

Mistaken Identities: Millennial Remakes, Post-Socialist Transformation, and Hungarian Popular Cinema

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Distance makes beauty, the saying goes. Even if it is not always a spatial distance, but often a temporal or cultural distance (or a mixture of these), it is certain that remake studies usually focus on broad questions of proximity (Leitch 1990; Forrest and Kroos 2002; Verevis 2006; Cuelenaere, Joye and Willems 2016; Smith and Verevis 2017). Cultural proximity, the shaping of the codes, patterns, and structures of an adapted product in order to appeal to local audiences, is a characteristic feature of adaptations and remakes (Straubhaar 1991). Recent studies of transnational film remakes have highlighted the performative power of ‘manufacturing proximity’ and discussed remaking as a shaping process of culture and national identity, inevitably raising the question of localization (Cuelenaere, Joye and Willems 2019). But what about intra-national remakes and their specificities in the remaking practices? In a recent article about remaking *Winnetou* for the German audience, Loock claimed that intra-national and transnational remakes are distinguished by the presence or absence of local context. While intra-national remakes have a past in their national cultural context, transnational remakes usually have to adapt their contents to the given national background. Furthermore, Loock stated that ‘diachronic remaking (relating to the production of remakes over a decades-spanning period of time) seems less common than synchronic remaking (relating to the production of remakes that takes place at roughly the same point in time as the production of the predecessors)’ (Loock 2019: 326–327).

In the following analysis, I will examine a case of intra-national remakes: a series of Hungarian millennial remakes of classic interwar comedies (four films were made one after the other, between 1999 and 2006). The production of these remakes is an interesting example of the diachronic remake, as there is generally a time span of 60–70 years between the source film and the remake. The sample consists of four film tandems: *Hippolyt* (original version: 1931, remade in 1999), *Car of Dreams* (original: 1934, remake: 2000), *One Skirt and a Pair of Trousers* (original: 1943, remake: 2005) and *One Fool Makes a Hundred* (original: 1942, remake: 2006). The source films are prominent examples of Hungarian entertainment cinema of the 1930s and 1940s. Though the remakes were domestic box office hits, their overall reception was quite negative. This critical antipathy might be one of the reasons behind the lack of scholarly discussion of these Hungarian remakes. As this chapter will be the first detailed study of the topic, it is necessary to, besides focusing on the textual and industrial practices of intra-national remakes, provide some information regarding the cultural context and aspects of the series of Hungarian millennial remakes. Thus, the aim of this study is twofold. Firstly, to shed light on aspects of intra-national remakes, such as canonization, the function of genre patterns, and acting performances. Secondly, in the specific context of post-socialist transformation, my aim is to show the unique potential of remaking in the shaping and discussion of the traditions of local popular cinema by focusing on the case of Hungary.

Remaking was not and is not a typical feature of post-war and contemporary Hungarian film culture – contrary to the pre-war period, whose powerful local film culture (with a dynamic transnational dimension) was firmly built on different kinds of repetition practices (Balogh and Király 2000, Cunningham 2004, Gergely 2017). As in the case of smaller European film industries, the emergence of sound film production in Hungary was closely related to the production of films with multi-language versions (Frey 2018). The trend of producing multi-version films survived until the late 1930s in the Hungarian film industry. Since then, especially during the decades of socialism, remaking

was not at all a typical feature of Hungarian cinema. It might be called paradigmatic that alongside the wave of nostalgia which swept over the region in the 1990s (Pehe 2015), sequels, re-adaptations, and remakes of previously successful films have proliferated in Eastern European film cultures (Varga 2018). The series of millennial remakes thus represents a novel phenomenon in the post-socialist Hungarian film ecosystem, forging an interesting link between pre-1945 and post-1989 film culture. In what follows I will discuss the novelty of Hungarian millennial remakes and the diachronic dynamics of intra-national remaking within the concepts of risk management and cultural memory.

Remakes, risk management, and the transformation of Hungarian popular cinema

Hungarian millennial remakes can be linked to discourses on risk in two ways. First, as attempts to repair the film-ecological imbalance (Hjort 2015) during the hectic decade of post-socialist transformation. Second, as examples of economic pragmatism (minimizing risk) that Constantine Verevis (2006) describes as the basic function of remake practices.

