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Remix in Fairy Tale Film – Remakes & Reboots & Revivals, Oh My!

Abstract
A notable trend in reworking familiar stories, particularly in the cinema, has emerged since the beginning of the millennium that defies encapsulation in pre-existing terminology. The rise in works that creatively reuse readily available content to transform it beyond the previously seen warrants the use of a new term, Remix, which denotes the expression of an original idea using non-original material. This practice began in music in the 1980s and, with the rapid development of computer technology spread to or heavily influenced other arts, notably the cinema. One genre where Remix is conspicuously present is fairy-tale-based productions. This article introduces the practice and discusses some examples.

Keywords: remix, Remix culture, fairy tale, remake, reworking, film, TV series, *Grimm*

Some cinematographic productions released in the past couple of decades warrant the use of a new term to describe their relationship to the anterior works they originate from or reuse. None of the existing terms seems to adequately capture such relationship for the specialist researcher of Remix culture, although the difference might seem unimportant to the general media scholar.

The type of work (film) I am referring to sources/reuses material from one or (usually) more works and may carry the name of its main source work or a name that in some way points to it. It is, however, more than a version (such as a remake or cover) or extension (such as a sequel or prequel) of it – it claims independence (cf. Navas 2012: 66, reflexive remix) and leads a life of its own, tells its own story. To designate this concrete type of work, I propose the term Remix (capitalised), aware of the ambiguity this may well create.[1] Before I can discuss my reasons for this, it is pertinent to review the existing terminology currently operating in the realm of *derivative works* in media such as *film/video* and *music*. Having done this, I will elaborate on the term Remix I propose, noting the different ways it is already used in its lower-case spelling variant: both broadly to designate any work that revisits an earlier one without considering the sourcing method, and narrowly to denote a work that incorporates actual pre-recorded material. After that I will offer a brief analysis of a couple of recent cinematographic productions that qualify as Remixes, while

[1] Particularly because of the use of capitalisation for emphasis.

also discussing the reasons for the prevalent reworking of fairy tales in early-twenty-first century cinematographic productions.

Remakes in film and covers and remixes in music are nothing new. But while the latter are increasingly prevalent, the former seem to be on the decline. The Wikipedia articles[2] on film remakes list 162 titles made in the 2000s, 100 titles in the 2010s, and 45 titles so far in the 2020s; a total of 84 remakes were made in the 1990s, 60 in the 1980s, and 29 in the 1970s. These data show a surge beginning in the 1990s that is on a noticeable wane. This does not mean there is any shortage of reworking of prior productions, however. It means that the film-making industry is looking for new conceptual forms to explore while continuing its heavy reliance on the popularity of earlier works. This article will adduce examples of one novel approach to recreating that I call Remix – defined as the creative reuse of found material and as the expression of original ideas using non-original materials – where the capital R functions to distinguish it from the commonplace remix.

To situate Remix in the paradigm of reworking existing oeuvre, it is necessary to begin with a review of the terminology. Two terms closely related to *remake* are *reboot* and *retcon*:[3] according to British media and cultural studies researcher William Proctor, "both revise pre-established 'facts' about an imaginary world, but do so in different ways, to different degrees, and for different reasons" (2018: 224). While in a retcon, "an author alters established facts in earlier works in order to make them consistent with later ones" (Wolf 2012: 380), a "reboot aims to purge the system and begin again with a tabula rasa (a "blank slate"), onto which a brave new world can be etched" (Proctor 2018: 225). A remake is much simpler than this: to cite a couple of dictionary definitions, it is "a new or different version of an old film or song" (Oxford) or "a film or song that uses the same story or music as one made before" (MacMillan). A remake almost always carries the name of the prior work and rarely deviates from the plot; indeed, it is most often a modernisation of a familiar work. To clearly outline the difference between remake and reboot, Steven Gil states that "a reboot […] initiates a series of texts", whereas a remake reproduces a singular work (2014: 25–26, qtd. in Proctor 2018: 230). Some of the highest-grossing recent remakes are *Gone in 60 Seconds* (1974, 2000), *Planet of the Apes* (1968, 2001), *King Kong* (1933, 1976, 2005), *The Tourist* (2005, 2010), *The Karate Kid* (1984, 2010), *The Lion King* (1994, 2019). Proctor cites several examples of reboot proper, including *Batman Begins* (2005), which was "the first film to be described as reboot" (2018: 229), *Casino Royale* (2006) of Bond, *Star Trek* (2009), and *The Amazing Spider-Man* (2012). He then explains that *The X-Files* (2016), *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015), and the *Doctor Who* television series (2005–present) are mistakenly labelled in mainstream media as reboots (2009). Indeed, they are not

