

22- On the circulation of the moving objects in Jacobs', see Stéphanie de Loppinot, "A la foire d'empoigne", in *Tom Tom the Piper's Son*, pp. 22-27.

23- In a letter to Fénelon, Seurat talked about "the purity of the spectral element" (quoted by Jean-Claude Lebensztejn in *Chahut*, Paris, Hazan, 1989, p. 100). On the dots in Seurat's painting, see Meyer Schapiro, "Seurat", in *Style, artiste et société*, Paris, Gallimard, 1982, pp. 361-382.

24- For a typology of cinematographic reuse, see Nicole Brenez and Pip Chodorov, "Cartographie du Found Footage", in *Tom Tom the Piper's Son*, pp. 97-109.

25- In *Three Essays on Style*.

26- *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*, Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1981, p. 164.

27- "Pierre Ménard, Author of Don Quixote", in *Collected Fictions* (tr. Andrew Hurley), New York, Viking, 1998 (1939).

### Endurance of repetition, upsurge of invention: the remake and the workshop of history

Thierry Davila

And each time that *producing* does not mean *reproducing oneself*, everything becomes darkness for us. Gabriel Tarde, *Les Lois de l'imitation*<sup>1</sup>

All that will be retained of the cinema will be that which can be remade. Serge Daney, "Journal de l'an passé"<sup>2</sup>

In *The Sophist*, Plato draws a distinction between two types, at least, of mimesis<sup>3</sup>. On one side there is the excellent imitation that makes each reproduction an exact copy of a model – its icon – and guarantees the perfect participation of the copy in the life of the original. On another side there is the kind of mimesis that produces simulacra, or imperfect, distorted imitations of a model, and integrates one or more differences

into the repetition of the primary form; which posits disparities in the very principle of duplication. On one side, therefore, there is an ontologically founded representation that exists only through the permanence and triumph of truth, and on another, image production that is not the absolute reproduction of a principle of existence external to it. The result: faced with a successful copy there appears a proliferation of simulacra and phantasmic creations whose very existence "interiorises a dissimilitude", or is of the nature of "an internalised dissimilarity"<sup>4</sup>. It introduces the multiplicity of differences constructed against the ideal repetition of the same that distinguishes a perfect iconology, which produces singularities by emancipating itself from a model. Question: throughout its history, has art, and most particularly that of the 20th century, done anything other than, for the most part, produce series of simulacra, impure images that do away with the very possibility of an iconic vision? Has art not been, de facto, the leading critic of Platonism? And do simulacra not constitute, in most cases, the principle of invention of images? Are they not at the heart of the operationalisation of perception, making irrelevant the concern for truth that distinguishes the triumph of perfect representation?

Let us take, for example, what happened in Western art in the course of the 1990s, and continued after 2000 (and it may be that the phenomenon will persist for some time yet). During this period, a number of artists did remakes of films, or produced extracts of well-known films, or reworkings, with mobile images, of photographic images<sup>5</sup>. They made simulacra that were clearly identified as such. In these reprises, these reworkings, movement and time would very

often become the material common to a set of invented aesthetic devices, beyond the singularity of each work. When Douglas Gordon, for example, slows down Hitchcock's *Psycho* so that the projection of the film lasts 24 hours (*24 Hour Psycho*, 1993), he transforms the original, which is presented in its totality in his work by dilating it to the maximum extent. He remakes it and breaks it down as if to take in hand, in a programmatic way, in the exhibition space, the very substance of the cinema (movement and duration)<sup>6</sup>. And when Pierre Huyghe remakes Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (*Remake*, 1994-1995), using the original script word for word, spoken by characters who mimic the poses of the actors in the film, he takes Hitchcock's film as the architecture for the construction of a narration. The arrangement of the shots in the remake reproduces that of the original, transposing it into a universe that is without qualities, banal, using technical resources that have been pared down to a minimum and seem to have been mobilised in a hurry (*Remake* was filmed in two weekends). Here also, the reprise produces an effect of structure: as it is impossible to see *Remake* without thinking of *Rear Window*, the viewer is faced with a gap, a pure difference between two objects, which comes out in what distinguishes the cinema, technically, from the home movie, but which is also based on the memory one may have of the primary film. This works on the same level as the cutting process, the constitution of the secondary film, so as to bring to light a narrative structure that is simultaneously covered and unveiled by the play of the doublings, with their work of imitation and quotation<sup>7</sup>. These two examples show that the aesthetic use of the remake has nothing in common with the meaning and function that the image industry attributes to it, i.e., generally, those of

