

## Something Feels Different: Reimagination of Fairy Tales Characters in *Once Upon a Crime* (2023)

Alifa Salsabila<sup>1</sup>, Alma Fadhilahwati<sup>2</sup>, Hilyatuz Zuhdiyah<sup>3</sup>, Nurul Hidayah Septian<sup>4</sup>,  
Rahima Nur Syafira Arsy<sup>5</sup>

English Literature, Faculty of Culture and Language, UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta

Email: [226111014@mhs.uinsaid.ac.id](mailto:226111014@mhs.uinsaid.ac.id)

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to analyze the markers of reimagination in fairy tales, especially through the characters. Reimagination is the process of recreating a story or reimagining an old version of a story and wrapping it in a new perspective. Character reimagination is seen in the movie *Once Upon a Crime* (2023). The research data source from characters namely Cinderella (Shinderera), Little Red Riding Hood (Akazukin), Fairy Godmother (Witch Barbara and Witch Tekla), Step Sisters (Anne and Margot), Prince Charming (Prince Gilbert), and Gus Gus the Mouse (Porru). Researchers use methods from Spradley's approach, namely the qualitative descriptive method. *The Nothing Stays the Same: A Typology of Markers and Functions of Reimagination theory*, proposed by Purnomo, Adila, and Adzhani (2023), serves as the main theoretical framework in this research; mutation markers and presentness as well as the reimagination function of both related namely stylistic function, ludic function, medial function, branding function, and culture function, are seen from this research. The results of this study found that reimagination markers, mutation markers, and presentness in the change of iconic characters are dominated by stylistic and cultural functions, indicating that reimagination updates from the movie *Once Upon a Crime* (2023) not only transformed traditional characters into more modern ones, through altered characterizations, classic stories can be kept alive in a contemporary cultural context.*

**Keywords:** *Reimagination, Reimagination Markers, Fairy Tales, Characters*

### INTRODUCTION

In the creative realm, character reimagination presents a fascinating opportunity to garner the attention of both new and existing audiences through a fresh perspective. (Purnomo et al., 2023). This is consistent with Jenkins (2008), that this process establishes a

creative space where stories can be modified, updated, or enlarged to reflect shifting culture and social values (Jenkins & Deuze, 2008). Jack Zipes (2013) discusses how fairy tales as polygenetic cultural artifacts are constantly reshaped through human interaction and technological advancements, allowing them to spread across cultures and remain relevant (Zipes, 2013). Compared to other theories, such as Zipes' polygenic evolution (2007) or Jenkins' cultural convergence (2008), reimagination concepts by Purnomo, Adila, and Adzhani (2023) excel because they combine the analysis of structural change with cultural relevance.

One of the narrative genres becoming the subject of reimagination is fairy tales. Fairy tales have universal values, but their narrative presentations require coherence and cohesion among the generations to which fairy tales are told (Baciu, 2023). This adaptability of fairy tales explains how characters, such as Little Red Riding Hood, can be reimagined over time to align with modern values and resonate with contemporary audiences.

One of the examples of reimagined fairy tales is *Once Upon a Crime* (2023), a Japanese movie that combines mystery, comedy, and fantasy genres inspired by Cinderella and Red Riding Hood's fairytale. The reimagined characters vividly illustrate how traditional characters can be transformed to offer new and intriguing perspectives. One of the fairy tale characters that received reimagination in the movie is *Little Red Riding Hood*. Since its inception by Charles Perrault (1697), this character has already been reimagined by the Grimm Brothers (1812). In Charles Perrault's version, Little Red Riding Hood is described as a child who visits her grandmother, who lives in the forest, then meets a wolf and the wolf manages to eat Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother. Due to its brutal scene where the wolf devours the little girl, this version was reimagined by the Grimm Brothers. In their version, where Little Red Riding Hood is referred to as Little Red Cap, the girl is devoured by a wolf but is luckily saved by a hunter. In *Once Upon a Crime*, Little Red Riding Hood was further reimagined to fit new audiences. The most striking difference in *Once Upon a Crime* is that the Red Riding Hood character is played by a young woman instead of a child, and the story's beginning does not present a wolf character but a witch who offers shoes. According to the movie *Once Upon a Crime* (2023), instead of dying like what happened to Perrault's *Little Red Riding Hood*, the little girl in the movie survived and features her as a clever detective.

This study builds upon previous research. In the first study by Heejoo Park in Karen Tei

Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* (2022), the main difference between the objects and media was analyzed. The article discusses the form of reimagination in opposing the colonial discourse on space and time in America (Park, 2022). Further previous research on gender reimagination in fairy tales. Studies on gender reimagination in the fairy tale *Beauty and the Beast* (Koning, 2017) have analyzed character transformations from a gender perspective. However, research that connects gender reimagination with the reimagination of fairy tale characters in movies is still limited. Mieder (2015) explores the evolution of traditional Brothers Grimm fairy tales into darker or subversive versions in modern storytelling. Another research about reimagination refers to the way Plath took elements of classic fairy tales, such as *The Wicked Witch and the Princess* (Tamás 2022). The concept of fairy tale reimagination involves rewriting traditional fairy tales using alternative narrative techniques (Lam, 2022). Despite these studies, there remains a gap in identifying specific indicators that can evaluate the success of the fairy tale reimagination process. We formulate the questions as follows:

1. What reimagination markers are found on the fairy tale characters in *Once Upon a Crime*?
2. What reimagination functions are found in the fairy tale characters in *Once Upon a Crime*?