The end of socialism drastically changed the cultural ecosystem of Eastern Europe. During the decades of state-socialism, political control of the film studio system and financial protection constituted the structural framework. With the end of state-funded film culture, filmmakers were not only unshackled from censorship, but they also had to leave the haven of stable state funding. Newly gained freedom obviously brought new challenges and risks for filmmaking. Following Hjort's argument that 'one way of understanding what counts as being in a state of transition is to consider the extent to which the relevant risk environment has changed' (2015: 49), post-socialist transition unquestionably changed the whole 'risk environment' of Eastern European cinemas and made the region a unique example of small cinemas in transition. According to Hjort's and Petrie's (2007) parameters (population, territory, GNP, and the rule by non-co-nationals over a significant period), many of Eastern European national cinemas might be identified as 'small cinemas'. In that respect, Hjort (2015) listed several 'systemic risks' that might threaten small national cinemas such as the risk of a film-ecological imbalance. Here, Hjort refers to the asymmetry of mainstream (typically non-state-funded) and arthouse (usually heavily funded) films which was illustrative of the post-socialist transformation of Eastern European cinemas as the sustainability of popular mainstream films was a vital aspect of the industry and funding systems' transformation. After all, the greatest beneficiaries of the transition were arthouse and auteur films. Popular films not only had to contend with the flood of Hollywood blockbusters on the domestic markets but also had to struggle for funding. The emergence of commercial televisions as potential (co)producers of comedies and mainstream genre films was an important step in redressing the film-ecological imbalance.

After the passing of the media law in 1997, two nation-wide commercial broadcasters appeared on the market: TV2 (owned by ProSiebenSat1) and RTL Klub (owned by RTL Group). These channels soon took an extremely strong position in terms of market share and cultural impact, rapidly and completely transforming the mediascape of Hungarian popular culture (Kaposi 2007). Regarding film, they provided new sources and platforms for financing and broadcasting Hungarian films. As the media law required them to support Hungarian film production, this requirement was met by financing projects that fitted into their entertainment profile. The first example of Hungarian millennial remakes was one of the early flagship projects of RTL Klub. The producer and director of the first remake, *Hippolyt* was Barna Kabay, an acknowledged Hungarian arthouse filmmaker.

The idea of producing a remake of an emblematic Hungarian classic film comedy by said director was illustrative of the increasing attention paid to the tradition of local popular film culture. At the same time, it was perceived by most of the critics as a foreign practice, alien to the local film culture.

Nevertheless, after the success of the first remake, another interwar classic comedy was remade the next year, with two subsequent remakes in the following years. All of them were made under the auspices of commercial television companies and were produced and directed by the same tandem of filmmakers, Barna Kabay and Bence Gyöngyössi. The films served the public image of commercial television stations as safeguards of domestic film culture as they included the most popular Hungarian comedians from films, theatre, and cabaret, together with emblematic personalities of the commercial television's shows. The series of Hungarian millennial remakes not only show the pre-eminent role and function of remakes within the risk environment of small cinema (risk-minimizing and the film-ecological imbalance) but could also be viewed as a powerful gesture of revitalizing cultural memory of local popular narratives.

Remakes, national identity, cultural memory and canonization

Recently, Loock (2019: 327) discussed the way remakes bring back 'popular narratives from a national storytelling repertoire' and function as a 'mode of timekeeping'. However, as she elaborates her arguments on the dynamic of cultural memory, generationing and remakes, she claims that new versions of culturally stored experiences not only bring back popular narratives but add new interpretations to their reception history and provide fresh perspectives for their audience. With the appearance of new generations and the extension of the audience, the variety and dynamic of the interpretative communities of the film evolves. Furthermore, Loock shows how shared knowledge and experiences might help to stabilize 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1983) and demonstrates the potential of remakes for the (re)negotiation of shared and established imaginations concerning the definition of a nation.

The claim that encounters with emblematic stories preserve familiar cultural manifestations and products could be linked to the often-discussed role of remakes in the formation of a canon. Verevis (2006: VII), for example, views film remakes as 'a function of cinematic and discursive fields that is maintained by historically specific practices, such as copyright law and authorship, canon formation and media literacy, film criticism and re-viewing'. Yet there are still many variations of remaking and canonization. Remakes can be based on (and canonize) already canonized texts, and it may also happen that source films become established and acknowledged as 'classic' and 'original' pieces after they have been remade (Quaresima 2002, Loock 2012). Introducing the remake into the process of cultural memory and canon formation may involve changes in the memory of the original (Kelleter and Loock 2017: 127).

Questions of cultural memory, canonization, and the legacy of former popular narratives of shared experiences are no less complicated in the case of Hungarian millennial remakes. We have seen that all four source films are emblematic pieces of 1930s and early 1940s Hungarian popular cinema. However, the temporal order in which the remakes were produced clearly represented the differences in the canonical influence and power of the source films.

