POPULAR CINEMA AS NOSTALGIA INDUSTRY: REUNIONS, REMAKES, AND REQUELS

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Abstract

This article seeks to develop a new perspective on the experience of nostalgia, one of popular cinema's central features, through a focus on cathartic reunions in reproductions—remakes, reboots, requels, sequels, prequels, spin-offs, and adaptations—released on digital platforms and in cinema in 2021. The discussion is grounded on the idea that popular cinema's commercial approach to reproducing certain experiences and canonical narratives is dependent on nostalgia. Reunions are a common element in commercially successful sequels in the early 2020s, and they perform several functions. The newly launched SVOD service HBO Max aired three major cathartic and nostalgic reunions in a single year: *Friends: The Reunion* (2021), *The Matrix Resurrections* (2021), and *Harry Potter 20th Anniversary: Return to Hogwarts* (2022). Moviegoers also witnessed an ensemble of three Spider-Men from different decades and franchises in a cathartic sequence of the worldwide highest-grossing movie of 2021, *Spider-Man: No Way Home*. Taking this uptrend in nostalgia-oriented reunions as its starting point, this study engages in a wide-ranging review of the literature to assess cinema's relation to nostalgia and debates on reproduction practices. Through a case study of the four productions above, selected using the method of purposive sampling, it discusses nostalgia's function in popular cinema and SVODs. In scanning reproduced works and their contemporary counterparts, this qualitative study draws its theoretical background from memory studies, which provide the tools it uses to approach and discuss the selected works. Thus, this article offers a contribution to the field by investigating the functions of reunions in sequels, requels, remakes, reboots, spin-offs, and adaptations in terms of their nostalgic qualities and commercial potential.

Keywords: reunion, nostalgia, remake, popular cinema, experience

NOSTALJİ ENDÜSTRİSİ OLARAK POPÜLER SİNEMA: YENİDEN BİR ARAYA GELMELER, YENİDEN ÇEVRİMLER VE YENİDEN YAPIMLAR

Öz

Bu çalışma popüler sinemanın sunduğu nostaljik deneyime yeni bir bakış açısı geliştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Popüler karakterlerin 2021 yılında yeniden bir araya geldikleri, sinema ve dijitalde yayınlanan yapımlar çalışmanın odağını oluşturmaktadır. Bu çalışmada yeniden bir araya gelmeler, yeniden yapımlar, yeniden çevrimler, devam filmleri ve kaynak yapımdan türetilen ayrıksı yapımlar, yeniden üretilmiş yapımlar olarak ele alınmaktadır. Makalenin odağındaki tartışma, popüler sinemanın nostaljiyi belirli deneyimleri ve kaynak anlatıları ticari amaçla yeniden üretme biçimi olarak kullandığı fikrine dayanmaktadır. İçinde bulunduğumuz on yıla bakıldığında, ticari açıdan başarılı olan devam filmlerinin yanı sıra, popüler karakterlerin yeniden bir araya geldikleri yapımların çeşitli işlevlere sahip olduğu görülmektedir. Yeni kurulan üyelik bazlı dijital bir platform olan HBO Max'de aynı yıl içerisinde, karakterlerin yeniden bir araya geldikleri üç yeni yapım yayınlanmıştır. Bu bağlamda, *Friends: The Reunion* (2021), *The Matrix Resurrections* (2021), ve *Harry Potter 20th Anniversary: Return to Hogwarts* (2022), karakterlerin yeniden bir araya geldikleri duygu yüklü ve nostaljik yapımlar olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Farklı on yıllar ve çeşitli ticari anlatı gruplarından gelen üç farklı Örümcek Adam, 2021 yılının dünya çapında en çok gişe hasılatı elde eden filmi olan *Spider-Man: No Way Home*'da bir araya gelmiştir. Bu çalışma karakterlerin yeniden bir araya geldikleri nostalji odaklı yapımların yükselen eğilimini ifade etmeyi hedeflemektedir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda sinemanın nostaljiyle ilişkisi ve yeniden üretim pratikleri üzerine gerçekleştirilen tartışmalar, literatür taramasıyla ortaya konmuştur. Amaçsal örneklemle belirlenen yapımlar incelenirken kuramsal temel bellek çalışmaları üzerine kurulmuştur. Çalışma birçok devam filmine ek olarak, kaynak filmlerde yer almış karakterlerin yeniden bir araya geldikleri yapımları ve bu yapımların işlevlerini inceleyip anlamlandırarak alana katkı sunmaya çalışmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: yeniden bir araya gelme, nostalji, yeniden yapım, popüler sinema, deneyim

