

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE STUDY

2.1 Film Remake, Reboot and Spinoff

A remake is a production of a film, television series, video game, or similar form of entertainment that is based upon an earlier production (Willits, 2009). A remake tells the same story as the original but uses a different cast and may alter the theme or target audience. Film remakes are a retelling of an existing story, an example to this is Harald Zwart's *The Karate Kid* (2010), which is a remake of John G. Avildsen's *The Karate Kid* (1986). Both films, while having a difference in character introductions and settings, usually a remake still retains the familiar beats and plot points of the original film.

Whereas remake works as a retelling of the same story, reboot signifies a new start to an established fictional universe, work, or series. In a reboot, they normally discard the continuity of the universe and its established character and form the story, character, plot, and backstory from scratch (Willits, 2009). Many times, movie reboots are described as a way to rebrand the established series and bring the franchise for a newer generation of audience.

An example for this would be *The Next Karate Kid* (1994) telling a new story that is not about Daniel LaRusso but is still connected to the established universe of the Karate Kid trilogy. The more recent examples of movie reboot would be *Ghostbusters* (2016) and *Ocean 8's* (2018). Each has the same premise, of having a group of ghostbusters and heisters in the pre-existing universe but with a different set of characters, backstory and plotlines.

In general, a spinoff is a narrative work that is derived from already existing works that focus on more details and different aspects from the original work (Tucker, 2005). In films, spinoffs are usually taken from a well-known franchise or comic book movie. While

they are mostly standalone films, they are usually written in a way that is interconnected to the original films.

One of the most well-known comic book movies examples is Bryan Singer's *X-Men* (2000). While there were many other comic book movies before it, *X-Men* is believed by many to be the fire that sparked many more comic book films, including Sam Raimi's *Spiderman* trilogy (2002 - 2007), *Fantastic Four* (2005) and *V for Vendetta* (2005) to name a few (Richard, 2006).

Singer's *X-Men* films were made as a trilogy, however, there have been a handful of spinoff films since then focusing on different characters in the universe such as *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* (2009), *Deadpool* (2016) and *The New Mutants* (2020). Another widely known film franchise that received multiple spin offs is George Lucas' *Star Wars*. Outside of *Star Wars* episode 1 through 6, there are *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (2016), *Solo: A Star Wars Story* (2018) and TV series such as *The Mandalorian* (2019).

From these three types of films, *Ghostbusters* (2016) and many other gender-swap films are in the reboot category. This is because these films were usually adapted from an existing film or franchise but instead of retelling stories starring the same set of characters, these films tell a story of different characters. Unlike sequels however, reboots do not acknowledge the existence of the previous films making reboots essentially a new series in an existing franchise.

2.2 Gender Issues in Hollywood

Different countries and societies have different perceptions on the concept of masculinity and femininity. Usually however, the conception of the two is usually universal disregard of the country/culture. When one thought about femininity, it would usually be someone with an image of who has the values of caring, nurturing, compassionate, soft spoken,

cooperative, focused on appearance, dainty and with masculinity, it would be someone who's aggressive, tough, strong, leader, commanding, and risk-takers (Ellemers, 2018).

This stereotype would then apply to genders, usually with men perceived as more masculine than women, whilst women are perceived as more feminine than men. Several scales have been developed to measure fundamental aspects of gender stereotypes.

The common application of this stereotype can be seen in Hollywood films. Many Hollywood films are guilty of having a "male gaze", this is where women are portrayed as an erotic and sexual person for the purpose of empower (usually heterosexual) men and objectifying women (Mulvey, 1989). One of the examples of a male gaze in Hollywood films can be seen in Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* (2003) in which the first shot of the movie is a shot of a woman's rear, showcasing both the curve and 'inviting' nature of women's sexual attributes.

2.3 Phenomenon of Gender Swap Film Reboot

The newer form of film reboot in recent years is the film in which the gender of the lead characters is swapped, normally going from male leads to female leads. Some of the recent examples include *Ghostbusters* (2016), *Ocean's 8* (2018) and *What Men Want* (2019).

Back when the trailer for 2016's *Ghostbusters*, directed by Paul Feig, was revealed, it received a higher dislike ratio from YouTube viewers. By May 2016, the trailer had become the most disliked film trailer on YouTube and the top 30th most disliked YouTube video, with 280,000 likes to over one million dislikes.