The first film to be remade in 1999, *Hyppolit the Butler*, is an iconic piece of early Hungarian sound film culture. Székely's comedy from 1931 was such an instant hit that it is regarded as having established 'the tone of Hungarian bourgeoisie [sic] comedy that came to define Hungarian filmmaking throughout the 1930s' (Balogh 2019). The source film of the second remake, *Car of Dreams* (2000) was a romantic comedy from 1934, made by another star director of the era, Béla Gaál. As a Hungarian version of Frank Capra's myth of the 'common man', its story about the love of the bank director and a low-ranking bank clerk became the basic model of the early 1930s comedies – the film even received an English remake with the same title (directed by Graham Cutts and Austin

Melford in 1935). Gaál's film was the greatest box office hit and became a symbol of the period. Hyppolit and Car of Dreams are canonical films of 1930s Hungarian commercial filmmaking and are remembered as exemplary works, emerging from the commercial film production of the period. Their remakes bear the characteristics of homage, in the sense Leitch (1990) uses the term in his taxonomy of remakes. The source films of the third and fourth remake (made in 2005 and 2006, a couple of years later than the first two remakes) are also memorable pieces of interwar Hungarian popular cinema, but represent a different era (the early 1940s), a different genre (farcical comedy, as opposed to romantic comedy), and, last but not least, a different position in the local cultural memory. One Skirt and a Pair of Trousers and One Fool Makes a Hundred are memorable comedies due to their star comedian's popularity, but are not canonical films.

Another important feature of interwar Hungarian film culture, which, moreover, provides the key to understanding the process of cultural memory of these films, is the close embedment of the domestic popular film culture in the local entertainment culture of the period, especially cabaret. Discussing the cultural memory of Hungarian entertainment film culture of the era, Manchin (2013) argued that these films were forgotten for political reasons in the decades of socialism and were rediscovered by the public with resounding success only after 1989. Manchin rightly describes the ideological and political resentment towards bourgeois popular culture during socialism, but even then, these films were not completely invisible: they had various adaptations and re-runs at that time. After 1945, during the decades of socialism, the tradition of Hungarian entertainment interwar film culture was rejected. From an ideological and political point of view, Hungarian films of the earlier period were treated as representatives of bourgeois, commercial culture, detached from social reality. However, these films cannot be said to have completely disappeared from cultural memory. For instance, the 25th anniversary of the production of Hyppolit, the Butler was commemorated in 1956 by the weekly Hungarian Film Newsreel. In 1957, a year after the repression of the Hungarian revolution, the newly established Hungarian Film Archives opened its cinematheque with the re-release of Car of Dreams, attracting a huge audience. Hyppolit has been staged in theatres many times during socialist decades. Furthermore, interwar classics were often broadcast on television, especially in the 1980s. Following the political changes, the revival of interwar Hungarian entertainment culture in the 1990s received a new impetus. In short, the memory of these films and their star-comedians was vivid and present during the decades of socialism. Moreover, the influential series of stage adaptations of these stories maintained and reinforced the interconnectedness, strong dynamics, and inner relationships of Hungarian popular theatre and cinema. Traditions and trends of Hungarian popular cinema may have been weakened and transformed during socialism but the legacy of interwar popular culture and cinema found a way to make itself manifest. The series of remakes, which began in 1999, succeeded in activating both the popularity and cultural memory of these films and comedians, as well as in building on the legacy of cabaret and popular theatre (Varga 2016b).

Altered worlds, replayed situations

Mistaken identities and disguise, the leading motifs of comedies, are central to all the four film tandems under investigation in this chapter. The first two source films, Hyppolit and Car of Dreams, revolve around the topics of modernization, generational conflicts, and social elevation. Being canonized and well-known films, the millennial Hungarian audience was acquainted with the stories. Both films followed local cabaret traditions and focused on witty dialogues, sarcastic catchphrases, comic situations, and emblematic acting performances. These were their most important and memorable characteristics, which supposedly made audiences expect that the remakes would repeat

and replay these memorable motifs. The remakes had to face the challenges of close adaptation or transformation (cf., Verevis 2006): staying as close as possible to the originals and at the same time effecting a fundamental change while transferring the stories to contemporary Hungary. Given the 70 years distance between the source films and the remakes, and the fundamental difference of social and cultural context, maintaining cultural proximity was an essential challenge. In the following, I will argue that both remakes used the strategy of deliberate anachronism to resolve this challenge.