Introduction

Cinema has often been regarded as an associated medium with the nostalgic way of storytelling and film promotion. Likewise, the film has been a convenient art form related to memory studies regarding reproducing the past, the filmic experience, and the narrative. In this sense, reproducing canonical stories with remakes, sequels, and reboots has become one of the long-running trends of popular cinema from the mid-1910s to the present. As Walter Benjamin (1969, p. 2) argues that "in principle a work of art has always been reproducible," popular cinema has always produced and reproduced commercially successful canons through these filmmaking practices. Concordantly, adaptations from non-filmic media to cinema have been the field of ancestor practices of cinema. However, the Benjaminian idea of reproduction (1969, pp: 2-6) brings originality, authenticity, and the concept of aura into the debate on the quality of the work. André Bazin (2005, p. 65) marks that "the drama of adaptation is the drama of popularization." Bazin (2005, p. 83) criticizes that commercial success is one of the common reasons for making a film based on a contemporary play. Thus, cinema's way of reproduction has been discussed with several dichotomies, such as originality vs. popularity and fidelity vs. commerciality. Along with adaptations from non-filmic media, such as literature, theatre, and video games, today's popular cinema has dominantly used various ways of reproduction. This article addresses remakes, reboots, requels, sequels, prequels, spin-offs, and adaptations as reproduced works. This study's one of main arguments is grounded on the idea that popular cinema's commercial way of reproducing specific experiences and canonical narratives depends on proposing nostalgia. It is evident in the mainstream examples of the 2020s. Besides, several nostalgic reunions in cathartic moments are observed between popular productions in cinema and on digital platforms among the excessive number of commercially successful sequels of the 2020s.

In the context of commercially successful sequels, there is an influx in the Top 20 list of worldwide highest-grossing productions of 2021 and 2022. The list of 2020 is excluded due to the Covid-19-related cancellations. Based on the data on Box Office Mojo website, the Top 20 list of 2021 demonstrates that 50% of the total are sequels; if sequels, spin-offs, and adaptations are collected as reproductions, their domain becomes 80%. On the contrary, only 20% have original scripts. 10% can be categorized

as non-canonical script-based movies in the Top 20 list of 2022. However, 55% of the total are sequels. The percentage reaches ninety when sequels, remakes, spin-offs, and adaptations are regarded as reproductions. As observed, sequels, remakes, spin-offs, and adaptations have become worldwide box office winners. They have certain functions—related to nostalgic and cathartic experiences through industrial and commercial trends.

This article focuses on the nostalgic experience, one of popular cinema's central features, in the direction of becoming the dominant way of storytelling from a contextual and commercial perspective, through the concentration on cathartic reunions in reproductions—remakes, reboots, requels, sequels, prequels, spin-offs, and adaptations—released on digital platforms and in cinema in 2021. Significantly, nostalgia-oriented stories and marketing are not only associated with a particular genre or a single medium. Lauren Rosewarne (2020, p. 102) mentions that "each genre offers its own set of tropes and conventions, sometimes helping to make all films from that genre seem a little like remakes." However, nostalgia-providing reunions have become more apparent among popular cinema's commercially successful sequels, spin-offs, and remakes.

Reproduced works—sequels, remakes/reboots, and adaptations—are the industry's dominant trends, which seem less risky than original stories for Hollywood studios, especially in the 2020s. Jennifer Forrest and Leonard R. Koos (2002, p. 4) mention the economic dimension of remaking and counterparts from the producers' perspective that "Hollywood has always had recourse to canned projects that promised to ensure stable audience attendance more than new and riskier projects." Additionally, Kathleen Loock (2016, p. 280) points out that "from the film industry's point of view, remaking is a pro table business because it minimizes costs and risks by repeating existing stories and by putting pre-sold products back on the release schedule."

This study aims to showcase the related trends to offer a new perspective on popular cinema's relation to nostalgia and debates on reproduction practices through a wide range of literature review collection. This article attempts to remark on the digital streaming platforms' strategy through nostalgia to promote the platform covering arguments on sequel filmmaking and its financial dimension.

Case study, one of the essential methods for studies on Social

Sciences, was selected for this article's research. John W. Creswell (2007, p.73) approaches the case study as "a methodology, a type of qualitative research, or an object of study as well as a product of the inquiry." J. David Creswell and John W. Creswell (2018) state that the design of inquiry of a case study "requires an in-depth analysis of a case." According to them (2018), these cases are commonly programs, events, and activities. This study focuses on popular reproduced works' nostalgic qualities. The purposive sampling method was used as one of the non-probability sampling methods in this study. It was chosen because it is a method based on the researcher's judgment about which selection of units will represent the population most (Earl Babbie, 2006). In this direction, the primary selection criterion for productions was being rated by more than 40.000 users and gaining more than 5.5 points on IMDb website. This platform was selected because it has approximately 83 million registered users and 485 million data items. Episodic productions—television, limited, mini, quality, and documentary series—were excluded from the scope. Therefore, *Friends: The Reunion* (2021), *The Matrix Resurrections* (Lana Wachowski, 2021), and *Harry Potter 20th Anniversary: Return to Hogwarts* (2022) were selected as prominent cases from the same digital streaming platform, HBO Max, which include nostalgic reunions within cathartic moments.

