we end up with both (pire)*. Take Lacan’s example of the freedom to die of hunger, where in choosing freedom, one dies; alternatively, one can “choose death, for there, you show that you have freedom of choice” (Lacan, 1998:213). It is clear that in the remake Jeff is faced with the choice between freedom

or life, whereas in the original, Rex is faced with the choice between freedom or death. So, Jeff goes on living without the knowledge he craves, whereas Rex dies and knows. Is Jeff not then the perfect example of a modern day cinematic slave? He cheats death but pays for it with the cost of his life, that is, his inner ethical being. Thus, we can now answer the question at the beginning of this paragraph quite simply and state that Rex is the only one who really *ethically* chooses at all, while Jeff is only faced with a false choice.

A quick comparison of the films' *mise-en-scène* confirms that this difference runs throughout the versions, even from the very first choice. Compare, for example, the two images of the tunnel just preceding the first choice, where Saskia/Diane and Rex/Jeff run out of petrol in the tunnel.



Fig. 3.2: Tunnel vision: *Spoorloos* and *The Vanishing*

These images come from identical points in the narrative, however the image from *Spoorloos* is noticeable darker than the image from *The Vanishing*. In the latter, the head-lights, Jeff's face in the rear-view mirror, and a light at the end of the tunnel are clearly visible. The *mise-en-scène* is telling its own story here as regards the different markets each version is being aimed at, with the latter clearly reducing the tension of the scene while increasing the sense of this tunnel as a new space. Played side-by-side, the two scenes reveal more, for it is a mere 15 seconds after entering the tunnel that Jeff and Diane run out of gas in *The Vanishing*, and both the entrance and exit of the tunnel are still clearly visible throughout. After a lorry nearly hits them, Jeff walks off and leaves Diane but behind him the tail-lights of the car can still be plainly seen. In the original however, Rex and Saskia are driving in the tunnel for almost a full minute before the car runs out of fuel, and during this time Saskia tells Rex of her dream of being trapped in the golden egg, floating through space, a story absent from the remake. Then, when the lorry nearly hits them, Saskia exclaims that this is the golden egg, *that she is*

living her dream.^{*} When Rex exits the tunnel having abandoned Saskia, it is pitch-black behind him. We should read this re-inflection of the scene as being exemplary of the deadlock between European and American notions of the abyss. The crucial shot is of Jeff looking in the rear-view mirror – what is it about the abyss of dark spaces that haunts American cinema so? The original cut of David Lynch’s *Lost Highway* was so dark that many scenes simply featured shadows upon shadows *ad infinitum*. When released on DVD, the picture has been visibly brightened to render the scene clear and visible. Is not the problem with *The Vanishing* the fact that we can never be sure that the light at the end of the tunnel is not going to turn out to be a lorry speeding straight towards us? In a funny kind of a way, the happy ending is one such light at the end of the tunnel in American cinema also...

This statement leads me to a somewhat playful turn in which I would like to suggest that the choice facing the auto-remaker is one of ‘*père ou pire?*’ also. Any foreign remaker moving to Hollywood is also faced with a need to repeat the choices from the original, or else betray their desire and conform to the symbolic father of the Hollywood style. Sluizer clearly chose *père*, but one auto-remaker who attempted to choose *pire* was Michael Haneke, who in 2007 remade his Austrian original *Funny Games* (1997) in America shot-for-shot, even using the blueprints of the original house for the remake house (unlike Van Sant then). The result is uncanny. Mike D’Angelo references the happy ending of *The Vanishing* in his review of *Funny Games U. S.*, saying that it “ends with the hero buried alive... and then dug up by his girlfriend, who helps him defeat the bad guy and restore order. Cue pop song. Haneke is having none of this shit” (2008). Rather than have this “shit”, Haneke painstakingly replicates everything from the original, including the timing, sets, and its bleak ending. What is interesting though is that Haneke plays in one ‘rewind’ scene with this light at the end of the tunnel in American cinema, and here the light really is a false hope, one he exploits with a cruel exactitude and awareness of American stereotypes. This is arguably why his remake was received so poorly, and was considered ‘offensive’ to American audiences. When asked why the remake would not introduce a happy ending, producer Hamish McAlpine argued that “The minute you sacrifice that irony, you’re sacrificing Michael Haneke’s soul, and the film” (cited in Arendt, 2006). Perhaps this is a true kind of ‘European sense’ of remaking then, seeing as American distributors even appended the English title with the qualification “U.S.”, to stamp their identity on it. Nonetheless, Haneke stated that his remake was “as much an auteur’s film as the first one”[†], with the addition that “for Americans it’s interchangeable. In reality nothing is” (cited in Katey, 2008), which is an almost exact repetition of Sluizer’s

^{*} A comparison with the tunnel dream and its realisation in Gaspar Noé’s *Irréversible* (2002) is favourable here.

[†] This observation inverts Hitchcock’s own auto-remake assertion regarding the difference between the two versions of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, that “the first version is the work of a talented amateur and the second was made by a professional” (cited in Truffaut, 1983: 94).

criticism about the American tendency to exchange things like a “piece of plastic”. Nonetheless, if we were in any doubt prior to *Funny Games U.S.* as to the consequences on the box office of choosing *mise-en-abîme* over *mise-en-état*, then following the statistics we should rest assured that the results are predictable. *Funny Games U.S.* bombed at the box office, pulling in just under half of its reported \$15 million budget. Nonetheless, Haneke understood his sacrifice, stating that *Funny Games U.S.* would only be a success if audiences “misunderstood the meaning behind it” (2009). For him, the only way to properly ‘translate’ the message of the original was to be offended and walk out of his film in disgust. The critics, of course, obliged him.

What happens when you cut the thesis out of a ‘thesis film’: the *objet petit a* in the remake

Haneke’s *Funny Games* cannot be considered a ‘typical’ case of the auto-remake due to the unprecedented level of autonomy he retained pre-, during, and post-production. *Funny Games* thus sits better alongside Van Sant’s shot-for-shot *Psycho* than Sluizer’s auto-remake *The Vanishing*. The issues of auto-remaking must be located elsewhere then. Domestically, Hitchcock is perhaps the most obvious place to start given his importance to this thesis. Michael Serceau said of Hitchcock that “to say that a great director always remakes the same film is yet another truism” (cited in Forrest & Koos, 2002:22), echoing Hitchcock’s own view that “self-plagiarism is style” (2009). Technically, Hitchcock was a foreign auto-remaker for the original version of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934) which was British. However, following Higson we should remember not to divide national cinemas by virtue of where they were made but by their economic, textual, exhibitory, and critical criterion. Thus, here are three auto-remakes of particular interest that crossed boundaries other than passport control, boundaries that led to death at the box-office (and one that failed even to make it to the box-office).

(1) Our first example is of a Thai original, *Bangkok Dangerous* (1999), remade in Hollywood in 2008 by the original directors Oxide and Danny Pang. The original features a deaf gunman, Kong (Pawalit Mongkolpisit), whose disability gives him an edge over other gunmen as he does not react to the gunshots he fires. Eventually, he becomes a hit-man for the mob and is torn between his girlfriend and his job. While the film is fairly predictable, it engages us with the fascinating premise of a disabled protagonist in Kong (and the professional edge it gives him). However, when the Pang brothers gave their film the Hollywood treatment, this fascinating premise was lost as the new protagonist, Joe (Nicolas Cage), is not deaf. In an interview for the *New York Times* Oxide Pang explained the decision:

“We’d like to keep him the same, but we understand from a marketing point of view Nic needs to have some lines.” Their solution was simple: “What we’re going to do is transform his girlfriend instead into a deaf [*man*]” (Pang, cited in Jessop, 2006). This is despite the Hollywood precedent for a deaf protagonist having been set back in 1997 with James Mangold’s *Cop Land* (1997) starring Sylvester Stallone.

(2) Number two on our list is Jean-Marie Poiré’s auto-remake of his French original, *Les Visiteurs* (1993), which saw a medieval knight time travel into the future (with predictably comic results). The Hollywood remake, *Just Visiting* (2001), recast the original stars, Jean Reno and Christian Clavier, and relocated to America. However, the film ultimately proved that humour does not translate as well as horror, for while *Les Visiteurs* out-grossed *Jurassic Park* in France, the remake bombed in both countries, pulling in less than half its estimated \$35 million budget (Willmore, 2008). While the original revelled in its R-rated toilet humour, the remake tamed it down to a PG-13 and cut half of the more obscene jokes out. Perhaps even more interesting than this remaking however is the proposed remake that never was: a Miramax-commissioned dubbed version of the original overseen by Mel Brooks and deemed “unreleasable” (Willmore, 2008). Is not this the ultimate non-remake, one that falters before it has even been released?

(3) To complete my trilogy of disaster auto-remakes is Dick Maas’s *De Lift* (1983), remade in Hollywood in 2001 as *Down* (U.S. title, *The Shaft*). The original featured a killer elevator which terrorises an office block, elevating a technical repair worker from zero to hero as he saves the day. The remake featured the star-power of Naomi Watts and James Marshall, accompanied by Michael Ironside and Ron Pearlman. If this all sounds a little unfamiliar, then perhaps the reason is that the remake was never properly released. Despite following the original storyline, the remakers transported the action to a fictional New York ‘Millennium’ building. However, its scheduled release date of September 2001 saw it shelved along with similarly themed films following the aftermath of the September 11th attacks on New York. The film eventually got a release on DVD in 2003.*

Is this not a case of hear no evil, speak no evil, see no evil? What each of these auto-remakes share in common is the change made on the part of the Hollywood producers: the remake of *Bangkok Dangerous* hears no evil in curing its protagonist’s hearing disability; the ‘unreleasable’ dubbed remake of *Les Visiteurs* speaks no evil with its new English dialogue; and the unreleased *Down* sees no evil with its direct-to-DVD release, despite an impressive cast and budget. Each of the changes made to these three auto-remakes follows Schneider and

* Other trans-national auto-remakes of note include: Francis Veber’s *Les Fugitifs* (1986), remade as *Three Fugitives* (1989); Ole Bornedal’s *Nattevagten* (1994), remade as *Nightwatch* (1997); Takashi Shimizu’s *Ju-on* (2002), remade as *The Grudge* (2004); Hideo Nakata’s *Ringu 2* (1999), remade as *The Ring Two* (2005); and, of course, Haneke’s *Funny Games* (1997) remade as *Funny Games U.S.* (2007).

Leitch's 'essential' changes for an American remake, including a star the audience can invest in (Nicolas Cage, who must speak), English dialogue, and an American setting (although a fictional skyscraper in New York City in September 2001 seems particularly unlucky).

While I have looked in the previous part at the major changes to the star-wattage of the protagonist, the dialogue shifts, and the setting, there are other aspects of *The Vanishing* which were altered that must be considered separately, aspects that can be loosely identified in the 'master question' facing the producers of the remake, which was: Why does Rex drink the drugged coffee in the original? Sluizer remarks that "Americans really didn't understand that someone might be willing to die for the love of his girlfriend" (2003), and as such the American producers kept asking for a clearer rationale as to why a sane man would put himself at the mercy of someone responsible for his girlfriend's abduction. While they could not change Jeff's choice, they could change his sanity, so Sluizer's solution was to have Jeff suffer a nervous breakdown, since he observed that "all Americans have nervous breakdowns" (2003). However, in a different context, Alan Williams articulates the problem when he asks: "When you cut the thesis out of a thesis film, what do you have left?", to which he responds: "Despite handsome cinematography and reasonably good performances – rather little" (2002:160). Well, having discussed the 'big' changes in the previous sections, I now want to focus on this "rather little" leftover/trace remaining in remake.

Critic Desmond Howe puts it best when he writes that *The Vanishing* is "the same movie, only completely different. It follows the same plot, except where it changes everything" (1993), which might as well be the epigraph for this entire thesis. The quote perfectly renders the paradoxical nature of remaking: while it looks, acts, and feels the same, we should not be fooled: it is the same! Recall Žižek's example of Groucho Marx enquiring of a stranger: "Say, you remind me of Emmanuel Ravelli". "But I *am* Emmanuel Ravelli", the stranger replies, to which Groucho responds, "Then no wonder you look like him!" In short, the 'thesis' of the film is posited *only* in the moment of its reception, and only in the minds of the spectators engaging with it – after all, what is a thesis if no one brings the antithesis?

Sluizer reflects on *The Vanishing* in a similar way, and recollects being asked to change some dialogue from the original in the scene where Raymond's daughter turns to him and asks: "Daddy, do you have a mistress? Don't look so shocked. At your age you're allowed to, right?" *The Vanishing's* producer, Paul Schiff, felt that the idea of a little girl telling her father to get a mistress was completely out of touch with American audiences (for whom adultery is not openly discussed nor accepted). Sluizer was only half-joking when he proposed new 'in-touch' dialogue: "Daddy, why don't you divorce mum, I'm the only one at school with two parents, all the other kids only have one" (2003), alluding to the high divorce rates in America. He writes that the producers then thought he was "a black hearted European because kids would not say those things in America" (Sluizer, 2003). The line was eventually

changed to “I wouldn’t blame you for cheating on mum” in the remake, and loses the sense from the original of his daughter’s complicity in the affair (and by extension, the abduction) when she gives her father a knowing wink. In the remake, Barney’s daughter clearly disapproves of the affair she imagines her father having, and eventually it is this which leads to Barney’s downfall (as the daughter, mistaking Rita for the girlfriend, leads her to Barney and Jeff). The point is not that the producers ‘cut’ the thesis of the original out of the remake, but that they cut the thesis of the *remake* out of the remake. The cycle of repression implicit here proves that Hollywood is not only capable of cutting another national ideology out of its pictures (which perhaps we should support) but that it will go so far as to cut its own ideology out – that America *does* have a high divorce rate, etc. This is the ‘ghosting’ implicit to the ‘American sense’ of remaking and Hollywood history generally: not that it represses the signifiers of a foreign culture, but that it represses its own.

This process of repression always leaves a trace, the “rather little” noted by Williams. Recall Žižek’s phrase, “What more does this statement contain, that has caused you to make it?” (2006a:19), which illustrates the sensitive nature of Sluizer’s new dialogue, which clearly gets too close to the truth. In the *Psycho* remake, it was a declaration repeated again and again in stereo, where every deviation from the original spoke volumes; here, in *The Vanishing*, we are dealing with something much more subtle, for “no less than the superfluous act of mentioning, the act of *not* mentioning or concealing something can create additional meaning” (Žižek, 2006a:19). The relevance of this example to that of the producers denying their own ideology is contained in Lacan’s understanding that repression and the return of the repressed *are one and the same process*: it is only with the very superfluity of suppressing the new content that the content becomes ‘content’ at all. One might argue that perhaps the producers really did believe the dialogue simply to be ‘out of touch’ like the original dialogue, but then one must ask: why protest to this degree (thinking Sluizer a cynical “black-hearted European”)? “The Lady doth protest too much, methinks”, for there is more truth in their protestations than in what they are protesting. Are we not approaching the *real* thesis of the remake here?

Paul Schiff also felt that there were certain “expectations” from American audiences for this “kind of movie” (cited in Avins, 1993:20), expectations that he felt made the compromises worthwhile. Schiff’s statement concerning this “kind of movie” seems to echo Werner Herzog’s sense of a remake “in the American sense of the word”, a “kind of movie” that required a “positive, affirming result at the end of the journey” (Schiff, cited in Avins, 1993:20). Durham argues that

the problem with American remakes of French films comes down to the most basic of tautologies: French films are French and American films are not. One wonders, in that case,

what precisely they *are*, since they somehow seem to be ‘not French’ without necessarily remaining – or becoming – American either (Durham, 1998:11).

One also wonders whether the ending of *The Vanishing* remake is a “positive, affirming result at the end of the journey”, even excluding the purist’s argument about remaining faithful to the original. Let us be clear here: this is *not* an issue of fidelity, for as Brian McFarlane argues “fidelity is obviously very desirable in marriage; but with film adaptations I suspect playing around is more effective” (2007:4). As Durham points out, the issue is not that the Hollywood remake is not French/Dutch but that it is *not American*.

Let us return to the question plaguing the producers of the remake, namely: Why does Rex drink the drugged coffee? Is there not a *prescriptive* element to the American remake akin to what Carol Feldman describes as the sense of national narratives as “tell[ing] us not just who we are, and were, but who we should be” (2001:141)? While all films to an extent engage in such an activity, there is an additional level of enunciation here. As Richard Kearney notes, “the problem is not that each society constructs itself as a story but that it forgets that it has done so” and “whenever a nation forgets its own narrative origins it becomes dangerous” (2002:81). Are we not in pure Hitchcockian waters here, where “a little knowledge can be a deadly thing”?

The final act of *The Vanishing* is not about knowledge as it is in *Spoorloos*; it is about *forgetting, amnesia*. Remember that in the remake, Barney only seeks Jeff out because the latter is forgetting his ‘narrative origins’. Elsewhere the difference between the two endings reveals more. While the final act of *Spoorloos* features Raymond gazing onto an open space, the final act of *The Vanishing* takes place in a restaurant some months on from Jeff and Rita’s ordeal, where they discuss a book deal with a publishing agent. When a waiter brings two cups of coffee, both emit a nervous laugh and in unison say: “No coffee thanks, we don’t drink that anymore!” What is the point of this cheap (unfunny) joke? Simply, it is a diversion, standing in for the simple fact that there is no answer to the question of why Rex drinks the coffee in the original; for Jeff and Rita the rejection of the coffee itself misses the point of Barney’s offer in the first place. We are here back in the realm of the patient who receives his/her message back to them in an inverted form (for example, *Lost Highway*’s “Dick Laurent is dead”). Remember our example from chapter one of the story of a factory worker suspected of stealing wheelbarrows? It is not the content of Jeff and Rita’s refusal of the coffee in this final scene that should interest us but the gesture itself: the nervous laughter, the discomfiture of their body language, the compulsive way they both answer at *exactly* the same time, etc. We should not take the content of the joke at face value but look at the enunciation itself: can we not imagine a scene following this one in the restaurant where, having fetishised coffee as the locus of his terror, Jeff’s disturbances force him into a lengthy period of therapy,

still bombarded as he is by the meaningless signifier of ‘black coffee’? This extended ending would still be ‘in-touch’ with Schiff’s American “kind of movie” (we should also append Sluizer’s comment that “All Americans have nervous breakdowns...” with “...and undergo extensive therapy to cope with this”).

The reason the coffee joke is unfunny is because it – as with Freud’s own unfunny jokes – dances a fine line between comedy and psychosis, leaving us unsure of whether to laugh or cry (recall the joke about the kettle borrower’s logic from chapter 2). It is with this joke that we should conclude that American audiences are neither naïve nor child-like, but patients locked in a repressive cycle with an evil analyst who has stopped listening (or perhaps no longer knows how to listen). To paraphrase Lacan, God is not dead in American cinema; he is *unconscious* (1998:59). The only way to deal with an unconscious God is to diffuse one’s symptoms via the fetishisation of the “rather little” objects (the *objets petit a*) that are leftover, the objects which cause our disgusted fascination (the example here being black coffee). Another such fetishised object can be seen in the different lures used by Raymond and Barney in *Spoorloos* and *The Vanishing*. In both versions, Raymond/Barney is given a present for his birthday by his daughter, and in both versions he uses this object as a lure to get his victim, Saskia/Diane, into his car and the clutches of a chloroformed rag. In *Spoorloos*, the lure is a key-chain with the symbol ‘R’, an initial shared by both Raymond and Rex as two subjects orbiting around the same symbolic referent (unknown knowledge). However, in *the Vanishing*, the lure is a bracelet featuring the symbol for eternity, ‘∞’, which is the very symbolic meaning of the original that the remake has disavowed, the ‘thesis’ it unceremoniously cut.

Ultimately, this near-imperceptible change in the lure is a representation of *The Vanishing*’s fetish object *par excellence*, such that, despite the loss of the thesis of eternity from the ‘thesis film’, it displaces that theme onto the bracelet and is somehow able to cope with the trauma of translation. Is this not the “rather little” left over of the Real in Alan Williams’s complaint? Barney himself tells Jeff that “sometimes the devil is in the details”, and it is the devil that we see in other “rather little” elements in the remake also. In the first section of this chapter we explored the linguistic meanings of ‘spoorloos’ beyond its translation into English. Does not its literal meaning as “vanished (without a trace/traceless)” enter a new dimension when we consider the irreducible traces left in the Hollywood remake? Perhaps the defining image of *The Vanishing* is the mound of earth concealing Diane’s body that Jeff and Rita stare wordlessly at prior to the final scene in the restaurant when they refuse the coffee. In *Spoorloos* of course, there are no mounds of earth: Rex and Saskia really have vanished “without a trace”.

Remakes like Van Sant’s *Psycho* and Haneke’s *Funny Games* form the *exception* disturbing the surface of Hollywood’s false appearance (the Other Scene erupting onto a

contemporary fabric), whereas remakes like Sluizer's *The Vanishing* allow Hollywood to go on functioning with its hysterical history by latching onto another, fully contingent, space. This 'foreign' history need not be secure itself, it just needs to be 'other', and this is how trans-national remaking must be defined: by its status as a fetish object for other national cinemas. If my first case study of *Psycho* posited the shower scene as a *symptom* of American cinematic experience, then I hope this case study has posited the happy ending as the *fetish* enabling American cinema to go on dealing with its problematic history.