[2] The list is split into two: A–M, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_film_remakes_(A%E2%80%93M), and N–Z, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_film_remakes_(N%E2%80%93Z)

[3] A portmanteau of *retroactive continuity*.

reboots, because while "reboots forget and disconnect", these, alongside prequels and sequels, "remember, attach, and continue" (Proctor 2018: 230) and are properly identified as *revivals/re-launches*. The Wikipedia list of revivals started since 2020 features 61 titles in television series,[4] while feature film 'resurrections' include titles such as *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015), *Blade Runner 2049* (2017), *The Matrix Resurrections* (2021), *Top Gun: Maverick* (2022), *Scream* (2022), etc. while the list of revivals planned for 2024 or beyond features *Kung Fu Panda 4*, *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga*, *Mufasa: The Lion King, Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes*, *Alien: Romulus*, *The Lord of The Rings: The War of The Rohirrim*, among others.[5] This shows beyond doubt that the film industry continues to relentlessly exploit commercially former glories but that simply re-making them no longer suffices to capture audience interest (and money).

Strictly speaking, a remix must incorporate material sampled from an earlier work to be called that. Eduardo Navas insists that the activity of remixing is "materially grounded on a citation that can be quantified, in other words, measured" (2011). Where there is no appropriation taking place at the material level, what is performed is not remix but "intertextual citation", it is a "well calculated emulation" without a material grounding (Navas 2011). Navas writes this in his critical response to *Everything Is a Remix* (Ferguson 2011), a short documentary series by Kirby Ferguson, where Ferguson calls *Kill Bill* "Quentin Tarantino's remix master thesis". I argue that *Kill Bill* is neither a remix, nor a compilation of intertextual citations, but an excellent example of Remix, a work made through the creative reuse of found material, the epitome of Remix culture.[6]

A range of elements have been sourced in *Kill Bill*, from scenes to visual appearances to plots: from the Bride's yellow tracksuit, helmet, and motorcycle that resemble Bruce Lee's in 1972 *Game of Death*, to the plots of 1973 *Lady Snowblood*, which is about a woman killing the gang who murdered her family, and of 1968 *The Bride Wore Black*, which tells the story of a bride exacting revenge on a gang and striking the names of those she has killed off a list. But even if these were actual instances of the materially grounded appropriation that sampling is, and not "cultural citations" as Navas contends (2011), they would still not constitute *Kill Bill* as a remix of *Gone in 60 Seconds*, or *Game of Death*, or *Lady Snowblood*¸ or *The Bride Wore Black*. Tarantino's production is not a remix "by definition, but [is] rather informed by principles (sic) of Remix as a form of discourse" and this is what "allows him to claim autonomy of the material", Navas maintains (2011). Failure to identify the earlier productions Tarantino has sourced in no way obstructs the viewer from comprehending *Kill Bill*; its meaning is not shaped by those anterior works – if we should even talk about intertextuality, it is of the optional type (Fitzsimmons 2013:

[4] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_television_series_revivals

[5] See https://screenrant.com/2024-movie-franchises-comeback/#lord-of-the-rings

[6] Defined by Lawrence Lessig as a society that permits and encourages the production of derivative works through the combination or editing of existing materials (2008).

15). Because Tarantino craftily sources an impressive number of prior productions and closely recreates the scenes and/or events and/or characters – *without telling the same story, without relying on the meaning of the stories being sourced* – a new term is required to adequately describe what he is doing and the resulting product. This I call Remix (the capitalisation denoting differences from the lower-case remix), or a production in which its author takes material from *multiple* earlier works, manipulates it as he or she sees fit, adds his/her own ideas, and mixes everything seamlessly to produce something autonomous, independent, fully disconnected from its sources.

