

DEAR READER,

OF REMAKES AND ADAPTATIONS

Remakes and adaptations rarely surpass the artistic quality of an original and valuable artwork. In order to achieve that an exceptional talent with a broad vision is required.

Reginald Rose's drama entitled *Twelve Angry Men* was originally broadcast as a television play in 1954. It is basically a chamber play and it tells the story of a jury consisting of 12 people who deliberate in order to arrive to a unanimous verdict in a murder trial based on the concept of reasonable doubt. Soon it was adapted for the stage and in 1957 the highly successful drama film *12 Angry Men* was produced, directed by Sidney Lumet and which starred Henry Fonda. This film made a lasting impact on many generations, due to the psychological process it depicts in social interactions despite its certain unrealistic legal features. It achieved a cult status and in 2007 it was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress.

Since then it was adapted many times for the stage and several new film remakes and adaptations were produced. Of these I would like to draw the attention to the two most significant film remakes and one adaptation. These three movies exemplify the rule at the beginning of my editorial.

The first of these remakes is the Hindi film *Ek Ruka Hua Faisla* produced in 1986 and directed by Basu Chatterjee; the other the American television film *12 Angry Men* produced in 1997 and directed by William Friedkin. Both films follow the original plot very closely and in them we see a complete remake of the 1957 film, in the first case in an Indian setting, in the latter in an American. Both films add some additional 20 minutes to the Lumet version, which in my view dilutes the high-level tension of the chamber play. Personally I prefer the B&W tone of the Lumet version because that helps concentrating on the core message. Nevertheless, both films are solid productions, well performed, well directed. Artistically tough, they do not overpass the original 1957 film.

In 2007 a new film was produced, based on Reginald Rose's play; this time a Russian one, directed by Nikita Mikhalkov and entitled *12*. In contrast to the previous two remakes this is an adaptation or better said a masterpiece inspired by the original work. It is almost 160 minutes long and significantly expands the dimensions of the original chamber play in every aspect; chiefly physical, cultural, psychological, and ethical. In the first instance we repeatedly see flashbacks from the accused boy's wartime childhood in Chechnya (the boy being an orphaned Chechen and the victim, his stepfather, being a Russian military officer who served in Chechnya). Next to that the jurors as personalities are made much more significant. Their life, their background which emerges during their deliberation would be enough material for another twelve movies! And the real turn is achieved by the director some ten minutes before the end of the film, when the unanimous verdict ('not guilty') is imminent: at that point Nikita Mikhalkov turns the table and practically a new film is started, or the real film is about to commence when the lead juror draws the attention to the fact that by arriving to an unanimous acquittal is not the real solution, though every one of them is at that point in time assured by the boy's innocence. This is not

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just a 'clinical' legal process; it is about taking responsibility for a human being beyond the jurors' room. During the last ten minutes the movie turns into a turbo-charged drama, exploring issues that go far beyond the original play's scope.

Nikita Mikhalkov proves again that he is a truly genius director. He takes inspiration from others' works, remolds their ideas and expands them. He shows us the real face of art and artistic process.

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