To finish then, let us consider Deleuze's interest in the subtle ambiguities of the French language, for Lacan is not the only French theorist noted for his interest in homophones. Indeed, the French word for 'shot' is '*plan*', and Deleuze plays on the dual nature of the word *plan* to mean both 'shot' and 'plane', as in varying planes of thought. Furthermore, Deleuze's precise rendering of the term '*découpage*' ('cutting') is vital in understanding the cinematic mechanism, for he uses the word to mean both 'cutting' in the sense of 'to cut' and of creating new 'cuttings'. In short, with different cuts of films we enter onto new planes of film-thinking where each precise rendering of the film's thesis registers both *a new cutting* and the *cutting out* of a previous thesis. Thus, just as we discerned Deleuzian and a Lacanian 'cuts' of the shower scene, so too can we discern Deleuzian and Lacanian 'cuts' of the living burial scene, and this time we need not raid our imaginations, for they come down nicely on either side of the remake divide. The Deleuzian living burial scene is *Spoorloos*'s link to the Eternal. There is no new concept in the final act, just repetition to the n^{th} power of the repetition internal to the original act, positing the original as repetition-for-itself (Rex's living burial is not the second time after Saskia's, but, rather, it is Saskia's living burial to the n^{th} power). The Lacanian living burial scene is *The Vanishing*'s repression and fetishisation of the *objet a*, difference-in-itself. It is only here that a little imagination is perhaps needed to complete the scenario, that is, with the extended ending following Jeff's refusal of the coffee in the restaurant, his ensuing breakdown, and months of therapy on the analyst's couch.

“If at first you don't succeed...” Re-marketing the original and the return of the repressed in Hollywood

So, *Bangkok Dangerous* removed its thesis of a deaf hitman to bow down to its star, Nicolas Cage. A review in *Variety* noted how this film is the first since *Dickie Roberts: Former Child Star* (2003), five years earlier, to debut at number one in the US with such a low gross (\$7.8 million on its opening weekend). Lionsgate distributor Steve Rothenberg noted that the film's star pulling power alone coupled with marketing strategies would mean that the remake of

Bangkok Dangerous “will be a nicely profitable film for us” (cited in *Variety*, 2006). However, while some Hollywood remakes are guilty of removing their foreign ‘theses’ in order to sell them to bigger audiences, some are innocent. Furthermore, not all foreign originals contain foreign theses in the first instance, as Lucy Mazdon has observed of Jim McBride’s 1983 Hollywood remake of Jean-Luc Godard’s French modernist classic, *À bout de souffle* (*Breathless*, 1960). While many criticised McBride’s remake for ploughing hallowed foreign ground, Mazdon points out that Godard’s original is already ploughing Hollywood’s cinema archive. Godard wrote that his American influences made him want to “take a conventional story and then remake, in different ways, all the cinema which had come before” (cited in Mazdon, 2000:79). Mazdon notes that the most striking and recurrent intertexts of Godard’s *À bout de souffle* are its references to Hollywood cinema, particularly the gangster films of the 1930s and the *films noirs* of the 1940s. For example, the film’s protagonist, Michel (Jean-Paul Belmondo), is so obsessed with Humphrey Bogart that he not only imitates his style but even his mannerisms and personal tics, such as Bogart’s habit of rubbing his fingers over his lips.



Fig. 3.3: Michel Poiccard (Jean-Paul Belmondo) doing Humphrey Bogart – too cool for (film) school

Mazdon notes that trans-national remaking is a two-way process, that Godard is both copying and transgressing the codes of *À bout de souffle*'s Hollywood intertexts long before it is itself remade in McBride's *Breathless*. For example, Michel both is and is not Bogart in this film: he wears the fedora hat but always at an angle (as is the French way), and frequently forgets

his persona in moments where he is distracted, gesticulating less like Bogart and more like an idiosyncratic Frenchman.*

For Mazdon, the curious thing about McBride's remake, also called *Breathless*, is that it resembles the old Hollywood classics that Godard himself dug up for the original, in many ways by-passing Godard's refraction of that style in his film. *Breathless* is a representation of a representation, what Deleuze would call a simulacra-phantasm, a "bad copy" which has lost its resemblance to the original while retaining the image. These are empty imitations that go from one thing to another thing, producing only the effect of resemblance but without the necessary referents, and as such they lack any real depth. On the other hand *À bout de souffle* is what Deleuze would call a copy-icon: a secondary processor which goes from one thing to the Idea of the original. Another example of this distinction can be found in *La Jetée* (1962), a film which utilises many of the images of Hitchcock's *Vertigo* in rendering an apocalyptic vision of Paris following World War III, and one man's travel into the past to reconcile himself with a haunting image of a woman and the brutal execution of a stranger. The film imitates *Vertigo*'s themes of obsession, the mysterious female image, and even replicates the scene where Scottie and Madeleine visit the sequoia trees. However, we can tell it is a copy-icon because like *À bout de souffle*, it too goes from the thing (*Vertigo*) to the Idea implicit in the original, more than the original (time travel). The film ends with the protagonist falling in love with the mysterious woman from his childhood past and eventually becoming the executed stranger.

Furthermore, the example of *La Jetée* is intensified when we consider that it too was remade in Hollywood by Terry Gilliam as *Twelve Monkeys*. However, unlike *Breathless*, *Twelve Monkeys* is no empty simulacra-phantasm for it updates Marker's *La Jetée* and successfully Americanises it, staying true to the Idea of the original and its theme (of the möbius impossibility of meeting yourself in the future, and witnessing your own death in the past). However, the copy-icon is always lurking somewhere, and in 2005, John Maybury's *The Jacket* answered the call. In this version of the *La Jetée* narrative, the protagonist, Jack Starks (Adrian Brody), is a Gulf War veteran remanded to a psychiatric institution after he is convicted of murder upon his return to America. While there, he is drugged, confined to a straightjacket and imprisoned in a mortuary chamber, whereupon he finds he can travel in time. He too meets a woman, Jackie (Keira Knightley), with whom he feels an uncanny connection. The film betrays its own premise however with the happy ending which Americanised the bleak (European?) ending of *Vertigo*, which each of the other versions retain. Each of these examples illustrates that trans-national remaking is not limited to box-office 'cash-cows', and that sometimes the original already contains an 'American' theme to

* For a nice counterpoint on this, see Herbert Ross's *Play it Again, Sam* (1972), featuring a protagonist (Woody Allen) who becomes more and more like Bogart as the film wears on.

begin with. To complicate matters even further, Mazdon observes something interesting in Serge Daney's review of McBride's *Breathless* remake, when he remarked that

There is something fascinating about the way American cinema always, everywhere, knows how to recuperate and recycle ideas, making them anodyne and timeless. *A bout de souffle*, like all Godard's films, is an old, dated film. *Breathless*, like all American films is already ageless. It has no wrinkles, it's true, but then it never will have (cited in Mazdon, 2000:85).

Mazdon agrees with this quote, writing that many American remakes are "the object of 'hyperreality' in which 'reality' and the 'past' have been eclipsed and disappeared" (2000:85). However, I think we need be more careful, for with examples like *Twelve Monkeys* we must be prepared to look for those American films which do contain wrinkles, and like their aged foreign-language originals seek to stimulate, rather than recycle, their own defunct referents.

Let us look at this from another perspective. Rather than simply draw a line between 'ageless' American remakes and 'dated' European fare, perhaps we should recall Kant's distinction between negative and indefinite judgement, where a positive statement has both a negative opposite, and a 'third' intermediary statement. We should follow Žižek's use of alive-dead-undead with the triad of ageless-dated-undated, for if a text has no historicity, against what can it be measured? While *Spoorloos* certainly keeps good company in top ten horror movie lists now,^{*} it was by no means an instant hit. Sluizer recalls that it received a "lukewarm" reception at the Cannes Film Festival: "no one wanted the film, no one in America, no one in England, and no one in Australia, and not even in my own country [could] I get a distributor", such that he felt the film was "a real, real failure [...] because they [the distributors] thought it was too clever and no one would like it" (2003). However, while the distributors seemed reluctant to jump aboard the *Spoorloos* bandwagon, the film was eventually included in the Sydney Film Festival over a year later, and audiences were somewhat less reluctant. From Australia, word spread like wildfire to England, then to Europe, and finally America, where it was eventually released in 1991. So the distributors clearly got it wrong; audiences were not only clever enough to understand *Spoorloos*'s premise, but they loved it. Another European director soon experienced almost identical distribution problems. In fact, there are quite a few striking similarities between Sluizer's experiences with *Spoorloos* and Ole Bornedal's experiences with his Danish thriller, *Nattevagten* (*Nightwatch*, 1994). One could even say that Bornedal's *Nattevagten* shared a case of *folie à deux* with its Dutch cousin.

^{*} Film critic Mark Kermode included the living burial scene in his top ten 'scariest moments' of all time, alongside many horror classics including *Alien* and *Nosferatu* (Kermode, 2003).

Bornedal's *Nattevagten* caught the eye of Hollywood producers after establishing itself as a cult hit, and it was not long before they commissioned him to make the move to Hollywood to remake his original as *Nightwatch* in 1997. In a repeat of *Spoorloos* however, the shocks of the original were toned down and the studio sought audience-investment in new star Ewan McGregor, fresh to Hollywood from the success of the British smash-hit, *Trainspotting* (1996). *Nattevagten*'s plot concerns a student, Martin (Nikolaj Coster-Waldau in original, McGregor in remake), who takes a job as a nightwatchman at a local morgue to pay his way through college. At the same time a series of grisly murders takes place, and before long Martin finds he is the fall-guy following some bizarre occurrences at the morgue. As with *Spoorloos*, several unconscious signifiers allude to *Nattevagten*'s excess textuality, as in one scene when the killer asks Martin: "Have you ever been killed before?" The overriding sense of *déjà vu* plays on the fact that this line is repeated in the remake just prior to the real killer's attack on Martin (again). Another line in the original plays the same game of repetition, as Martin asks a friend if telling his girlfriend that he is in love with her will sound like a line from "a bad American movie". Even the *mise-en-scène* is replicated, as the black-and-white photograph in Martin's cabin is the same as the one used in the original.

There are many productive (mis)readings available to us at each level of the return of *Spoorloos* and *Nattevagten*, from the 'making' of the original films (including their distribution difficulties and titular translations) to their 'remaking'. But what about the marketing, does this not also warrant its own return, perhaps as the Deleuzian 'unmaking'? Lucy Mazdon notes that "the French film and its remake are separate artefacts; indeed the production of a remake can be seen to create a new audience for the work upon which it was based" (2000:78), and as such we must consider the marketing and *remarketing* of the original in relation to its remaking. This is also apparent in American-American remakes as well, for following Van Sant's *Psycho*, Universal released the *Psycho Collection – Psycho 1-4* in 2003, and the original *Psycho* was re-released as a "2 Disc Special Edition" in 2005. In the case of *Spoorloos* and *Nattevagten*, it was perhaps inevitable that the original would be re-released following the critical condemnation of their remakes as "inferior". Each new reviewer suggested by implication alone that somewhere out 'there' existed a superior original creating an intrigued new audience potential. Never missing a sales opportunity, their respective studios (Twentieth Century Fox in the case of *Spoorloos* and Dimension films in the case of *Nattevagten*) decided to re-release the original versions on DVD to capitalise on the remake publicity. As such, both originals were newly re-packaged, containing brand new taglines, cover-art, critical opinions, and, of course, Anglo-American titles.

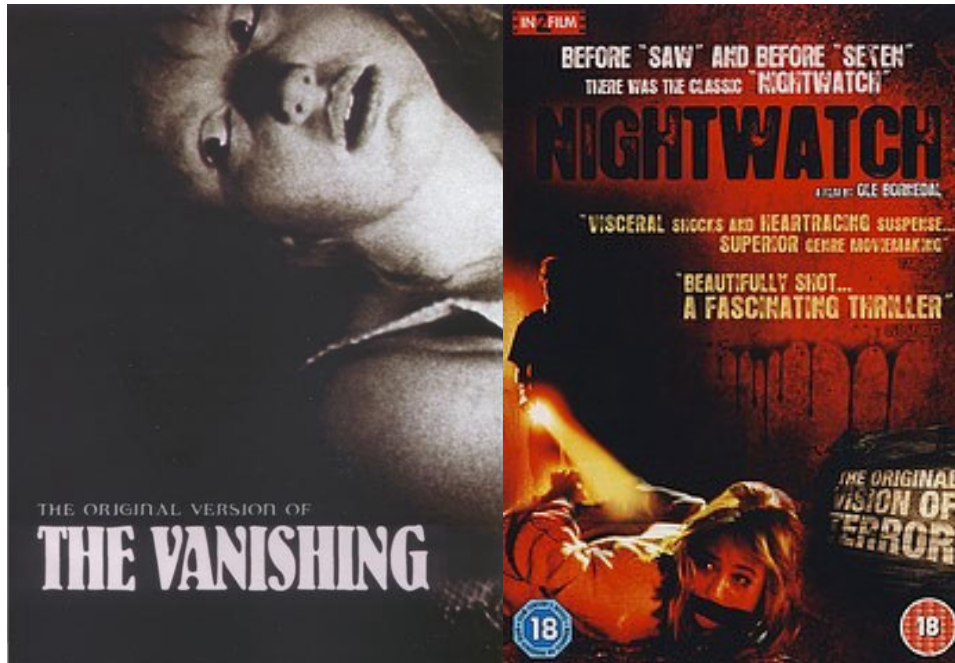


Fig. 3.4: DVD cover-art for the re-release of *Sporloos* and *Nattevagten*

In the case of the *Nightwatch* re-release, the cover boasted that “before ‘Saw’ and before ‘Se7en’, there was the classic ‘Nightwatch’”. This statement is more than a little problematic, as it seems on the one hand to be suggesting an influence on these later American paradigms, and yet on the other hand, suggesting that perhaps this ‘ups the ante’, so to speak.* Perhaps even more problematic is the appendage to both titles of: “The original version/vision of...” While the *Nightwatch* re-release presents itself as “Nightwatch, the Original Vision of Terror”, *The Vanishing* goes one step further, and actually incorporates the additional message into the title itself, as “The Original Version of The Vanishing”. Is this a fourth title to add to the Dutch original, Anglo-American, and French titles? If so, this title contains the very complex differentiation implicit in Deleuze’s sense of *unmaking*, for while ‘*Sporloos*’ is the made title and ‘*The Vanishing*’ and ‘*L’homme qui voulait savoir*’ are remade titles, then ‘*The Original Version of The Vanishing*’ should be considered its unmade title. These are not the only two examples of such hyper-reflexive titles, as Lucy Mazdon points out another example in the re-release of *Le retour de Martin Guerre* in the aftermath of its Hollywood remake, *Sommersby*. The re-released French original was described as “The film remade as *Sommersby*” (2000:78), which is an even more overt reference than “The original version of...”, as it even emphasises its remaking in the title. In an inversion of this process, sometimes the original can be used to sell the remake, as in the example of *À bout de souffle*, which when remade as *Breathless* was sold to French audiences as *À bout de souffle (Made in*

* One is also reminded here of the omnipresent claim for superiority in the DVD market with horror releases boasting such things as: “What you didn’t see in the cinemas”, and “Extreme edition”...

USA), with markedly similar artwork. Another example from Hollywood's more recent fixation with East Asian cinema can be found in the re-release of Hideo Nakata's original Japanese horror, *Ringu* (1998), which, having been remade by Gore Verbinski (this time to critical acclaim – see appendix) as *The Ring* (2002), was re-released with the new appended title: “The Original Movie that Inspired The Ring: Ringu”.

Are we not, in each of these examples of ‘The original version of...’, at the most extreme level of fetishistic disavowal? While, as Christian Metz argued, every cinematic spectator must disavow using the formula: *I know very well* (that the film is not real), *but all the same* (I will believe in it as if it were), the consumer approaching the re-released “original version of...” has the additional weight of cleaving the new version in three, between the re-released-original, the original-original, and the remake. As such, this new title confronts us with two messages and an underlying unconscious one: (1) it claims *authenticity* as the original version; however, by stating its claim on originality it (2) explicitly acknowledges its prior remaking to lend weight to itself as a *version*. As such, the re-release is not aimed at Americans who did not see the original, but, rather, it is aimed at Americans who *did see* the remake.* (3) The unconscious message is a rewriting of Ken Marks's question concerning the necessity of the remake, of which he asked “If the original did not exist, would this picture [a remake] be worth seeing?” (1998), which we should amend here to read: “If the *remake* did not exist, would the ‘original version of...’ be worth seeing?” The re-release is balancing the remake's critical materiality with the original's cult status; in a sense, at the same time as it ‘unmakes’ the original, it ‘remakes’ the remake. If it needed one (which of course, it does not) the remarketed French version should perhaps have been: “The Man Who Wanted to Know (Again)”.

It is perhaps more helpful to us to consider trans-national remakes in the same way that Rick Altman claims we should consider film genres; that is, as sites of conflict amongst different groups. This chapter has revealed some of those groups already, including: critics, academic scholars, directors, producers, etc. So what, then, is trans-national remaking? Alan Williams asks a related question: “So what is French national cinema?”, and his answer is that, “in a sense, it is whatever you need it to be to make a point in the ongoing struggle to conceptualize France, and the cinema” (2002:5). Williams warns that this struggle is both dynamic and perpetually unfinished, and that to ‘make’ national cinemas is to reduce things to being “in-themselves, and not part of a complex dynamic in which they do things *to* and *for* nations” (2002:6). In chapter one, we explored Deleuze's notion of *logical* sense, which has the formula ‘both/and’ over ‘either/or’, a formula with which Van Sant is clearly working.

* Once again, never ones to miss a trick, Fox included in the re-release plenty of advertising for the remake, including an exclusive 2003 interview with Sluizer who speaks candidly about the remake and a photo gallery from the 1993 production.

However, that is the zombie remake, while here we have a ghost remake, a remake which 'spooks' itself. Perhaps we should add a third formula here, one that is 'irrational', and yet entirely consistent with Lacan's sense of *père ou pire*. Such a formula would have to follow a different, and appropriately darker, psychoanalytic humour. This formula would not be faced with choosing between two choices, nor would it have to choose both choices; rather, this is the choice to reject *the very framework of the choice itself*. Žižek points out that when Stalin was asked the question, "Which deviation is worse, the Rightist or the Leftist one?", Stalin answered: "They are both worse!" (1997). Thus our formula for the trans-national remake is 'neither/nor', that is, the third, hidden way out, to choose not to choose, that is, to emphasise the "complicity of the opposites" (Žižek, 1997). Žižek reminds us that this "'choice of the worst' fails, but in this failure, it undermines the entire field of the alternative and thus enables us to overcome its terms" (1997). Is this not why the most artistic and brilliant remakes always seem to fail? Lacan writes of the sexual relationship that "it fails. That is objective [...] the failure is the object" (1999:58); it is not a matter of analysing how the trans-national remake might succeed in representing its nationality, but repeating until you are blue in the face *why it fails*.

CHAPTER 4

THE 'IRRATIONAL' REMAKE: TIME AND MEMORY IN UNMAKING

Irrational – adjective 2 *Mathematics* (of a number, quantity, or expression) not expressible as a ratio of two integers, and having an infinite and non-recurring expansion when expressed as a decimal. Examples of irrational numbers are the number π and the square root of 2.

Opening thoughts: The re-viewer and the time-image as unmaking

This study of the remake is not yet complete, for while Forrest and Koos argue that “when Hollywood isn’t remaking films from its own archives, it is looking towards Europe” (1998:26), we should come to realise that something is missing from this simple split between American-American and foreign-American remakes. Missing is the remake that does not recur, imitate or exchange with its original; a remake which condemns both cinematic habit and memory, and plays instead with humour and irony; it is a type of remake hitherto unexplored in all but a few places in remake theory. The closest approximation of this third type of remaking is to be found in Anat Zanger’s description of the “disguised version”, where a remake conceals its status as a remake and yet, at the same time contains “elements necessary to insure [*sic*] that the version – even in disguise – will be recognized as such, that is, as a version” (2006:103). I have illustrated that an essential feature of the remake is its declarative dimension. Can we move from a sense of the remake as being *for*-itself to a remake as being *to*-itself (that is, from being in language to being outside of it, about it)? This question is undercut by Zanger, who writes that “disguised versions [...] emphasize precisely those parameters that declared versions seek to conceal” (2006:104), such that, a version can have either declared or latent referentiality to a source text. If we have thus far been primarily dealing with texts whose reference is declared (often violently as with the case of *Psycho*), then what of latent repetition in film – can we simply ignore these as versions? Just as the presence of the analyst alters the discourse of the patient in psychoanalysis, so too does the presence of the declaration alter the discourse of the remake. In this chapter however, I want to put forward a case for considering a ‘latent’ or ‘disguised’ remake as a wholly different kettle of fish altogether, one no less subjected however to our remake theory from chapter 1. The central issue in this chapter is not to find an alternative approach to remakes than ‘spot-the-difference’, but to find an approach to spot these remakes in the first place.