I identify two fundamental methods of procuring source material to reuse: sampling and interpolation. The former is the "physical" taking of excerpts from pre-existing works, the latter is derived from rap and pop music, where it

> refers to using a melody — or portions of a melody (often with modified lyrics) — from a previously recorded song but re-recording the melody instead of sampling it. Interpolation is often used when the artist or label who owns the piece of music declines to license the sample, or if licensing the piece of music is considered too costly. ("Interpolation (popular music)")

A suitable example of interpolation in film is a scene in *Requiem for a Dream* (2000) where director and writer Darren Aronofsky recreates a sequence from the Japanese anime *Perfect Blue*: an overhead shot of the main character, Marion, in the bath, followed by a shot of her screaming underwater. Curiously, Aronofsky purchased the remake rights of the entire anime solely to be able to use this specific scene ("Trivia for *Requiem for a Dream*"). Other popular examples include the recreation of *Matrix* (1999) "bullet time" effect in multiple films, often to a comic effect.

I put "physical" in quotation marks above because in today's digital age, what exists inside the computer is both material and not: everything can be reduced to the proverbial zeroes and ones – yet these ephemeral digits only take material shape when *at rest*, when the bytes are not being read or written, when they lie dormant on/in the storage disk or flash memory (they are transformed into electrical pulses while being processed). Considering this vagueness of the term "physical" when talking about digitally encoded work, I use "remix" more freely – yet less so than Ferguson. Everything is *not* remix. Remix is to reuse material – and in the Digital Age, texts, sounds, images, videos are all *material*, all inherently the same: zeroes and ones, only ordered differently and in varying quantities.

For a reworking to be called a remix or Remix, and not adaptation, which is another very popular recreation strategy in the cinema and television, a protype in the same medium must exist. The remix identifies itself as such only in opposition to an antecedent. In film, we can only speak of remix if previous films (whether adaptations of texts or not), loose or otherwise, have been made, and the new work reuses them in some way. Remix requires the prior accumulation of material. Remix

also requires an interpretation of the original "with significant changes and artistic input, [while] still keeping with the original 'look and feel'", as argued in a discussion of the differences between remixes and cover versions in music (Makke 2009). The deviation is always intentional and not the unavoidable effect of translation between mediums in adaptation, e.g. the challenges of rendering in visual form the book character's inner world and mental struggles depicted in words. A *de*viation is only possible if some "road" (Latin: *via*) has been travelled already. A remix is only possible if the main ingredients have previously been mixed together to build a work – they are now *re*-mixed by adding, subtracting, inverting, altering, multiplying, repeating, and so forth. Adaptation itself is not an act of remixing. Adaptation falls in the realm of remediation as formulated by Jay Bolter and David Grusin, who discuss the relationship between new and old media, which is expressed in terms such as "paying homage", "rivalling", "refashioning" that are regarded as ways for new visual media to achieve their cultural significance (Bolter and Grusin 1999).

To offer an insight into this novel type of work that I call Remix and validate my claim that this is a necessary term, below are brief reviews of a few exploitations of fairy tales, where the prototypical stories have been sourced to supply building material for such productions. Without claiming to be exhaustive, the list of Remixes of fairy tales made after the turn of the millennium[7] includes the films *Shrek* (2001) and its sequels *Shrek II* (2004), *Shrek The Third* (2007), and *Shrek Forever After* (2010); *The Brothers Grimm* (2005), *Enchanted* (2007) and its sequel *Disenchanted* (2022), *Puss in Boots* (2011), and *Into the Woods* (2014); and the television series *The 10th Kingdom* (2000), *Once upon a Time* (2011–2018), *Grimm* (2011–2017), and *Once upon a Time in Wonderland* (2013–2014).[8]

Before proceeding to discuss the choice of the fairy tale realm and some of the Remixes listed above, it is necessary to mention the other types of remixes that exist, to avoid confusing them with this paragon of creativity using found material. In *Remix Theory – The Aesthetics of Sampling*, Navas defines the extended, selective, and reflexive remixes, as well as the mashup. Extended (and their opposite – abridged) remixes can only be found in music and video and involve repetition of

[7] I am not aware of any instances of such productions released before the year 2000.

[8] The Remix type of work is not only found in the fairy tale genre, of course. It enjoys popularity in other fantasy narratives, too. An early example is the 2003 *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, which features characters from the works of various nineteenth-century sci-fi writers, e.g. Allan Quartermain, Captain Nemo, Mina Harker, Rodney Skinner, Dorian Gray, Tom Sawyer, Dr Henry Jekyll/Edward Hyde, Professor James Moriarty, Dante, Ishmael, etc. Sourced from H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*, Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* novels, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, respectively. The character Rodney Skinner, a.k.a. An Invisible Man, was created for the film due to a failure to acquire the rights to the protagonist of H. G. Wells' *The Invisible Man*.