This negative reception causes dispute between people who got accused of being sexist/misogynist because they simply refuse to watch the film. Not only that, but the cast

member Leslie Jones became the target of racist and sexist abuse on Twitter (Stevens, 2016).

2.4 #MeToo and #OscarsSoWhite Movement

#MeToo movement was a movement that sparked back in 2006 during MySpace era by Tarana Burke, an activist who created the movement to create solidarity between survivors of sexual harassment. It is a movement that works to focus on assisting a growing spectrum of survivors — young people, queer, trans, the disabled, Black women and girls, and all communities of color (Burke, 2017).

In 2017, the phrase “Me too” was brought up by a Tweet that Alyssa Milano made to bring up awareness of sexual harassment and assault (Sayej, 2017). In the same year, Harvey Weinstein, a former American film producer, was charged for sexual abuse in workplace which led to Hollywood hiring more female writers (Layne, 2021).

#OscarSoWhite is another movement that sparked through social media, particularly Twitter. This hashtag sparked from the 88th Academy Awards, where many news outlets and social media users criticized the Academy Awards for the lack of diversity, as far as calling it as “Oscar’s whitest year” (Vincent, 2016).

Despite its constant criticism throughout the years, the Oscars still faces issues trying to diversify its events. Given the 336 Oscars for acting that have been awarded over the ceremony’s lifetime, actors of color account for roughly 6% of overall wins (Gooding, Moore, 2022). To quote Academy CEO Dawn Hudson in 2020 “While the Academy has made strides, we know there is much more work to be done in order to ensure equitable opportunities across the board, the need to address this issue is urgent.” While the

Academy itself acknowledge its diversity issues, #OscarsSoWhite could possibly be a movement that will stay relevant in the coming years.

2.5 Feminism in Films

Activism such as the #MeToo movement is one of the result of feminism. The goal of feminism is to define and establish the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes. Feminism is a collection of sociopolitical movements and beliefs.

Feminism includes the notion that women are unfairly treated in these nations and that society prioritizes the viewpoint of males. Fighting against gender preconceptions and ensuring that women have equal access to educational, professional, and interpersonal opportunities and outcomes are some ways to address this.

Feminism covers many aspects of the world, including culture, politics, science, and many more. However, in this study I will focus on discussing feminism in films. Feminist film theory started out in the 1960s to 1970s, marking it as a part of second wave feminism in which the movement itself tackle issues about women inequality and discrimination (Hayward, 2006). Feminist filmmaking is often separated in two parts. To establish a different relationship between the viewer and dominant cinema, 'deconstruction feminist cinema' is concerned with analyzing and dismantling the protocols of popular cinema. The second strategy is 'feminist counterculture', in which it uses feminine writing to investigate a cinematic language that is specifically geared toward women (Kuhn & Radstone, 1990).

Though at first glance it seems as if feminism movement brings a significant progress to women in cinema, a study done in 2021 by The Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film shows that the state of cinema for women 'isn't good'. The lead researcher for the study, Dr Martha Lauzen, states that "The chronic under-representation of girls and women reveals a kind of arrested development in the mainstream film

industry,” Lauzen said in a statement. “Women are not a niche audience, and they are no more ‘risky’ as filmmakers than men. It is unfortunate that these beliefs continue to limit the industry’s relevance in today’s marketplace.” (Lauzen, 2022)

2.6 Pop Feminism

Another form of feminist is called popular feminism (or pop feminism). It is a populist, non-academic approach to feminism, suggesting that women can attain equality with men through a positive, go-getting attitude, without much need to organize politically or to examine or change cultural institutions and biases (Eisenstein, 1996).

This concern was brought up in 1990 by Andrea Stuart where feminist values were spread via magazines where issues like domestic violence, unequal pay and workplace harassment are brought to light through readerships (Mcrobbie, 2004). Films and its contribution to pop culture has a similar function to spread values just like magazines, it could even reach a wider audience with the existence of franchise and intellectual properties.

Gender swap reboots are a good example of post-feminism. Reboot films being a film that was based on an existing, usually famous franchise, would naturally bring a wide audience. Having it being a gender swap, it could also function as a revisionist piece where women are shown to be able to do things that men do and could do it just as well as they do. As such, gender-swap reboot is very similar to that of ‘deconstruction feminist cinema’ in which the aim is to deconstruct the norm of the mainstream cinema and creating a new myth/story to connect with a new audience or connect with the audience in different ways.