



REPETITION

Repetition runs throughout the entire history of Western aesthetics and constitutes one of the fundamental categories for understanding the relationship between art, representation, and technology. From ancient *mimesis* to the algorithmic logics of the present, every thought on the image appears to engage with the question of the status and value of repetition.

Art as repetition

From its Greek origins, philosophy has identified a fundamental tension within the concept of repetition. For Plato, art is first and foremost *mimesis*, a double copy of the world of Ideas. As a deceptive duplication of reality, the artistic image derives its power precisely from its illusory nature and its capacity to lead us away from truth. Aristotle, by contrast, attributes to *mimesis* both cognitive and affective value: representational repetition becomes a means of understanding the world, a fundamental narrative principle, and a source of pleasure. Between these two poles – repetition as a degradation of reality and repetition as a form of knowledge – lies a long theoretical tradition that runs through the arts and finds in cinema one of its privileged sites.

Twentieth-century film theory can, broadly speaking, be reread as a radical reflection on the phenomenon of repetition. To mention only a few key figures, André Bazin identifies in the photographic and cinematic image a form of “mummification of reality,” an automatic recording of the world that appears to free the image from human intervention and to make cinema a repeatable trace of existence. Similarly, Siegfried Kracauer understands cinema as an art capable of redeeming physical reality through its technical reproduction. Reflecting on photography, Roland Barthes recognizes in the image the spectral return of what has been: every photograph irrevocably repeats a lost moment. When this reflection on photography is extended to cinema, the image does not merely represent reality; it produces its survival, its ceaseless reappearance.

Repetition, however, also pertains to the very nature of aesthetic experience. Emilio Garroni described art as a meta-operative activity, capable of operating upon operations themselves, thereby revealing the human capacity for self-reflection and for creatively opening up new horizons of

possibility. More recently, Alva Noë has emphasized art as a second-order practice, one that renders perceptible the structures of experience and the ways in which first-order practices organize our lives. Modern and contemporary cinema likewise appears permeated by forms of self-reflexivity, reiteration, and return that involve not only images themselves but also the dispositifs and practices associated with vision.

Repetition as difference

Building on these reflections, this issue seeks to investigate repetition as a theoretical, aesthetic, and media-specific category, exploring its transformations throughout the history of cinema and contemporary media.

A first line of inquiry concerns repetition as difference, shift and transformation. For Kierkegaard, repetition never coincides with the mere return of the identical; rather, it becomes an existential experience and a possibility for repossessing time. Nietzsche radicalizes this perspective through the figure of the eternal recurrence which, far from being conceived as a form of mechanical cyclicity, emerges as an affirmation of becoming. It is within this tradition that Gilles Deleuze's thought is situated, proposing repetition as the production of difference: every authentic repetition generates variation, mutation, and intensity. On the political and media perspective, Guy Debord, beginning in the 1950s, developed the practice of *détournement* as a critical reuse and diversion of the images of the spectacle, while Jean Baudrillard later identified in the contemporary simulacrum the proliferation of copies without an original.

Cinema offers numerous examples of such processes. In *The Hypothesis of the Stolen Painting* (1978), Raúl Ruiz constructs a labyrinth of repetitions, *tableaux vivants*, and interpretive variations in which each image refers to another. Similarly, Wim Wenders's *Perfect Days* (2023) portrays a form of repetition that gradually reveals itself, over the course of the film, as differentiating and transformative.

Repetition may also take the form of a simultaneous variation of points of view and temporal perspectives. Films such as *Rashomon* (1950) by Akira Kurosawa, *Sátántangó* (1994) by Béla Tarr, *Elephant* (2003) by Gus Van Sant, and *The Wasteland* (2020) by Ahmad Bahrami demonstrate how the reiteration of events, situations, or narrative segments can generate a multiplication of perspectives and a continuous redefinition of meaning.

A further variation of repetition is found in the figure of the temporal loop, in which the recurrent return of the same event becomes a privileged narrative device for exploring the relationship between fate, freedom, learning, and transformation. Beyond Harold Ramis's *Groundhog Day* (1993), one might recall Doug Liman's *Edge of Tomorrow* (2014) and numerous

contemporary horror films that make the temporal cycle the generative principle of the cinematic experience, such as Christopher Landon's *Happy Death Day* (2017).

In other respects, the remake constitutes a privileged site for interrogating cinematic repetition. The comparison between Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) and Gus Van Sant's shot-for-shot remake of 1998 clearly demonstrates how repetition inevitably produces difference, if only at the level of historical context and reception. Similarly, Douglas Gordon's installation *24 Hour Psycho* (1993), by subjecting Hitchcock's film to an extreme temporal slowdown, highlights the temporal dimension as an essential and defining feature of the experience of repetition.

Reenactment likewise constitutes a significant form of repetition as difference. Particularly prominent in contemporary documentary cinema, it stages the repetition of events, gestures, and traumatic experiences as a cognitive, memorial, and performative practice. The works of filmmakers such as Rithy Panh and Joshua Oppenheimer demonstrate how reiteration can simultaneously function as reproduction, critical distancing, and the working-through of trauma.

From this perspective, Lars von Trier and Jørgen Leth's *The Five Obstructions* (2003) represents a paradigmatic case. The film adopts variation through repetition as its organizing principle, while offering a metacinematic reflection on the relationship between constraint, form, and creativity.

Repetition as Repetition compulsion

A second thematic area concerns repetition as compulsion, the return of the repressed, and a drive structure. Freud identifies *repetition compulsion* as a fundamental dynamic of the psyche, whereby the subject tends to reiterate traumatic experiences and affective configurations beyond the pleasure principle. Film theory has frequently engaged with this psychic dimension, as demonstrated by the work of scholars such as Christian Metz, who describes cinema as a dual experience, simultaneously presence and absence, reality and phantasm, and Edgar Morin, who interprets the cinematic apparatus as an imaginary machine grounded in narcissistic projection and the spectator's fascination. From this perspective, repetition concerns desire, the gaze, the construction of identity, and the relationship between the image and the unconscious.