segments from the original tracks to lengthen the song or its accompanying video. Selective remixes are where material is added to or subtracted from the original composition; whereas this process undoubtedly plays an impact on the meaning and perception of the resulting production, the original's "spectacular aura [is left] intact" (Navas 2012: 66) and the remix is understood as a version or variant of it. An example from the realm of cinema is director James Bobin's *Alice through the Looking Glass* (2016), which recounts the original story without any significant departure from it. In contrast, any additions or subtractions of material or recreation through interpolation in the reflexive remix carry such weight that the new work "challenges the aura of the original and claims autonomy even when it carries the name of the original" (Navas 2012: 66). A prominent example is director Rupert Sanders' *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012),[9] which offers a very different interpretation of the familiar tale, particularly of the role of the Huntsman, who, as he captures the runaway princess, learns he has been intentionally misled by the Evil Queen and turns against her men, saving Snow White in the process. The last relevant type of remix, the mashup, in music involves the fusion of two (rarely more) songs; both songs remain recognisable, and the resulting production is not understood as a new and independent work. An example from fairy tale film is director Brian Singer's *Jack the Giant Slayer* (2013), which blends the stories of *Jack the Giant Killer* and *Jack and the Beanstalk*. However, because it also adds new material, the production is correctly positioned in the borderland between mashup and reflexive remix: as the film's tagline promises, "If you think you know the story, you don't know Jack" (*Jack the Giant Slayer*).

While cinematographic works that qualify as one of the aforementioned types of remix usually rely on recognition of and familiarity with the source work in order to understand them (Navas writes that remix needs its history to function as such, 2012: 68), this is not necessarily or typically the case with Remixes. The Remix does not tell the familiar story, not even "with a twist", offering the spectator a new "reading" or a new understanding of the prototypical production.

With both adaptations and remixes, there is often the expectation in the broad audience and in many reviewers that the factual correctness of the recycled story ought to be preserved. There is the insistence that stories should be retold faithfully; and if they are not, the narrator (writer, screenwriter, musician) is frequently condemned for disrespecting the original, accused of a sort of trespassing. From the point of view of Remix, however, the remixing artist is under no such obligation of faithfulness – they are merely sourcing material to reuse as they see fit. Adopting the perspective of Remix, we acknowledge above all the existence of a unique story that has been weaved out of sourced material; the Remix does not seek to challenge the spectacular aura of the original as Navas' reflexive remix does. This should no more

[9] Graeme McMillan calls it 'a somewhat modernized take on the familiar fairy tale' in https://entertainment.time.com/2012/05/30/another-bite-of-the-poisoned-apple-why-does-pop-culture-love-fairy-tales-again/.

be considered a derivative work than a computer is a derivative of a calculator – indeed, the foundations *are* there, and they are *principally* the same: they calculate, but the resulting product and its capabilities are vastly different.

In identifying and defining the Remix in its own right, I choose instead to look at the work from the viewpoint of the DJ compiling his or her set from a selection of tracks by other musicians and/or own compositions (Brewster and Broughton 2000: 14, 19–20). Or from the perspective of the DJ producing a singular Remix composition comprised of fragments from other pre-existing recordings fused together using additional material.[10] It is only when we adopt this perspective that the Remix reveals its true wealth of altered sources working in unison to build a novel story that would otherwise remain unnoticed.

One production that qualifies as Remix in the domain of fairy tales, in the medium of television, is the *Grimm* television series that ran between 2011 and 2017 for six seasons and a total of 123 episodes. *Grimm* is a present-day story – events unfold in the actual years the episodes are aired and feature references to real-life events and to contemporary cinema and TV productions – depicting the life of a Portland (in the US state of Oregon) homicide detective who begins to have uncanny visions of ordinary people briefly transforming into hideous monsters. The protagonist Nick Burkhardt, a.k.a. the Grimm, soon finds out he is descended from the millennia-old line of the Grimms, people who possess the ability to see the real form of mythological creatures that inhabit our world and societies (and that we normally associate with fairy tales) but have blended in perfectly by assuming human appearance and leading normal lives. The Grimms are the only humans who possess the combat skills, strength, weapons, and knowledge (handed down for generations) to defeat these monsters when they go rogue. Unlike his predecessors, who often acted as mercenaries and rarely abided by the law when hunting and slaughtering these Wesen (German: "creatures"), Nick Burkhardt does not abuse his powers but instead does his best to act in accordance with his professional duties of a police detective, only prosecuting criminals and law offenders. In the cases he investigates, the Grimm is assisted by some Wesen, in a previously unimaginable cooperative effort to bring offending Wesen to justice or – as it occasionally proves necessary – inflict justice upon them outside the law. Nick's creature-associates are a reformed Blutbad and his Fuchsbau wife, and in Season Five he finds himself living as family with his nemesis from previous seasons, a Hexenbiest, while the Portland police precinct Nick works at has a half-Zauberbiest of ancient royal descent as chief. Throughout the series, all Wesen are mentioned by their Germanic names, translations and explanations provided, e.g. Blutbad means "blood bath" and is the prototype of the