Let us (why not?) conceive of this entire thesis in terms of Deleuze’s three modes of construction, for if chapter 1 was concerned with ‘making’ remake theory, and chapters 2 and

3 explored ‘remaking’ across two case studies, then perhaps this chapter is best thought of as exploring ‘unmaking’, the unfolding to the others’ folding and refolding. Implicit in this sense of unmaking is the importance of the viewer and reviewer *through time*, a facet of remaking rarely explored in any philosophical depth. Nonetheless, any viewer of a remake is caught in a dual moment, which Linda Ruth Williams describes in a literary context: “in this way, links are made, connections and sequences established, the reader *looks back* as she *reads on*. Reading (perhaps *all reading*) proceeds in two different directions at once” (1995:134). Does this not go double for the viewer of the remake, and the reviewer of the original? It seems somewhat strange then, that the area least explored in remake theory is that of remake reception.

The machine as ideal father: Rethinking the ‘return of the repressed’ with *T2-as-remake*

Anat Zanger considers the disguised remake with a structuralist approach, one which sees the concealment of a deeper, underlying arrangement of signifiers that society desperately attempts to quantify with surface-phenomena intended to conceal its replicant status. For example, Zanger argues that *Alien*³, while not declaring itself as a version of Joan of Arc, nonetheless partakes in what Hrushovsky coined as a “*double referential mechanism*” (2006:108). Thus while it seems not to belong to the series of ‘Joan of Arc’ films, Zanger argues that it should be seen as a part of that series no less. However, far from falling into the trap of discovering every text to be a latent version of a Master-narrative, from Cinderella to Oedipus, as pointed out by Smith (1981) and Bellour (1979) respectively, I am keen to show that there really is a disguised remake with a real, tangible connection to a series it seems not to relate to. Deleuze did, after all, consider repetition as constituted only via a disguise affecting the terms and relations of the real series, writing that “repetition is truly that which disguises itself in constituting itself, that which constitutes itself only by disguising itself” (2009:19). After Deleuze, those remake theorists who argue that ‘latent’ or disguised remaking does not exist are forced to think again.

While Zanger’s work on the disguised remake will be useful here, I want primarily to move away from her structuralist approach towards a more fluid Deleuzian and Lacanian model which takes into account the *jouissance* of the remake; one which approaches its death drive. Key to this is an engagement with the notion of time, for as Linda Ruth Williams has argued, we ignore the temporality – and not just the historicity – of a text at our peril. Drawing on a Laplanchean psychoanalytic framework, Williams argues that any return to a prior moment contains “an intertextuality which operates temporally, as different time-zones

interpenetrate the ‘timelessness’ of fable with the specific unfolding of personal history” (1995:135). This sense of Freudian *Nachträglichkeit* (crudely translated as ‘deferral’) is so important to a film which is characterised by its status as not only a returning text, but one whose return is deferred (some time always elapses). Laplanche writes that “*Nachträglichkeit* means many things in German; it means the fact that something comes afterwards; it means also something like revenge or bearing a grudge, when you take revenge because of something that took place before” (1992:42). In much the same way, latent/disguised remakes can be seen as a form of *revenge*.

Firstly, we need to establish the precise nature of this type of remake ‘revenge’, for I want to be clear in saying that there is no Hollywood equivalent to the evil mastermind plotting world domination in a volcanic lair somewhere. This revenge is completely *irrational*; it is the arbitrary ‘event’ motivated by a pure insistent *drive*. In moving from the ‘action-image’ in his first volume on cinema to the ‘time-image’ in his second volume, Deleuze explores the way that images impact on one another through time. The cut (*découpe*) extends in two directions at once, reaching back into the past and pushing forward into the future, creating a viewer who, not unlike Williams’s reader, is left facing in two directions at once. The cut creates space and meaning, as well as removing other spaces and alternate meanings (consider the meanings of the common film phrase “cutting room floor”).

While the time-image is much more than a ‘return of the repressed in the movies’, what if, via Lacan, we can show that as much as psychoanalytic film theorists have oversimplified Deleuze, these Deleuzians have also grossly oversimplified the return of the repressed? To put it simply, is it not that *our conception* in psychoanalysis of the return of the repressed – irrespective of its relationship to the cinematic form – is what is lacking in contemporary film theory? Suddenly our problem in remake theory becomes somewhat different: rather than use psychoanalytic theory to reveal the return of the repressed, would it not be more productive to use film remakes to reveal the return of the repressed in psychoanalysis? It is my thesis that Lacan, and Žižek after him, have been articulating something approaching Deleuze’s critique of the return of the repressed all along; did not Lacan observe that the true function of the unconscious is its profound relation with ‘the cut’ (1998:43). It is ‘vulgar’ Lacanian psychoanalysis that is to blame for remake theory becoming stuck on repeat, so to speak, hopelessly ill-equipped to deal with the issue of memory and time. What we need is a dose of *filmosophy*!

Robert Eberwein (1998) begins to approach the topic of time in remakes but stops short of actually addressing it. Zanger also writes that “repetition is, first and foremost, a movement in time” (2006:112), but similarly refrains from engaging with the philosophical weight of the issue. It is from this reluctance to deal with the question of time in remaking that I have identified what can be called the ‘master-question’ in remake theory, one that

consistently arises and yet as soon as it does, is just as reliably passed over in silence. This master-question appears in Kauffmann (1993:28), Durham (1998:180), Marks (1998), and Zanger (2006:18) as a version of the following: *Is the remake still a remake without the original?* This question not only recalls the old epistemological debate over whether a tree falling in a forest makes any noise if there is no-one to hear it, but, as with every master-question, it conceals a hidden obverse (clear to any good semiotician), which can be written as: *Is the original still an original without the remake?* On the face of it, both versions of the question seem somewhat nonsensical; common sense leads us to answer “of course” to the former and “of course not” to the latter. However, what these simplified answers do not take into account is Deleuze’s logical sense (as opposed to his common/good sense), a sense constantly grappling with the paradox of being.

Žižek notes that Lacan’s work on the paradoxical nature of the return of the repressed concerns the manner by which the symptom returns to the subject. Laplanche writes that “‘afterwards’ is not the after-effect but it is also something going back to before” (1992:41). However, this sense of ‘going back to before’ does not adequately deal with the question: “From where does the repressed return?” Lacan’s answer is quite surprising, for he argues that it is *not* from the past, but “from the future” (Žižek, 2008a:58). The meaning of the symptom is not constructed from the constitutive trace it left in its buried historicity, but, rather, its retroactive reconstruction in analysis. It is the analytic process that enables the symptom to be approached as such, in which the very framework of the symptom is posited. What is the symptom prior to its return from the future? Put simply, it is nothing, a hole in the fabric awaiting the language with which it can be spoken into existence. Friedrich Schelling is right to loop Freud’s description of the uncanny as everything that “ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light” (1990: 345), back on itself, such that psychoanalysis not only tells us *about* this something, but “*is* such a ‘something’ itself” (cited in Cohen, 2005:70). Objects and places are not uncanny in themselves but become uncanny in their relationship to subjects who observe them through time. “Every historical rupture”, writes Žižek, “every new advent of a new master-signifier, changes retroactively the meaning of all tradition, restructures the narration of the past, makes it readable in another, new way” (2008a:58). In remake terms, a film’s *mise-en-scène* becomes uncanny via a hallucinatory return which is split between two moments, between two spectators (who are one and the same person). Linda Ruth Williams writes that a film’s “*Mise-en-scène* is thus read as the film’s body, the site of symptomatic signs given out visually which the film’s narrative cannot bring itself to express” (1995:136). Meaning here is not fixed, for the depth of field of the time-image has as much to do with memory as it does with movement, leading to what Deleuze calls the “figure of temporalization” that “gives rise to all kinds of adventures in memory, which are not so much psychological accidents as misadventures of time,

disturbances of its constitution” (2009c:107). Is not the remake the ultimate cinematic expression of a misadventure of time?

Why is Freud’s essay on the uncanny rarely evoked in remake theory? One would imagine that all remakes are uncanny, no? The answer is simply that this ‘something’ is that which *ought* to have remained hidden, but has somehow been revealed. True remakes are declarative; their *mise-en-scène* does not contain the symptom but the fetish further *disguising the symptom*. If we widen the scope of our investigation to include Zanger’s ‘disguised version’, and take Deleuze’s figure of temporalisation into account, we will find that remakes achieving a sense of the uncanny are, by definition, *remakes where we did not expect remaking*, where the remaking should have remained concealed. These remakes are not remakes in the traditional sense at all, but hidden remakings, what I will call ‘irrational remakes’. Before I give some examples of irrational remakings, I must first provide a metaphor for this temporal paradox intrinsic to the remake. This metaphor is the counterpart of the facehugger from chapter 1, which we could designate as a metaphor for the *jouissance* of the remake, or what we might call the ‘material’ property of the remake. The metaphor is that of the terminator in James Cameron’s *The Terminator* (1984) and *Terminator 2 (T2)*, (1991), which, by extension, is a metaphor for the Lacanian *drive* of the remake, or what we might call the ‘memory’ of the remake.

It is in *The Terminator*’s *idée fixe* “The future is not set” that we should begin to see Lacan’s definition of the symptom as coming “from the future” take shape. The film’s plot begins with a complex temporal paradox set in a dystopian future where rebel humans battle artificially intelligent machines (Cyberdyne Systems) for supremacy. On the eve of a human victory, the resistance, inspired and led by John Conner, learns that the machines have sent a ruthlessly efficient cyborg, the T-800 (Arnold Schwarzenegger) to the past to terminate John’s mother, Sarah Conner (Linda Hamilton), effectively wiping out his very existence and crippling the resistance. John himself sends back a lone warrior, Kyle Reese (Michael Biehn), to protect his mother and as-yet unborn self from termination, and the film chronicles their ongoing fight for survival, a survival on which the future of mankind rests. Cameron revisited the *Terminator* story with a bigger budget in the hugely successful special effects-laden ‘event’, *Terminator 2: Judgement Day (T2)*, (1991). *T2* features a remarkably similar storyline with only basic changes: this time it is a teenage John Conner (Edward Furlong) himself, and not Sarah Conner (reprised by Hamilton), who is to be protected, and a new model T-800 (Schwarzenegger) has been sent by the resistance to *protect* him, while a more sophisticated ‘liquid-metal’ T-1000 (Robert Patrick) is the machine sent to terminate him.

Many theorists have explored time travel in *The Terminator* from different perspectives, including the introduction of *noir* into the family home (see Fred Pfeil, 1993) and time travel as a critical dystopia of the primal scene itself (see Constance Penley, 1993).

Few, however, consider it in terms of remaking. Why not – simply because it was not marketed as such? There are two interconnected issues here: (1) is the *sequel* a type of remake? (2) Is the remake a type of *genre*? The answer to the question of whether sequels are remakes is that, at least in the context of this study, they perhaps should be considered so. While Lucy Mazdon actually evokes *Terminator 2* to illustrate the *differences* between the sequel and the remake (2000:4), Carol Clover argues that sequels should be regarded as remakes because although they feature the continuation of a particular world, they really just retell the same story. In much the same way that different versions of the same film hide under new titles to indicate that the story has changed, Clover argues that sequels are in fact an even better way of hiding this remaking, since rather than simply negate their relationship to an original, sequels openly present that relationship *as having a contingent signification* (2000:131). Sequels are remakes which “hide in plain sight”, so to speak. This sense is complicated further by Robert Eberwein who writes that when the sequel is remade it “is itself the subject of multiple remakes” (1998:30); in other words it is a doubling that is then redoubled.

The second question about the issue concerning the remake as a genre category is somewhat more difficult to answer; however, I will now attempt to do so. This is yet another remake question that has been raised as many times as it has been insufficiently answered, and while they might not realise it, some genre theorists are actually already remake theorists. Linda Ruth Williams argues that “[genre] hybridity is endemic to the classical form” (2005:22), but Anat Zanger makes a distinction between the kind of hybridity ‘endemic’ to genres and the dynamics of repetition intrinsic to remaking. For example, when speaking about narrative comprehension in film, Edward Branigan has argued that narrative form is the most important way in which we perceive our environment, but that this narrative depends on our building of story structures “based on stories already told” (1992:1). Meaning, for Branigan, exists only when a specific pattern is achieved, which is one way of describing genre. One example can be found in Robert Ray’s claim that David Miller’s *Flying Tigers* (1942) is an unaccredited remake of Howard Hawks’s *Only Angels Have Wings* (1939), and on first glance he appears to be correct. However, Jennifer Forrest and Leonard R. Koos have been quick to point out that, taken in the context that a whole series of World War II combat films used the blueprint from Hawks’s original, *Flying Tigers* becomes less a remake and more “the first of many actualizations of the combat film subgenre” (2002:5). This confusion is what Constantine Verevis is aiming to reduce when she makes the important distinction between ‘cinematic remaking’ and ‘film remakes’, where the former belongs to any cinematic work that refers, revisits, or engages with any number of “technological, textual and cultural practices” (2006:vii), and the latter to remakes ‘proper’ (that is, as an industry category). Sometimes, changes in genre trends and production cycles help mask remakes, such as the

noir thriller, *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950), remade as a Western in *The Badlanders* (1958) to capitalise on the popularity of the Western at the time. Elsewhere, the remake might highlight a complex shift in the dynamics of a genre film, such as the remaking of classic *noir*, *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946), as a self-conscious neo-*noir* in 1981. Of course, one of the burning questions in remake theory follows the obvious similarity between Frank Krutnik's description of genres as "frameworks for mediating between repetition and difference" (1991:11), and the same description of remakes. Perhaps the question "Is the remake a type of genre?" is thus incorrect; instead, let us be bold and ask instead: "Is the genre film a type of 'cinematic remaking'?"

It is here that we run into our first clash between our irrational remake and Zanger's disguised version, and it is the same issue identified originally in genre studies. I can already hear the film historian's complaint of yet another 'meta-discourse' – the practice in academia of the inclusion and exclusion of texts via the categorisation of a series according to a specific academic perspective – recalling the statement falsely attributed to Hegel that, "If the facts don't fit the theory, so much worse for the facts!". Genre theorists such as Rick Altman (1999) and Steve Neale (2000), among others, argue that we must avoid collapsing institutional and analytical categories of genre, for as Andrew Tudor states: "(Genre notions) are not critics' classifications made for special purposes; they are sets of cultural conventions. Genre is what we collectively believe it to be" (cited in Neale, 2000:18). Tudor is here alluding to the importance of institutional categories of film established in publicity and marketing, including the film's distribution, exhibition, studio marketing departments, etc., all of which Lukow and Ricci (1984) have described as the film's 'inter-textual relay' (which also includes the credit/title sequences). Primarily, the impact of the focus on the inter-textual relay is that the history of a genre term, such as 'Horror', is as much a history of the term itself as it is of the film to which that term is being applied.

However, this very prohibition against academic 'meddling' with industry categories fails to take into account much of what I have been arguing in this study: that, as Zanger observes, "no 'meta-version' exists" (2006:123), cinematic marketing is just as subject to repression and unconscious wish-fulfilment as any other discourse. In fact, I would go so far as to state that instead of inhibiting my designation of the irrational remake, the fact that these films were never marketed as such actually *contributes further to their irrationality*; if it were marketed as a remake, it would cease to be irrational. These are unconscious repetitions and after all, why not? I have been giving evidence throughout this thesis both diachronically and synchronically to prove that remaking far exceeds all industry categorisations. This is where Zanger's disguised remake shows limitations that our irrational model will not: her structuralist model is ill-equipped to deal with the unconscious, the common complaint of the deconstructionist. To submit to Tudor's view above is effectively to close doors, and to argue

that meticulous historical research into production and marketing are our only options for categorisation. Otherwise, we can go the way of the deconstructionist and look to the Derridean deferral of meaning, the proliferation of endless signification giving way to ambiguity and formlessness. For the Lacanian, there is always a third option, one which actually recalls Michel Foucault's sense of a textual 'episteme' (*épistémè*), wherein the work is positioned in relation to the dialogues which shaped it, as well as those into which it entered and by turns, shaped. These texts mark a discursive break, a point at which history shifted. For Foucault, the historian always partly constructs his or her subject matter, thus when the remake enters a semiotic field it is necessarily disturbed, made problematic, something that cannot be wholly reduced to marketing factors.

Let us reframe this debate using our terminator metaphor, for when Kyle Reese and John Conner, in *The Terminator* and *T2* respectively, announce (with clear Marxist overtones) that "The future's not set. There's no fate but what we make for ourselves", we get our first möbius entanglement crucial to ruining the view that *T2* is nothing more than a sequel. With this declaration, John Conner is quoting from his mother, who learned the words from Kyle Reese (John's biological father) in the original movie. While this seems to suggest that these films relate to one another as sequels (with crucial knowledge being passed from the former to the latter), the filmic chain radically loops back on itself when we remember that in the original, Kyle was himself quoting from a speech he learned from John in the future. Thus the suturing point for this möbius band, if we collapse it, is John quoting himself – not from the past – but *from the future*. Once again we find ourselves in Lynchian territory, where the meaningless phrase returns from the future to bring into effect, the actions of the past. As such, our first job is to reverse the phrase, and translate the speech into Lacanese, rendering it as "The past is not set, there is no history but what we make for ourselves in the future." In remake terms, this sense is clear even in the most elementary of dimensions: for example, to return to our case studies, we cannot simply say that Van Sant's *Psycho* had no effect on Hitchcock's original, or that *The Vanishing* had no effect on *Spoorloos* (we can even satisfy the film historian on this count by indicating the re-marketing of the original, etc.).

However, this analysis is still rooted in Bergson's matter, or the remake equivalent of Deleuze's 'movement-image'. How do we move on to engage with memory, or the remake *in memoriam* (the connotations of death are appropriate here)? One remake theorist committed to showing that the original is not fixed, but is disturbed by its remaking through time, is Robert Eberwein, who uses the *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* as an example. However, while Eberwein seems dedicated to introducing some much-needed temporal fluidity to remake criticism, he begins by stating that he will *not* address Abel Ferrara's *Body Snatchers* remake because "it will remain for later critics to look back and speculate on the condition of reception for the film in a way that I am convinced we really can't since we are inside the

historical and cultural moment” (1998:16). Quite apart from confirming my earlier thesis that this is a film largely ignored in the *Invasion* series in critical opinion, Eberwein has also slightly missed the point here, despite otherwise producing an excellent analysis of the earlier films in the series. Our reproach to Eberwein should be that in reactivating the semiotic field of the earlier *Invasion* films, Ferrara’s remake *disturbs the spatio-temporality of the original versions as well*. It effectively proves that the “historical and cultural moment” is not set. One cannot simply separate these texts out from one another: just as it is inconceivable that one can speak of a remake without addressing its original, it is my thesis that *we can no longer speak of originals without addressing their remakes*.

Eberwein almost says as much in his introduction when he writes that “in one sense, the original *is* a fixed entity. But in another sense it is not”. He then goes on to provide the familiar qualification: “please understand that I am *not* arguing that a return to the original will necessarily yield a ‘new’ meaning in the film” (1998:15). My question is: Why not? Eberwein himself says that “a remake is a kind of reading or rereading of the original. To follow this reading or rereading, we have to interrogate not only our own conditions of reception but also to return to the original and reopen the question of its reception” (1998:15). However, unless meaning is unequivocally ‘fixed’ this point becomes rather moot, for the text is not fixed, but always embryonic in its proliferation of hidden streams of meaning that posit and re-posit the viewer at every turn, pushing into new spaces and times.

However, as I keep stressing, it is not my desire to get lost in a poststructuralist proliferation of deferred meaning, hence the absence of Derrida from my bibliography. Rather, if we return to *T2*, I want to show how the original *is* fixed by its sequelisation/remaking; how definitive meaning can and is produced but repressed at the site of its reproduction. *T2* provides another example that reflects its own dynamic textual status at the level of plot and story, for another striking quotation replicated across the two versions is Sarah Conner’s discussion about John’s paternal origins. In the original, Sarah speaks to her unborn son via a tape-recorder, asking “Should I tell you about your father? That’s a tough one. Will it change your decision to send him here... knowing? But if you don’t send Kyle, you could never be. God, you can go crazy thinking about all this”. Lacan writes that “it counts, it is counted, and the one who counts is already included in the account” (1998:20), as in the anecdote about a child who says that “*I have three brothers, Paul, Ernest and me*”. Lacan is keen to observe that the mistake here is to assume that the child is wrong, for “it is quite natural – first the three brothers, Paul, Ernest and I are counted, and then there is I at the level at which I am to reflect the first I, that is to say, the I who counts” (1998:20). Sarah Conner has, of course, forgotten to include herself in the equation here, of her own reconstruction as the maternal original, and this is exactly the minimal difference between the original and the irrational remake: first we have the original which has X versions (including

itself) and second we have 'it', the original as an event with an underlying being capable of producing more than it knows. Recall, for example, how Elsaesser (2001) distinguishes between the 'text' of *Psycho* and the 'event' of *Psycho*. In true remakes the subject does not 'overlook' its own inclusion in the 'text' of the film, and as Lacan writes, "one only has to be aware of the fact to find oneself outside it" (1977:vii), such that in *knowingly* counting oneself, *one removes oneself from the counted*; if nothing is overlooked and the remake knows it is a remake, then in knowing, it is, as Lacan writes, in error; that is, it becomes ignorant of the symbolic fiction ('text') which sustains it (as 'event').