a second-order cinematographical practice, or which seem not to be the essence of time, motivated only by the financial consequences of the reproduction of an oeuvre that remains canonic, whose still-intact fascination is to be exploited commercially, and whose mythology is to be turned to account<sup>8</sup>. Aesthetic remakes have nothing to do with cut-price cinema or the fabrication of essentially déclassé visions, even if (and we shall return to this point) they cultivate disappointment as a form of work in their own right. For the most part, on the contrary, they are a means of analysing images, preconditions of the narration, a tool for exploring cinema in space; in sum, a procedure for the invention and production of works that have their own power of interrogation. These images are therefore analytic and reflexive, because they integrate a productive difference into the very heart of the repetition of a primary form; because they interiorise a disparity and turn this integration into a way of doing and thinking; *24 Hour Psycho* epitomises this situation, which leads to the construction of a simulacrum, an image which, even if it draws on a pre-existing plot, harbours within itself its own means of interrogation of the point of departure, and consequently invention, of a final form. And with this work one no doubt has the most explicit example of the remake as invention and differentiated repetition. In this sense, if modernity is defined by the power of the "modernity", remakes are eminently modern works, in that they are sensitive to this richness and power of difference in repetition, the non-iconic image, which they put on display through a variety of procedures.

The different procedures in the formation of the remake could be divided up into three main families

which are exemplified, to a certain degree, by the works already mentioned. On the one hand, there is the kind that takes the cinema as its material<sup>9</sup>, the cinematographic image as a ready-made, and makes something out of it, starting with it. In *Westlich* (2002), for example, Jan Kopp used scenes from a popular German Western, *Old Shatterhand*, which was shot in Bosnia with European actors at the start of the 1960s. He did a tri-projection in which he reworked the soundtrack, inviting non-Germanophone Americans to imitate the German script without relying on a written text, but rather using the original film as an auditory source which each individual transcribed phonetically as he or she saw fit. This work is a specialised remake, in that not only is the film in its German version a reprise of the classic American adventure film, but there is also the fact that the work done on the soundtrack is a reappropriation by Americans of their creativity, after its reoperationalisation by Europeans; and it is recomposed by them. The work thus functions as an accumulation of discrepancies, translations, passages. Mark Lewis, in *Upside Down Touch of Evil* (1997), shows a scene from Orson Welles' *Touch of Evil*, whose projection he inverts, thus leaning on the original in order to destabilise it with a gesture that recalls the way Duchamp exposed a urinal (*Fountain*), simply turning it round in space. Douglas Gordon redistributes scenes from films within the exhibition space, producing collages where the projection of images. In *Déjà Vu* (2000), *Dead on Arrival* (1950), a film noir made by Rudolph Maté is shown in the form of a triple video projection. Each part of the triptych starts at the same time. The first part runs at 23 frames/second, the central scene at the normal speed of 24 frames/second, and the third at 25

frames/second. By the end of the projection the temporal disparities are obvious, so that the film itself is taken up again in its totality, remade in each of the panels of the projection according to the proposals that frame the original, which one has lost from sight, as with all simulacra, given that one no longer knows where it is. As in *24 Hour Psycho*, the use of the primary film is transformed, worked on from within by a modification of the duration of the work that acts on the film as a material thing, and recomposes it. Film sequences can also be used as such, and put together in space either in face-to-face confrontations (e.g. *Through a Looking Glass*, 1999, which alludes to a famous scene from *Taxi Driver*), or apposed to one another (*Left is Right and Right is Wrong and Left is Wrong and Right is Right*, 1999), recomposing cinema in space to construct collages with feature films. Pierre Huyghe, in *Versions Multiples (Atlantic-Atlantik-Atlantis, 1929)*, 1997, projects the same film, *Atlantic*, in three different spoken versions (French, English and German) as a way of elucidating the divergences between forms which are supposed to be superimposable, but whose duration is actually different in each version (going from 125 to 130 and 140 minutes). In these examples, it is the cinema that becomes the raw material, the material of an aesthetic construction as such – most frequently its duration and movement – with cinema revisited, remade, according to highly varied procedures, but always turning space into the place for an image exhibition that modifies the nature of film. In an essay published in 1936, and expanded in 1947, Erwin Panofsky, one of the first art critics to discuss the cinema, defined the cinematographic art as a material, concrete discipline which in any case has to do with reality, its objects and constraints, even if these take the form of film sets that reconstitute the