Purnomo, Adila, and Adzhani (2023) propose the theory of reimagination, identifying two key markers; mutation and presentness. The theory focuses on how comics, movies, games, and other cultural products are reimagined by altering textual, visual, and operational elements while retaining fundamental themes or character essence, even as the storyline undergoes significant changes. Two key markers of reimagined works discussed are mutation and presentness. Markers refer to operative, visual, and linguistic components unique to reimagination. As noted by Purnomo, "the act of reimagination not only revitalizes existing narratives but also engages contemporary audiences by reflecting their cultural contexts and preferences" (Purnomo et al., 2023). This highlights the dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation in cultural products, emphasizing that reimagined works must resonate with current societal themes to remain relevant.

The title of a reimagined work is one of the most noticeable areas where mutative signals can be easily recognized, as it often reflects changes in themes, tone, or context. Presentness

refers to the concept of engaging with a work in its present form, focusing on how the work exists and is perceived in the now, regardless of its original temporal or cultural context. Presentness does not necessarily refer to a strict chronological timeline but rather involves manipulating or blending periods to make the work feel immediate and relevant to the audience. Visual cues, such as the use of modern technology or contemporary objects, often serve as mimetic signs to convey this impression. The concept of presentness is closely linked to reimagination, which refers to the various ways a work is adapted, transformed, or reinterpreted to maintain its relevance and appeal to contemporary audiences (Jenkins & Deuze, 2008).

In this research to reveal the reimagination functions, we apply the theory following the reimagination functions by Purnomo, Adila, and Adzhani (2023). Reimagination functions are divided into six categories. According to Purnomo et al. (2023), the first function is the stylistic function. In this context, stylistics could include operative, visual, and textual styles. Textual styles, the reimagination of images by visual styles, and the mechanical aspects of operations by operative styles surround the works' narrative reimagination. The ludic functions go around encouraging playfulness. In this ludic setting, remade works are intended to be amusing and lighthearted. Fans are linked to methectic functions. The decision to recreate a piece is occasionally made to appease the audience. Reimagination is limited to the target platforms in medial functions. The next role is branding, which can also affect reimagining, especially when a company buys out another company. To buy another company means to change the audience's identity narratively. Cultural functions center on orientation over cultural, normative, and legal components.

Reimagination serves the purpose of reorienting the emphasis from the author's authority to the reader's interpretation as the meaning-maker (Sandvoss, 2007). This indicates that reimagination creates fresh context or opens up possibilities for an infinite variety of interpretations that give classic pop culture resonance. *Once Upon a Crime's* reimagined characters maintain essential elements of their classic fairy tale origins. However, new features like Cinderella's wit and resourcefulness enable contemporary audiences to relate to her. This balance between maintaining the movie's core elements and incorporating new ones favors how it is received.

The function of reimagination involves how the audience can reimagine the text through their own culture and feelings. It serves as a spectacle that shapes their relationship with the story. In this process, the characters become dynamic figures, combining literary elements with the audience's imagination, making them more comprehensible and meaningful (Eder, 2010). Adding flaws, vulnerabilities, background, and personality enhances characters, both heroines and villains (Parsons, 2023). This is a method of giving ancient texts fresh life.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Data and Data Sources

The data of this qualitative study were in textual and visual forms. The textual data form came from the narrative by comparing the source text of the classic Cinderella story and the reimagined characters in the movie *Once Upon a Crime (2023)*. Thus, the visual data form is obtained from the image and action of the characters. There were 8 characters researched. To investigate the difference between original and reimagined characters, supported by the reason from the investigated characters, as an argument that explained how the characters reimagined the story. It was a narrative summary. The characters investigated were as follows:

Table 1. Data Sources

Classic Character	Reimagined Character	Reason
Cinderella	Shinderera	Shinderera is a strong-willed girl with hidden goals that drove her to kill the royal hairdresser. In contrast, the classic Cinderella character is associated with an innocent. Reimagined Cinderella influences the storyline because it impacts the main conflict.
The Little Red Riding Hood	Akazukin	This character greatly influenced the storyline's reimagination and was shown by a young lady, not a little girl. She had a more intelligent, active, clear-thinking nature like a detective.
Fairy Godmother	Witch Barbara and Witch Tekla	The Fairy Godmother is considered a mystical, benevolent figure who encourages Cinderella to achieve her dreams of finding true love. This movie drastically changes the portrayal from a Fairy to a Witch. The plot also changes when the witch does not support Cinderella.
Anastasia	Anne	Anne is portrayed as a more expressive woman with the courage to express her goals. Here,

		Anne's character shows courage in her attraction to the prince. Contrary, the classic character is shyer than Anne.
Drizella	Margot	In the classic story, Margot as Drizella is the stepsister of Cinderella who has a vicious and malicious personality, then in this movie, she is made a scapegoat by Cinderella and is accused of murdering the royal hairstylist.
Prince Charming	Prince Gilbert	The prince serves as the central male character admired by young ladies. In this reimagined story, the prince's role extends beyond the traditional quest for true love; he also plays a critical part in unraveling the case.
Gusgus the Mouse	Porru	The character of Porru in the movie Reimagination is depicted as a greedy rat. Porru is not only a passive character who helps Cinderella but he is also given the ability to speak and give ideas to other characters.

