

By way of illustration, Lynette Porter compares twenty-first century televised versions of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes short stories to late-twentieth century adaptations, which are themselves remakes, while Lorna Piatti-Farnell explores how the Gothic genre shapes both *Dark Shadows* (ABC, 1966-1971) and *Dark Shadows: The Revival* (ABC, 1991).

One of the intriguing observations that runs through a number of the essays is that an original television series sometimes manifests characteristics that we more readily identify with a remake. Stephen Gil, for instance, investigates the way that *The X-Files* (Fox, 1993-2002) creatively recycles previous science fiction texts (34). James Martens argues that the ability of *The Avengers* (ITV/ABC/Thames, 1961-1969) to adapt to cast turnover, as well as to the ongoing cultural shifts of the 1960s, means that the show effectively remakes itself over and over. Heather Marcovitch makes similar claims for the sci-fi series *Fringe* (Fox, 2008-2013), which alters its premise with each successive season. In the case of the long-running *Doctor Who* (BBC 1, 1963-1989, 2005-), the subject of Paul Booth and Jef Burnham's chapter, rebooting is arguably built into the show's format, with its periodic changes of cast and setting. Even the nostalgia that is the impetus behind many television remakes, according to Ryan Lizardi, can be found in an original series like *How I Met Your Mother* (CBS, 2005-2014), in which the characters remember and misremember their shared past.

Other contributions take note of the impact of contemporary socio-political attitudes on television remakes. Thus Lavigne discusses the influence of 9/11 on *Beauty and the Beast* (CW, 2012-), while Matthew Paproth considers the role of *Friday Night Lights* (NBC, DirecTV 2006-2011) as a pop culture reference in the 2012 American presidential election, and Kimberley McMahan-Coleman locates metaphors of disability in *Teen Wolf* (MTV, 2011).

At the same time, the existence of a remake may prompt a re-evaluation of the earlier text, as Peter Clandfield observes of *The Prisoner* (ITC, 1967-68; AMC, 2009). Comparing the short-lived remake of *Charlie's Angels* (ABC, 2011) with its iconic predecessor (ABC, 1976-1981), Cristina Lucia Stasia concludes that the original now seems far more feminist than critics at the time realized. For Helen Thornham and Elke Weissmann, the re-importing to the UK of the American remake of *Jamie's School Dinners* (ABC, 2010-2011) reveals its popular British predecessor (Channel 4, 2005)

to be "less authentic, more hero-centered, and more commercially interested than we would like to admit" (197).

One wishes that the authors had included English-language television remakes from outside the UK and the United States, as well as more non-English-language examples. An exception is Karen Hellekson's chapter, contrasting the American series *The Killing* (AMC, 2011-2013, Netflix 2014) with the Danish series *Forbrydelsen* (DR1, 2007-2012). That quibble aside, this volume will appeal to media scholars, as well as to those looking for material to generate discussion in the undergraduate classroom. *Remake Television* convincingly makes the case that the television remake has been under-theorized and under-appreciated, and that despite being much maligned, it can enhance our understanding of what makes successful serial television.

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Kelleter, Frank, **Serial Agencies: The Wire and Its Readers**. Winchester: Zero Books, 2014, 114 pp., pb., \$14.95.

This book has been around for a while now. Alas, only in its unpublished form. Often quoted in the realm of the Berlin-based Research Unit "Popular Seriality – Aesthetics and Practice," Frank Kelleter's manuscript of *Serial Agencies* saw previous lives as a key source to select reference works on remakes, popular seriality, and as a chapter to Liam Kennedy's and Stephen Shapiro's reader *The Wire: Race, Class, and Genre* (2012). Even though *Serial Agencies* is part of what within the author's own corpus appears to be "the fantasy of a more comprehensive work on American serialities" (ix), this renegade reading of the HBO TV Show *The Wire* (2002-2008) stands firmly on its own feet.