universe: "The painter works on a bare wall or canvas, which he organises into a resemblance to things and persons according to his ideas [...] he does not work with these things and persons, even if he uses a model. And this is also true of the sculptor [...] It is the cinema, and only the cinema, that does justice to the materialist interpretation of the universe which, whether or not we subscribe to it, permeates contemporary civilisation. Apart from the very special case of cartoons, it is with real things and persons, not neutral matter, that the cinema fashions compositions whose style and, in some cases, fantasy-loaded or eminently symbolic aspect derive less from the interpretation of the world that has germinated in the artist's mind than from his manipulation of physical objects and recording equipment. The material of films is physical reality as such: the physical 18th-century reality of Versailles (and it matters little whether this is the original or a reconstitution, since the aesthetic intention is the same), or the suburban reality of a house in Westchester"<sup>11</sup>. The aesthetic remakes that use film as a material express the transition of the cinema as a materialist art, or material par excellence, dealing with flesh-and-blood bodies, and objects, in all their physical and spatial substantiality, to the cinema as an abstract practice, or in any case one which is founded on an abstract grasping of its object, in which bodies are replaced by their images, and the world by its representation. This abstraction – which concerns the evolution of the film industry itself through virtual images – relies on limited samplings of images, scenes, spatialised fragments projected on large screens, in a gesture that partly has to do with an aesthetic of the "monumentalised quotation"<sup>12</sup>. This practice spatialises a prediction made by Giorgio Agamben, based on an analysis of the

montage by Guy Debord and Jean-Luc Godard. For Agamben, the montage is a procedure whose transcendental conditions of production are repetition and stoppage. The history of this process ends up, with Godard, in the observation that it is no longer necessary to do any actual shooting, or to produce images, in order to construct a film, but simply to repeat and stop film material. From this, Agamben concludes that "the cinema will now be made only on the basis of cinema images"<sup>13</sup>, freeze-frames and the repetition of the cinema itself, using film itself. Aesthetic remakes, with their own formal inventions, project this condition of the cinema in exhibition venues, and exhibit it in space.

A second family of remakes is concerned with reproducing the narrative structure of an image or film, taken as an original. This is the remake in its most general sense, with photography or the cinema playing the role of a syntax that is transferred or rearranged as it is repeated. Starting with this primary framework, the entire range of variations and differences is possible, and all of them do indeed come into being. Thus, Ute Friedrike Jürss works on photos from *New York Times* articles, which she transposes into the domain of video (*You Never Know the Whole Story*, 2000). In the resulting remade mobile images, she interprets each of the characters from the original, and shows the result in slow motion in the form of triptychs, playing on the proximity between photography and film so as to create a sort of indecision, a monumental freeze-frame (the projection screen is 21 metres long). This is the silent mobile representation of a mineral remake, geological in its slowness. But most aesthetic remakes start out with the mobile image itself, and invent another one which is also in

movement, and is a reworking of the first. This is obviously the case with Pierre Huyghe's *Remake*, which expresses a strong penchant for the reprise, the replication of the original – a determination that becomes a technique for the fabrication, the production of images. The artist says of this work: "What I ask the actors to do is to repeat, to dub, to reproduce"<sup>14</sup>. Repeating and implementing an iteration of *Rear Window* in the mundane setting of a contemporary apartment in the heart of a district under construction, Huyghe ends up with the reduction of all insistence and filmic consistency in order to expose a "devitalisation of the original film"<sup>15</sup>. There remains only the skeleton of the fiction, its shooting plan, in other words the film as a musical score, a "matrix" for a possible rebound, a revisiting of the initial film<sup>16</sup>. In the same way, *Les Invisibles* (1995) uses the plot of Pasolini's film *Uccellacci e Uccellini* to produce a version that allows the remake to integrate current bits of reality into the original canvas. The film pivots around two people taking a stroll, and it is by following this same itinerary once again that the actors of the remake meet people who are not in the founding narration, and yet take part in the remade work. The founding plot is thus a guiding thread for current reality, which gives entry to it and reveals it: the cinema and its past, its memory, provide a means of access to the world. Olivier Bardin, for his part, takes as his point of departure a film made by Marguerite Duras in 2002, whose title, *Le Camion* ("The lorry"), he retains. But he gives it another kind of visibility, a new legibility. If he preserves the central theatrical configuration of the work (a man and a woman sitting side by side, taking it in turns to read a dialogue; in the original, the two characters, played by Duras and Gérard Depardieu, are in a lorry), this is for the purpose of displacing it in time