Harry Potter 20th Anniversary: Return to Hogwarts (2022) was released on January 1, HBO Max. Therefore, it was included in the case study. Besides, many parts of the production have been released in 2021. *And Just Like That...* (2021-) was excluded from the case study because of its episodic structure, even though it has revealed a reunion of three characters based on the television series titled *Sex and the City* (1998-2004). One of the criteria for the selection of the cases was to be a non-episodic narrative. In addition to them, *Spider-Man: No Way Home* (John Watts, 2021) stages a nostalgic union within a cathartic sequence. In fact, *Spider-Man: No Way Home* became the highest-grossing movie in 2021. Thus, it was included in the scope as a case that was theatrically released worldwide.

Lauren Rosewarne's seminal work titled "*Why We Remake: The Politics, Economics and Emotions of Film and TV Remakes*" (2020) provides insight into this article's main theoretical background and the analysis method. She works to theorize reproduced works in film studies through a comprehensive research on Hollywood from the early age to the late-2010s. Rosewarne separates remake filmmaking into six different

categories, including "the bigger and better remake," "the economic re-make," "the nostalgic remake," "the Americanized remake," "the creative remake," and "the fashionable remake."

This article argues that the industry's one of uptrends would be the nostalgic remakes and counterparts—revealing nostalgic reunions—in the 2020s based on the insight from the reproduced works on digital platforms and in cinema in 2021. Rosewarne's analysis method on "the nostalgic remake" includes three indicators, covering "character repri-sals," "new roles," and "cameos" to reignite interest in the earlier film. This study used Rosewarne's analysis method; thus four selected produ-ctions were analyzed based on these indicators to discuss the relation of these productions to nostalgia. According to Rosewarne (2020, p. 95), these indicators serve as 'nostalgia catalysts' for audiences with several functions. Nostalgia could also be regarded as one of the motivations to seek a new remake (p. 106). Besides, the reunions of 2021 could develop a new understanding of remake and sequel filmmaking's nostalgic qu-alities. Therefore, this article's theoretical base is centered on memory studies associated with popular cinema.

Promised Nostalgia of the Popular: The Sequel

Reproductions—remakes, sequels, and reboots—have been Hollywood's popular way of storytelling and marketing strategy for many decades in several genres. For instance, moviegoers have used to follow familiar nar-ratives from *Bride of Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1935) to *Halloween Ends* (David Gordon Green, 2022). Interestingly, the canonical/original *Hal-loween* (John Carpenter, 1978) has a couple of sequels, such as *Halloween II* (Rick Rosenthal, 1981), *Halloween 4* (Dwight H. Little, 1988), *Halloween 5* (Dominique Othenin-Girard, 1989), and *Halloween 6* (Joe Chappelle, 1996), two divergent movies in a different narrative timeline—*Halloween H20* (Steve Miner, 1998) and *Halloween: Resurrection* (Rick Rosenthal, 2002)— two reboots titled *Halloween* (Rob Zombie, 2007) and *Halloween II* (Rob Zombie, 2009), and an anthology movie called *Halloween III: Season of the Witch* (Tommy Lee Wallace, 1982). Currently, the latest *Halloween* trilogy (2018-2022) is discussed to be defined as requels instead of sequels. The terminological difference will be clarified below.

The case of the *Halloween* franchise (1978-2022) is given as an example to illustrate that the principal (original/canonical) story never ends, and the audience has still been eager to watch something "familiar"

but "new." Justin Wyatt (2021, p. 121) argues that "the familiar Hollywood pitch of 'the same, but different' resonates for much of mainstream entertainment." Wyatt emphasizes that "this adage is never truer than in the case of a remake or reboot, which instantly recall times past and the pleasures of the original movie, TV show, or other entertainment form" (ibid.). As mentioned above, reproductions are not limited to a particular genre. They are constantly produced and reproduced within various genres, such as musicals, romantic comedies, science fiction, and horror movies.

The world has still been waiting for the new James Bond actor. The tenth installments of *Saw* and *the Fast and the Furious* franchises have been developing. The scene has become more complicated in the superhero movie genre. The genre has generated many sequels—despite calling them sequels—, remakes, and reboots like *Fant4stic* (Josh Trank, 2015).

The first thing that caught our interest was that the recent sequels have staged reunions. Moreover, the requel's definition and meaning as a new term have begun to be discussed. Even the number of reproduced works has increased since the beginning of the 2020s. That is why this study's central research question is, does Hollywood sell nostalgia to keep these productions still alive? Therefore, the research traces the relation of the recent Hollywood productions in cinema and on digital platforms to the nostalgic features of the content. Many essential studies have associated memory and nostalgia to cinema in many fields. Kathryn Pallister (2019, p. 2) states that "the connections between nostalgia and mass media have been addressed by many scholars seeking to understand why the past retains such a strong siren's song." According to Pam Cook (2005, p. 3), "the critiques of memory and nostalgia in film studies are part of a more general engagement in the humanities with issues of history and identity, ranging across disciplines." However, she argues that "...they are also partly a response to the emergence of the nostalgic memory film itself, which reconstructs an idealised past as a site of pleasurable contemplation and yearning" (ibid.). Several concepts on memory and nostalgia should be discussed and explained to argue that popular cinema's one of the current ways of storytelling depends on offering nostalgic experiences with reunions.