Regarding Verevis' (2006) textual descriptions of remaking techniques, both films (especially *Hippolyt*) kept syntactic elements, such as their accurately reconstructed plot structure, dialogues or character relationships. They also kept fundamental semantic elements from the original films, although at this point, incoherency became bothersome, since important semantic elements and motifs were obviously anachronistic in the contemporary milieu. The main difference between the adaptation and transformation strategies of the first two remakes was the way they integrated these anachronistic motifs into their overall narrative-semantic system. The first remake, *Hippolyt* was a closer adaptation, although the most important alteration it made was a symbolic one: it left out the butler from the title and changed the place of the letters y and i in *Hyppolit/Hippolyt's* name. Nevertheless, this accurate repetition in *Hippolyt* led to a more coherent reinterpretation of the original film. The second remake, *Car of Dreams*, put more energy into replaying the most emblematic situations from the source film (which are connected to the secondary plot line) and left the central romantic plot loosely motivated and situated in the social realities of 2000s Hungary. This resulted in a culturally and politically more conservative and incoherent interpretation of the story.

The basic conflict of *Hyppolit* focuses on a wealthy transportation entrepreneur and the newly hired butler who tries to set standards of manners that the wealthy *nouveaux riches* cannot meet. At one layer the target of ridicule is the entrepreneur's wife, and at another layer the source of the comedy is the husband's subversive compliance (against the butler's efforts) (Balogh and Király 2000). As the source film puts the story into the interwar period's modernization context, the remake retells the story against the backdrop of the post-socialist transformation. In this context, the winners of the rapid transition from socialism to market-driven capitalism were the new entrepreneurs who sensed the winds of change and took the opportunities. Thus, the problem it confronts, of rapid enrichment and the social advancement, or more precisely, the *nouveaux riches* versus the traditional elite, served as an analogy. However, the figure of the title character, the butler, was anachronistic in the 1990s. By keeping the occupation of the butler, the film intensified the contrast between the protagonist's values and the rigid aristocratic rules. Another possible explanation of why the butler character was still important is that the story updated the initial conflict by rearranging the socio-political dynamics. Now the entrepreneur-versus-Hippolyt-conflict represented the clash of pre-war and post-war Hungary: the legacy of the (post) socialist heritage and pre-1945 (conservative, Christian-national) social order. The entrepreneur and his friends are survivors of the decades of socialism. They observe various careers around them with jovial serenity. In the carnivalesque closure of the film, the fireworks celebrate the failure of Hippolyt and hypocrisy –perhaps the similarity between the character's name and the word is not by chance – and the victory of small communities, self-acceptance, and hedonist pleasures. Thus, the remake's focal point is the legacy of socialism and the mockery of the efforts to bring back the pre-1945 aristocratic and elitist middle-class culture and worldview.

In contrast to *Hyppolit/Hippolyt*, where the conflicts between the old and new elites and the question of the change of habits provided a kind of connecting point between the source film and the remake, in the case of *Car of Dreams*, socio-cultural inconsistencies and anachronisms are much

more typical to the plot. The remake preserved the romantic storyline of the rich man in disguise and the ambitious poor girl. Yet, the central motif and symbol of the story, where the luxury dream car is given as a gift and the volunteer driver accompanying it, is almost as anachronistic as the butler was in *Hippolyt*. In the 1930s, the car was a symbol of modernity – a desired new product, accessible only to a few. 70 years later, it could still be a luxury commodity but not for a cool roller-skater courier – the protagonist young woman works as a courier in the remake. However, she seems quite happy to be transported around the city by the handsome driver in the elegant car. The remake simply leaves out all the story motifs from the source film that make her an active, autonomous, ambitious person. As a result, regarding the representation of gender and the possibilities of social mobility, the new version is more conservative than the source film. The remake presents a flat romantic comedy as its central plotline and puts its focus on the secondary romantic plot, which runs parallel with the love story of the bank director and the assistant. This subplot explores the relationship between the secretary of the director and a middle-rank bank manager. While the central plot shows the realm of dreams, the subplot deals with comic everyday romance. As the source film's most comic and memorable situations originate in the subplot, the remake tries to repeat and carefully re-stage these emblematic scenes, situations, and dialogues. This is where the importance of acting and re(en)acting lies. The 'texture of performance', as Alex Clayton put it (Clayton 2011) in his analysis on the differences of acting in *Psycho* and in its remake, is a significant issue in the case of Hungarian millennial remakes. *Hippolyt* and *Car of Dreams* provide an especially interesting case as the star comedian of the era, Gyula Kabos played in both films, and his role and performance was repeated in a completely different way by Róbert Koltai in *Hippolyt* and Imre Bajor in *Car of Dreams*. Koltai, who regained his popularity as the clumsy protagonist in bittersweet comedies, presents a jolly and hedonistic character (different than Kabos's more ambiguous figure, who is always in vacillations). Imre Bajor, however, echoes and imitates the gestures and expressions (even the fine details, the 'texture' as Clayton called it) of Kabos. Here, in *Car of Dreams*, the main source of humour is how much the actor in the remake can re-enact the performance of the comedian from the source film. What makes the comparison, difference and the game of matching even more compelling is the physical and physiognomic difference between the two actors. Thus, instead of social commentary, the appeal of the second remake is rather a combination of homage and rivalry in which a popular comedian from the 1990s tries to imitate and re-enact memorable acts from the source film. However, this aspect can be more generalized. Not only *Car of Dreams* but all other Hungarian millennial remakes provide an intriguing combination of respect and exploitation in their attitude towards their source films. While they admire the classic comedies for their popularity, narrative, and stylistic excellence, they simultaneously exploit this popularity. Thus, appreciation and appropriation go hand in hand, resulting in an ambivalent strategy of a 'parasite remake' which admires and exploits its original, both at the same time.