(with the use of slow motion), by having the male actor read the whole of Duras' text, which appears as subtitles on the silent video image. In the first version there were shots outside the lorry, which are absent from the remake. Bardin uses the concept of the reprise as a way of exploring the text and staging that comprise the core of the initial film. Everything rests on a process of condensation of the original, a reduction to a unique time and place, and a given text which, as the work unfolds, becomes its real subject. Thus the remake turns into a condensate of the original – its slimmed-down version, its quintessence – as in Mark Lewis's *Peeping Tom* (2000), a reprise of several scenes from Michael Powell's film in which a so-called Mark Lewis is both film director and assassin. This complex, virtuoso reprise, invented by the artist, sets forth the original story in a shortcut that brings out the major articulations of the primary version. And when Brice Dellsperger remakes extracts from films, or entire films, he systematically holds onto the original soundtrack (words and music). The generic title he uses is *Body Double*. Whether remaking scenes or reproducing the whole of a script, he works with the images of the original versions, which the actors watch on the set before embarking upon the reprise, the repetition of the interpretation they have seen. In *Body Double X* (1998-2000), a total remake of Andrzej Zulawski's *The Important Thing is to Love*, the actor with whom he works most of the time, Jean-Luc Verna, who is himself an artist, plays all the parts in the film – those originally played by Romy Schneider, Jacques Dutronc, Klaus Kinski, etc. – using the technique of imitation-reinterpretation. In his case, there is a protean reprise of the original: his different travesties transform him into an almost infinite double, without any possible limit, of

any given point of departure, any given archetypal figure, as an unceasing quotation. It is as though he himself embodied the power of the simulacrum. The means used (accessories, environments) are generally reduced to the bare essentials, especially in the remakes of extracts from films chosen because they are cult scenes which are remade as sequences shown in a loop (*Body Double 15*, 2001, is a remake of a scene from *Vertigo*); and particularly in the case of *Body Double X*, where the director, as he himself has stated, wanted to "empty the fiction, and draw out all the action, of the [original] film. So that it would no longer be anything more than an empty shell"<sup>17</sup>, with the image becoming something of a heavily made-up relic of a fiction that had been lost from sight, deflated, enfeebled. Another example of an aesthetic remake is Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger's *Affection Riposte* (2001). Taking as their point of departure a scene from John Cassavetes' *Opening Night*, the artists constructed a set where actors would replay the scene. This set was integrated into the shooting of the video and the final presentation of the work. The vision of *Affection Riposte* leaves the viewer in the profoundest uncertainty as to the object he is looking at: a rehearsal of a scene from a play, or a live document devoted to the universe of the theatre? This vacillation accompanies a highly-constructed, carefully-written spatialisation that differs from the procedures of imitation and reinterpretation used in the aforementioned remakes. In the artists' words: "By comparison with Cassavetes and his work on the direction of the actors, our work has been to write down displacements that were originally improvised, or, let's say, fluctuating (with Cassavetes, the script wasn't prepared before the shooting started). We put together a

score for our actors; with dialogues, it's true; but more than that, and what's peculiar to the theatre, a very precise succession of gestures and displacements. After the inspired or improvised act of *Opening Night*, we carried out a displacement of attention onto the dramatic mechanisms. This was a new act of writing. With us, what was exultation, explosion and surprise in Cassavetes' work becomes traced out, predestined. This produces a description of a situation that's almost clinical, in other words observable and repeatable. One remains at a distance."<sup>18</sup> *Affection Riposte* displays an uncertainty principle which has been precisely premeditated in its elaboration, and precisely constructed in space, and can be summed up as follows: where is reality? Insisting as it does on the mechanisms of construction, the work takes a structural approach to the cinema, or, in broader terms, to representation, of which the idea of a score is one possible expression, with the remake then being just a given interpretation among others of film considered as a system of notations, a point of departure subject to every imaginable distinctive adjustment and invention. In all these examples, of which *Affection Riposte* is the most theatrical version, it is the cinema as syntax that becomes a privileged working tool, and not exclusively the narrative content of a fiction. In this sense, such works constitute a structural approach to film which is re-used, revised, reproduced in space as visual architecture. In this sense too, such remakes echo certain procedures which conceptual art has systematised, with shots that allow of a certain number of variations, ways of constructing works; and the rapidly with which some of these remakes are constructed no doubt makes it possible to share the conceptual artists' concern with evacuating, as far as possible, the

subjectivity of the creator in the very act of execution, in the materialisation of his work<sup>1</sup>. It is notably this type of artistic practice that gives its full sense to a categorial difference put forward by the American philosopher Nelson Goodman, which could be said to run right through the arts. For Goodman, there are autographical arts (painting, sculpture, engraving), which "consist of a material object for which the notion of authenticity is important; this being guaranteed by the history of the production of this material object", and then there are allographic arts, all of which "function through a notation that makes possible the reiteration of exemplars, for which the notion of a counterfeit makes no sense"<sup>2</sup>, like a play or a musical score. Remakes obviously belong to this second category: they systematise the relationship between the original, treated as a system of notations, and its reworking, which is its legitimate infinite reiteration.