An Overview of Nostalgia, Mediated Nostalgia, and Popular Film

Many comprehensive works have centered on the concept of nostalgia in memory studies. Especially Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase's *"The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia"* (1989), Svetlana Boym's *"The Future of Nostalgia"* (2001), and Regina Rudaitytė's *"History, Memory and Nostalgia in Literature and Culture"* (2018) are regarded as seminal works. Zygmunt Bauman's *"Retrotopia"* (2017) could also be mentioned in this respect. Boym's approach to nostalgia has been an inspiration for and the center of many researches in memory studies. Boym (2001, p. iv) mentions that "nostalgia is not only a longing for a lost time and lost home but also for friends who once inhabited it and who now are dispersed all over the world." Nostalgia was considered as a medical disease in the initial studies. Like Boym, Clay Routledge (2016) investigates the history of nostalgia. While Routledge (2016, p. 4) argues that "distress, sadness, and loss often instigate nostalgia," he indicates that "the term nostalgia was coined in 1688 by the Swiss medical student Johaness Hofer (1688/1934). ...Hofer was, however, the first to explicitly define this condition as an illness and crafted the word nostalgia from two sounds: nostos (return to the native land) and algos (pain)" (p. 5). According to Routledge, the desire to "return to the home," implying the native land, causes the constructed nostalgia (ibid.).

Likewise, Routledge (2016, p. 5) highlights that nostalgia, as a medical disease in the initial approaches, focused on "a yearning for a home." Matthias Stephan (2019, p. 26) states that "nostalgia is a double bind, both a look back to an idealized past, but with a future trajectory, a hope that the romanticized past will become our future." Andrew Higson (2014, p. 123) argues that "the classical version of the concept was developed as a means of describing the painful longing suffered by mercenaries who missed their homeland." Higson explains that the modern version of nostalgia is about memory and remembering the past, things, conditions, or values associated with that time (ibid.). He illustrates that "the process of remembering in this version of nostalgia is closely attached to a desire to *return* in thought or in fact to that earlier time —even while it is clear such a return can only be a fantasy" (ibid.). However, the perception on nostalgia has been changing and expanding. For instance, Routledge (2016, p. 5) emphasizes that "with a new emphasis on a general longing for aspects of one's past (e.g., childhood) as opposed to a specific longing for one's home or homeland, during the twentieth century, views on nos-

talgia started to change." Garry Cross (2015, p. 23) argues that "nostalgia has long been about returning home to a place and time most people recall as happy, innocent, and full of promise."

Jason Sperb (2016, p. 2) states that "nostalgia is always most intense during periods of dramatic cultural and technological upheaval, whereby the perceived reassurances of a simpler past anchor our perception of an uncertain present (and future)." Then, Sperb refers Philip Rosen's approach on hybridity (2001) to explain the recent condition of cinema and memory; Sperb (2016, p. 6) discusses that "more broadly, these cinematic mixtures of old and new echo what Philip Rosen once called medium 'hybridity' within the ontology of the digital."

Cinema is often associated with memory in two aspects. At first, the context and content of a film can include a particular style and narrative, which could function as a particular memory within the film language. In this sense, a group of movies has been described as memory films. This perspective is contextual and conceptual. Susannah Radstone (2010, p. 326) explains that "the cinema's long-standing and intimate relationship with memory is revealed in cinema language's adoption of terms associated with memory- the 'flashback' and the face, for instance —to describe cinematic dissolves between a film narrative's present and its past."

Cinema is not the first medium associated with memory. Radstone indicates photography through Henri Bergson's works and Camera Obscura's way of working (ibid.). Radstone (2010, p. 328) explains that "the permeability of the boundary between personal and social memory extends beyond memory films intended for public exhibition to the domain of home movie," while she underlines that "like images from the family album, home movies supplement, enhance or even supplant intimate memories of the personal and familial past while drawing on film language learned as much at the cinema as at home." She (2010) gives *Memento* (Christopher Nolan, 2000), *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Michel Gondry, 2004), and the *Bourne* trilogy (2002-2007) in this regard.

Boym's (2001, p. 33) perspective on popular culture and nostalgia is complementary, in which she approaches dinosaurs—implying *Jurrasic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993)—as "ideal animals for the nostalgia industry because nobody remembers them." She argues that "popular culture made in Hollywood... both induces nostalgia and offers a tranqu-

ilizer; instead of disquieting ambivalence and paradoxical dialectic of past, present and future, it provides a total restoration of extinct creatures and a conflict resolution" (ibid.). Her term (2001, p. 33), "the nostalgia industry," is critical for popular culture and mainstream movies in Hollywood.

Susan Flynn and Antonia Mackay (2021, p. 1) debate that "...the entertainment industries are uniquely placed to conjure up the memories and sensations of times past, and of laying out the commonality between current experiences and past ones," while they argue that "the re-creation of the look and feel of the past, and the idealized views of an earlier, more innocent time have clear links with popular ideologies and politics." They (2021, p. 3) claim that the marketing of productions and content of films are designed with a particular ideology to maintain the American dream associated with nostalgia through a critical lens that "we consider the manner in which life is portrayed on screen via a system of everyday memory making and collective aspiration in relation to the home, community, the family and the state itself."