[10] Practiced extensively in music (electronic and hip-hop) in the late 1980s and early 1990s, until a US court ruling decreed these illegal and obligated artists to seek permission for each and every sample they wanted to use, regardless of its length. Building with or around samples did not stop after that, but a significant drop in the number of samples used in any given musical track began to be observed.

Big Bad Wolf, Fuchsbau means "fox hole" or "burrow" and is reminiscent of the Fox character featured in many fairy tales, while Hexenbiest is a "witch beast", and Zauberbiest, a "wizard beast", is the male variant.

The *Grimm* television series (*Grimm* 2011) thus sources material, chiefly but not limited to, from the Brothers Grimm folk tales – the creatures, their habits, and some storylines, while inventing many of its own, and "explains" the connection between the brothers and the stories they have collected: while hunting Wesen. At the beginning of each episode, a citation, usually from a Brothers Grimm tale, is given that serves to establish connection between the episode's plot and a specific fairy tale, functioning as intertextual binder to the prototypical story. The series pilot episode, for example, begins with: "The wolf thought to himself, what a tender young creature. What a nice plump mouthful…", sourced directly from the 1812 tale of *Little Red Riding Hood*. The episode recounts the story of a postal officer who is a Blutbad and kidnaps and eats young girls wearing red-hooded sweatshirts. Episode Two begins with: "She looked in the window, and then peeped through the keyhole; seeing nobody in the house, she lifted the latch", taken from *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. The episode is about a young couple who break in a house near the woods, eat the food, drink the wine, and try to have sex in the bed, but are attacked by a grisly creature. It turns out this is the home of a family of five, the rich parents and their three sons, who are all bears. The sons capture the humans and then chase them in a rite of passage for adolescent Jägerbars, called Roh-hatz (Ger. roh "raw" + Hatz "hunt"). Some quotes are taken from other stories, such as in Episode Twelve, "The beasts were loosed into the arena, and among them, a beast of huge bulk and ferocious aspect. Then the slave was cast in", from *Androcles and the Lion* by Latin author Aulus Gellius, dated to the second century a. d.

Each episode is loosely based on a folk tale or mythological story that it gives a modern-day twist (implying as it does) that those folk tales merely reflected a reality that is continues to exist in our time. Episode Six, for example, is about a reformed Blutbad trying to lead a normal life whose house is blown up; he escapes miraculously. Soon, we learn that his brother died a month earlier in a similar situation where the gas pipes in his home leaked and the house exploded. As the Grimm investigates the case, he discovers that their sister had killed "for fun" two brothers who were Bauerschwein (Ger. Bauer "farmer" + Schwein "pig"). Their third brother, who is a sergeant at the same precinct as the Grimm, is now exacting revenge, killing the two Blutbad brothers, preparing to go after their sister – all in an unorthodox retelling of *The Three Little Pigs* tale. In the Season One finale and the first two episodes of Season Two, Nick Burkhardt's partner Juliette, an unsuspecting human, is put under a sleeping spell at the scratch of her cat (instead of the prick of a spindle) and requires the kiss of a prince who is pure of heart to wake up. This is a contemporary adaptation of the *Little Briar Rose* folk tale recorded by the Brothers Grimm and used as the basis for Walt Disney's 1959 *Sleeping Beauty* and the 2014 *Maleficent* films. In an unexpected turn of events, it is the Grimm's boss, the captain

of the Portland police department, who can and eventually does wake Juliette up with his kiss because he is a genuine prince.

The series enjoyed such wide popularity that a wealth of paratextual (cf. Genette) works have been produced, including a dedicated Wiki in the popular Wikia.com portal, Grimm Wiki, and *The Mythology of Grimm* book which "explores the history and folkloric traditions that come into play during Nick's incredible battles and investigations – tapping into elements of mythology that have captured our imaginations for centuries" (Grimm Wiki).