Finally, there is a third family of remakes that uses both cinema as a form of ready-made and film as a syntax whose articulations are to be mimed. This is the case with the work of Christoph Draeger, who combines extracts from well-known films with reprises, using characters who are not played by professional actors, and violent scenes. In *Feel Lucky, Punk?* (1988), murders taken from cult films (*Taxi Driver*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Thelma and Louise*, *Magnum Force*) are replayed in the artists' studio without, it would seem, any particular preparation on the part of the actors, and improvised in an absolutely neutral room, against an exceedingly perfunctory backdrop. The final cut shows both extracts from films and scenes remade in haste from the home movie that duplicates them; as in Pierre Huyghe's *The Third Memory*, where we are dealing with a remake which also combines the cinema as material, in this instance Sidney Lumet's *Dog Day*

*Afternoon*. Huyghe located the real protagonist of the story, who was played by Al Pacino, and brought him into the film so as to correct the script errors committed by Lumet. It is a direct intervention of the remake in the original, an inset of the copy in the film which is like a simplified version that goes to the heart of the organisation of the film, and which reduces its emphasis so as to annex its order. The editing accentuates the contrast between the two versions, giving the film a substance, a texture, which its remake, in projection, no longer possesses. This interplay between sampling and reconstitution led Christoph Draeger, in *Schizo* (2003), to remake the murder scene from *Psycho*, and to superimpose the two versions, Hitchcock's and his own, in a projection. The result is a sort of anthropophagous image in which the fusion of the two scenes dislocates the natural legibility of the film, and throws the viewer even further off balance.

From all these examples of remakes it is possible to extract the elements of a mutation in the order of the images of which they are the symptom. Their diversity and plurality are consubstantial with the idea of the reprise or the reworking, because by definition there is no such thing as an absolute simulacrum. The order of repetition, or of the differentiated mimesis to which the remake belongs, is that of the proliferation of singularities. Despite this observation, such works can be considered as resulting from the same general practice, i.e. that of the projection of real or mimicked films in an exhibition space – "exhibition cinema"<sup>3</sup> – and what it implies about a collective relationship to the image, and to memory. But, over a large swathe of the plastic arts at least, memory has become cinematographic: the history that is worked on by artists – and notably those who do remakes – is

that of the cinema itself, with Hitchcock often serving as an essential reference (for Pierre Huyghe, Douglas Gordon, and indeed Brice Dellsperger and Christoph Draeger). In reworkings of major films, it is as though the repetition of the original had become the repetition of its memory, the actualisation of its passage into memory, its access to history and to its duration, which is also expressed by its re-use at a given moment, and its aesthetic reinvention. That which lasts, because it has left its mark on memory – and thus that which has a history – is that which is repeated in memory: aesthetic remakes are the shapings of this process, and its exhibition in space, which plays on the differences that memory itself induces, and produces, in its work of conservation, fixation and forgetfulness. Thus, by putting into practice – mechanically, and on a large scale, in monumental dimensions – the work of remembering, with its power of transformation and creation, remakes are also setting in motion the elements and mechanics of an artistic genealogy in which Hitchcock represented a decisive moment. Because with remakes, "repeating means behaving, but in regard to something unique or singular; which has no likeness or equivalent"<sup>4</sup> – *Vertigo*, for example, or *Psycho*. Repeating means adopting "a behaviour", having "a point of view" and using "thefts and gifts"<sup>5</sup>, which are the criteria of repetition, and prerequisites for the invention of a vision (for Douglas Gordon, kidnapping is an essential gesture<sup>6</sup>); for if one agrees with Benjamin, it is of the very nature of the work of art – and, even more, the major work of art – always to have been reproducible, able to be remade<sup>7</sup>; or again, on multiple occasions, in multiple forms, translated: "the higher the quality of the work, the more it remains, even in the most fleeting