The second way to relate cinema to memory and nostalgia is associated with the ritualistic function of filmic experience. Pallister (2019, p. 3) argues that "...an audience's nostalgic responses to texts can function both individually and collectively, expanding the types of audiences who view content from a nostalgic perspective," while she explains that "viewers who consume content they previously enjoyed or that otherwise links them to their past connect to the text with a primarily individual nostalgic response..." Thus, it is also contextual but associated with reproducing the past experience on a new one. In this sense, reproductions—remakes, reboots, and sequels—have become the center. As stated in this article, popular cinema, covering series, has become more nostalgia-oriented.

According to Box Office Mojo website, six movies are sequels of Hollywood franchises in the Top 10 list of the worldwide highest-grossing movies of all time. *Avengers: Endgame* (Anthony Russo & Joe Russo, 2019) is the second highest-grossing movie. *Avatar: The Way of Water* (James Cameron, 2022) becomes the fourth. *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (J.J. Abrams, 2015)—the first installment in the third *Star Wars* trilogy (2015-2019)—is the fifth. *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018), *Spider-Man: No Way Home* (2021), and *Jurassic World* (Colin Trevorrow, 2015) follow *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015).

Avatar (Cameron, 2009) as the first, *Titanic* (Cameron, 1997) as the third, *The Lion King* (Rob Minkoff & Roger Allers, 1994) as the ninth, and *The Avengers* (Joss Whedon, 2012) as the tenth are placed in the Top 10 list of the worldwide highest-grossing movies of all time.

The feature-length animation *The Lion King* (1994) has a live-action adaptation called *The Lion King* (Jon Favreau, 2019) and an animation sequel titled *The Lion King II: Simba's Pride* (Darrell Rooney, 1998). Currently, *The Avengers* has three sequels in the years between 2015 and 2019. Moreover, two new sequels—*Avengers: The Kang Dynasty* (2025) and *Avengers: Secret Wars* (2026)—have been announced in development (Adam Bankhurst & Matt Fowler, 2022). That is why the only monic and non-canonical film is *Titanic* (1997) in the list.

"The same but new" approach is critical for these reproduced works. Essentially, it is also related to the fan and participatory culture, and postmodernist narratives. Henry Jenkins' book, *"Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture,"* (1992) is regarded as one of the best sources on the fan culture. For the postmodernist narratives in our age—related to the sequel and remake practices in the nostalgia industry—Frederic Jameson's works are seminal. Higson (2014, p. 123) indicates that "following Fredric Jameson, nostalgia is now understood by some contemporary cultural commentators as a symptom of a more widespread post-modern condition." Jameson (1984) states that "...postmodernism replicates or reproduces—reinforces—the logic of consumer capitalism; the more significant question is whether there is also a way in which it resists that logic..."

Therefore, popular cinema's contextual relation to memory and nostalgia is associated with the postmodern turn and the industrial trends. Higson (2014, p. 121) states that "in the contemporary period, nostalgia is a heavily mediated experience, manifested in the intense public re-cycling of narratives, images, sounds, characters and styles associated with the often recent past," while he argues that "this nostalgic re-cycling has been massively encouraged and enabled by the participatory convergence culture of the twenty-first century and the possibilities of digital media, and especially the Internet, as a showcase for a whole plethora of nostalgic activity." However, he (2014, p. 126) indicates that the condition of today's nostalgia "is primarily for the popular culture of the relatively recent past, and it is organised through hobbyist activity, through purchasing and collecting and through the celebration of

particular styles..., but on the other hand most definitely live on as retro fashion and collectables."

The situation is beyond imagining the past, it is about experiencing and collecting the past. In this sense, the article's one of the main debates could be described with the statement that popular cinema's way of offering nostalgia with reproductions is a practice to propose reaching and recalling the past within a new experience, which seems "the same but new." Giulia Taurino (2019, p. 10) defends that "today nostalgia is not so much about memory as it is about the media industry itself." In this regard, Antonia Mackay (2021, p. 67) states that "today's nostalgia appears more viscerally and perhaps more obviously than in previous years."

Besides, Mackay explains that "everywhere we look, the nostalgic turn appears. In recent years, culture appears to have made an overt shift, and rather than looking forward, toward a future of innovation and change, contemporary culture increasingly looks backward" (ibid.). Taurino (2019, pp: 10-13) defines reproduced works as "all forms of revival"—centered on repetition and variation (as any genre film and film genres)—that "...as the main properties of serial narratives, the nostalgia effect is created when there is a sense of return perceived by the audience, rather than a simple pattern of reiteration."