Hinting at the Brothers Grimm's supernatural abilities and their role in maintaining the balance between mankind and the mythical is not an idea that is original to the *Grimm* series. The 2005 *The Brothers Grimm* by director Terry Gilliam portrays the brothers (Jake and Will, played by Matt Damon and Heath Ledger) as folklore collectors and con artists who travel from place to place pretending to protect townsfolk from enchanted creatures and perform exorcisms. They are, however, put to the test when they encounter a real magical curse in a haunted forest with real magical beings, requiring genuine courage (*The Brothers Grimm* 2005). The film's final scene is what ties its narrative to what we know to be the brothers' real life: Will tells his brother that he has "been thinking of an alternative career path. One that uses all of [their] new expertise" but adds that he hasn't "sorted it yet" (*The Brothers Grimm* 2005).

While this form of fictionalisation of the lives of the two brothers is unique to *The Brothers Grimm* and *Grimm* (from the research I have made, which might suffer from omissions), other imagined accounts of their lives are not uncommon.[11] In the preface to the second edition of *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World*, Jack Zipes writes that "their names and accomplishments appear to have been diminished and distorted, if not obfuscated – at least in English-speaking countries", and recounts a personal anecdote where, after asking a group of ten-year-old pupils who wrote the *Snow White* tale, only one "small boy […] stated confidently, 'Walt Disney'" (2002: ix). Zipes then mentions a number of films that corroborate this misrepresentation of the Brothers Grimms: *Ever After* (1998), where they "are summoned to a castle by a French baroness […] who tells them a preposterously radical version of 'Cinderella', indicating that they had got their story wrong?" (2002: ix). Zipes qualifies *The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm* (1962) and *Once upon a Brothers Grimm* (1977) as "two god-awful and kitschy films about the Brothers Grimms' lives and how they came to write fairy tales" (2002: x). He goes on to say that such distortion of "the background to their lives and the purpose to their collecting tales" is in order to "create lovely entertainment" because, as Zipes lamentably infers, "[e]ntertainment is always more important than truth. We live in the realms of fictions. Even the news is part of popular

[11] It is a well-known fact that the general public is largely unaware of the scholarly careers of the brothers but rather believes they were the "authors" of the fairy tales, if at all conversant with the stories' connection to them.

culture" (2002: x). I am inclined to think that Zipes would have been even harsher, had *The Brothers Grimm* film and the *Grimm* television series been released at the time of writing of his book.

Zipes, however, positions himself in stark contrast to the remix studies researcher: it appears that for him, faithfulness to the source is an important criterion of the quality of the derivative work. From the point of view of the remixing author and the remix researcher, any prior works (or fragments thereof) that are appropriated in the making of a Remix are seen as mere "quarries", nothing but sources of found material. Navas explains that, in the scheme of chronological development of the practice of remix, the third stage of material reproduction and the first stage of remix, respectively, commence when creators begin to privilege pre-existing material over the real world (2012: 17–21). Both Jack Zipes and Marina Warner are aware that in film, producers often choose fairy tales as source material because (1) they are drawn by the familiarity of the material, which then (3) ensures the production's potential to attract widespread appeal. (The second factor that Zipes and Wagner identify is the fairy tales' propensity for staging visual spectacle, see below.)

Sue Short in *Fairy Tale and Film – Old Tales with a New Spin* recognises that there has been a notable surge in interest of the cinema industry in fairy tales since around the year 2000: she links it to the "mammoth commercial success" of Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001, 2002, 2003) and Tim Burton's 3D *Alice in Wonderland* (2010). Short, however, does not recognise this trend as part of the grander remix culture times we live in, although she mentions Marina Wagner's and Jack Zipes' pointing out that "from the earliest days of cinema […] film-makers were drawn by the familiarity of the material, its propensity for staging visual spectacle and potential to attract widespread appeal" (2015: 1). Sue Short understands that "Films are an expensive business, and we need to be mindful of the bearing this has on what gets made, which stories are chosen and how they tend to be interpreted – just as their need to market themselves to an audience plays a crucial part in their formation and reception" (Short 2015; 8). This inference has likely been influenced by Zipes who, discussing the incentives to make fairy-tale films, writes that the driving purpose behind the appropriation of a fairy-tale is "to use it as vehicle to celebrate his or her virtuosity, to make money, and to obtain power and fame" (*Enchanted Screen* 14).