contact with its sense, still capable of being translated"<sup>8</sup>. Aesthetic repetitions are located in repetition and transmission, at the heart of the invention of a tradition and the fabrication of a history, at the heart of the translation of memory, of translation as memory; and herein cinema and its cult films – the historical value of the original being, in most cases, one of the necessary conditions for the possibility of the remake – take pride of place because they have become the locus of memory and its actuality<sup>9</sup>. Remakes deal directly with these questions, spatialising their moments and logic. They construct the past at present according to a law expressed by Walter Benjamin: "Irrecoverable is [...] every image from the past that threatens to disappear with each present instant which, in it, has not recognised itself as being aimed at."<sup>10</sup> This law of memory and history obviously leads to an evolution in the art of projection, and a real transformation of its meaning and aesthetic effectiveness. Thus, if one could talk about an "aesthetics of narcissism" in relation to video at the start of the 1970s<sup>11</sup>, the current proliferation of remakes and their mode of operation, starting with what is always, already, there (cinema and its history), put videomakers, on the contrary, face to face with the Other; with whom it is a question of finding the terms of a possible negotiation. To proceed via the Other; therefore, rather than to situate oneself in a confrontation with oneself, is the mark of those works which are, in a certain way, external to themselves, and exist only through, and as a function of, a "founding otherness"<sup>12</sup> of which they are really the instantiation – which they put, and which puts them, to work. These are the terms of a definite modification of video art, or at least an evolution of its history that the remake, more than any other genre invented by

videomakers, takes in hand, and gets to grips with.

In the end, these works – in this genre which has been imported from the cinema and spatialised by artists – make up the essence of the time they manipulate without making a big thing of it, using techniques that are light, if not derisory, even when it is a question of recreating sets (with the notable exception of Moser and Schwinger's *Affection Riposte*). It is as if the copy were thought out and produced as a non-heroic version of the original – as its anaemic, devitalised double. It is as if the remake chose to be disappearing, in order to be as close as possible to its understated divergence from its Other/founder; its unique architecture; in order to construct only the difference between the subject and the world that is external to it; in order to allow only the structural distance to appear. And then to exhibit something as being required for the emergence of the work, and its invention; an upsurge of knowledge and culture, and their ever-differing announcement, ever repeated: "To introduce a difference between the external world and me is what we could doubtless designate as the founding act of human civilisation. And if the space thereby opened up becomes a substrate of artistic creation, an awareness of distance could give rise to a durable social function whose success or failure, as a means of intellectual orientation, would be equivalent to the destiny of human culture."<sup>13</sup>

Translated from the French by John Doherty

## Notes

- 1- Les Empêcheurs de Penser en Rond, Paris, 2001, p. 66.
- 2- In *Trafic*, No. 1, winter 1991, p. 6.
- 3- Sections 235d-236c, 264c.
- 4- Gilles Deleuze, "Platon et le simulacre", in *Logique du sens*, Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1969, p. 297.
- 5- One of the first analyses of the "remake" phenomenon in contemporary art was carried out by Jean-Christophe Royoux in "Remaking cinema. Les nouvelles stratégies du remake et l'invention du "cinéma d'exposition", in Véronique Goudinoux and Michel Weemans (ed.) *Reproductibilité et irréproductibilité de l'œuvre d'art*, Brussels, La lettre volée, 2001, pp. 215-229. The relationship between video art and cinema has given rise, in recent years, to a number of exhibitions, for example *Cinéma Cinéma. Contemporary Art and the Cinematic Experience* at the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, February-May 1999, and *Action on tourne*, a series of four exhibitions organised by Laurence Gateau at the Villa Arson, Nice, in 2000 and 2001. And the phenomenon of projection has been explored in exhibitions such as *Projections, les transports de l'image*, Le Fresnoy, Studio national des arts contemporains, November 1997 – January 1998, curated by Dominique Païni.
- 6- Gordon's comment on this work is: "I thought it might be interesting to take an existing film and re-make it" (interview with Thomas Lawson, *Frieze*, No. 8, April 1993, p. 17).
- 7- Huyghe himself says: "With Hitchcock I was in no way looking for a companion, but for a covering, in other words a memory, a critical memory", Erik Bullot (ed.), *Pointillégienplan. Cinéma et art contemporain*, Paris, Léo Scheer, 2002, p. 136.
- 8- Serge Daney, predicting that the future of the remake is assured, describes the reproductive inevitability of the cinema in the following way: "I suppose that if a work of art is, by definition, what is conserved, a mythology, on the contrary, never ceases to be managed and recycled according to the spirit of the time and the state of the techniques involved, so that, rather than 'colouring' old-Huston films, it is more profitable for the entertainment industry simply to remake 'legendary films', and only these. What will be retained of the cinema will be limited to what can be

remade. This involves films that have often been legendary successes; the truth being that, even posthumously, money attracts money, and success breeds success. Even Europe is getting into the act: is there not a rumour that Kieślowski has been asked to remake *Citizen Kane*? (see Note 2).