Additionally, Stephan (2019, p. 30) describes "mediated nostalgia" as "totemic nostalgia" through one of the popular Netflix series titled *Stranger Things* (Matt Duffer & Ross Duffer, 2016-), in which the 1980s technologies are surroundings, such as VHS tapes and the iconic wall telephone with an extended cord. Moreover, Loock (2016) describes this type of storytelling as "the act of retro nostalgia." According to Stephan (2019, p. 29), "the nostalgic narrative is presented in setting and tone, the context of the stories, through totemic objects within the texts, including iconic technology, as well as through peripheral content such as music, intertextuality, and paratext." In this sense, Cook (2005, p. 10) argues that "despite all their claims to authenticity, nostalgic fictions depend upon a slippage between current styles and period fashion in order to draw audiences into the experience." She explains that "the past is presented as a site for a complex imaginative encounter, combining fantasy, emotion and critical judgement, to which the knowledge that it can never be fully retrieved is essential" (ibid.).

There is another perspective of the domain, which is related to the

marketing and consuming culture. Routledge (2016, p. 7) indicates that "when it comes to aesthetic preferences and media consumption, nostalgia may influence consumer choice." Garry Cross' book titled "*Consumed Nostalgia: Memory in the Age of Fast Capitalism*" (2015) should be underlined, which covers critical perspectives on collecting culture, consumed nostalgia, and postmodernism. Cross (2015, p. 23) references the title of Thomas Wolfe's book—*You Can't Go Home Again*, 1940—in the context of nostalgia as "returning the home." However, he argues that "today, we can get back home by collecting." Indeed, he discusses that "it isn't the same experience exactly, but it may be the same 'thing,' and the thing collected, be it a toy, old car, or phonograph record, is now in our possession, and it won't go away, like our actual childhood worlds have" (ibid). Similar to Jenkins, Cross (2015, pp: 204-210) associates re-experience of Disney theme parks with nostalgia that "theme-park nostalgia is often evoked in and through fantasy places and characters recalled from childhood films and other media, which, thanks to modern repeatable media technology, is reexperienced across generations." He (2015, p. 210) indicates that "it was in making a 'memory' of the past into a playground of nostalgia, the memory of a child's play set for young and old alike." Whereas Cross (2015, p. 232) strongly argues that "nostalgia today is mostly for things, not home, religion, or politics. Though it may be experienced in reverie, it is evoked and lived through objects and media owned or encountered personally," he (2015, p. 233) concludes with that "our things of memory are simultaneously mass-produced and ephemeral." Collecting childhood items and totems could also be likened to following reproduced works to re-experience the collection of past experiences.

Constructing the Present on the Past with Nostalgia: Character Reprisals, New Roles, and Cameos

Almost seventeen years after *Friends'* (1994-2004) finale, the main cast, secondary characters, and creators had a special reunion. This reunion was produced as a TV special aired on HBO Max in 2021. HBO Max is a part of the Warner Bros. Discovery brand, which could also be regarded as an SVOD version of HBO launched in 2021. *Friends: The Reunion* (2021) was produced to be streamed on HBO Max, unlike the original sitcom. Critically, bringing the old folks together with several cameos, such as Tom Selleck as Monica's ex-boyfriend, Maggie Wheeler as Chandler's ex-girlfriend, and Reese Witherspoon as Rachel's sister, could be seen as an impactful marketing strategy for a newly launched global SVODs. Ra-

chel (Jennifer Aniston), Monica (Courteney Cox), Phoebe (Lisa Kudrow), Joey (Matt LeBlanc), Chandler (Matthew Perry), and Ross (David Schwimmer) came together to return to the original stage of the sitcom to re-experience their memories on the show in *Friends: The Reunion* (2021). They play trivia games on their roles, replay their lines, and share their memories. In this sense, the re-enactment of the participants, as character reprisals, should be mentioned because they act out of past events. Besides, the production includes popular guests in new roles with re-enactments. For example, Cara Delevingne wears a recreated version of Rachel's iconic dress while Cindy Crawford wears Ross's pants. *Friends: The Reunion* is a non-episodic special and Rosewarne's (2020) indicators—character reprisals, new roles, and cameos—are the show's fundamentals. The special (2021) proposes a particular nostalgia based on a reunion theme for the fans to call them to the platform.

The second prominent reunion was aired on HBO Max and simultaneously released in theaters. The fourth *Matrix* movie—the third sequel—called *The Matrix Resurrections* (Lana Wachowski, 2021) was released twenty-two years after *The Matrix*'s (The Wachowskis, 1999) and eighteen years after the last installment of the *Matrix* (1999-2003) trilogy. *The Matrix* closed the 20th Century, whereas *The Matrix Resurrections* (2021) was aired in the 21st Century's first post-pandemic era. Neo (Keanu Reeves) and Trinity (Carrie-Anne Moss) reunite despite the absence of Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne). However, Neo and Trinity must remember each other to recognize the artificiality of the simulation in which they live in *The Matrix Resurrections* (2021). They do not recognize and remember each other in the first encounter. During the first conversation between the two, the first line of Trinity is, *"have we met?"* They must reach their memories under the influence of the safety and conformity of the simulation by recalling their past to reprisal their characters in this sequel. Even though Laurence Fishburne is not in the movie, Fishburne's Morpheus portrayal has a cameo as a statue and a reflection. Besides, the movie includes new characters in new roles, such as the analyst (Neil Patrick Harris), Bugs (Jessica Henwick), and the new Morpheus (Yahya Abdul-Mateen II). Significantly, *The Matrix Resurrections* (2021) recreates the Kung Fu fighting sequence of *The Matrix* (1999) with Neo and the new Morpheus. Rosewarne (2020, p. 95) states that cameos and role reprisals have functions as "an explicit callback or reference to the previous film." As it is seen, the movie's context is related to reproducing past experiences in a nostalgic way.