Deliberate anachronism as a stylistic-textual tool is absent from the third and fourth remake, as these films modified and altered the stories of their source films more effectively to fit a contemporary milieu. As mentioned earlier, these changes could be connected to the usage of different genre patterns, since these source films were not romantic comedies but less story-centred absurd and farcical comedies with the extremely popular dancer-comedian, Kálmán Latabár. Although the personality of the comedians and their acting performances were crucial in every interwar Hungarian comedy, absurd and farcical comedies of the early 1940s were even more centred on the leading comedian and his/her character. And it is precisely because of these films' distinctiveness, that they were comedian comedies, that made their remakes focus not on their story, but the absurd situations and uncontrolled comic performances. Comedian comedies, that is, comedies organized around the persona of the comedian, is a special trend or tradition in classical

Hollywood films, as Steve Seidman described it (Seidman 1981). Seidman argues that in these films the performing skills of the performer are more important than character construction and instead of realistic acting and a homogenous fictional world and diegesis, the focus moves to 'the maintenance of the comedian's position as an already recognizable performer with a clearly defined extrafictional personality' (Seidman 1981: 3). In comedian comedies the comedian is often an eccentric individual who is dysfunctional from the perspective of social conventions and the normative parameters of cultural identity (Krutnik 1995). The last two instalments of Hungarian millennial remakes take full advantage of the comedian comedy's potential to ridicule social order and present an eccentric and crazy comedy.

The eccentric acting style dominates these films. Every member of their ensemble cast is characterized by unconventional and unusual acting and behaviour, and (in line with their exaggerated farcical and absurd character) basic dynamics of comedian comedies (the weakening of narrative cohesion, the conflicted relationship with social conventions) result in the incoherent and weird character of these films.

One Skirt and a Pair of Trousers (1943) was a variation of a cross-dressing comedy. The story used (gender) disguise and transgression to celebrate the performative power of acting. Its protagonist, a star-actor dresses as a woman to seduce the actress who, instead of him, chooses a count. The actor then decides to dress like the wealthy Spanish widow whom the count would like to marry. The story's motivation is twice-injured vanity, since the actor wants to take revenge both as man (being rejected by the actress) and actor (for the count called him a ham actor). As opposed to the widespread use of the cross-dressing scheme, when the reason for crossing the gender line is usually an existential crisis (eluding some existential danger or reacting to the loss of a job (Lieberfeld and Sanders, 1998)), *One Skirt* focuses on the reinforcement of identity and self-esteem. Nevertheless, the problem of social mobility has a significant role in the story. The actress seeks the count's company in the hope of wealth and a career. Over the course of the story, we learn that the count is not a poor, degraded aristocrat, who, before a wealthy marriage, sees the actress as just a bit of fluff, but turns out to be a crook who is only pretending to be a count.

