In 1972, Turkey was the third most prolific film producing country with 301 movies and ninety percent of these films were remakes, adaptations or spin-offs of American films. Ironically, in a survey conducted by the MISM about the popularity of various film genres, “Turkey was listed with India, Egypt, Iraq and Lebanon as being among the countries with tastes almost diametrically opposed to those of American audiences.” Not only were these themes of these films irrelevant to the Turkish audience; genres like science fiction and horror were not even popular in Turkish cinema.

Recent scholarship on remakes, especially transnational remakes, eventually leads to discussions about cross-cultural fertilizations, appropriations, dominations of one culture by another, different forms of exchange between borders, motivations behind specific changes during the process of remaking, and the ways these choices affect either the original film or the remake. The focal point of remakes in Turkish cinema, however, is not about any cultural fertilization or a “triangular relationship they establish among themselves, the original film they remake, and the property on which both films are made” (Lotz, “Twice-Told Tales: Disavowal” 39). On the contrary, the very different triangular relationships on which Turkish remakes depend are intercultural relationships among the industry, the public, and the government. Remakes are produced not in order to capitalize on the success of the films they are remakeing but in order to avoid the resistance that would more likely greet more original Turkish films because of the political unrest caused by the 1960 and 1980 coups d’état, a tension that revolves around nationalistic borders.

In current scholarship, film remakes are generally compared with former film versions instead of their literary sources and considered to have a complex relationship with those earlier texts. While they are trying to achieve independent textual status, they also rely on either those texts’ established cultural memory or their financial success. This web of relationships has become a decisive point in their analysis. However, many Turkish mockbuster films, including Nejat Saydam’s My Friend Frankenstein (1975), a Turkish remake of Mel Brooks’ Young Frankenstein (1974) has the potential to redefine the politics of remaking, since they do not fit the general tendencies of these theoretical approaches.

In 1972, Turkey was the third most prolific film producing country with 301 movies and ninety percent of these films were remakes, adaptations or spin-offs of American films. Even though both remakes use the same plot structure and even an advertising poster remarkably similar to that of their originals, those textual activators did not trigger any recognition due to the inaccessibility of the originals in times of their release in movie theaters. In other words, even though the Turkish Frankenstein can be categorized as a remake in terms of plot structure, it makes sense for the adaptation strategies, the same argument cannot be made for their reception.

After World War I, the Ottoman Empire faced massive changes. Following the events in 1923 Empire fell, and the Republic of Turkey was established. Even though the country had adopted a parliamentary regime, a single party ruled the government until 1945. Turkish cinema, whose birth dates back to the 1910s, flourished first under the rule of an emperor, then under the single party regime. During these years, the cinema was controlled by people with a “beational background, and like the nation’s politics, its cinema was dominated by a single person: Mustafa Erğin.” In 1945, Turkey adopted a multi-party regime, with immediate effects on the culture industry. After 1945, cinema began to grow as both art and industry, ushered in by a new generation of young actors, actresses, and technicians. Reviewers emerged along with cinema journals, magazines, and books. However, the enduring legacy of the single party regime was prevailing political opposition in the country.

The 1960s and 70s saw remakes of E.T., Superman, Star Wars, Star Trek, Batman, the Exorcist, The Wizard of Oz, and many other films. Remakes of these films, and of science fiction and horror films whose genre had never been established in Turkish cinema, the strength of the western world towards the Turkish audience. Even so, the Turkish film industry largely focused on remaking American films, especially on Hollywood science fiction, horror, and comedy, in order to emphasize the cultural connection of their material so that they could avoid governmental, military, or public criticism, as well as censorship. As a result, the case of Turkish cinema, consisting largely of remakes of foreign films that had never been released in Turkey, poses a direct challenge to remake theories that presuppose a certain familiarity or cultural memory of the original film. By the 1970s, almost 90 percent of Turkish films were remakes, adaptations, or spin-offs (Singamalio 68). Current scholarship on remakes argues that the economic motive for remaking is the success of the original film and its potential acceptance by a new audience. But Turkish cinema’s embrace of remakes stemmed rather from internal economic, industrial, and political problems. Similarly, the process of Turkish remaking did not emphasize the original films’ familiarity and relevance, but the remakes’ distance from both the films they remake and their target audience, which allowed them to provide a fresh, new, and apolitical experience.

Recent scholarship on remakes, especially transnational remakes, eventually leads to discussions about cross-cultural fertilizations, appropriations, dominance of one culture by another, different forms of exchange between borders, the motivations behind specific changes during the process of remaking, and the ways these choices affect either the original film or the remake. The focal point of My Friend Frankenstein, however, is not about any cross-cultural fertilization or a “triangular relationship they establish among themselves, the original film they remake, and the property on which both films are made” (Lotz, “Twice-Told Tales: Disavowal” 39). On the contrary, the very different triangular relationships on which Turkish remakes depend are intercultural relationships among the industry, the public, and the government. Remakes are produced not in order to capitalize on the success of the films they are remakeing but in order to avoid the resistance that would more likely greet more original Turkish films because of the political unrest caused by the 1960 and 1980 coups d’état, a tension that revolves around nationalistic borders.

Politics of Transnational Film Remakes: The Case of Turkish Cinema
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In current scholarship, film remakes are generally compared with former film versions instead of their literary sources and considered to have a complex relationship with those earlier texts. While they are trying to achieve independent textual status, they also rely on either those texts’ established cultural memory or their financial success. This web of relationships has become a decisive point in their analysis. However, many Turkish mockbuster films, including Nejat Saydam’s My Friend Frankenstein (1975), a Turkish remake of Mel Brooks’ Young Frankenstein (1974) has the potential to redefine the politics of remaking, since they do not fit the general tendencies of these theoretical approaches.