The difference between Sarah Conner's message in the original *Terminator* and the message in *T2* is this same minimal difference between the subject who is counted and the subject who counts, hence why the message in the original is a recording addressed to a future subject within the diegesis, the 'little other' literally waiting to be born. By contrast, the message in the sequel is addressed to none other than the symbolic order itself, the non-diegetic 'big Other' to whom voice-overs are always addressed in film:

Watching John with the machine, it was suddenly so clear. The terminator wouldn't stop, it would never leave him. It would never hurt him or shout at him or get drunk and hit him or say it was too busy to spend time with him. And it would die to protect him. Of all the would-be-fathers that came over the years, this thing, this machine, was the only thing that measured up. In an insane world, it was the sanest choice.

We should note the radical shift also from Kyle Reese as the father of the original message to the T-800 as the father of this new message (adding new meaning to Lacan's "There where it was, it is my duty that I should come into being", 'it' being the machine). In the original message, Reese is the dead, or *symbolic*, father internalised only as the memory of his name, which in Oedipal terms recalls the fact that John sent his own father to his death. In the revised message it is Kyle's murderer, the T-800, who is idealised as a Lacanian *imaginary* father, one who is either an ideal or an evil cruel agent who imposes His Will (like a God), "ruining the child" (Lacan, 1992:308). Is it any wonder that John is thrown hopelessly into Platonic confusion in *T2*?* However, if we reverse the designations, the message still makes sense, for we can also consider Kyle as an *imaginary* father and the T-800 as a *symbolic* father. This is no progression but a flow of pure becoming, as Deleuze would say, where the T-800 is a being-for-death, whose termination in the original film established the framework enabling Cyberdyne Systems to initiate 'Skynet' (after the company recover its processor and skeletal arm protruding from a compactor). It is significant that Kyle Reese's last words are

* Suffice it to recall that one of *T2*'s trailers features a production line of T-800s all bearing Schwarzenegger's image. The trailer was created specifically to differentiate between the old evil T-800 and the new one without, of course, spoiling the fact that the new version is *good*.

“Come on, motherfucker!”, for as Constance Penley points out, *he* is actually the mother-fucker (1993:69). Kyle is what Lacan would call a pure ‘fucker’, since while he explicitly ‘fucks’ Sarah Conner, he is coded as an inexperienced (virginal) and boyish lover being initiated by a maternal woman, rather than a potential father. This continual traversal of the two fathers is cemented by the (possibly apocryphal) rumour that James Cameron’s initial proposal for the casting of the two terminators in the sequel was for Michael Biehn to return alongside Schwarzenegger as the ‘bad’ T-1000. This plot twist would have been perfect for the Deleuzo-Lacanian film theorist, resonating clearly with the dual figure of the evil/good neighbour.

Just as our *Alien* facehugger metaphor demonstrated a sexualised maternal Thing impregnating new versions with *jouissance*, this new *Terminator* metaphor demonstrates a desexualised paternal Law positing the original as such. We can see this in Sarah Conner’s move from Kyle Reese to the T-800, which illustrates that she has learned a valuable lesson regarding all good and evil fathers. At first Sarah is horrified at the sight of the T-800, although her horror is not that it is somehow the same old evil *version* from the original movie, but that the earlier *model* was arbitrarily coded as evil in the first place, while this version – the same model but different version – is good. Recall Žižek’s point concerning Madeleine in *Vertigo* as destabilising, not the reproduction of the perfect form (that Scottie cannot dress Judy perfectly enough as a version of Madeleine), but the *form itself* (that there is something wrong with the very model of Madeleine). We have the same problem with remakes in that we misrecognise the original forms and make no distinction between the ‘version’ and the ‘model’. Thus it is not the disguised remake itself which is irrational, but the process of remaking in this particular way that recodes the original content as irrationally motivated, as containing a drive that we cannot simply attribute to Hollywood avarice. Ultimately, the remake is not unlike the opposition between John Conner and Kyle Reese, both as father and son in a möbius entanglement that can only be severed by the T-800: as the French say, it is the sense of ‘*peut être et avoir été*’ (‘to be and have been’), to which we need only make a small addition, which is: ‘to come and have come (that is, ‘arrive’ in both senses of Freud’s *Wo es war*)’.

Why is the irrational remake irrational? From the simulacra-phantasm to the copy-icon in the primal scene

The key here is, as ever, the topology of the möbius band and its supplement is the radical dimension of the Thing which curves its space. We should read the original T-800’s severed arm from the original as the *objet petit a*, the object of *jouissance* that instigates everything

(including itself). It is no coincidence that, as a complementary metaphor to the facehugger from *Alien*, they look remarkably similar; does not the alien also posit its own existence? To cement this unholy unity between the metaphors of the T-800 and the facehugger, we need only recall Dan O'Bannon's description of the latter as responsible for "alien interspecies rape", and the fact that the terminator's penetration of Sarah's thigh in the original has been described as "a kind of cold rape" (cited in Penley, 1993:66). In one scene from *T2* the T-800 convinces Miles Dyson (Joe Morton) – the unwitting architect of Cyberdyne Systems – that the holocaust of the human race is a future reality by slicing the skin from its hand and arm, revealing the metallic endoskeleton beneath.



Fig. 4.1: Terminator bone in *T2*

This deliciously abject moment nicely reminds us of the unstoppable mechanistic life teeming beneath the living façade in an underrated moment worthy of Lynch at his best (the similarities between the mechanistic movements and sinewy tensions of the arm and *Blue Velvet*'s opening scene where we move from sunny flowers to the crawling insects under the penetrating gaze of the microscopic shot is uncanny in itself). Recall Lacan's description from chapter 1 of the *lamella* ten years prior to the filming of *Alien* and how tantalisingly close it comes to also describing the alien facehugger. The same description also seems to express the evil terminator in this series also (especially the T-1000's liquid constitution). It is worth repeating part of that description:

It is the libido, *qua* pure life instinct, that is to say, immortal life, or irrepressible life, life that has no need of organ, simplified, indestructible life. It is precisely what is subtracted from the living being by virtue of the fact that it is subject to the cycle of sexed reproduction (Lacan, 1998:198).

The uncanny horror in this scene is not brought about by the transition from human flesh to metallic bone, but, rather, the fact that just beneath the skin there resides a pure substance that seems to be more alive than life itself. Put simply, while the T-800 is stripping away the living tissue revealing the undead metal beneath, it is in fact this metallic structure that represents the shiny, pure life of *jouissance*, of enjoyment-as-suffering. Any relief in the face of *jouissance* (relief say, in terminating a terminator), is undercut by the fact that this destruction only leads to more life (that one termination plants the seed for other – more sophisticated – terminators to follow).

But there is more here concerning remakes when we consider the machinic quality of Lacan's description from above, a quality that the facehugger metaphor only partially embodies. The key is Lacan's evocation of the Aristotelian '*tuché*', or what he calls the encounter with the Real. Lacan writes that in order to fully appreciate Aristotle's *tuché* we must first master the important distinction between Freud's sense of 'reproduction' ('*reproduzieren*') and his sense of 'repetition' ('*wiederholen*'), which are frequently conflated as concepts. Paolo Cherchi Usai makes the distinction between reproduction and repetition in film, noting that

the assumption is that the spectator is indifferent to the fact that the moving image is derived from a matrix, and believes in the possibility of seeing it again under the same conditions as previously. From that standpoint, as much as in oral literature, cinema is not based on reproduction. It is an art of repetition (2001:59).

In remake terms, repetition first appears in a form that is obscured, that is not self-evident, and which designates itself as 'other'. Lacan writes that "nothing has been more enigmatic than this *Wiederholen*, which is very close, so the most prudent etymologists tell us, to the verb 'to haul' (*haler*) [...] very close to a *hauling* of the subject" (1998:50-1). Indeed, this sense of being hauled into being (across time), of there being a moment at which the subject becomes what it always was, depends on a repetition of this traumatic act. The trouble with remakes is that this *tuché*, this encounter with the Real, is disguised by the *automaton*, the mechanical reproduction, '*reproduzieren*', at the level of the symbolic. It is, however, no less subjected to this sense of being hauled into being (suffice it to recall Schwarzenegger's catchphrase, "I'll be back", in which he is not just 'back', but back from the dead).

I propose that every original film retroactively established as such, contains such a *tuché* concealed within an *automaton*, that is, a repetition concealed inside a reproduction which is homologous with it. It is our goal to strip away the false 'flesh' (which is just a disguise), and reveal the bare mechanical workings of *jouissance* beneath the skin. However, this terminator metaphor must be viewed as having a contingent, and constantly evolving,

relationship to time. In the flesh strip-scene mentioned above, the shock is not that of the Dyson family seeing metal where they expected bone, but of the spectator him/herself seeing metal *where they expected metal*. It is the shock of seeing what we knew was there but had disavowed from reality. In everyday life this is the same difference between seeing meat that has been shaved, gutted, and packaged in a supermarket and seeing it hanging on a hook in an abattoir; it is the same meat only presented in a manner to which we are not accustomed. This is why the irrational remake is a kind of *revenge* (it is enough, of course, to find a simple animal hair in our meat, let alone some bone or a piece of shot).

While our zombie metaphor seems more appropriate than ever, it is a mistake to forget the ghost metaphor here, for in sharp contrast to the machinic rebirth of the T-800 in this series of films, Robert Patrick's T-1000 can blend into the crowd with a spectral non-presence as the ultimate embodiment of the pure thing. In sharp contrast to Schwarzenegger's unwieldiness, Patrick is lithe, an everyman seemingly capable of being literally any-*thing* (including Sarah Conner's *doppelgänger* at the end of the film). Here, we are not faced with the classic "ghost in the machine" but the reverse: it is the *machine in the ghost*, which Žižek writes of in another context: "there is *no* plotting agent behind it, the machine just runs by itself, as a blind contingent device" (2008d:6). Does not the film's tagline "It's nothing personal" (intended as a pun on the common action tagline of the 1980s and 90s, "This time, it's personal") confirm this? Ultimately, the remake could have the same motto, that there is nothing personal in its attack on the original, but, rather, it is merely the realisation of a motiveless, machinic insistence devoid of moralistic functioning. This is why we need the terminator metaphor as the counterpart to the facehugger metaphor; one or the other will not do, for just as the terminator has an organic aesthetic disguising a machinic being, so too does the facehugger have a machinic aesthetic disguising an organic being. By extension, the zombie is both pure dripping flesh and machinic insistence, and the ghost is both pure spectral insistence and the remainder of an absent corporeality. We can easily move from Freud's *reproduzieren* to his *wiederholen* by imagining some remake twists on Benjamin's 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', including: 'The Remake in the Age of Mechanical Repetition'...

On a 'making of' documentary (2000), James Cameron stated that the Universal Studios ride 'T2 3-D: Battle Across time' was "a stepping stone to a third theatrical production" (2000) of the Terminator franchise, a film he fully intended to direct. However, soon after, Cameron declined the chance to direct *Terminator 3*, stating that he had "never planned on doing a third film, because the story was finished with T2" (2000). While it seems on the surface as though Cameron is implying that the story was finished with *T2* because across the two films he fully explored these themes, on the contrary, we should read his statement as meaning that he explored the issues fully only after he remade the original and

established the möbius loop. *T2* is thus what Deleuze would call a copy-icon, a positive repetition that reveals the hidden content in the original left unarticulated. The subsequent *Terminator* sequels (*Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines*, *Terminator Salvation*, and proposed others in pre-production) are merely what Deleuze would call simulacra-phantasms, ‘bad copies’ that efface the Newness of the original concept. Instead, these simulacra-phantasms favour a degraded return to some secondary process revealing nothing, but concealing a distinct lack of surface-depth. What is perhaps most depressing about the most recent version, *Terminator Salvation* (2009), is that it had a really good premise: that of a human (Sam Worthington) who is actually transformed into a machine that has no conception of itself as a machine but still believes itself to be human. Unfortunately, this premise was lost in a haze of explosions and missiles, such that its ‘*Blade Runner*-esque’ depth was reduced to a simple Hitchcockian MacGuffin, what Žižek would call a vanishing mediator. See how this distinction between the copy-icon and the simulacra-phantasm runs along a knife’s edge?

While it seems as though I agree with Deleuze’s condemnation of the simulacra-phantasm, I must stress that this does not mean that we should stop considering them, for they nonetheless aid us in finding the irrational remakings. Žižek notes that when Plato dismisses art as copies of copies and introduces three ontological levels (ideas, their material copies, and copies of these copies), “what gets lost is that the Idea can emerge only in the distance that separates our ordinary material reality (second level) from its copy” (2004a:160). Thus for Žižek, when we copy a material object we are copying the object’s Idea, not the object itself. “It is similar”, continues Žižek, “with a mask that engenders a third reality, a ghost in the mask that is not the face hidden beneath it [...] the Idea is something that *appears* when reality (the first-level copy/imitation of the Idea) is itself copied” (2004a:160). Here, Žižek is suggesting that we must look to that which is in the copy, in excess of the original. Deleuze is keen to emphasise that Platonism is reversed when the simulacrum rises to the level of the icon and copy, leading to that Nietzschean ‘Twilight of the Idols’ which “denies *the original and the copy, the model and the reproduction*” (2009b:299). In the face of such a rising phantasm, the model simply ceases to *be*.

In light of this critical failure of the idol, perhaps we should suggest that the logical counterpart to *The Terminator* films is Robert Zemeckis’s *Back to the Future* (1985), for if the *Terminator* series is concerned with the (re)construction of paternal authority, the latter is concerned with the (de)construction of maternal desire. One of Freud’s most scandalous propositions was that as babies we develop our sexuality via our mother’s touch: “she strokes him [the child], rocks him and quite clearly treats him as a substitute for a complete sexual object” (Freud, 2001:222). In an inversion of John Conner’s situation, *Back to the Future*’s protagonist, Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox), travels back to the past himself, and in the process he manages to erase his own history by interrupting a ‘quilting’ moment between his

future mother and father. In a calamitous situation, Marty replaces his father as the object of his mother's affection and actually ruins his father's own chances with her. Whereas John Conner sends his own father back to the past to create the framework for the event of his being, Marty McFly removes his father from the past to destroy this seminal ('semen'-al) framework. Instead, Marty supplants his father as the object of his mother's desire. Constance Penley argues that the success of this otherwise "banal and clumsily made" (1993:67) film is down to its construction of a formative desire articulated by Freud as the primal scene, or, as Penley puts it, the theme: "what would it be like to go back in time and give birth to oneself?" (1993:68). For Freud, the primal scene occurs when a child hears his or her parents having sex and thus is catapulted both into the scene of his or her conception, *and the sex scene itself*. Penley points out that the clue is in *Back to the Future's* TV advert, which boasted a tale about "The first kid to get into trouble before he was ever born" (1993:68); while this may be true, Marty McFly does not even come close to the kinds of trouble that John Conner gets into before he was ever born.

Both of the incestuous bonds in these films fulfill the same historical requirement, where, in traveling to the past, the protagonist becomes what he always-already was; that is, he realises the 'destiny' he was already living.* The remake functions in precisely the same analogous way, both as the paternal drive towards self-destruction and the supplanting of the original, and as the maternal self-preservationist/restorative desire for the original. Lacan wrote that "things which mean nothing all of a sudden signify something, but in a quite different domain" (1988:158), and it is my thesis that it is only when the repetition inherent to the original is properly activated in a copy-icon that it is recognised as a 'great' film, which returns to Linda Ruth Williams discussion of textual *Nachträglichkeit*. Did not *Psycho* and *Spoorloos* experience something of a delay in being recognised as a classic and cult films respectively? Suffice it to recall that, upon being asked his opinion on the impact of the French Revolution of 1789, the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai simply replied that "It was far too early to tell". These are not simply Platonic copies of copies in a Warholian negation of their originals but the ultimate establishment of the Great Original itself, the establishing of the big original Idea.

But why is this irrational remake irrational? The psychoanalytic answer is provided by Sebastian Gardner, who describes psychoanalytic 'irrationality' as being exhibited when a subject does not

* In the same way as the ideal version of *Terminator 2* would have been for Michael Biehn – John's real father in the original – to return as his destroyer alongside Schwarzenegger in the reversed role, would not the perfect Oedipalisation of *Back to the Future* be where Marty McFly, unbeknownst to him, actually *did* consummate the relationship with his mother (preferably in the back-seat of the DeLorean)?

think about himself in a way that would both make adequate sense of his own thoughts and/or action, and at the same time avoid exhibiting incompleteness, incoherence, inconsistency, lapse into unintelligibility, or some other defect of a void to signify, in a suitably broad sense, *self contradiction*” (1993:3-4).

For Gardner, the irrational subject of psychoanalysis is one who fails the test of self-confrontation, one who is unable either to justify or explain him or herself, or else in attempting to do so, betrays a failure of self-knowledge (in other words, for Gardner, we are all irrational subjects). Ultimately, Gardner leaves us with the axiom that the subject who experiences him/herself as rational contradicts his/her own rationality. The Deleuzian approach to irrationality resonates with this, for Deleuze writes that

the cut, or interstice, between two series of images no longer forms part of either of the two series: it is the equivalent of an irrational cut, which determines the non-commensurable relations between images [...] Ultimately, there are no longer any rational cuts, but only irrational ones (2009:205-6).

This description is exactly what happens in Sarah Conner’s first meeting with the T-800 in *T2*, where audience knowledge is momentarily undermined via the time-image, or what Deleuze also called film-thinking/feeling. The irrational cut is, for Deleuze, the difference between classical and post-classical cinema, between objective film-*being* and subjective film-*thinking*, and I wish to extend this logic to the remake, and differentiate between objective remaking and subjective remaking. Let us now return (appropriately) to *Psycho* and look at two examples of irrational remaking which focus on a failure of self-knowledge, examples to be found in an unobvious part of its textual edifice: the flushing toilet.

The exploding toilet (or how to have a proper conversation with Norman Bates): The time-image in the irrational remake

Harvey Greenberg comes up with a perfect metaphor for remaking when he writes that:

In poker, when cards are poorly shuffled and redealt the result is often a ‘ghost hand.’ If the last hand was good, its ghost hand is likely to be a poor, watered-down thing better left unplayed. In their long Hollywood history, most remakes of earlier films have been ghost hands (1998:115).

There is more to Greenberg's metaphor than meets the eye here, beyond a view of the remake as a kind of shadow of a former 'hand'. That it connects to our discussion of the partial organ as ghostly remainder is appropriate to begin with, but perhaps more interesting is the implication that a weak ghost hand is somehow destined to come up following a strong one, a mathematical certainty which nonetheless appears as something uncanny, recalling Žižek's 'machine in the ghost'. Furthermore, there is in this image an appropriate Deleuzian connotation with the irrational cutting (*decoupage*) of the deck: while in the minds of the players, these cards could produce any number of complex variations, what emerges is something far more sinister, as though the dealer is somehow transcendent here.

The irrational remake is precisely this ghost hand, an interstice between an original and a remake which no longer forms part of either version, but reveals a new space for meaning in-between the two. This irrational cut is temporally contingent, as my reading of the *Terminator* films above stresses, and as such it can only be viewed in the transition from the one game to the other and back again, *not in isolation*. The 'ghost hand' is only a ghost hand if both hands are played *and* remembered in series; this is then, always a relational level of experience. To attempt to see it in a singular work is to miss the mark, to search in the wrong place – suffice it to recall the third stage of the remake process in chapter 1's analogy of the *Alien* reproductive cycle, where in analysing the dead facehugger the crew misses the fact that it has already shifted elsewhere (into the throat, the chest, the dining-room table, etc...).

Ultimately, it is Žižek who describes the ghost hand of remaking in his description of Van Sant's *Psycho* as one of only two ways do an "ideal" remake of a Hitchcock film.* For him, if one merely tries to imitate Hitchcockian sinthoms (images containing jolts of *jouissance*, for example: the shower scene), the result is "a Shakespeare Made Easy output" (Žižek, 2008c:234) – any number of true remakes could be included as examples here. According to Žižek, the first kind of 'ideal' Hitchcock remake is the recreation of its *ideal form*; that is, a shot-for-shot remake (such as Van Sant's) which replicates exactly every frame of the original in order to create an uncanny double. In this exact replica, the irreducible differences become additionally overt, rendering it all the more palpable that we are indeed dealing with an entirely different film. This is why Žižek describes Van Sant's film as a "failed masterpiece, rather than a simple failure" (2008c:234), because while it attempted to achieve this state of uncanniness, it ultimately failed to do so for the very reasons we explored in chapter 2 (the real question is whether Van Sant could ever have succeeded). To return to Greenberg's poker metaphor, we could regard this as the effect of a player who 'stacks the deck', which is to say, cheats to achieve that perfect hand again...

* While I am interested in introducing Žižek's ideas about this kind of remaking I am not keen on his word 'ideal' here, primarily because it is somewhat restrictive and over-simplified, another reason why I have suggested 'irrational'.