9- Gilles Deleuze: "Modernity is defined by the power of the simulacrum." (Op. cit., p. 306.) *And Difference et répétition* (Paris, PUF, 1968) opens with this same observation (p. 1): "modern thinking is born out of the failure of representation, the loss of identities and the discovery of all the forces that are acting under the representation of the identical. The modern world is that of simulacra. [...] All identities are merely simulated, produced in the same way as an optical effect, by a more profound interplay, namely that of difference and repetition."

10- This expression was used by Dominique Païni in *Le Temps exposé. Le cinéma de la salle au musée*, Paris, Editions Les cahiers du cinéma, 2002.

11- In *Three Essays on Style* (1936-1963).

12- Dominique Païni, op. cit., p. 67.

13- In "Repetition and stoppage", *Documenta X- Documents 2*, C222-97, C223-97, C224-97, Ostfildern-Ruit, Cantz Verlag, 1996, p. 70.

14- Quoted by Jean-Christophe Royoux, op. cit., p. 220.

15- *Ibid.*, p. 221.

16- "I replay the score of the film in its entirety. It's a remake of the direction, and the performances are based on its intrinsic duration and rhythm. I keep only the structure, like an active matrix, a trigger" (Interview between Pierre Huyghe, Pierre Bal-Blanc and Mathieu Marguerin in *Blocnotes*, No. 16, p. 158).

17- Brice Delsinger, quoted by Maxime Matray in "Body Double X", in *Paintingreplay. Cinéma et art contemporain*, p. 157 (see Note 7).

18- From a lecture given by Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger in the *Medialität und Modell* conference organised by the university of Stuttgart's Zentrum für Kulturwissenschaft und Kulturtheorie at the Akademie Schloss Solitude in January 2002.

19- Sol LeWitt: "To work with a plan that is preset is one way of avoiding subjectivity. It also obviates the necessity of designing each work in turn. The plan would design the work. Some plans would require millions of variations, and some a limited number, but both are finite. Other plans

imply infinity. In each case, however, the artist would select the basic form and rules and that would govern the solution of the problem. After that the fewer decisions made in the course of completing the work, the better. This eliminates the arbitrary, the capricious, and the subjective as much as possible. This is the reason for using this method." ("Paragraphs on Conceptual Art", in *Critical Texts*, Rome, I Libri di AELUO, 1995, p. 79.)

20- Michel Weemans, "Pratiques allographiques et reproduction : Sol LeWitt, Claude Rutault, Lawrence Weiner", in *Reproductibilité et irréproductibilité de l'œuvre d'art*, p. 144.

21- This apt and judicious expression was coined by Jean-Christophe Royoux. See, for example, "Pour un cinéma d'exposition. Retour sur quelques jalons historiques", in *Omnibus*, No. 20, April 1997.

22- Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et répétition*, p. 7.

23- See Douglas Gordon *Kidnapping*, Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 1998, pp. 38-40.

24- Walter Benjamin: "In principle a work of art has always been reproducible. Man-made artifacts could always be imitated by men. Replicas were made by pupils in practice of their craft, by masters for diffusing their works, and finally by third parties in the pursuit of gain." ("The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction").

25- Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator".

26- The historical quality of the original work is one of the preconditions of all repetition in art. Elaine Sturtevant, an American artist whose work, since the end of the 1960s, has consisted of reproducing key works from the 20th century, explains her relationship to history in the following way: "Q. Was it important that these paintings [which you reproduced] should generally be extremely well known? A. Yes. Otherwise my work would lose its visual and intellectual impact." (Interview with Bill Arning in Sturtevant, *Villa Arson*, Nice, 1992, p. 11.)

27- In "Theses on the Philosophy of History".

28- See Rosalind Krauss, "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism", *October*, No. 1, spring 1976, pp. 51-64.

29- Bernard Cerquigini, *Eloge de la*

*variante. Histoire critique de la philologie*, Paris, Seuil, 1989, p. 33. Cerquigini applies this expression to the literature of the Middle Ages, which was based essentially on reprises, variants and reinterpretations of texts.

30- Aby Warburg, quoted by Claude Imbert in "Warburg, de Kant à Boas", in *L'Homme*, No. 165, January-March 2003, p. 11.