At the heart of Kelleter's argument is the sturdy belief in the necessity of reading the series' reception alongside the TV show's aesthetics. Such a view would allow to understand how a television series can mobilize "practices and values that help stabilize America's conflict-ridden conceptualization of itself" (2). In this sense, the author applies to David Simon's show a yet to be formulated theoretical framework that bridges the gaps between Bruno Latour's actor-network theory and Niklas Luhmann's social-systems theory. *The Wire* as an actor-network encompasses

both the television narrative and the accompanying communicative practices (cf. 5). In other words, the TV show generates structures allowing it to read itself and to unleash a script that grants its readers to do what the narrative concedes them to do (cf. 27) – it has a serial agency that keeps *The Wire* “structurally geared toward its own return and multiplication” (29).

Kelleter’s crisp and stimulative prose shows an intelligent audience in a further step how American media studies become a part of the series’ multiplication. For the sake of his argument, Kelleter repeatedly targets Tiffany Potter and C.W. Marshall’s edited volume *The Wire: Urban Decay and American Television* (2009) and the 2009 Leeds conference “*The Wire* as Social Science Fiction” to elucidate “the narrative dimension of sociological knowledge production itself” (36). Here, Kelleter succeeds in showing the trappings of academic criticism if it is bracketing out the productive aspects of American culture. In this way, the hetero-descriptions passed on by various academic disciplines can be read as “agents of continuation” that help to disseminate, formalize and accelerate “*The Wire*’s cultural work” (58).

Having established the agencies of both the TV series and academic criticism, Kelleter focuses in a strongly essayistic manner on an American Studies analysis of the cultural self-enactment these agencies are involved in (62). On his final pages, the author cannot dodge pathos completely or even avoid *The Wire*’s auto-referential topoi when employing Dickensian allusion to *A Tale of Two Cities* (69) and comparisons to *The Sopranos* (HBO, 1999-2007; another standard in the reception of *The Wire*) in order to explicate the show’s and its readers’ project of national reproduction.

After 180 footnotes and 80 pages of dense but highly accessible remonstrations and rectifications of “proper” academic discourse, the author is to be congratulated on his achievements in this volume. Not only does he manage to formulate a critical fable for the academic public that might still be teaching and studying *The Wire*. But also Kelleter succeeds in schematically framing his vision of American Studies in a feedback economy-driven, post-industrial, and digital age. In addition, these pages most painfully remind its academic readers of how to approach popular cultural narrative texts. Next to training scholars in the possible pitfalls of *The Wire* in the university classroom, the reader might occasionally miss what the book is keen on in criticizing in its sources: an awareness about its own status as actant and

therefore yet as another eponymous reader of *The Wire*. But apart from this, *Serial Agencies* is a key textbook that should be found on any syllabus of yet another university course on serial narration or *The Wire* per se.

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Sarah Schaschek, **Pornography and Seriality: The Culture of Producing Pleasure**. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 232 pp., hb., £62.00.

Over and over and over again. The same spare dialogues, the same flat characters, the same movements, settings, facial expressions and sounds, culminating in cum shot after cum shot. Repetition is one, if not *the*, central means of pornography, with the ever returning money shot as its ultimate epitome. *Pornography and Seriality* takes a closer look at this all too obvious but still easily overlooked feature. Focusing on audiovisual pornography, Berlin-based cultural scholar and journalist Sarah Schaschek scrutinizes the relationship between seriality and pornographic pleasure. In so doing, one of her central questions is how something so highly repetitive, and thus bare of surprise, can still be arousing. With the aim to “reload the discourse” (6), Schaschek has chosen a vantage point she finds unjustly neglected within the field of porn studies: “I will approach pornography from the perspective of its form,” she announces (3) – that is, its serial formulas.

The book consists of five chapters, which are, though obviously intertwined with one another, self-contained and cover a wide range of different aspects. After the 25-page “Foreplay,” which arouses readers’ desire for answers and gets them in the mood for things to come, the first chapter tackles pornography from the perspective of genre. While emphasizing the difficulties of finding its proper place in the genre system, Schaschek – following Linda Williams – finally puts porn on the shelf tagged *body genre*, which is characterized by both the display of and effect on the body. The chapter makes a convincing case for incorporating the affective dimension of pornography into discussions about its structure. Bodily arousal, Schaschek proposes, is not only created through the material actually looked at but also through the memory of previously consumed pornography – a phenomenon she calls *the serial feedback loop* (cf 66 ff.).