The second kind of 'ideal' remake is to be found elsewhere however. In fact, for Žižek, just as the first kind of proper Hitchcock remake is to be found in the most obvious places (high-profile shot-for-shot remakes, etc.), the second kind are to be found in the most *obscure* places, 'disguised', as Zanger would put it. John Orr argues something similar when he writes that Van Sant's "real attempt" to remake *Psycho* is his meditation on the 1999 Columbine High School Massacre, *Elephant* (2003), and not his actual shot-for-shot remake (2005:3). Although I do not entirely agree with him, he is thinking along the right lines here, for the 'real attempts' to remake *Psycho* are not to be found in the countless homages, pop references, and allusions. Rather, Žižek's second 'ideal' Hitchcock remake is to be found in those films which "stage", as Žižek argues, "in a well-calculated strategic move, one of the alternative scenarios that underlie the one actualized by Hitchcock, like the remake of *Notorious* in which Ingrid Bergman survives alone" (2008c:235). In this way, Žižek argues that this second type of 'ideal' remake poses a challenge to its original by realising an alternative historicity, one which radically contemporises, rather than dates, this act of filmmaking. As the definition in the epigraph to this chapter suggests, irrational numbers have an infinite and non-recurring expansion, and in the same way we are not dealing with simple recurrence in irrational remakes either. This time, rather than being in the situation of the true remaker playing a poor ghost hand following a good original hand, or the first type of ideal remaker stacking the deck, the irrational remaker need *simply play the poor, neglected hand from the previous game*, knowing full well that a poor shuffler will provide them with a good ghost hand in the next game. What would such a remake look like? Žižek offers Francis Ford Coppola's *The Conversation* (1974) as an 'ideal' version of *Psycho*, but stops short of going far enough into this example to really explore this as a remake. I propose to do this, and suggest *The Conversation* as an exemplar of irrational remaking.

So, if the irrational remake stages one of the alternative scenarios that underlie the one actualised by Hitchcock, which of *Psycho*'s unplayed scenarios is staged in *The Conversation*? The film follows professional surveillance specialist, Harry Caul (Gene Hackman), who, having stumbled on a murder plot after reconstructing a conversation between a couple in a noisy park, convinces himself that someone will soon be murdered in a hotel. He books himself into the neighbouring room, and sure enough, following the muffled sounds of an argument on the balcony adjoining the rooms and separated only by frosted glass, Harry witnesses a shadowy body thrust up against the partition with a bloody smear. Having been traumatised by what he witnesses, Harry waits long enough for the murderer to be long gone before he climbs onto the balcony of the next room to inspect it for clues that the murder has indeed taken place. Doubting his own sanity, Harry first inspects the toilet and bathroom sink for traces of blood, and then in a self-conscious allusion to *Psycho*, inspects the shower and plug-hole (see below). Breathing a sigh of relief at the lack of blood, Harry

catches sight of the toilet once more and with a clear sense of foreboding he breaks the hotel seal before pulling the toilet chain. To his horror, the water begins to cloud with blood and well up over the side, spilling on the floor and around his feet.



Fig. 4.2: *The Conversation*'s Harry Caul inspecting the plug-hole and the spewing toilet

This terrifying scene in *The Conversation* is just about the only connection to *Psycho* in an otherwise unrelated thriller, and yet the scene resonates beyond mere film quotation or allusion. Why? The focus on the plug hole of the shower followed by an exploding toilet is both distinctive and the double condemnation of habit and memory: not only is there no doubt as to which film audience members are thinking of when Harry inspects the plug-hole of the shower, but there is also no doubt as to which film Harry himself is thinking of. *Psycho* is here a part of the textual fabric of this film; not just a textual allusion for the 'knowing spectator' or allegorical wink in the direction of the film connoisseur, but a traumatic flashback to a moment of absolute unexpectedness recalling the moment of Marion's murder in the original *Psycho* itself (another 'Real' shower scene then). But why is this not simply a film quotation?

Harry's inter-textual knowledge is undermined along with the audience's, as the toilet itself becomes the focal point of the scene, overriding the shower as the usual locus. Audiences familiar with *Psycho* will almost certainly recall the shot immediately prior to the shower scene in which Marion flushes a torn-up note (on which the details of her crime are written) down the toilet. In fact, *Psycho*'s censors objected more to the shot of a flushing toilet (the first in Hollywood history) than to any of the shots in the shower scene. Thus Coppola is acknowledging not only the *semantic* link between these shots (that is, they are connected by Marion's actual murder), and the clear *visual* link (that is, the swirling of the water down the hole), but also the *historical* link. Compare the couplet above from *The Conversation* with the couplet below from *Psycho* to see the remarkable similarity:



Fig. 4.3: Water swirling down the toilet and then down the plug-hole in *Psycho*

The repetition of these images is reversed in *The Conversation*, from the direction toilet-sink to sink-toilet in much the same way as the very function of the toilet is reversed also, spewing back, as opposed to flushing away, its contents. If we follow Deleuze's lead, this reference in *The Conversation's* bathroom scene is not of the order of generality as there is no new concept being evolved here, no variation on the theme; *it has no exchange value*. Rather, *The Conversation* is extending that which is already implicit in *Psycho*, repeating the excess of the original's textuality, that is, the horror of the shot in *Psycho* of the flushing toilet leading to the demise of the film's protagonist.

The Conversation presents Harry as being quite particular (anal), as someone who enjoys cleanliness and order, bringing him into sharp alignment with Norman Bates. However, to really prove this point about the exploding toilet as the irrational repetition inherent to *Psycho*, we need only look at how this scene in *The Conversation* is subsequently reincorporated back in the *Psycho* series via the first sequel, *Psycho II*, which features a near-identical scene featuring Norman himself. One can only speculate here, but it seems a near-certainty that *Psycho II* is referencing *The Conversation's* exploding toilet in an early scene following a suspicious murder when, upon inspecting a gurgling toilet, Norman pulls the chain, which instead of flushing its contents, spills them over the floor.

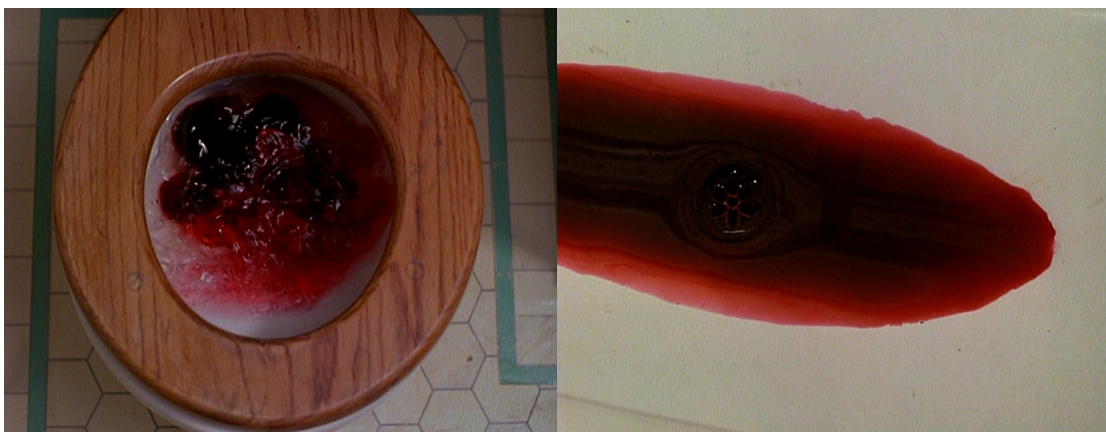


Fig. 4.4: The spewing toilet and plug-hole: *Psycho II*

This scene in *Psycho II* twists the original *Psycho* and *The Conversation* around one another in seamless homology, for this time Norman goes straight to the toilet without even bothering to check the plug-hole, as though *he had seen The Conversation*. To make matters worse for Norman, blood begins to ooze from the plug-hole in the shower also. The usual relationship between cause-and-effect here is radically disrupted as murderous secrets spill over clean white bathroom tiles to the evident surprise of the flusher.*

The exploding toilet scene is a Deleuzian ‘time-image’ *par excellence*, for as Deleuze writes, it is with the time-image that “we are plunged into time rather than crossing space” (2009:xii). What is this simple shot of an exploding toilet if not the literal ‘plunging’ of a specific cinematic time? The pure horror of the exploding toilet is matched by the pleasurable disgusting act of cleansing in which Hitchcock’s films take delight. In *Psycho II*, the blockage causing the exploding toilet is revealed to have been a bloody towel used to mop up the very murder scene Norman is investigating. If this bloody rag were not proof enough of the connection, then Hitchcock’s own idiosyncratic compulsiveness for the combination of cleanliness *and* murder completes it, especially when we combine two quotes from the director: (1) “In films murders are always very clean. I show how difficult it is and what a messy thing it is to kill a man” (2009); and (2) “When I take a bath, I put everything neatly back in place. You wouldn’t even know I’d been in the bathroom” (cited in Truffaut, 1983:260). Žižek notes how Norman’s ten-minute clean-up scene in the original *Psycho* enables the audience on the one hand to calm themselves after the shower murder, and on the other hand to start identifying with Norman via his sheer efficiency at dealing with the mess, something approaching the sense of a ‘Job well done’, or as Žižek puts it, the sense that “In a country governed by Norman, trains would certainly run on time!” (2008c:239). Hence, given this knowledge, it should have been easy to spot that Norman was not responsible for this first murder in *Psycho II*, for it is the girl, and not he, who cleans up the mess. Freud wrote that obsessive cleanliness is a component symptom of what he calls the ‘housewife’s psychosis’ (2001: 20), which post-*Psycho* must surely take on new meaning. While the cleaning of the bathroom in the original *Psycho* revels in a job well done, both *The Conversation* and *Psycho II* contain the sense that this is a bathroom that cannot be cleaned, something approaching the sense of “This mess belongs to you, so *you* clean it up!”, or, if you recall, a Lacanian murder scene.

* The turn of the ‘spewing toilet’ has featured elsewhere in cinema: in 1991’s *Sleeping with the Enemy* and 2002’s *Dirty Pretty Things*. See also in East Asian cinema, 2000’s *Seom (The Isle)*.



Fig. 4.5: Norman Bates sympathises with Harry Caul inspecting a spewing toilet

Thus in these irrational remakings of *Psycho*, the spewed contents of the toilet are what Lacan would call *lamellae*; irreducible remainders constituting a terrifying *jouissance* embodied in our ‘Thing’ metaphors of the alien facehugger and the exposed arm of the T-800. These fissures in the symbolic are not caused by the intrusion of the Real, but are the gaps in the symbolic fabric itself, or what we might call ‘flushed unflushables’ (after Žižek’s ‘unknown knows’ – the knowledge which does not know itself). Whereas the fetishised shower scene is a synecdochic ‘part’ standing in for the whole, this irrational toilet scene is a part standing in for the *hole*, or its repressed content. We should supplement Linda Ruth Williams’s statement that some films make “you question the terms under which you proceed to make sense of [them]...” (1995:145), with “...and their originals”, for while the true remake idealises and annihilates in a single gesture of Oedipal contingency, these irrational remakes do not. Rather, the latter seek to affect both themselves and their originals by disturbing the fields into which the broadly defined ‘events’ of these texts are situated and historicised. Therefore, if the hysteric is split in precisely the way of the true remake, perhaps then these irrational remakes provide an alternative remake experience, one that escapes the discourse of the remake as an industry category altogether (and thus the criticism that follows).

The perfect image of this irrational return is actually contained in the toilet handle itself, which Žižek sees in parallel with the red button in science fiction novels which, when pushed, causes the end of the universe, the knowledge of which compels the protagonist even more to push the button (why else would Harry Caul flush the toilet?). Žižek writes that the toilet bowl here is an object “which simultaneously attracts and repels the subject, [and] can be said to be the point from which the inspected setting returns the gaze (is it not that the hero is somehow regarded by the toilet sink?)” (2008c:236). It is most pertinent to our argument here to note that Coppola is *not* what we might call a ‘Hitchcockian’ director. In fact, his style is markedly closer to European directors such as Michelangelo Antonioni, whose *Blowup*

(1966) was cited by Coppola to have been his main influence (1974). That the plots of both *Blowup* and *The Conversation* rely on a small imperceptible detail in a recording marks them out as having a very different style to Hitchcock, who relied for his plot devices on the ‘MacGuffin’, which he famously described as “actually nothing at all” (cited in Truffaut, 1983:138), simply an element introduced to activate the narrative. By contrast, the *mise-en-scène* in Antonioni and Coppola’s films are fascinatingly perverse; not nothing, but something (literally some-*Thing*).

Of course, this simple opposition misses the point, for Hitchcock clearly does have a perverse fascination with his *mise-en-scène*, only these are elements that seem to stick-out from the plot, to have apparently no relation whatsoever to the forwarding of the narrative. Examples include the scene in the remake of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, when Benjamin McKenna (James Stewart) struggles to eat his food in a Moroccan restaurant without a knife and fork and clearly dislikes getting his hands dirty (this is further enhanced when it is pointed out to him that the left hand only is used to eat, the right being reserved for more private matters). *Topaz* (1969) is another example in the scene where an official diplomatic document is stained by the grease from a sandwich. Both are small details that take on an extraordinary significance of pleasurable disgust for our protagonists. If we take Hitchcock at his word that the MacGuffin is ‘nothing’, the question arises as to why it is these elements that remakers tend to focus on, and not the other, pleasurable disgusting elements which tend to be left out? Is this not where the Idea of the film is located? What is the significance of *Psycho*’s MacGuffin of the \$40,000 compared to the toilet handle flushing Marion’s life down the drain? The \$40,000 is sunk into the swamp along with Marion’s car when Norman fails to notice it. One can only wonder why Van Sant updates the amount of money in the remake to \$400,000 when it seems the choice is clear: one should either remake ‘as Hitchcock’, and stick to the amount of \$40,000; or else one should remake as someone else (Antonioni/Coppola) and focus on the toilet handle (or equivalent ‘alternative scenario’).

There is more evidence for considering the toilet as *Psycho*’s ‘symptom’ in the film’s trailer, in which Hitchcock gives a guided tour of the Bates Motel while alluding to the horrific “mess” with a grimace (but giving nothing away). When he reaches cabin #1 Hitchcock says: “cleaned all this up now – big difference. You should have seen the blood. The whole place... Well, it’s too horrible to describe...” Then, he regards the toilet and, picking up the lid, states that “A very important clue was found here [looking in]... *down there*.” In much the same way that Norman struggles to say the word “shower” when showing Marion around in the film, Hitchcock here struggles with the word “toilet” in the trailer. For Žižek, the domain to where excrement vanishes after a toilet is flushed is a metaphor for the horrifyingly sublime ‘beyond’ of the primordial, pre-ontological chaos into which things of a different order (that is, shit) disappear. He writes that “although we rationally know what goes

on with the excrement, the imaginary mystery nonetheless persists: shit remains an excess that does not fit our daily reality” (Žižek, 2008c:238). Lacan was right then to claim that we make the transition from animal to human only when we problematise the issue of disposing with our waste. For Žižek, it is the drain itself that is horrifying in *Psycho*, not what comes out of it, but the passage into a different ontological order, a black circle framed by porcelain white, like Malevich’s black and white squares. Žižek describes this space as a “topological hole or torsion that bends the space of our reality so that we perceive/imagine excrement as disappearing into an alternative dimension that is not part of our everyday reality” (2008c:238). As an irrational remaking, the scene from *The Conversation* simply reverses the direction in which this reality flows in *Psycho*, for instead of moving from the clean flushing toilet to the bloody plug-hole in the shower, it moves from the clean plug-hole in the shower to the bloody spewing toilet.

The big question still remains: on what level does this type of remaking differ from the other types seen in my case studies? Well, *Psycho* and *Spoorloos* are not signifiers but *symptoms*, and, according to Lacan, the symptom is always a sign *intended for someone*. “The signifier”, Lacan writes, “being something quite different [to the symptom], represents a subject for another signifier” (1998:157). This formulation is crucial to the irrational remake, for what is it if not a subject for another signifier? We must amend our formulation that the toilet is *Psycho*’s ‘symptom’ then to it being *Psycho*’s ‘signifier’, for here we get a message addressed only to another signifier (linking *The Conversation* and *Psycho II*). On a larger scale, is this the traversal then from the remake-as-symptom to the remake-as-signifier? Can we not posit a text like *À bout de souffle* as being a specifically French subject for the signifier of American *film noir*, and, specifically, Humphrey Bogart? *The Conversation* is a love letter to *Psycho* with all the menace of Frank’s description of the love letter in *Blue Velvet*, or Lacan’s conception of love as evil. However, what the irrational remake cannot be is a symptom; it can ‘stand-in’ for the symptom only; it can be the signifier of the shower-scene-as-fetish, or what we might designate as a truly *new cinematic subject*.

Žižek writes that when such elements erupt for the first time they are “experienced as a contingent trauma, as an intrusion of a certain non-symbolized Real; only through repetition is this event recognized in its symbolic necessity” (2008a: 64-5). One even wonders if *Psycho*’s censors objected to the flushing toilet before or *after* they had been shocked by the shower murder... Either way, they were right to object, although probably for the wrong reasons. The right reason to regard the flushing toilet as a problematic image, and our final proof that focusing on the exploding toilet is an irrational way to remake *Psycho*, is actually contained in the image of the swamp at the end of *Psycho*, for the real problem is that the flushing toilet is just a smaller version of a much bigger shit hole. It is here that we find another film which irrationally remakes *Psycho*, a film which returns to *Psycho*’s final image

of Marion's car being retracted from the swamp while oozing a putrid-looking sludge. Our work on the time-image will be challenged here more than ever, for this is a *Psycho* remake that was made in 1955, *five years before the release of the original*.

Swamp 'Thing': Diabolical *jouissance* in the irrational remake

When Norman threw what he believed to be nothing more than an old newspaper into the boot of Marion's car just prior to sinking it into a swamp, *Psycho* audiences held their breath thinking he may miss the \$40,000 wrapped inside. Shortly after, this apprehension was superseded by another, contradictory intake of breath when that same car *failed to sink*. Hitchcock was right when he observed that audiences were secretly pleased when the car containing Marion's corpse finally sank at the end of Norman's 'clean-up'. Indeed, *Psycho* audiences begin their identification with Norman almost immediately, feeling nervous for him as we might a thief in a museum attempting to avoid tripping the alarm. We thus become complicit in two crimes: firstly as an extension of our sympathy for Marion's theft, and secondly as our sympathy for Norman's erasure of his 'mother's' crime. Clearly, the shift from the one to the other takes place almost instantaneously, from having a vested interest in the car's contents, to praying along with Norman that it will sink. It is at the point at which Norman 'flushes' Marion's car that the money is all but forgotten, and the transition from Marion to Norman as subjective locus is complete. Having lost the main subjective point-of-view already, the degree to which audiences *need* Norman to succeed here is exemplary, such that if the car does not sink, \$40,000 or no, things will be bad for everyone... The sense of 'not sinking' is to be equated with the sense of 'not flushing' here, and this is why both Harry and Norman never recover from their trauma of the exploding toilet: in *The Conversation*, Harry already had to break the hotel's paper 'seal' to inspect it, confirming that it had already been cleaned, and in *Psycho II*, Norman discovers that the very object used to clean the crime scene is the cause of the exploding toilet. In both instances, the trauma of the exploding toilet is compounded by the fact that it previously looked clean.*

At the beginning of this chapter I suggested that the irrational remake extended *both* back into the past and reached forward into the future, so if *The Conversation* is reaching back to *Psycho*, which version reaches toward it? The answer is Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Les Diaboliques* (1955), a film much discussed for foreshadowing the shower scene in what was retroactively called the 'bath scene'. The film takes place in a boarding school run by a

* Is the exact reverse of this not true in *Trainspotting*, where Renton (Ewan McGregor) plunges headfirst into a toilet of shit to find his heroin suppositories and, after a fantasy sequence in which he swims in a Clearwater pool, emerges inexplicably clean where we expected him to be filthy?

sadistic headmaster, Michel Delassalle (Paul Meurisse), who physically and psychologically abuses his wife, Christina Delassalle (Vera Clouzot), until she and his mistress, Nicole Horner (Simone Signoret), decide to murder him. Using the pretence of a divorce to lure Michel into a remote village, the two drug and drown him in a bathtub and dump his body in the school's neglected swimming pool which has formed a thick layer of scum, in the hope that the police will assume he drunkenly fell in and drowned. However, when the pool is drained the following morning the body is gone, and Christina begins to have heart problems. The problems continue as the deceased headmaster's ghostly image appears throughout the school, and sightings of him are reported in the town. Is Michel alive, dead, or *undead*? One night, Christina hears noises and when she goes to investigate the bathroom she finds her husband's corpse in the tub. Suddenly, the corpse moves, rising from the tub with a blank lifeless stare. Christina dies of shock and the 'dead' headmaster removes fake contact lenses from his eyes before revealing Nicole's complicity with him in faking his death to procure the rights to the school, which Christina owned.