Short does not use any consistent terminology to identify the different types of treatment of the source material. She employs vocabulary such as "reimagined", "remakes", "revised treatments", "a new spin", "versions", "rewrites", "refashioned", "a playful attitude to their [the films'] source material" and "narratively irreverent" (Short 2015: 1–2) but none of it helps identify the degrees of revision of the source material like Navas' typology of remix and my addition of Remix as a new form do.

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When speaking about remix, I choose to limit the span of application of the term and not use it for films such as *Pretty Woman* (dir. Garry Marshall, 1990), for which Short writes "is clearly a 'Cinderella' tale" and quotes Butler in explaining that "the Fairy Godmother's magic wand is replaced by a businessman's credit card" (Butler 2009: 49, qtd. in Short 2015: 4). I also exclude productions that reference, more or less clearly, a fairy tale – such as *Freeway* (dir. Matthew Bright, 1996), described as a "modern update on the tale of *Little Red Riding Hood*" where Reese Witherspoon's heroine dressed in a seductive dress attracts the attention of a serial killer fittingly named Bob Wolverton.

Unlike Zipes, Short recognises that "Fidelity to the source is beside the point" and quotes Warner in saying that "shape-shifting is one of fairy-tale's dominant and characteristic wonders" (1995):

> Tales have always been subject to revision, in their transition from oral to print forms, as well as their various incarnations on screen. Writers and film-makers are as inspired as prior generations in retelling such tales – *often keen to find new ways of updating and adapting them* – while the pleasure of recognising themes, and seeing how they have been altered, is not simply confined to critics, but an evident appeal for viewers also. (Short 2015: 15, emphasis added)

While remix is one such new way of updating and adapting fairy tales, Remix transcends it. Remix recognises that the prototypical stories have been subjected to revisionary treatment before and therefore strives to offer something more, likely influenced by the principles of consumerism underlying our economic reality. The Remix emerges as an expression of an original idea using non-original material and in this peculiar quality of its own, it demands a critical approach that diverges from traditional criticism, steeped in the romantic concept of the genius author, that often perceives reworkings as inferior derivatives of prior originals.

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But to return to Remix in fairy tales. Certain questions arise: Why fairy tales and why this return to the macabre? As mentioned earlier, Marina Wagner and Jack Zipes identify the following factors for choosing fairy tales as source material for a cinema production: (1) filmmakers are drawn by the familiarity of the material; (2) the propensity for staging visual spectacle; (3) the potential to attract widespread appeal. Elaborating and complementing the first factor, reliance on familiarity, we need to also consider the legal aspect of such preference. The copyright on most fairy tales[12] has expired, meaning the stories are free to reuse; reworking copyrighted material always entails significant expenses in the form of royalties paid to the copyright holder and restrictions on what is permissible in terms of modifying the source sto-

[12] Fairy tales that have an identifiable author, e.g. *Peter Pan, or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*.

ry. This does not apply to Disney's versions that are more suited for a younger audience – they are still protected,[13] as well as the specific Disney-style appearance of the characters. Indeed, the Disney Corporation is one of the strongest lobbyists for further extending copyright protection periods both in the US and around the world. Beside the legal aspect are influences explained by Adorno's theory of regression in mass culture, which is the tendency in Media to provide consumers with easily understood entertainment and commodities (Adorno 1991: 50–52). Or the desire to offer commentary, criticism, or simply one's own vision of the familiar story (Zipes 2011: xii).

The second main factor (the propensity for staging visual spectacle) in choosing fairy tales is the opportunity they present for the deployment of spectacular CGI effects and action, battle, and supernatural scenes in the productions. Zipes writes that this is a tendency clearly observed since the beginning of cinema, with Georges Méliès, who "sought to sweep his viewers away from reality so that they could indulge their imaginations" (2011: 40), until present day productions such as "the blockbuster conventional Disney commercial films *The Princess and the Frog* (2009) and *Alice in Wonderland* (2010)… [that] have very little substance and are produced for the sake of spectacle" (2011: 364). There is an unambiguous preference in Hollywood-style mass entertainment for epic battles, fantasy characters and narratives, particularly heightened in the past couple of decades, afforded of course by the technological advancement in the film industry – Zipes calls these films "animated tripe" (2011: 364). This is observed not only in fairy-tale-based productions but also in the veritable deluge of films based on comics and myth, including religious, of the 2000s and beyond.