## Remakes / sekamer

Concerning the discourse on method in the work of Pierre Huyghe

Jean-Christophe Royoux

The remake has quite a lengthy cinematographic history, and it illustrates the cinema's reliance on commercial imperatives. Indeed the phenomenon of "re-shooting" a film cannot be explained outside the framework of a market economy in which the profit motive is the rule, and cost-cutting a religion. In parodic mode, deliberately exaggerated, Pierre Huyghe's *Remake*, shot on video in a weekend using amateurs, is, from this point of view, the epitome of reification in the cinema! Concerned only with "rehearsing" doing the dubbing, reproducing [...] disinvesting the role psychologically (something that could be likened to the status of the translator), the logic of the recital comes apart, disintegrates, thereby paradoxically bringing out the structure of the storyboard before the start of shooting; this being one of most characteristic innovations introduced by Hitchcock, whose *Rear Window*, the film remade by Pierre Huyghe, is one of the most typical instances of

recursive specularisation to be found in his work, given how explicitly each image is chiselled. The immediate effect of this operation is to rob the film of its fictional nature, and to tip fiction over into reality, displacing its real interest onto another plane, with the transition from a cinema of suspense to a cinema of situations, as though the corollary of the idleness or disinvestment of the recital were that we become attentive, more than to a narrated story, to the topography of inhabited places, the different forms of association of a character and an image. The road in *Les incivils* (another of the artist's remakes, based on Pasolini's *Uccellacci e Uccellini*), about which one knows neither where it comes from nor where it leads to, and, more explicitly, the swallowing-up of the Titanic in *Multi Language Version* (1997) both recount, in allegorical mode, the sinking of a certain narrative model founded on the construction of a sense of history, and open onto its "moralisation". Each shot turns into a sort of *tableau vivant*, questioning the ability of gestures to embody fiction. *Remake* is in this sense the emblem of a turning-point, like *24 Hour Psycho* before it, in its way of integrating the history of the cinema into our own history, both individual and collective, no longer considered as a sum of coherent, thematic accounts but as a huge repertoire of scenes isolated from one another, role-playing games with the most diverse types of staging, social structures of interactions that become autonomous from the account to which they belong and are seen as models to be interpreted, putting questions, mirror-like, in a more direct and discrete manner, to the attitudes and behaviours of the spectator. In other words, the problem of the remake is not that of the plot. It carries out a radical *displacement* in relation to the initial centre of gravity of the film towards its performance.

A comparable use of the remake can be found in Olivier Bardin's video sequence, after Marguerite Duras's *Le camion* ("The lorry") – a film that is also a printed recital. On the one hand, this is a remake of a work which the passage of time has imbued with an ever more emblematic character. It was an early thematisation of the end of History (as the postulate and not a consequence of the remake), identified with the dislocation of the revolutionary project. And on the other hand, it is an attempt to dissociate a particular stratum of "discourse" from other forms of discourse on the work; and notably those that would lead to our questioning ourselves in a privileged way about its general meaning – which the mimes, poses and attitudes of the two "actors" bring into circulation between them in the form of particular affects during the reading of the text. If Duras's film is marked by the idea of the disappearance of any shareable, communicable representation of a community – hence the mutism and incomprehension of the two characters as they drive around in a lorry one winter's evening, disorientated, on the sad, indifferent *tabula rasa* that is the Beauce plain – Olivier Bardin's remake of *Le camion* starts, or restarts, at the place where the film ends. The remake restarts with this end, and this platitude. Its specific question is how can a story about two people be restarted without a story or a perspective? By displacing the spectator's initial attention from the text itself to this new system of representation constituted by the affective marks that are stamped on the postures and the expressions of the two actors, who are seated face to face, it questions the very basis of the relationship. It asks, "What is a relationship?", while attempting to extract a sort of *infra-discourse vis-à-vis* the discourses of the image and the text – this infinitesimal, almost

undecipherable discourse of the affects. It attempts to bring into existence, like a vibration, an autonomous rhythm, a half-conscious, half-unconscious language of the passions, and to make it an object in itself, to be looked at and meditated on. This sort of second skin, the remake, is thus justified, in the present case, as in the case of *Remake*, by a desire for the abstraction of a level of "language", in this instance that of affects, by comparison with the other forms of language that are intrinsic to cinematographic writing. This is the isolation of a component that is usually considered as contingent, and always subordinated to other modalities of discourse, based on a work which is also, like that of Jean-Luc Godard, though to a lesser extent, and later, marked by a lability of media and formats, which constitutes a new step in the history of the forms adopted by the remake, and whose antecedence means that, in a way, the reprise is legitimated by the artists themselves. The displacement of the images and text towards a new system of diction and representation comprised by the affective marks that circulate between the young "actors" is also anticipated by one of the film's characteristics: the production of mental images induced by the text in the place of the image that should have been visible on the screen.

In *India 58*, Roberto Rossellini was already contributing, within the history of the cinema itself, to a bifurcation in the history of the remake, when he conceived of the making of a film, not as the concrete implementation of a scenario but as the recording of a simple image bank, in which some shots could be sold off to other film-makers to create new films. Through *re-editing*, he was already thinking of the cinema as the remake of existing filmed sequences.