There is a story that Hitchcock once received a letter from an angry father who complained that after seeing *Les Diaboliques*, his daughter refused to take a bath, and that now, following the release of *Psycho*, she refused to shower. Hitchcock's advice was: "Send her to the dry cleaners!" (2009). Is there not a sense that *Les Diaboliques* is retroactively established as having opened some cinematic space awaiting the inscription of *Psycho* five years later? Žižek considers the issue of the precursor when he cites Borges as illustrating that Kafka is present in a multitude of precursors from old Chinese authors to Robert Browning. However, "if Kafka had not written we would not perceive it; that is to say, it would not exist... Each writer *creates* his precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future" (cited in Žižek, 2004:112). For Žižek, the dialectical solution to the dilemma of "Is it really there, in the source, or did we only read it into the source?" is that it is always there, but we must perceive this retroactively, from a later perspective, and that this is the *sine qua non* of real freedom (2004a:113). Following the release of *Psycho*, *Les Diaboliques* emerges as one of its precursors waiting to be reinscribed. This is cinematic repetition in advance, right down to the scene where Christina dies of shock and pulls a net curtain off its rail in a symmetrical mirroring of Marion's death throes where she pulls the shower curtain off its rail.

I am certainly not trying to contend that Hitchcock was in some way ignorant of *Les Diaboliques*, or that it had no influence on his filming of *Psycho*. Such a view is simply incorrect, for a well-known anecdote tells of Hitchcock's frustration at losing out on the rights to the novel from which *Les Diaboliques* came – Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac's *Celle qui n'était plus* (*The Woman Who Was No More*) – by a matter of hours. That *Les Diaboliques* earned Clouzot the title of 'The French Hitchcock' only reinforces that

Hitchcock would have almost certainly viewed Clouzot as competition, if not a rival. In addition, Robert Bloch, the author of *Psycho*, is even quoted as having said of the adaptation of his book into a film that “there was hardly anyone else in the world I would have preferred to Hitchcock, except Henri-Georges Clouzot, who had done *Les Diaboliques*” (cited in Rebello, 1998:191). Clearly, there is a mutual drawing of inspiration from both directors here, but we nonetheless cannot help but feel as though Clouzot had somehow seen *Psycho* before making *Les Diaboliques*. Anat Zanger suggests another precursor to *Psycho* when she notes that the murder scene in Fritz Lang’s *While the City Sleeps* (1956) bears “an astonishing resemblance” to *Psycho*’s shower scene. “Hitchcock’s film however”, Zanger notes, “has acquired the status of the ‘original’ – everything else is an imitation” (2006:20), *even if it were released before*. This is the true meaning of a film’s ‘event’, one whose repetition is not only guaranteed in the cinematic future but also in its past. This seems to be anticipated in the opening scenes of *Psycho* in which the specific date and time are recorded, a historical baptism of sorts that Van Sant updated (he added “1998” to his version).

Žižek uses the example of the sinking of the Titanic in 1912, stating that “it was a shock, ‘the impossible happened’, the unsinkable ship had sunk; but the point is that precisely as a shock, this sinking arrived at its proper time – ‘the time was waiting for it’: even before it actually happened” (2008a:74). The traumatic ‘Thing’, or stain of the Real, can only become a symbolic event in this way, for “when it erupts for the first time it is experienced as a contingent trauma, as an intrusion of a certain non-symbolized Real; only through repetition is this event recognized in its symbolic necessity” (2008a: 64-5). Deleuze argues a similar line in *The Logic of Sense* when he suggests a crucial difference between ‘frozen scenes’ and ‘repetition’, writing that

the body is reflected in language: the characteristic of language is *to take back into* itself the frozen scene, to make a ‘spiritual’ event out of it, or rather an advent of ‘spirits.’ [...]

Difference gives things to be seen and multiplies bodies; but it is repetition which offers things to be spoken, authenticates the multiple, and makes of it a spiritual event (2009b:329).

Saul Kripke calls this process a “primal baptism” (1980:83-5), and I think there is clear link between the sense of baptism and of birth from the primordial sludge contained in the image of the swamp into which Marion’s car is sunk, and from which it later returns.

There is a foreshadowing of *Psycho*’s swamp in *Les Diaboliques* in the image of the scum-covered swimming pool from the opening scene into which Michel is unceremoniously dumped by the murderesses. While the end credits roll over *Psycho*’s swamp, the opening credits roll over *Les Diaboliques*’s swimming pool. This dual shot of the swamp and pool acts

as another kind of suturing point marking the traversal of the möbius band; where the one image begins the other ends, in a continually spiralling relation.

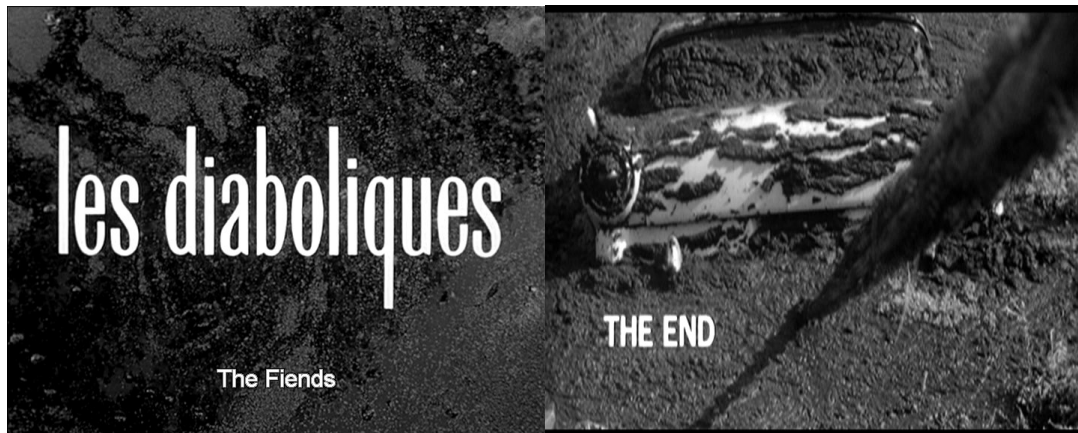


Fig. 4.6: The opening shot of the swimming pool in *Les Diaboliques* and the final shot of the swamp in *Psycho*

Indeed, there is something of a ‘primordial soup’ about these two shots which, viewed next to one another, could be the same exact place. Both of these ‘swamps’ hide bodies, and both spew those bodies back; has the return of the repressed ever been so clearly rendered as it is here in this cinematic couplet? Perhaps we should regard this as *the* ‘Hitchcockian’ motif of a space that cannot be cleaned, a place of the Real (thus the biggest mistake of the Hollywood remake of *Les Diaboliques* is to have the pool cleaned). That the opening and closing credits roll over these images highlights the closeness of language and horror in the death drive, in all its filthy glory.

Let us return to what is perhaps Gus Van Sant’s most cryptic reason as to why he took on the project of remaking *Psycho*, the dual argument that he must do the film “[Because] no one else would” and “So no one else would have to”. There is a similar sense of pure drive here, of the machinic libido ‘hauling’ the subject into being. As with the moment in *T2* when Sarah Conner carves “No fate” into a table, Van Sant’s reasoning illustrates the prohibition of the dead symbolic father. The future is indeed not set, but our freedom as beings of choice is not that we can choose to change that future – it is unalterable – but that we can choose to *accept it, to activate ourselves in it*. So if the *idée fixe* of chapter 1 was “*Memento mori*” (“Don’t forget to die!”), this chapter’s *idée fixe* is Nietzsche’s *amor fati* (“Learn to love your fate!”). Each of us is irrationally driven by the Thing which emerges from the Hitchcockian swamp and it is our duty not to exchange this encounter in the real but to go to it, and learn to love it. This is what Žižek means by the “*sine qua non* of real freedom”, that our fate is both predetermined *and* chosen retroactively. We do not need to get rid of remakes to resolve the impasse of cinematic hysteria but go to meet them, accept them,

and learn to love them; for like remakes or loath them they are the ‘swamps’ of contemporary cinema, spewing back our repressed historicity.

This is the meaning of the scene just prior to the ending of both *Psychos* where Norman’s face transforms momentarily into a skull, displaying a profound solidarity between the *jouissance* of the spewing toilet and the death drive of the swamp.

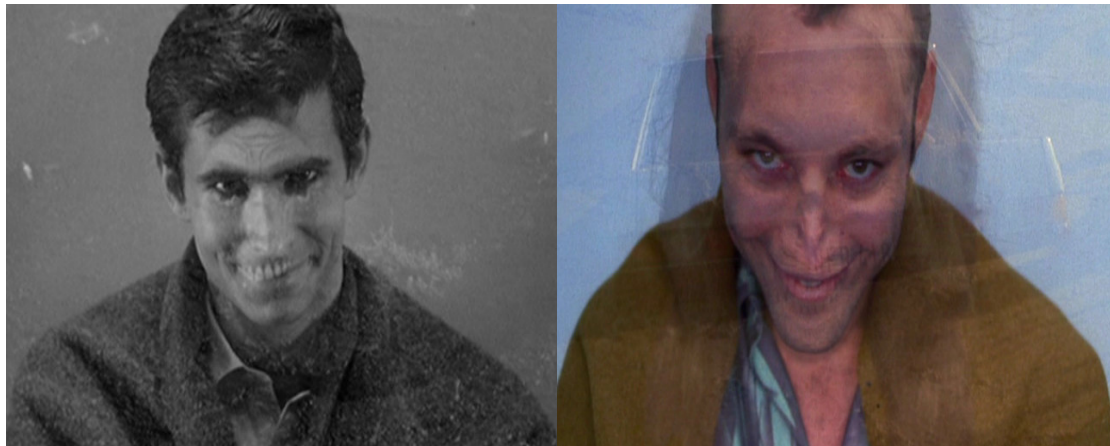


Fig. 4.7: Skull dissolve: Norman’s grinning skull dissolving into the spewing swamp

Van Sant used the very same fleeting image of the skull from the original in the remake; proof that, while perhaps without a sense of Lacan’s death drive, he is certainly not without a sense of irony. Nonetheless, this is the symbol of the death drive; it is fleeting, almost imperceptible, and immediately transforms into sludge. Did Lacan not warn us, after all, that a master-signifier such as this is always in danger of suddenly changing into shit (1998:268)? Raymond Durgnat has observed that this image of the car containing Marion’s body sinking into the swamp indicates that “to cite a popular idiom, she’s in deep shit” (2002:140). Durgnat goes further in providing the equation “Norman equals swamp equals shit – an equation with substantial vernacular back-up, as in ‘You little shit’ or the slang ‘bog’ for toilet” (2002:141).^{*} This is all well and good, but what is the link between pleasure and *jouissance*, and when does the one become the other?

Roland Barthes has distinguished between two ‘texts’ of desire: (1) the “text of pleasure: the text that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a comfortable practice of reading” (1976:14). This is a text that in Lacanian terms is properly entrenched in *fantasy* and ensconced in the symbolic order; it not only allows us to desire but tells us what to desire, and as such it is encountered as enjoyable. (2) The “text of bliss: the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of boredom), unsettles the reader’s historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to crisis his relation with

^{*} The link between the toilet and burying in *Spoorloos* is contained in the phrase “bowels of the earth”.

language” (1976:14). This ‘text of bliss’ is traumatic because it reveals the substance-knowledge of the Real, and in the process, it destabilises the form-illusion of misrecognition concealing this substance in the ‘text of pleasure’. As Žižek writes, “access to knowledge is paid with the loss of enjoyment – enjoyment, in its stupidity, is possible only on the basis of certain non-knowledge, ignorance” (2008a:73). True remakes are clearly pleasure texts, which aim to keep the traumatic realm of language at bay. Irrational remakes, by contrast, are always bliss texts imbued with *jouissance*, which are unsettling precisely because they reintroduce the language of unconscious knowledge previously disavowed. Anat Zanger also notes this Barthesian distinction between pleasure texts and *jouissance* texts, but links them to remakes in a different way, stating that

pleasure is located in the moment of homeostasis between tension and release, that is, when difference and repetition are in equilibrium. *Jouissance*, in contrast, relates to the freezing of the moment of the annihilation of tension, that is, when differences and repetition are not satisfactorily balanced (2006:121).

Zanger cites Van Sant’s *Psycho* remake as “the ultimate actualization of pleasure, that is, originality as repetition” (2006:121), but what kind of pleasure is it exactly? Žižek describes fantasy in terms of its differentiation from the symptom: “[the] symptom (for example, a slip of the tongue) causes discomfort and displeasure when it occurs, but we embrace its interpretation with pleasure” (2008a:80), such that its examination is a source of intellectual satisfaction and humour. However, “when we abandon ourselves to fantasy (for example, in daydreaming) we feel immense pleasure, but on the contrary it causes us great discomfort and shame to confess our fantasies to others” (Žižek, 2008a:80). Is not the same distinction apparent in the difference between Van Sant’s *Psycho* and Coppola’s *The Conversation* as the symptom and fantasy of Hitchcock’s *Psycho* respectively? Van Sant’s remake caused considerable discomfort and displeasure on its release and yet as a remake it is the focus of many studies from which much pleasure is derived from enumerating its many mistakes and errors. Coppola’s *The Conversation*, by contrast, caused immense pleasure as a reverie of the *Psycho* myth, but to explore its toilet connection seems somewhat shameful or at least undignified as a subject for academic study. We should suggest *The Conversation* as the ultimate actualisation of *jouissance* in the *Psycho* series, a remake that destroys traditional cinematic pleasure and throws the very experience of spectatorship into state of loss and crisis by revealing what audiences were really daydreaming about when watching *Psycho* back in 1960...

“Because you’re worth ‘It’”: The death drive in the irrational remake

For Žižek, it is not reality itself which is multiple, but the fantasies that sustain that reality. Against the idea of ‘multiple realities’, we should, as Žižek claims, insist on the fact that “*the fantasmatic support of reality is in itself necessarily multiple and inconsistent*” (2000:41). This is the irrational remake’s retort to Hollywood’s sense that one can either choose “My way, or the highway”, for there is no mutual exclusion in the unconscious. Once again, the phrase is “To have one’s cake and eat it”. This is the reason David Lynch has been something of a lynchpin (if you will excuse the expression) for this thesis, because his cinema is the presentation of multiple fantasies, an *œuvre* undermining the phantasy of the ‘ideal couple’ (revealing the frog embracing a bottle of beer just beneath). As Žižek writes,

by displaying the two fantasies side by side in hypertext, the space is thus open for the third, underlying fundamental fantasy to emerge [...] in the most efficient way to undermine the hold this fantasy exerts over us? (2000: 44).

A film like *Lost Highway* is pure film-thinking, a time-image which exemplifies the structure of the möbius band and irrational remake. Thus in the irrational remake, and each of David Lynch’s films, it really is possible to have one’s cherry pie and eat it!*

When Anat Zanger asks the question: “Is it necessary [...] to be familiar with Hitchcock’s version in order to enjoy Van Sant’s?” (2006:18), she is asking the right question but in the wrong context. Because Van Sant has altered the sexual politics in his remake of *Psycho*, and once again over-relied on the libidinal investment surrounding the film’s fetishised shower scene, our answer should be a resounding “No” – that is, viewers can almost certainly enjoy his version independently, precisely because he failed to stick to his shot-for-shot mandate. In fact, Anne Heche famously revealed in an interview that prior to taking on the role of Marion she had never seen the original *Psycho* herself (speaking in D-J, 1999). A more precise question then would be: Is it necessary to be familiar with Hitchcock’s *Psycho* in order to properly enjoy Coppola’s bathroom scene from *The Conversation*? The answer here is a resounding “Yes!”, because only then is the uncanniness of Harry Caul’s

* While I do not have the space to explore them at any length, I would like to suggest a couple of additional examples of irrational remaking to get us started with this new field: Roman Polanski’s *The Tenant* (*Le locataire*) in 1976 as the realisation of *Rear Window* (1954)’s unexplored blurring of the line between Peeping Tom reality and paranoiac fantasy; Stanley Kubrick’s *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) as realising in *Singin’ in the Rain* what Timothy Corrigan notes as the eponymous number dancing “a thin line between an acceptable generic engagement with the reality of the dark and rainy streets [...] and pure, compulsive lunacy” (1991:141).

inspection of the 'spotless' bathroom-cum-murder-scene fully rendered. The exploding toilet (which is never corroborated by a third party) is the explosion of *jouissance* and the image of the death drive *only to viewers familiar with Psycho*.

To describe the death drive, Josh Cohen uses the example of anti-aging cream adverts where youthful looking women model the product before they are revealed to be older than they appear ("Look at her, she's over 50! You too can reverse time...", etc.) Put simply, the death drive is present in the gap between the smooth image and the description, such that while the woman in the advert may appear 10 or more years younger than she really is, it is not that those years have simply disappeared, but, rather, that they are still present in the absence (abyss) of wrinkles. This is a real '*mise-en-abîme*'; an erased history that haunts the flawlessly smooth skin in its very lack, and flaunts itself in the descriptor such that these are products that erase the very fact of having *lived*. This effect is properly uncanny, a face that somehow just does not ring true, betrayed by language (what else?). As Cohen puts it, the model's face is "weirdly and inappropriately *undisturbed*, a flawless vessel emptied of its proper contents – life itself" (2005:111). The death drive is the appearance of an ideal of lifeless life that the irrational remake similarly strives for. Daniel Protopopoff has even written that "the remake effaces its age", that is, it alters the chronology we assign to film, its very historicity (1989:13). We should complement this with Serge Daney's observation that *all* American films are already ageless, such that the American film has no wrinkles and never will have (cited in Mazdon, 2000:85), something echoed in Brian Grazer's statement that *Psycho* "doesn't deal with trends or fashions; the drama, suspense and horror work independently of any particular era" (speaking in D-J, 1999). While the usual sense of the term 'repression' is concerned with representations, primary repression is concerned with pure *presentations*, or how the drives are lived. When Lacan designates every drive as a death drive, this is what he means, for he is referring to the silent, pure presentation within representation, the originary repression within repression. Given Protopopoff and Daney's statements, the American remake could be considered the cinematic equivalent of Dorian Gray and his portrait.

We must utilise a model of complex differentiation in which this presentation in Hollywood remaking of "external disturbing and diverting influences" (2001:37), to quote Freud, is revealed. Finally, if we (re)view Freud's statement on the death drive in the context of Deleuze's time-image that we have been exploring here (including our work on *The Terminator* and *The Conversation*), his words should resonate anew:

It would be in contradiction to the conservative nature of the drives if the goal of life were a state of things which had never yet been attained. On the contrary, it must be an *old* state of things, an initial state from which the living entity has at one time or other departed and to

which it is striving to return by the circuitous paths along which its development leads (2001:37).

And why does the remake do so? Because there is an 'it' contained inside the original in which we have a vested interest. Therein resides the true meaning of beauty manufacturer L'Oréal's famous slogan, "Because you're worth it", which is also the meaning behind Lacan's formula for *drive*: $S \diamond D$ (1998:209). We must read this alongside Coca-Cola's slogan "This is it!", for this is where the hidden truth effaced by immortality lies. In fact, the famous beauty slogan initially began life as "Because *I'm* worth it", and was only changed in the mid-2000s, a telling inflection. In late 2009, the slogan was changed again to "Because *we're* worth it" (and for the children's version, "Because *we're* worth it *too!*"). This is such a wonderful example of Deleuze's 'grammatical perspectivism', which is, if you remember, the only way to observe the phantom of the death drive.

Zanger argues that there is a "veil of censorship" dictating the manner in which "official", that is, overtly declared remakes, can be told (suffice it to recall the furore surrounding Van Sant's *Psycho*). Thus, while "all official versions seek to present themselves as the 'ultimate truth,' to the exclusion of all others [...] all the disguised versions seek to present the traumatic elements of the story" (Zanger, 2006:107) uninhibited by this regulatory mode of censorship. Zanger also points out Michel de Certeau's argument that 'historical knowledge' is "more about contemporary interests and identities and less about preserving the otherness of the past. In this sense, history functions as a tool by which one generation expresses its difference from its predecessors" (2006:126-7). However, we must be careful here, because this is not exactly 'it' either. Lacan states something similar about psychoanalysis, where interpretation cannot be bent to any desired meaning, but instead "designates only a single series of signifiers. But the subject may in effect occupy various places, depending on whether one places him under one or other of these signifiers" (1998:209). Thus we should emphasise that meaning shifts around the position of the subject, such that it matters not how close to historical accuracy one 'true' account is over another 'false' account, but, rather, what the prevailing contemporary *attitudes* have to say on the matter. Linda Ruth Williams also points out that film narratives are historically contingent, but adds that these "slippages *backwards* [...] which change the way we read back through a history or a narrative, occur collectively, and infect our ways of reading" (1995:144-5), implying that spectatorship is indeed a collective process. I would go one step further and suggest that these contemporary interests and identities are always unconscious, the subject of *cultural* drives. The beauty of the irrational remake is that it enables the link between the source, its 'unknown knowledge', and the historical knowledge associated with the status quo

of the original to be re-opened, thus keeping the discourse-time, as well as the story-time, open to analytical interpretation.