The first encounter of the Neo and Trinity is a cathartic moment. Importantly, *The Matrix*'s (1999) special IMAX version was released in theatres nearly before *The Matrix Resurrections* (2021) comes out. It was time for the audience to remember the original one and recall the past experience when they watched it in 1999. Britta Devore (2021) refers to the President of IMAX Entertainment, Megan Colligan's statement is that "with excitement building around *The Matrix Resurrections*, this is the perfect time to experience the film that started it all in a way it's never been seen before. *The Matrix* forever changed the visual language of epic filmmaking…" In this sense, the nostalgia, also observed by the indicators of Rosewarne (2020)—created around the movie with an enhanced past and ritualistic experience—could be seen as a contemporary way of marketing with the reunion of the characters in a long waited-sequel.

Another special reunion was *Harry Potter 20th Anniversary: Return to Hogwarts* as a new year's gift for Harry Potter fans, released on January 1, 2022, on HBO Max. The reunion was aired at the twentieth anniversary of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Chris Columbus, 2001) and ten years after the last *Harry Potter* sequel. The special gathers Harry (Daniel Radcliffe), Ron (Rupert Grint), and Hermione (Emma Watson) together again in a frame to reprisal their roles. Moreover, crucial secondary characters have cameos, such as Sirius Black (Gary Oldman) and Bellatrix (Helena Bonham Carter). Actors play new roles in trivia games and reprisal their canonical characters. Assembling the cast into particular groups with creators' contributions proposes nostalgia—derived from the past experience of cast members and the audience.

Significantly, the prominent reunion of a group of characters, which gathers past and present together, was *Spider-Man: No Way Home* (2021). Even though the first promotional materials—posters, teasers, and trailers—did not include any shot in which three Spider-Men assemble, moviegoers have already known the cathartic moment in the age of social media and the world of spoilers. That is why the movie's promotion with nostalgia is less direct compared with *The Matrix Resurrections* (2021). However, Tobey Maguire from the 2000s, Andrew Garfield from the early-2010s, and Tom Holland from the late-2010s came together in a cathartic sequence in which old and new, past and present, unite.

Besides, the movie has a nostalgic reunion function, which gathers Spider-Men and villains of the past together, such as Norman Osborn (Willem Dafoe) and Doctor Octavius (Alfred Molina). As mentioned above,

Spider-Man: No Way Home (2021) became the seventh highest-grossing movie of all time at the worldwide box office records. Mediated and totemic nostalgia gain importance in this sense. That is why the ensemble of three Spider-Men from different decades and franchises could also be seen as gathering all the experiences together within a big production, which proposes the collection of the characters. While the ensemble sequence of three Spider-Men is cathartic, the return of Maguire and Garfield to their roles in the iconic costumes becomes the reunion of canonical characters with fans, which provides a nostalgic experience. When the movie includes main and secondary characters from the past, it has significant cameos like J. Jonah Jameson (J.K. Simmons).

Spider-Man: No Way Home (2021) recreates the tragic rescue scene of *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* (2014) with Spider-Man (Garfield) and M.J. (Zendaya) within a happy ending. Rosewarne (2020, p. 100) claims that "the pleasures of revisiting the comforting—if not romanticized – aspects of one's past provide pleasures and a quasi-time-travel opportunity." However, the ensemble of three Spider-Men is romanticized—even three of them cry in certain moments—the ensemble provides nostalgic pleasures through "a quasi-time-travel opportunity."

As observed, these productions approach Rosewarne's (2020) indicators as fundamentals of narratives. Thus, they are considered nostalgia-oriented reunions. Therefore, this study marks that the reunion is an uptrend way of nostalgia-oriented storytelling in popular cinema.

Old and New Together: The Requel

The article attempts to trace three HBO Max-released productions and the worldwide highest-grossing movie of 2021 as particular cases based on nostalgic qualities. While reproduced works—reunions, sequels, remakes, reboots, and spin-offs—have become familiar to the audience, new terms and concepts have been updated. In this sense, the new *Halloween* trilogy (2018-2022), *Candyman* (Nia DaCosta, 2021), *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (David Blue Garcia, 2022), and *Scream* (Matt Bettinelli-Olpin & Tyler Gillett, 2022) are valuable to be mentioned.

They are originally sequels. However, a new term—the requel—has become the sequel's latest characteristic. Interestingly, a character, Mindy (Jasmin Savoy Brown), defines the concept of the requel as "the return to the original" in *Scream* (2022), which could be regarded as a *self-aware* sequel. The character describes the requel as a part of an on-

going storyline with new characters supported by canonical characters when the character (Mindy) criticizes reboots and conventional sequels. Mindy exemplifies the requel concept through *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015), *Jurrasic World* (2015), *Jigsaw* (Michael Spierig & Peter Spierig, 2017), *Halloween* (2018), *Terminator: Dark Fate* (Tim Miller, 2019), and *Ghostbusters: Afterlife* (Jason Reitman, 2021). The story always goes back to the original and canonical in these examples.