Returning once again to Hitchcock, *Vertigo* (1958) stages the obsessive repetition of the beloved image and the transformation of desire into compulsive replication. Stanley Kubrick's cinema is likewise permeated by iterative logics: symmetries, rituals, repeated movements, and mirrored spaces transform repetition into an unsettling formal principle, as exemplified in *The Shining* (1980) and *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999). More recently, Martin Scorsese's *Shutter Island* (2010) presents repetition as the traumatic return of the repressed and as a delirious construction of identity.

Christian Petzold's recent film *Miroirs No. 3* (2025) appears to stage precisely the possibility that compulsive repetition may be transformed into what Freud described as a “attempt at mastery”

Within this framework, reenactment can also be understood as a way of working through repetition compulsion. The performative restaging of a traumatic event does not necessarily coincide with a merely compulsive reiteration; rather, it can become a practice of appropriation, reconstruction, and mastery of experience.

Repetition as Double, Doppelgänger, Mirror

A further line of inquiry concerns repetition as double, doppelgänger, mirror, and ghost. The figure of the double runs throughout modern aesthetic and psychoanalytic thought, from Freud's concept of the uncanny to Lacan's theory of the mirror stage. As is well known, according to the French psychoanalyst, the reflected image simultaneously produces identification and division: the subject comes to recognize itself only through an alienated form of itself—one that is both anticipated and "orthopaedized." Although emerging from different theoretical contexts, contemporary neuroscience has likewise reopened the debate on the relationship between imitation, empathy, and vision, particularly through studies on mirror neurons.

Cinema has continually explored these figures of duplication. Consider, for example, the motif of the mirror, which Deleuze associates with the crystal-image, where the actual and the virtual become indiscernible. Examples range from Orson Welles's *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947) and Alain Resnais's *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961) to Claire Denis's *High Life* (2018). Equally significant is the theme of the double, exemplified by Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (1966), David Cronenberg's *Dead Ringers* (1988), and David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* (2001).

More recently, films such as Denis Villeneuve's *Enemy* (2013), Coralie Fargeat's *The Substance* (2024), and television series such as *Black Mirror* (2011 – 2025) have explored the fragmentation of the self, the proliferation of self-images, and the technological duplication of the body.

Repetition as a Compositional Figure

A further line of inquiry concerns repetition as a compositional figure and formative principle of the audiovisual work. Beyond its thematic or narrative implications, repetition can constitute one of the fundamental devices through which a film organizes its formal development. Gestures, actions, situations, visual, sonic or audiovisual motifs recur throughout a work, generating variations, displacements, and differences that contribute to the production of meaning.

From Eisenstein to Godard, and extending to films such as Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), repetition emerges as a structuring element

of cinematic composition, making visible the very work of form itself. From this perspective, repetition can be investigated both as a constitutive condition of cinematic form-making and as a privileged site through which cinema reflects upon its own creative activity.

Repetition as Technological Reproducibility

A final line of inquiry concerns repetition as technical reproducibility and media condition. Looking back to its technical origins, cinema was initially perceived as a minor art precisely because it was founded upon the mechanical repetition of images. This accusation, which echoes in modern form the Platonic critique of art as *mimesis*, finds an early response in the work of Walter Benjamin, who demonstrates how technological reproducibility radically transforms the status of the artwork by altering the very conditions of perception and collective experience

From this perspective, it is particularly useful to distinguish the concept of repetition from that of reproducibility. Whereas the former implies the return, variation, or reiteration of forms, images, and practices, the latter primarily concerns the technical conditions that make possible the multiplication and circulation of images. The interplay and distinction between these two paradigms constitute an especially fertile terrain for investigating both modernity and contemporary media culture.

More recently, scholars such as Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin have described contemporary media through the concept of *remediation*, namely the continual repetition and refashioning of prior media forms. Pietro Montani has reflected on intermedial imagination and technical creativity, while Bernard Stiegler has explored the relationship between technology, memory, and temporality in contemporary societies.

Within this framework, television seriality should not be considered solely in terms of its media, industrial, or reception-related aspects, but also as a specific ontological organization of repetition. As Stanley Cavell suggests in *The Fact of Television*, what characterizes the television medium is not simply the accumulation of episodes but the periodic return of a form, a program, or a format that remains recognizable through its variations. Seriality can therefore be understood as a distinctive mode of articulating repetition and difference, one that reconfigures the relationship between the identity of the work, temporality, and the viewer's anticipation.

A further area of investigation concerns practices of recontextualization and reconfiguration through the reuse of pre-existing images and audiovisual materials: found footage, recycling cinema, archival film, and montage practices that make the repetition of already existing images the very principle of creation. In such cases, reiteration is inseparable from the semantic transformation of the material and from the reconfiguration of audiovisual memory.

The journal invites contributions that address the theme of repetition in its various theoretical, historical, aesthetic, and media-related aspects. Submissions may adopt theoretical, historical, philosophical, aesthetic, semiotic, or comparative approaches, and may focus on cinema, visual arts, television, digital media, and contemporary audiovisual forms.

Deadline for the submission of the abstract (150 words): August 23, 2026

Deadline for the submission of the essay: December 10, 2026

Essays should be expressly written for the journal and should strictly respect the following word limit:

***Focus:* Min 5000 Max 6000 words (including spaces and footnotes)**

***Rifrazioni:* Min 2000 Max 3000 words (including spaces and footnotes)**

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