The remake of *One Skirt and a Pair of Trousers* keeps the initial situation of the plot, regarding wounded masculinity, and places the story into the present-day world of Hungarian show business. The world of commercial television was a familiar milieu for the makers of the film which makes the ironical references and allusions quite comprehensible. However, the preoccupation with the transgressive and eccentric permeates the whole plot. The remake makes several significant changes to the plot of the source film. While in the original, the actor and the actress find each other as a romantic couple, the remake ends with the love of the actor and the widow. The remake, then, ultimately accomplishes the perfect reparation of injured masculinity and the vanity of the actor, with all its consequences. Not only is traditional, heteronormative masculinity reinforced with its attributes (conquering, dominant, charming, irresistible), but the protagonist wins the love of the Mexican woman. Moreover, the remake not only uses various orientalist tropes to deliver its story about wounded (post-socialist, Eastern European) masculinity (Imre 2009), but offers a slightly elitist critique of its production background (the commercial television entertainment industry) in a paradoxical and divisive way.

The fourth source film from the early 1940s, *One Fool Makes a Hundred*, also follows the patterns of classic comedies with disguise and mistaken identity. Its protagonist, a lazy head waiter, is fired from his workplace. When he discovers his shocking similarity with a famous lion-hunter count, he transforms himself into the count. Because the count seems to be in Africa, his duplicate can safely move into the aristocrat's castle and have fun with new acquaintances – until the true count returns

home unexpectedly. As such, the remake retains only the initial idea of the source film and turns the plot into a series of absurd gags and nonsense situations. Instead of a count, the remake takes a millionaire and leads the story to the luxury villa and the troubled business and love interests of this representative of society's nouveaux riches. Of all the films from the remake series, this is the most obvious representation of post-socialist transformation as a crisis of traditional, heteronormative masculinity. Through his occupation, the protagonist represents the state and is fired after just 15 years of employment. Thus, considering when the film is taking place (the mid-2000s), he had been working at the registry since about 1990, that is, since the change of the regime. This hyper-saturated thematization of the nation (Hjort 2000) and the staging of post-socialist transformation concludes at casting the fifteen years of post-socialism into a binary opposition of clumsy losers and idiotic winners, while the film's exploitative humour and farcical approach make every character ridiculous. Nevertheless, the film, again with the help of Orientalist patterns, construes a new, post-socialist, Hungarian (masculine) identity, which is to be defined concerning the even more ridiculous Eastern tricksters and losers (Chinese mafioso, Ukrainian mechanics and debt collectors). The story proceeds toward complete absurdity and self-destruction. At the end, post-socialist Hungary's new equilibrium has been restored. Winners and losers can swap places, success and failure is not a question of skill or social background but depends purely on blind chance. Everything and everybody are interchangeable, identical, and unique. In the very last shot of the film, a pizza delivery man, who is a lookalike of one of the protagonists, arrives at the villa, closing the cycle of remakes, duplicates, counterparts, and doubles with a final destabilizing joke.

Conclusion

This chapter started its analysis with questioning the specificities of intra-national remakes. Accepting Loock's proposition that locally remade stories are different from transnational remakes, in that they have a past in the given nation's local cultural context, the analysis focused on the textual strategies and cultural aspects of Hungarian millennial remakes. The specificity of this group of films, which consists of four remakes of interwar classic comedies, is the unusually long time period (60-70 years) between the source films and their remakes. Differences over time raise questions of cultural memory and canonization. The chapter formulated its argument around the relationship and interconnectedness of the original films' canon position and the textual strategies of their remakes. The more canonical the original, the greater the challenge and attraction in evoking its most memorable scenes. The chapter describes a dual, parallel process of intertwining industrial and textual practices. On the one hand, the success of the first remake led to the production of another remake, so within two years each of the two most important Hungarian interwar comedies was released in a new version. A couple of years later this was followed with another two remakes, this time based on two memorable but not canonized comedies, which are primarily remembered for their star comedian. On the other hand, as the chapter argued, after the first remake's close and accurate adaptation strategies, the next remakes followed their own vision more freely. This tendency partly resulted from the fact that the latter two instalments of the film tandems were originally farcical comedies – a special subgenre which is less organized around narrative coherency and provides more freedom for acting performances. Re-enacted emblematic scenes and dialogues have a significant role both in the source films and the remakes, providing the continuity of the tradition of comedian comedies in Hungarian cinema. This tradition of Hungarian popular entertainment culture had great importance in the period of post-socialist transformation, as a tried-and-tested local cultural practice which might be re-used in the revision of the film-ecological balance and in the revitalization of local popular cinema. Eventually, the millennial remakes of

interwar Hungarian classic comedies turned out to be absurd comedies of mistaken, false and uncertain identities, connected to and representing the social-cultural ambiguities and confusion of the post-socialist transformation of Hungary.

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