The third factor is explained by the propensity of fairy-tale-based productions to easily attract large and diverse audiences, again because of familiarity with the material, but also because a fairy tale traditionally tells a story that is easier to understand by most viewers and rarely involves contentious political, historical, or religious issues.[14] Zipes writes that "the filmmaker chooses to make a film because the subject matter is already known and popular" (2011: 284).

Why are remixes, i.e. derivative works that significantly depart from or alter the familiar story, the popular choice for cinematographic productions now? This choice can be explained through the exhaustion of the more or less straightforward retellings of fairy tales, i.e. increasing demand leads to diversification. The situation is comparable to the eighteenth-century emergence of a rapidly growing mass market for literature in Britain and Western Europe as literacy rates rose dramatically

[13] See "Mickey Mouse's Impending Copyright Expiration Explained" (McCormick 2024).

[14] This does not mean that fairy tale remakes are free from political messages, specifically leftist, as demonstrated in *Maleficent* (2014) and its sequel *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil* (2019), or *Frozen* (2013), *Frozen 2* (2019), or the 2022 *Little Mermaid*. I plan to explore this topic in a future publication.

and printing technology was improved further, which also conditioned the emergence of new genres and the expansion of thematic range. But this often drew harsh criticism from prominent intellectuals and writers, e.g. D'Israeli contending that "since [the advent of printing], with incessant industry, volumes have been multiplied, and their prices rendered them accessible to the lowest artisans, the Literary Character has gradually fallen into disrepute" (1795: xv), or Coleridge lamenting the demeaning of the book over time – "as their [books'] numbers increased, they sank still lower to that of entertaining companions" (1817: Chapter 3). Similarly, the remarkable increase in entertainment options observed after the advent of the personal computer and the internet means that there is now greater demand for more and new productions. With the average person living in the Western World now spending more time entertaining themselves than ever before, especially with the availability of on-demand/subscription entertainment such as Netflix and Amazon Video or content delivery technology such as IPTV, they have perhaps watched more films and TV series in a single year than the average person living in the 1950s–1970s has in a decade. Meanwhile, the entertainment industry is keenly aware that the most successful products are those that both regress to (cf. Adorno, mentioned earlier) and renew a familiar story, as well as offer spectacle that does not require much intellectual effort. Remakes, reboots, sequels, prequels, and various other forms of revisiting a familiar narrative make up at least a third of the highest-grossing cinema and television productions in the past couple of decades. This notable prevalence of derivative works, and not only in the "big money" industry but also very clearly in all areas of cultural life, enables us to speak of a remix culture, an environment of a continuously increasing preference for reusing found material to engage in cultural exchange and artistic creativity.

In this milieu of remarkable preference to already available material that is characteristic of the remix culture we inhabit in the twenty-first century, the convergence of multiple sources to form a coherent autonomous unit that attains a life of its own logically requires a term of its own. Since the type of work that is born from such convergence is the growth and maturation of a practice that is known under the name *remix*, it seemed appropriate to visually represent this growth and maturation by the capitalisation of the term, thus arriving at Remix – that I define as the creative reuse of found material.

Another peculiar trait that distinguishes Remix from all the other types of reworkings is that the latter have a single source, whereas Remix has many, even when one is more prominent than the others as in *The Great Martian War of 1913–1917*, mistakenly labelled by many reviewers as an adaptation of H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* (see Stefanov 2024, where I offer a lengthy analysis of the pseudo-documentary aired on the History Channel). Remix thus stands out as a novel approach to recycling culture in a never-ending flow of stories that inevitably communicate with one another and in this continued discourse both establish a living connection to the

past and offer a companion to the future. Remix is the technologically conditioned upgrade in the post-parenthetical time of Thomas Pettitt's Gutenberg Parenthesis, which is characterised by keywords such as "sampling", "remixing", "borrowing", and "reshaping" that are our return to the "re-creative", "collective", "contextual", and "unstable" culture of the pre-parenthetical (Pettitt 2007: 2). Such growing instability and collectiveness characteristic of recreative efforts could indicate a near future in which cinematographic productions are increasingly a "hotch-potch" of familiar stories and/or characters, their true sources eventually falling into obscurity. Such development, although probably seen as undesirable from the dominant perspective today, would indeed align with Pettitt's vision of the post-Gutenberg Parenthesis times that defy the containment of the Parenthesis and allow "our sentence, which is the history of media" to continue after the parenthetical interruption in the same "unstable" (2007: 2) way as before it.

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