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# Letter from the Editors

**By Sarah Smyth and Connor McMorran**

As any regular reader of *Frames* will know the concept of transnationalism is a notional thread that has run through the publication since its inception, binding issues of the publication together and raising questions around our understanding of the amorphous landscape that is global cinema. In Issue 10, the notion of transnationalism is addressed through the prism of the cross-cultural remake. Throughout this issue, our contributors challenge some of the more traditional views that position the remake as a *rip off* lacking in authenticity rather than an articulation of resourceful creativity that responds to the global circulation of popular cinema.

The idea behind this issue arose as a direct response to some of the provocative discussions and dialogues that were sparked as part of a two-day conference hosted by the Institute of Global Cinema Cultures (IGCCC) at St Andrews, *The Rest and the West; Rip Off or Resourceful Creativity in Global Cinema*, organized by Professor Dina Iordanova with the assistance of PhD researchers Sanghita Sen and Shruti Naryanswamy.

The conference opened with Cem Kaya's colourful and highly entertaining documentary *Remake, Remix, Rip -Off* (Cem Kaya, 2014) that provided an illuminating insight into the bizarre world of copy culture in Turkish popular cinema, Yesilçam, from the 1960s to the 1980s. Yesilçam utilized a range of eclectic filmmaking practices that involved not only remaking American, European and Indian cinema but also re-appropriating, reformatting and re-using whole sections of the original films in Turkish reimaginations. At the time Yesilçam proved to be the largest producer of film in the world and yet remained an industry predicated on copy culture and low budget filmmaking practices.

Kaya's film provides a useful access point for some of the issues raised here. The film provokes pertinent questions relating to copy culture and cultural transfer by questioning the assumptions made by filmmakers about what local audiences really want from popular cinema. It raises the thorny issue of copyright and ownership in relation to the global circulation of images by demonstrating how the constraints of low-budget filmmaking can be the catalyst for surprising creativity and innovation. Finally, the film challenges notions that there is an integral authenticity connected to the so-called original.

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Questions of how intellectual property is owned and controlled are brought to the fore in Kaya's documentary and are powerfully responded to here by Professor Dina Iordanova in her video essay. Iordanova problematizes how invisible and ephemeral intellectual property is transformed into the visible and tangible by reducing matters of creative ownership to the auspices of record keeping and documentation. Using the example of Romania's thwarted plan to open a Dracula theme park, Iordanova calls in to question how a single entity can claim ownership on an iconic image that has traditionally transcended art forms mediums and national boundaries to capture the popular imagination.

Following directly on from this, Chris Berry discusses the remake in the context of China, raising a salient point about the need to distinguish between direct copy, remake and inspiration. Berry points out that inspiration is a creative element that is all too easily undervalued and questions where inspiration actually comes from by challenging the existence of a stable original. To illustrate his point Berry discusses the successful Chinese rom-com *Finding Mr Right* (Xue Xiaolu, 2013) that takes its inspiration from *Sleepless in Seattle* (Nora Ephron, 1993). Xiaolu's film is located in Seattle and directly references the original using it as a point of departure. By taking this approach *Mr Right* forms a cross-cultural dialogue with *Sleepless in Seattle* that builds on the original as opposed to depleting it, resulting in increased engagement for both the Chinese and the global audience.



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In an earlier example of cross-cultural renegotiation, Chris Fujiwara's presentation illustrates that cross-cultural dialogue in film is by no means a contemporary phenomenon. Fujiwara traces the journey of the novel, *Dark Angel*, written by Austrian novelist, Gina Kaus in 1933 from page to screen and across continents. This trajectory includes screen adaptations in France, *Conflit* (Léonide Moguy, 1938) and the United States, *Her Sister's Secret* (Edgar G. Ulmer, 1946), and is complicated by a South Korean remake of *Conflit* entitled *It's Not Her Sin* (Shin Sang-ok, 1959). Fujiwara's presentation calls attention to the nuanced changes to plot and style in each version that reflects the gender issues and political ramifications of the local context as the story subtly alters with each retelling.

The question of what local audiences want from film is a theme that appears repeatedly in one guise or another throughout this issue of *Frames*, challenging the accepted notion of Hollywood's dominant hegemony. As the above example demonstrate storytelling simply cannot be bound by one tradition, medium or culture but instead traverses back and forth across territories layering on and renegotiating meaning.

Eduard Cuelenaere, Stijn Joye & Gertjan Willems also tackle the question of the audience by interrogating the paradoxical phenomenon in the Dutch-Flemish film industry of the monolingual remake. In spite of their close cultural proximity, these two industries choose to remake their neighbour's films rather than viewing them in their original formats. While this is a phenomenon that can largely be considered to be motivated by commercial considerations, Eduard, Stijn & Gertjan suggest that this raises questions about how filmmakers perceive differences between Dutch and Flemish culture.

Reflecting the diversity of approach to the remake this issue of *Frames* features video interventions by Chris Fujiwara, Chris Berry, Abdulrahman Alghanem and Dina Iordanova, some of which were presented at the conference. Rather than viewing these pieces as traditional video essays we ask that you view these pieces as responses and interactions to the issues raised.

This issue sees the introduction of a new section, *Bibliognost*, to *Frames*. *Bibliognost* seeks to help new scholars find their way through the myriad of film books on offer by inviting our contributors to recommend a film book that they have found invaluable, inspirational or illuminating to their scholarly practice. Diversity is a buzz-word here again as Dina Iordanova, Deanne Williams, Chris Berry and Chris Fujiwara discuss their choices.

And finally, last but certainly not least we would like to thank Professor

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Dina Iordanova for her unfailing support with this issue of *Frames* but more importantly for opening up a dialogue around the remake at the conference in St Andrews, that will no doubt, continue to be reappropriated, reformatted and re-used well into the future.