Lacan coined the term ‘factor *c*’ (*facteur c*) as “the constant characteristic of any given cultural milieu” (cited in Evans, 2007:59). For Lacan, *ahistoricism* is the factor *c* of America, which is why it is so antithetical to psychoanalysis. Perhaps we should reverse the ‘factor *c*’ and call it the *c* factor, and then make the leap to ‘X Factor’, the popular reality TV show in which simulacra-phantasms are annually manufactured by media mogul Simon Cowell to sell cover versions of pop songs by the truck-load. Is this not the apogee of what might be termed a ‘remake culture’? To return to anti-aging creams, another world-wide beauty manufacturer is called ‘Max-Factor’. Is it just a coincidence that each of these companies seem to resonate with Lacan’s term for America’s ahistoricism, that the “‘American way of life’ revolves around such signifiers as ‘happiness’ ‘adaptation’, ‘human relations’ and ‘human engineering’” (Evans, 2007:59)? Founded in 1909, Max Factor was established by a real Max Factor (Maximilian Faktorowicz), who became the first person to introduce cosmetics to the growing film industry in Hollywood in the early 1920s (Baxten, 2008:62). He is also credited as popularising the term ‘make-up’, as in ‘to make up (one’s face)’ with reference to cosmetics in early cinema. Is not history ‘made up’ also? This is why Lacan links the American ‘way of life’ with obscurantism, as something “characterized by the revival of notions long since refuted in the field of psycho-analysis, such as the predominance of the functions of the ego” (Lacan, 1992:127), a reference to the psychoanalytic school of ‘Ego-Psychology’. In modern parlance, we speak of the term ‘life-style’ (as in ‘balanced’, ‘healthy’), but what is this ‘style’ of life? One is tempted to conjure up images of men and women who, having lost a considerable amount of weight, then stand next to a cardboard cut-out of their former selves with an air of self-satisfaction at having found their ‘factor’ (and people condemn remakes as ‘hollow’ versions of their originals). Does this image not successfully convey the distance between the registers ‘I’ and ‘me’ – one flat and reduced to a two-dimensional cut out of reality ‘there and then’, the other here and now in full corporeal presence? Let us dare to look beyond the signifiers at the death drive silently teeming just beneath this sheen of immortality, which barely conceals some ‘thing’ much deeper waiting to be ‘made up’ by we ‘other historians’. For in actual fact, the true meaning of the L’Oréal slogan, “Because you’re worth it”, is that there is a Thing (pure *jouissance*), an ‘It’, in which there is a vested worth.

CONCLUSION

THE FOUR FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS OF THE REMAKE

“The map is the treasure.”

– Will Rood, cited in Marks-Tarlow (2008:1).

To have one’s cherry pie and eat it: Institutional, spectatorial, and structural repetition

In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan offered a radical and controversial reappraisal of Freudian psychoanalysis. He proposed to rethink the very foundations on which psychoanalysis was based, asking himself: “what conceptual status must we give to four of the terms introduced by Freud as fundamental concepts, namely, *the unconscious, repetition, the transference, and the drive*” (Lacan, 1998:12)? For Lacan, these fundamentals were intended to bring some much-needed coherence and gravity into the science of psychoanalysis. I have claimed something similar in relation to the remake, that is, the reappraisal of remake studies as a serious academic object of study. Furthermore, it is no coincidence that the ‘four fundamental concepts of the remake’, as I shall call them, are the same as those of psychoanalysis: we have the depth of the remake unconscious, the repetition of the remake’s return to the original Idea, the transference of the remake as the shift of perspective and the ‘Thing’, the *jouissance* of the remake’s drive, or what is in the remake, more than the remake, to paraphrase Lacan (1998:20).

Can these four fundamentals of remaking be put to use elsewhere in film theory, beyond the industry category of ‘the remake’? There are, I think, three intertwined levels of remaking in Hollywood cinema that we should consider as vital components of cinematic repetition: (1) on a marketing level, we get *institutional-repetition*, for example: when films get re-released in the form of ‘director’s cuts’ (as popularised by Ridley Scott), ‘special editions’ (James Cameron’s specialty), and ‘re-mastered versions’ (for example, the twentieth anniversary edition of the original *Star Wars* trilogy in 1997); when classic films are ‘restored’ when in danger of becoming extinct simply because the film stock is deteriorating (see Usai, 2001); when scenes are ‘quoted’ verbatim outside of their textual base, that is, literally uprooted into another medium (via the inter-textual relay, including television spots, commercials, advertisements, trailers, posters, etc.); even a film *score* being used in trailers for other films to trade off the original’s reputation (Charlie Clouser’s score from the horror smash-hit *Saw*, for instance, is frequently used in other horror films). Each of these examples

is dealing with cinematic reverberations in a broader sense than the category currently covers, but there is nonetheless (even in film restoration) an 'original' that is both created in the past and annihilated in the present, while a 'version' of that original is created in the present and preserved for the future.

(2) On a reception level, we get *spectatorial-repetition*, which acknowledges that since films are made by both the cinematic institution and the audience, they are necessarily remade by both also. We can use Pierre Bourdieu's term 'symbolic goods' to understand the circulation of films in the marketplace which create certain viewing habits, such as re-watching certain films, from repeat viewings in cinema to DVD consumption. The concept of the circulation of symbolic goods in cinema has recently taken on a bitter-sweet edge for the film industry with the proliferation of file-sharing on the internet, where films (particularly new releases) are circulated between users online. The MPAA have attributed around \$6.1 billion in losses (McBride & Fowler, 2006), and have several court cases pending in an attempt to plug this circulation. Here we have an example of cinematic repetition-as-circulation, a communal activity that, once again, is seen as both venerating and destroying (at least for the studios and their shareholders) the institution of cinema. On a different level, one must also consider the way the circulation of 'symbolic goods' changes through history, and in different technological, socio-historical, economic, and nationalistic contexts (for example, a film like *Independence Day* from 1996 changes in light of advanced CGI effects, to post-9/11 or post-recession audiences, or simply in foreign countries). We must also think about the option for audiences to control their own mode of spectatorship with the advent of home video and the ability to pause, rewind, and repeat. More recently, DVD chapter selections have increased this control, and Christopher Nolan's *Memento* is an exemplary case here since there is an option on the DVD to watch this reverse-ordered film in *chronological order*. In addition, films often include 'alternate endings', cut scenes, and restored footage (notably in the horror genre, where DVD releases contain "Previously unseen footage", boast the inclusion of "What you didn't see in the theatres", and are re-titled "Extreme edition", etc. to reflect this). Ultimately, to take spectatorial-repetition to the next level, we must utilise André Malraux (1951)'s term "*musée imaginaire*" (imaginary archive), coined to refer to the accumulation of all viewing experiences in any given spectator's mind. For Malraux, we must consider the creation and recreation of the 'spectator', as s/he is the accretion of 'viewings', not just cinematically, but culturally and socially as well. Furthermore, our imaginary archive is itself disturbed, made problematic, by each new viewing and reviewing of a 'stored' film. Thus in terms of viewing a film, *the spectator him/herself is multiply remaking*; not consistently or with design, but arbitrarily and incoherently. Consider that *Psycho* goes through several 'times' just in reviewing it, for while first-time viewers in 1960 interpreted Marion and Norman's conversation from the perspective of the stolen \$40,000, second- and

third-time viewers were looking for the clues and warnings of what they know is about to come, and viewers outside of that moment in 1960 would have the film's historical event in mind.

(3) Finally, on a purely elementary level, we get the repetition intrinsic to the cinematic edifice itself – the level of cinema as a manifold construct, or what we might call *structural-repetition*. Raymond Bellour writes that “repetition is internal when it pertains to the very body of the film, to its most elementary and paradoxical level: that of the single frame [...] an endless repetition, twenty-four times per second” (1979:66). Thus we are always dealing with repetition in cinema, for “within the same shot, each frame is an earlier version of the frame about to be seen” (Zanger, 2006:13). It is evident in those self-differing elements that constitute the final print that long before remakers put their own spin on them, before the ‘director’s cut’ and the ‘special edition’, before spectators arrive to order and reorder narratives, and even before an editor has decided which cuts to use and rejected others, that the cinematic medium is in-and-of-itself a medium of repetition. It is perhaps little wonder then that Deleuze focuses his attention on cinema as the central philosophical medium for the twentieth century.

Having broadened the definition of ‘remaking’, let us see these new repetitions at work in Terry Gilliam’s *Twelve Monkeys*. One scene is particularly illuminating, and comes at the precise moment when the time-traveller, James Cole, having finally convinced his abductee, Kathryn Raily, of his time travelling experiences, discovers he now doubts his own story (and sanity). The scene opens with a scene-within-a-scene from Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*, before it is revealed that James and Kathryn are at a ‘24 Hour Hitchcock Fest’ applying disguises to aid in their escape. The ‘internal’ scene from *Vertigo* is the one where Scottie and Madeleine are amongst the sequoias and Madeleine utters the famous phrase as she traces the rings of a felled tree: “Here I was born, and there I died. It was only a moment for you, you took no notice.” The ‘external’ scene features James and Kathryn sitting in the cinema, and the rest of James’s dialogue is intercut with Scottie’s dialogue from *Vertigo* which can be heard in the background. This creates an interesting inter-textual cross-referencing effect as James’s dialogue is both about, and seems to be reflected in, Scottie’s dialogue, and the responses of both women are completely effaced:

- James Cole: “I think I’ve seen this movie [*Vertigo*] before, when I was a kid I saw it on TV. I *did* see it before...”
- [Scottie: “Have you been here before, when?”]
- James: “...I don’t recognise this...”
- [Scottie: “Tell me, Madeleine, tell me!”]

- James: "...It's just like what's happening with us, like the past. The movie never changes, it can't change but... every time you see it, it seems different because you were different. You see different things."

The dialogue of both Kathryn and Madeleine are effaced during this exchange which seems to be between James and Scottie, as though a fundamental rule of cross-textual interaction has been violated here.

This scene in *Twelve Monkeys* is first-and-foremost an example of 'proper' remaking, of remaking as an industry category, since it is (loosely at least) based on elements of Hitchcock's *Vertigo* and Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (itself based on *Vertigo*, so a triple-folded remake). *La Jetée* even replicates the scene with the sequoias where, rather than pointing out one's death in the past, the protagonist points out his *birth* in the future. In addition though, this scene in *Twelve Monkeys* is engaging in *institutional-repetition* as it lifts the scene from *Vertigo* directly, unequivocally, and with a fetishistic mandate. This scene is not film quotation but film replication: it not only parallels the narrative of *Vertigo* (creating an alternate dimension to it, as in *La Jetée*) but is in a directly *negative dialogue* with it, that is, one that must be constructed by the spectator who literally reads between the lines. This moment of *spectatorial-repetition* establishes a moment beyond the diegesis, where, just as James's amateur philosophising on the contextualisation of the cinematic spectator discusses the way audiences continually construct and reconstruct films according to their own positioning within the narrative, so too is the film making a non-diegetic point about the way repetition works generally in film. Just as James struggles with his own imaginary archive, so too does the *Vertigo* scene evoke the archival knowledge of the *Twelve Monkeys* audience, sitting in a different cinema. The last word goes to Kathryn who rightly uses the expression: "If you can't change anything because it's already happened, you may as well smell the flowers." Is this not what the sense of enjoyment is in film, of the enjoyment in the *mise-en-scène*, of losing oneself in the *pure image* beyond its textual meaning? One cannot influence the filmic event, but on a relational level, one can approach that sense of predestination in film with a series of unconscious choices. In short, while an audience cannot change the outcome of a film, they can make connections and form new experiences *within* the work.

It is wholly appropriate that in the next scene James is violently awoken by the avian monsters from *The Birds*, the next film on the 'Hitchcock fest', which of course is itself reinforcing the Hitchcockian canon. Here, unlike the original, the birds explode without prior warning, and despite the fact that we know we are watching a film, like James, the explosion of 'the birds' in the diegesis and *The Birds* textually, is startling. Then, to compound matters, as James leaves the cinema somewhat bewildered by the intrusion of *The Birds* into his dreams, he sees Kathryn wearing a blonde wig, while the 'transformation' music from *Vertigo*

is playing in the non-diegetic sound. Somehow, it is as though the internal film-within-a-film – already an inter-textual influence – has exploded into the external film world like the birds from the cinema screen. This is *structural-repetition* in its essence, in that, as Lacan argued, “the symptom is in itself, through and through, signification, that is to say, truth, truth taking shape” (cited in Evans, 2007:204). It is this sense of the work ‘taking shape’ through what we might call the ‘repetition-work’ of the symptom, a work in movement where each circuit of the möbius loop reveals something further of Hollywood cinema’s unconscious knowledge. This scene illustrates that if, like James, we stop moving, if we fall asleep, the revelation stops also and only the traumatic explosion of the Real (the birds) will snap us back into the picture. Significantly, the spectator does not see James fall asleep prior to his violent awakening. Rather, in this moment, in this edit, *the spectator is asleep also* in much the same way as we are *actually watching Vertigo in the prior scene*. The cinema screen within the diegesis does not frame this image for us; this is a dual window that opens onto not just another reality, but multiple fantasies. The motto here is that there is no escape from the filmind in the Deleuzian time-image, or, as Deleuze puts it: “*Repetition changes nothing in the object repeated, but does change something in the mind which contemplates it*” (2009a:90).

We should consider remakes in a similar way, for when Van Sant attempts to collapse 1998 into 1960, and Sluizer attempts a collision between The Netherlands/France and America, they have clearly failed on the one hand, and yet illuminated something remarkably well-hidden in the original, on the other. We have used Deleuze’s concept of ‘irrational cutting’ to describe this phenomenon concealed in the work, more than itself, and I believe the ‘irrational remake’, as I have called it, must be approached with a consideration of the memory implicit to the series as a whole, and the time-image as distinct from the movement-image. Crucially, we must acknowledge that analysis of the irrational remake is impossible without first analysing its discursive base, that is, the complex repetition in the true remake that supports it. Thus my chapter 4 required the knowledge gained from chapter 3 for it to make sense, and so forth. Inter-dependence is crucial to this thesis, and just as the irrational remake relies on the true remake, so too do I hope to have shown that Lacanian film theory relies on Deleuzian filmosophy. Of course *both need to re-engage with film history*.

That more has not been made of Deleuze’s dividing of the action-image and the time-image along classical and post-classical lines is proof of this, for the debate in film history about this very division rages on to this day (see Schatz, 1993 and Corrigan, 1991). Is it not about time that film-philosophy engaged in these very issues? We need not reframe the films but *remake studies itself*; these films are what Žižek calls universal singulars – elements of cinematic repetition the same in every symbolic universe. It is the theory which needs expanding, for as Deleuze frequently argued, it is not enough to ask “What difference is there?” as this always leads to the similarly unhelpful question “What resemblance is there?”

Nothing can come of this line of inquiry, for the answer is simply that: “Nothing”. Like the neuropath we must *shift the problems* and like the psychopath we must *repose the questions*. I propose that we ask three questions posed by Elizabeth Grosz in a different context:

- (1) Can it [the work] survive such assaults [the becoming-other] on its autonomy?
- (2) Can it become something – many things – other than what it is and how it presently functions?
- (3) If its present function is an effect of the crystallization of its history within, inside, its present, can its future be something else (1995:136)?

In response to these questions we can simply look back on our three main chapters: (1) in chapter 1, we illustrated that remake theory needed serious revision but that, ultimately, it not only survives a Deleuzo-Lacanian assault but emerges stronger for it. I hope to have provided a preliminary outline for where this new theorisation should start, and intend this as a starting point for subsequent discussions (‘making’ a new theory). (2) In chapters 2 and 3, we presented case studies that demonstrated not only that the original work becomes many things in remaking, but that the original itself is already functioning otherwise (texts that are multiply ‘remaking’). Finally, in chapter 4, we have shown that the present is always an effect of history becoming what it already was, and that the future is wherefrom the symptom returns (illustrating the ‘unmaking’ in Hollywood remaking).

Furthermore, this thesis has followed a möbius topology: chapter 1 is the making to chapter 4’s unmaking; chapter 2 is one type of remaking to chapter 3’s other type of remaking; and if one were to place a mirror down the centre, one would, like the image on the title page, hopefully see a chiasmic tear. The antithesis has at every remove been within the thesis: *memento mori* in *amor fati* as the memory/love of death/fate; the alien facehugger and the terminator metaphors as the machinic organ/organic machine; and the zombie and ghost as the soulless body/bodiless soul. I cannot stress enough how important this is, nor the fact that while other Deleuzian scholars might see remakes as ‘simulacra-phantasms’, or bad repetitions to be denounced as ‘false’, I see them with a Lacanian twist as constitutively revealing the lacunae that abound in American cultural forms. For the remake theorist, these simulacra reveal the holes in Hollywood cinema, around which film history becomes film ‘hystory’. These are blind spots otherwise concealed by ideological structures intended to obscure them. That the ideo-critical framework contributes to Hollywood’s continuing Americanisation of cinematic otherness, both canonical and foreign, is interesting enough given its absolute incapacity to control its own output in a market increasingly given over to market *needs* instead of *demands*. If we return to Lacan’s famous question, “*che vuoi?*” (2003:345), it is just possible to see the outline of its contemporary cinematic translation, not

just as “What do audiences want – what films do they demand to see?”, but also, “What makes contemporary audiences *tick* – what films do they *need* to see?”

But who is asking this question? Once again, “the studios” is the wrong answer, for while we have a discernible subject-*supposed*-to-know controlling the proliferation of remakes, I would suggest, rather, that at best we are faced with a poor dealer, whose shuffling of the cards is resulting in ever greater numbers of ‘ghost hands’ (to recall Greenberg) but who is by no means to blame for this “rear-view mirror” (Groen, 1998) culture. While this thesis has argued that time is unstable in Hollywood history, it is nonetheless in the post-classical form that we get the emergence of the time-image. In a phenomenon that began in Italy towards the end of the 1940s, France at the end of the 1950s, and then in West Germany around the late 1960s (Frampton, 2006:61), Deleuze notices a complete resignification of time in film, and he sees it originating in Hitchcock in Hollywood. I would suggest that, far from orchestrating this revolution, the studio is merely exploiting it on a commercial level only. On a deeper level, there is always instability and irrational cutting. One often hears attributed to remakes the familiar complaint: “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it!”, however, this thesis has argued that it is not the case that Hollywood is attempting to fix unbroken originals but, on the contrary, that the *original is already broken*, and yet, like the zombie, *it continues to function*. This is the real problem: not that remakes attempt to ‘fix’ unbroken originals, but that they highlight the imperfections inherent to the original, their hidden, competing streams of thought. To reiterate Žižek: the Real is not an inert presence curving symbolic space by introducing gaps and inconsistencies, but, rather, *it is the gaps and inconsistencies in the symbolic that create the Real* (Žižek, 2006a:73). Above all else, remakes age originals while at the same time reassuring against their erasure, containing the fleeting image of death which vanishes as soon as it appears. Our voracious appetite for the Hollywood remake is undiminished and to be sure, Hollywood is more than content to keep churning them out. Is not psychoanalytic film theory in a similar position: broken, and yet continuing to function in the face of its supposed death?

However, the worst thing for film studies would be to continue reading the ‘vulgar’ Deleuzian elegy for Lacan, and worse still to propagate vulgar Deleuzian film studies itself. Where Lacan sought to focus on the difficult and frustrating aspects of Freud’s work that others distorted, debased, fragmented and ignored, we should do the same with Deleuze. I hope that now we can read remakes with Deleuze’s earlier works, *Repetition and Difference*, and *The Logic of Sense*, to root out his wider philosophical musings and create a truly rich and vibrant filmosophy alongside the populist tones of his *Anti-Oedipus* and his volumes on cinema. However, I hope to have also shown that we should not simply reject the popular field of Deleuze in favour of the ‘other Deleuze’ while claiming something like “the *real* Deleuze is more complex than ‘this’”. While it is clear to see that the ‘popular Deleuze’ has

been thoroughly misunderstood (in western scholarship at least), perhaps we should follow Žižek's lead when he writes that "if there is something to be learned from the history of thought, from Christianity to Marx and Heidegger, it is that the roots of misappropriations are to be sought in the 'original' thinker himself" (2004b). Perhaps the 'popular Deleuze' might even be used to unlock this 'other Deleuze', and vice versa, although this is surely for others to continue.

I think the filmsophical potential for studying remakes is now open and ready to be explored, such that we can begin to appreciate the full implications of Joachim Du Bellay's statement that one should "carefully follow the virtues of good works, devour them and after having digested them well, transform them into your own blood" (cited in Mancini, 1989:44). This Hegelian notion is more than suitable, not only for the remake, but the genre film and the very question of repetition in cinema. It also alters the view of the remake as 'constipated', as restricting the flow of 'originality' in Hollywood filmmaking. The view that Hegel is a philosopher of 'constipation' (not least held by Deleuze!) is refuted by Žižek, who argues instead that Hegel is the ultimate philosopher of *release*, or what Žižek himself calls "Hegelian shitting" (2008a:xii). Žižek writes that where a philosopher like Theodore Adorno might consider the Hegelian absolute Substance-subject as thoroughly constipated, "the belly turned mind" whereby the subject has "swallowed the entire indigestible Otherness" (2008a:xii), we should instead consider Hegel's subject as thoroughly *emptied*. Hegel's classic 'synthesising' reconciliation of difference is not the result of some pseudo-magical dissolution, but, rather, the means "to enact a parallax shift by means of which antagonisms are recognized 'as such' and thereby perceived in their 'positive' role" (Žižek, 2008a:xviii). The remake is no different. Where critics see constipation, we should see release; where they (often correctly) accuse studios of avarice in their decision-making, we should look for the 'it-Thing' lurking beneath the corporate subject, the *drive* of the impossible encounter with the Real (*tuché*); and where social commentators see a lack of originality, we should perhaps show how the originals themselves already contain the very marks of repetition we see exploding on our screens in ever greater numbers.