Peter Bradshaw (2022) describes *Scream* (2022) as a requel that "Ghostface is now involving them in a 'requel'—a reboot-slash-sequel—whose purpose is to appease the toxic fandom by introducing a younger cast but respectfully leaving 'legacy characters' like Riley, Sidney and Gale intact." Charles T. White (2022) states that "my take on what a requel is when a new movie in a franchise/series is a sequel to the original movie but is also a remake at the same time." He explains that "usually, requels ignore all the other movies in a franchise and just become a sequel to the original movie." More importantly, White (2022) indicates that "the title of requels are usually just the original name," and requels bring the new and legacy characters together in a new story.

Titling a requel with the canonical work could also be seen as a common way, such as *Halloween* (2018), *Candyman* (2021), *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2022), and *Scream* (2022). Requel filmmaking in the 2020s—a contemporary practice—could be regarded as recalling the past (legacy) characters to unite the present (newly generated characters) in "a familiar but new story," which respects and embraces the original work.

Concluding Remarks

Old friends from Central Perk and Hogwarts reunite in HBO Max specials. The canonical characters' actors return to play their roles in nostalgic moments, although these productions are reality-based shows. *Friends: The Reunion* and *Harry Potter 20th Anniversary: Return to Hogwarts* are grounded on the promise of nostalgia from the perspective of Rosewarne (2020). *The Matrix Resurrections* was released on HBO Max simultaneously in theatres. The reunion of Neo and Trinity offers both nostalgic and cathartic moments. Three Spider-Men's reunion with villains of the past is centered on one cathartic sequence, which offers the audience a nostalgic experience in *Spider-Man: No Way Home* (2021). These productions allow the audience to recollect particular experiences from the past in a nostalgic but contemporary one.

This article approached four productions as crucial cases to analyze their nostalgic qualities based on Rosewarne's (2020) analysis indicators. With this purpose, narratives of selected productions were analyzed, focusing on "character reprisals," "new roles," and "cameos." It was observed that while these productions center their narratives on these indicators, the re-creation of iconic scenes and re-enactments are commonly used. Whereas *Friends: The Reunion* and *Harry Potter 20th Anniversary: Return to Hogwarts* include prominent re-enactment scenes, *The Matrix Resurrections* and *Spider-Man: No Way Home* recycle the iconic scenes of initial movies with different approaches. As stated above, many comprehensive works have described nostalgia as "a desire for returning home" in memory studies. This study discussed that contemporary nostalgia usage in popular cinema and on digital platforms depends on reunions. Therefore, it could also be argued that the reunions' nostalgic function offers the audience the sense of returning home and re-experiencing the past.

The releasing dates of selected productions' canonical and initial sources should also be underlined to reveal the periodical relation of nostalgia. Warner Bros. Pictures released *The Matrix* in 1999, while *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was theatrically released in 2001. One year after *Harry Potter*'s release, moviegoers watched *Spider-Man* (2002). *Friends* has been broadcasted in the years between 1994 and 2004. Therefore, their releasing schedules intersected in a period between the mid-1990s and the early-2000s. The average time passed from the initial works is twenty-two years. Thus, the past connotes approximately two decades ago. As Mackay (2021, p. 67) marks "a nostalgic turn," the idea could be argued that when the nostalgic turn in popular cinema indicates the period between the mid-1990s and the early-2000s in this article, reunions enrich the nostalgia-oriented productions, which offer the audience a nostalgic turn to home. In a nostalgic context, the home represents a particular period when canonical characters return to their roles with new characters and cameos of the past.

As marked in the article's title, this study approached popular cinema as the nostalgia industry. Reunions are becoming one of the most common wheels of the nostalgia industry. Taurino (2019, p. 10) stated that today's nostalgia is about "the media industry itself." This article was constructed as a qualitative study. Four productions were selected as valuable cases to be analyzed based on Rosewarne's (2020) analysis method on nostalgia-oriented reproduced works to broaden new understandings

of reunions' nostalgic functions in popular cinema. Therefore, this study could provide insight into reproductions' contemporary ways of using nostalgia.

In one way, reproduced works are commercially less risky productions for big franchises. In another way, they offer nostalgic and cathartic experiences. Meanwhile, the number of reunions is increasing. As a final mark, Warner Bros. Pictures released the official trailer of *The Flash* (Andrés Muschietti, 2023) on February 13, 2023. The trailer reveals two Batmen together. It announces the return of Michael Keaton to his Batman portrayal. Besides, Keaton's iconic line, *"I am Batman,"* is included in the trailer. The *"I am Batman"* moment would be nostalgic within a cathartic sequence due to the character's reunion with fans. Even the trailer foreshadows the possibility of two Batmen's union in 2023. Thus, popular cinema would remain to use nostalgia-oriented projects and reunions in reproduced works of the 2020s and the scope of the turn could be expanded.

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