'The Great Fucker' and the remake (Fathers, fathers, everywhere...)

On the set of *Blade Runner* a disagreement is reputed to have broken out between director Ridley Scott and actors Harrison Ford and Rutger Hauer. According to the documentary *Dangerous Days: Making Blade Runner* (2007), the disagreement concerned Deckard's status as being either a replicant (Scott's interpretation) or a human (Ford and Hauer's interpretation). The disagreement intensified when, having assured the actors that Deckard

was definitely human, Scott went on to shoot and edit the film in such a way as to leave not just a question mark, but a clear indication that Deckard is indeed *non-human*. This deadlock can even be seen in another documentary, *On the Edge of 'Blade Runner'* (2000), in which the original screenwriter Hampton Fancher discusses the script with his replacement on the script, David Peoples, who each attribute any inflection in the script of Deckard's status to the other (in a sense they cancel one another out, such that neither of them can be said to have written this ambiguity into the script). This crucial impasse is another 'both/and' situation, and it is in this vein that Ridley Scott's reply to Harrison Ford and Rutger Hauer *should* have come, such that the only true response as to whether Deckard is a replicant or a human is the same as Freud's answer "Yes please!" to the question "Tea or coffee?" Like the Hegelian dialectical mediation between the modes of making and remaking via unmaking, the story is both versions, stretching out in both directions of time and taking in a complex and inconsistent multitude of fantasmatic frameworks. Is not the paradox of *Blade Runner* (that of having a subject who knows s/he is a replicant) the same as that of the original that knows it is a remake (or, alternatively, of the remake that knows it is an original)? The issue here goes right back to that most central of Freudian theses: *paternity*, for how can we ever truly *know* who our parents are? We almost covered the issue of paternity in chapter 4 with our discussion of the symbolic and imaginary fathers in *T2*. However, to the eagle-eyed Lacanian, there is another kind of father that was left neglected.

To approach this third father, let us indulge in another of *Blade Runner's* great 'both/and' moments. While one of the replicants, Leon (Brion James), seems more bothered by his maternal identity^{*}, the leader of the replicants, Roy Batty (Hauer), is more concerned with his *paternal* identity. Indeed, when Roy tricks his way into the Tyrell Corporation – his place of 'birth' – he effectively 'meets his maker'. In this scene, Roy makes overt references to the father and creation, and in one particularly striking example he creates an odd meld of 'father' and 'fucker' when addressing his architect, Tyrell (Joe Turkel), just prior to murdering him in an oedipal transgression. In the scene, Tyrell asks Roy what his problem is, to which Roy retorts: "Death [...] I want more life, fucker/father". According to the production notes, Hauer deliberately pronounced the last word such that it could be *either* 'fucker' or 'father' depending on the version (theatrical or TV) of the film (Hauer, cited in Lauzirika, 2007). However, let us continue our Deleuzian 'both/and' reading and suggest that this is an Oedipal expletive, thus both 'fucker' and 'father' *at the same time*.

^{*} During a replicant test, Leon shoots another blade-runner after being asked to "Describe in single words only the good things that come into your mind about... your mother". This clearly echoes Freud's famous, "Tell me about your mother", except here the answer is: "Death to the analyst!" Later in the film, Leon functions as the *memento mori*, telling Deckard that it is "Time to die!"

It is here that we arrive at our missing third father, who is of course the *Real* father. This is Lacan's least defined paternal figure, and is clearly the one with which he struggled most. The Real father is the agent of symbolic castration, who Lacan describes as the one who "effectively occupies" the mother, and to whom he ascribes the moniker of the "Great Fucker" (1992:307). At one stage, Lacan likens the Real father to the sperm itself, but qualifies this by noting that "nobody has ever thought of himself as the son of a spermatozoon" (cited in Evans, 2007:63). Since a degree of uncertainty surrounds the true identity of the father (as opposed to the mother, who is always "certain"), the Real father is the one who is "*said to be*" the child's real, biological father. As such, the 'Real' father is not simply the real (that is, biological) father, but the father *of* the Real, an effect of language, or *the Real of language*. Harold Bloom (consciously or not) acknowledges as much when he writes that "it was a great marvel that they were in the father without knowing him" (1997:3), a father he labels the "Great Precursor", a figure of anxiety for the subject. Tyrell is an example of the Lacanian Great Fucker; both an effect of, and bringing into effect, the language of creation itself. At the same time however, he also signifies loss and death for Roy, bearing out Lacan's sense that "the first object he [the subject] proposes for this parental desire whose object is unknown is his own loss – *Can he lose me?* The phantasy of one's death, of one's disappearance, is the first object that the subject has to bring into play in this dialectic" (1998:214). We saw in our chapter on *Spoorloos* that it is here where one lack is superimposed on another. To reiterate: this is Lacan's Great Fucker, another name for whom could have been the Great Lack.

To return to David Lynch, it is Frank in *Blue Velvet* who desires to become the Great Fucker, as he shouts "Let's fuck! I'll fuck anything that moves!", aggressively establishing himself as the self-willed creator. In another scene, Dorothy mistakenly greets Frank with "Hello, baby", to which he responds angrily, "Shut up! It's Daddy, you shit-head!", clearly irked by her linguistic slip. However, the ultimate indication that Frank wants to be the Great Fucker comes in Ben (Dean Stockwell)'s nightmarish apartment, when a toast is proposed to Frank's "health". Frank, however, has a different toast in mind: "Ah shit, let's drink to something else. Let's drink to fucking. Yeah, say: 'Here's to your fuck, Frank'", to which everyone obliges. The icing on the Freudian cake comes when Frank seems to break down after Ben mimes along to Roy Orbison's 'In Dreams', a song which opens with the lines "A candy-coloured clown they call the sandman". Surely this scene alone demonstrates a great affinity between the Great Fucker and the Freudian uncanny (which analyses E. T. A. Hoffmann's short story, 'The Sandman'). As Žižek writes, Frank is a ridiculous character and yet, one who must be approached with *total seriousness* (2002a:19).

In remake terms, the Lacanian figure of the 'Great Fucker' is analogous to our irrational remake: it is only a remake because we say it is, such that it is an effect of film

historicising. The symbolic and imaginary fathers are easily aligned with other kinds of remaking also: the symbolic father, for instance, is that element of the law inherent to an ‘original’, or ‘making’ (our examples of Hitchcock’s *Psycho*, Sluizer’s *Spoorloos*, *et al.*), the text which dispenses *jouissance* and ‘quilts’ the Idea in a primal baptism, freezing the ‘spiritual event’. The creative misprison associated with the symbolic father comes as the transgression of the *nom du père*, and as this is a dead father, it is internalised in the memory of its own name via the fetish scene (‘shower/toilet scene’, ‘living burial’, etc). Lacan suggests that there is some homophony between ‘*nom-du-père*’ and ‘*non-du-père*’ (that is, the ‘no’ of the father), which in remake terms is reflected in the prohibitive “No!” greeting any would-be remaker approaching a Great Precursor text. By contrast, the imaginary father is the element of remaking that dares to enjoy itself at the expense of the original (Van Sant’s *Psycho*, Sluizer’s *The Vanishing*, *et al.*). These true remakes are usually received negatively, but ravenously ‘enjoyed’ in a similar way to the superegoic imperative to “Enjoy!”, as in “Enjoy Coke!” We can, of course, flip these designations over and play around with them a little if we wish.

The irrational remake is not an empty symbolic restaging of the original moment devoid of its substance, but an actual return *to the Real moment itself* (or at least what is ‘said to be’ the Real moment). During analysis, the role of the analyst is not to become the spectre of the father, to invoke a ‘theatre of shadows’ whereby the patient can settle with past traumas via an effigy; the analyst is, as Žižek writes, “a presence in front of which the past battle has to be fought out ‘for real’” (2008c:118). Perhaps an irrational remaking of *Spoorloos* is to be found in Guillaume Canet’s taut thriller, *Tell No One* (2006), which fully realises the notion that the vanishing woman’s disappearance was all an elaborate plan staged for the gaze of the ‘man who wanted to know’ (the connection to *Vertigo* is self-evident here). While Miramax and Focus own the rights to the English-language remake of *Tell No One* (due to begin principle photography in 2010), perhaps this is one foreign film they really should reconsider, for one cannot copy the Great Fucker (try, for instance, to imagine a remake of *The Conversation*). To quote Janet Leigh, the irrational remake really is a “once-only” film.

Suffice it to recall the lesson of the *trompe-l’œil* (‘trick the eye’) genre of art. Is not the ultimate symbol of the irrational remake that of the death skull which passes, fleetingly, across our screens at the end of *Psycho* in-between the image of Norman’s smiling face and Marion’s car being dredged from the swamp (fig. 4.7)? A lesser director would have had the skull completely replace Norman’s face, but Hitchcock astutely recognises in it the stain of anamorphosis, which disappears if looked at straight on. Compare this passing image with that of the most famous of the *trompe-l’œil* paintings, Hans Holbein’s ‘The Ambassadors’, which when looked at from the side, reveals a similar skull in the bottom of the picture.



Fig. 5.2: Hans Holbein's 'The Ambassadors' (1533) and the anamorphic stain (bottom, centre)

Lacan likened the *trompe-l'œil* to the 'soul' of the *objet petit a* (1998:112), and described the fleeting skull in Holbein's 'The Ambassadors' as a "singular object floating in the foreground, which is there to be looked at, in order to catch, I would almost say, *to catch in its trap*, the observer, that is to say, us" (1998:92). This is also the description of the irrational remake, for no other form of repetition includes in its own textuality the very reflection of the gaze itself, that is, the viewer's *own extra-diegetic position*. The scene in *Psycho II* where Mary thinks she may have trumped Norman after finding his peephole is one such scene where, in fact, all that is reflected is the gaze itself looking back, such that gazing subject and gazed-upon object are intolerably locked into one another, throwing each into instability. Who is looking here? Lacan might have been describing this scene in *Psycho II* when he wrote that "it is not at the level of the other whose gaze surprises the subject looking through the keyhole. It is that the other surprises him, the subject, as entirely hidden gaze" (1998:182). The shock is that of the Freudian uncanny, wherein that which should have remained hidden – the perverted gaze – is revealed. While most remakes seek to replace and honour their originals, they ultimately fail to do either: true remakes always fail to replace their original models and homages always fail to honour theirs (as Leitch argues, a re-release of the original is the only true homage). These remakes do, however, pass this hidden skull on to new forms.

Aside from the transition into the final scene in *Psycho*, the equivalent of the hidden skull in Hollywood cinema is that of the central image from *The Silence of the Lambs*, where Clarice discovers a moth (already a symbol of 'change') in a dead girl's throat *post-mortem* (recalling Freud's dream of Irma's injection). Having suspected this to be a piece of flotsam,

Clarice soon discovers that it was placed there, by the killer, specifically for the gaze of the investigators. Suddenly, something insignificant is radically redescribed, and when the moth is examined further and opened up for inspection, it reveals a skull not unlike that of Holbein's painting.



Fig. 5.3: The 'death's head moth' in *The Silence of the Lambs*

Lacan's description of the floating object in Holbein's painting relates to this image in *The Silence of the Lambs*, for he writes that the skull "reflects our own nothingness, in the figure of the death's head" (1998:92). That the variety of moth in the film is known as the 'death's-head moth' further illustrates that this image of death is not simply 'death' as such, but life from death, the *memento mori* in which we should be reminded "Don't forget to die!" The key word here is 'change', or as Deleuze would put it, *becoming*, because for 'Buffalo Bill' the repetition of this act (whose patterning is regarded by Lecter as 'desperately random' – in that it is not random at all) requires an audience. In this way, the remake and Buffalo Bill are not too dissimilar: while the latter is making a "girl suit out of real girls" by skinning his victims' hides, the remake is making a film suit out of real film skins!

For Žižek, this is the difference between 'reality' and the 'Real': the former is our manner of dealing with the latter, of preventing it from encroaching upon our daily existence, of maintaining a gap between what we 'desire' and what we *really desire*. Lacan writes that it is important that we realise "that we speak in analytic discourse about what the verb 'to fuck' (*foutre*) enunciates perfectly well. We speak therein of fucking, and we say that it's not working out (*ça ne va pas*)" (1999:32). The point is not the success of the procedure, but its *failure*, such that it is only when something is not working out for the subject that s/he works it out anyway. There is always something missing, some *objet a* facehugging monstrosity of a machinic Thing which 'escapes discourse'. In essence, reproduction only occurs thanks to "missing" (*ratage* – failing) what was intended, such that "it is by missing that jouissance that

it reproduces – in other words, by fucking” (Lacan, 1999:121). The Great Fucker does not fuck to escape the Real, but is ‘*the Fuck*’ itself. Walter Benjamin reminds us that the greatest crime for a reader (or spectator) is to leave language in the state it was found, to forgo the practice of reinscribing history at each pass (1977:69-82), indicating the Bakhtinian sense of dialogism, or a living language (“*heteroglossia*”), of the “intense interanimation and struggle between one’s own and another’s word” (2001:1187). Has there ever been a greater need for psychoanalysis in film criticism, for how else are we to see the rising phantom, the skull of the death drive, if not in the cinematic unconscious? Thus in honour of the unknown, I propose a Lynchian toast to the remake, one that might hopefully revitalise remake theory in looking at new forms of repetition as they unfold: Here’s to the remake ‘Fuck’.

But, finally, this Fuck needs to ‘come’, not once but twice – it must come *again*. Consider that each of the originals in this thesis, from *Psycho* to *Blade Runner*, *Spoorloos* to David Lynch himself had to fail once before they found their place in Hollywood history. Mark Kermode notes that when it was re-released as a director’s cut in the 1990s, “history had finally caught up with *Blade Runner* [...] it was clear that *Blade Runner* had actually shaped the face of the future” (Kermode, cited in Abbott, 2000). The French language frequently provides Lacan with opportunity for wordplay, connotation, and polyvalence, and none more so perhaps than the title of his last seminar, ‘Encore’. As a noun, ‘encore’ alludes to the sense of a brief performance to follow on from a main performance. As an interjection, the sense of “encore!” extends to an audience’s demand for the performer to return. However, as an adverb, ‘encore’ can mean ‘still’, as in “Why are you still here?”; ‘more’, as in “Would you like more?”; ‘again’, as in “Once again”; and ‘yet’, as in “This is not yet finished!”. Clearly, the irony of this being Lacan’s last seminar is not lost on him, as he writes: “Why not stop the *encore* now?” (1999:146), meaning not that this last seminar is his encore, the final brief performance before the real end, but, rather, that *every seminar is an encore*, each repeating and desisting in an ongoing ‘encore’. There is no continuation for Lacan any more than there is an end. Like the sexual relationship, his seminars come and go, and in the first instance they fail. It is my claim that the remake is also an ‘encore’, a brief and failed return to something that was itself already a return, one that asks us as audiences if we have had enough, or, perhaps, if we want more. The question I want to ask is, as a Deleuzo-psychoanalyst: *What’s the difference?*

APPENDICES

Appendix a: Horror remake box office stats: 1982-present

Remake	Opening	Lifetime Gross
1. <i>The Ring</i>	\$15,015,393	\$129,128,133
2. <i>The Grudge</i>	\$39,128,715	\$110,359,362
3. <i>The Haunting</i>	\$33,435,140	\$91,411,151
4. <i>The Texas Chainsaw Massacre</i>	\$28,094,014	\$80,571,655
5. <i>The Ring Two</i>	\$35,065,237	\$76,231,249
6. <i>The Amityville Horror</i>	\$23,507,007	\$65,233,369
7. <i>Friday the 13th</i>	\$40,570,365	\$65,002,019
8. <i>The Stepford Wives</i>	\$21,406,781	\$59,484,742
9. <i>Dawn of the Dead</i>	\$26,722,575	\$59,020,957
10. <i>Halloween</i>	\$26,362,367	\$58,272,029
11. <i>The Omen</i>	\$16,026,496	\$54,607,383
12. <i>My Bloody Valentine 3-D</i>	\$21,241,456	\$51,545,952
13. <i>When a Stranger Calls</i>	\$21,607,203	\$47,860,214
14. <i>Prom Night</i>	\$20,804,941	\$43,869,350
15. <i>Thirteen Ghosts</i>	\$15,165,355	\$41,867,960
16. <i>The Hills Have Eyes</i>	\$15,708,512	\$41,778,863
17. <i>House on Haunted Hill</i>	\$15,946,032	\$40,846,082
18. <i>The Fly</i>	\$7,007,423	\$40,456,565
19. <i>The Grudge 2</i>	\$20,825,300	\$39,143,839
20. <i>The Last House on the Left</i>	\$14,118,685	\$32,752,215
21. <i>House of Wax</i>	\$12,077,236	\$32,064,800
22. <i>The Eye</i>	\$12,425,776	\$31,418,697
23. <i>Mirrors</i>	\$11,161,074	\$30,691,439
24. <i>The Fog</i>	\$11,752,917	\$29,550,869
25. <i>The Uninvited</i>	\$10,325,824	\$28,596,818
26. <i>One Missed Call</i>	\$12,511,473	\$26,890,041
27. <i>Shutter</i>	\$10,447,559	\$25,928,550
28. <i>Dark Water</i>	\$9,939,251	\$25,473,352
29. <i>Invasion of the Body Snatchers</i>	\$1,298,129	\$24,946,533
30. <i>The Wicker Man</i>	\$9,610,204	\$23,649,127
31. <i>Psycho</i>	\$10,031,850	\$21,456,130
32. <i>The Hills Have Eyes 2</i>	\$9,686,362	\$20,804,166
33. <i>Pulse</i>	\$8,203,822	\$20,264,436
34. <i>The Hitcher</i>	\$7,818,239	\$16,472,961
35. <i>Black Christmas</i>	\$3,723,364	\$16,273,581

36. <i>The Invasion</i>	\$5,951,409	\$15,074,191
37. <i>The Thing</i>	\$3,107,897	\$13,782,838
38. <i>Village of the Damned</i>	\$3,222,450	\$9,418,365
39. <i>The Blob</i>	\$2,644,920	\$8,247,943
40. <i>Cat People</i>	\$1,617,636	\$7,000,000
41. <i>Willard</i>	\$4,010,593	\$6,886,089
42. <i>Night of the Living Dead</i>	\$2,884,679	\$5,835,247
43. <i>Invaders From Mars</i>	\$2,046,576	\$4,884,663
44. <i>Funny Games</i>	\$544,833	\$1,294,919
45. <i>Body Snatchers</i>	\$31,494	\$428,868
46. <i>Night of the Living Dead 3D</i>	\$215,300	\$271,000

Appendix b: ‘True remakes’ of Alfred Hitchcock

Remake	Original
1. <i>A Perfect Murder</i> (Andrew Davis, 1998)	<i>Dial M for Murder</i> (1954)
2. <i>The Birds</i> (Martin Campbell, 2010)	<i>The Birds</i> (1963)
3. <i>Disturbia</i> (D. J. Caruso, 2007)	<i>Rear Window</i> (1954)
4. <i>Jamaica Inn</i> (Lawrence Gordon Clark, 1985)	<i>Jamaica Inn</i> (1939)
5. <i>The Lady Vanishes</i> (Anthony Page, 1979)	<i>The Lady Vanishes</i> (1938)
6. <i>Lifepod</i> (Ron Silver, 1993)	<i>Lifeboat</i> (1944)
7. <i>The Man Who Knew Too Much</i> (Alfred Hitchcock, 1956)	<i>The Man Who Knew Too Much</i> (1934)
8. <i>Notorious</i> (Colin Bucksey, 1992)	<i>Notorious</i> (1946)
9. <i>Once You Meet a Stranger</i> (Tommy Lee Wallace, 1996)	
10. <i>Strangers on a Train</i> (Noam Murro, 2006)	<i>Strangers on a Train</i> (1951)
11. <i>Psycho</i> (Gus Van Sant, 1998)	<i>Psycho</i> (1960)
12. <i>Rear Window</i> (Jeff Bleckner, 1998)	<i>Rear Window</i> (1954)
13. <i>Rebecca</i> (Jim O’Brien, 1997)	<i>Rebecca</i> (1940)
14. <i>The Secret Agent</i> (Christopher Hampton, 1996)	<i>Sabotage</i> (1936)
15. <i>Shadow of a Doubt</i> (Karen	<i>Shadow of a Doubt</i> (1943)

Arthur, 1991)	
16. <i>Suspicion</i> (Andrew Grieve, 1987)	<i>Suspicion</i> (1941)
17. <i>The Thirty-Nine Steps</i> (Don Sharp, 1978)	
18. <i>The 39 Steps</i> (Ralph Thomas, 1959)	<i>The 39 Steps</i> (1935)
19. <i>Under Capricorn</i> (Rod Hardy 1983)	<i>Under Capricorn</i> (1949)

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