### Data Analysis

We employed analysis techniques by Spradley, which comprised four structured stages in this study. Those stages were domain, taxonomy, componential, and cultural themes (Spradley, 2016). In domain analysis, we employed the theory of reimagination by Purnomo, Adila, and Adzhani (2023) to reveal the reimagination markers used on the characters about the source fairy tale characters. In taxonomy, the theory of reimagination functions was employed regarding the reimagination markers to indicate the reasons that backgrounded the adaptation of the source fairy tale characters. In componential analysis, the relations between the findings on domain and taxonomy were revealed to point out which narrative parts of the characters were adapted, deleted, and elaborated. In the last stage, cultural theme, we exemplified how reimagination in the movie *Once Upon a Crime* not only reimagined traditional characters such as Little Red Riding Hood and Cinderella into more modern ones but served to reflect values and views that are more relevant to today's audiences. Classic stories can be kept alive in a modern cultural context through altered characterizations.

Table 2. Componential Table

Characters	Presentness	Mutation
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	Lud	Sty	Met	Med	Brn	Cul	Lud	Sty	Met	Med	Brn	Cul
Cinderella - Shinderera	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Little Red Riding Hood - Akazukin	✓	✓				✓		✓			✓	✓
Fairy Godmother Witch Barbara	-	✓				✓		✓				✓
Fairy Godmother Witch Tekla	-	✓				✓		✓			✓	✓
Anastasia - Anne	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓				✓
Drizella - Margot		✓				✓	✓	✓				✓
Prince Charming Prince Gilbert	-	✓				✓		✓				
Gusgus The Mouse Porru	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓				✓

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings show that the reimagination in the movie successfully maintains the reimagination of the classic story using reimagination markers. This research shows that character reimagination in *Once Upon a Crime* (2023) is dominated by two main markers: mutation and presentness. The main functions identified in this reimagination are stylistic and cultural. The stylistic function is seen in the changes in appearance and character traits, while the cultural function highlights new values relevant to modern audiences.

### 1. Cinderella – Shinderera

The Cinderella story has many versions because the Cinderella story is well-known in childhood as a fairy tale (Friedman, 2010). However, the Cinderella fairy tale was created by Charles Perrault from France in 1697 and published in his book *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (Kusumajanti et al., 2020). According to the Cinderella fairy tale, a girl who lives with her stepmother and stepsisters also tortures her (Sijabat, 2023).

#### a. Reimagination Markers

In *Once Upon a Crime*, Shinderera's character starkly contrasts with the traditional Cinderella. Shinderera is ambitious and willing to use drastic

means, including lying and murder, to achieve her goals, such as killing the royal hairdresser and hiding her intentions. This change transforms Cinderella from a kind and generous figure to a more manipulative and morally complex character. This mindset differs greatly from that of the traditional Cinderella, who depends solely on her generosity and the help of the fairies (Ramadhani, 2023).

Presentness, where significant aspects of the classic Cinderella are kept, albeit with some modifications, is another obvious indicator of reimagination. The audience still recognizes Shinderera as a girl with a low social standing who longs to be with the prince—a traditional Cinderella fantasy. Shinderera continues to enlist the aid of a Fairy Godmother and Akazukin, but this time it is used to deceive people into pitying her. Even though the means and nature are different, Shinderera's character is still identifiable as the Cinderella who wants happily ever after. The audience can still perceive Shinderera as a reimagination of Cinderella despite the stark differences in the characters' characteristics because it retains the fundamental elements of the classic tale.

#### **b. Reimagination Functions**

Ludic mutation function is seen from how the character name and nature of Shinderera change. Cinderella is depicted as an innocent and naive person (Pratama, 2023), while Shinderera is depicted as full of strong ambition and cunning. The ludic presentness function is seen from the way Shinderera changes and takes advantage of innocence to manipulate Red Riding Hood and Fairy Godmother.





Figure 1. **Cinderella's clothes**

(Source: *Once Upon a Crime* movie)



Figure 2. **Cinderella's feet are covered in wounds.**

(Source: *Once Upon a Crime* movie)

The mutation of stylistic functions was characterized by how Shinderera's clothes looked dirty, and her body was covered in wounds. The function of presentness stylistically, Shinderera wears her outfit and maintains the label of poor and hurt to lure the characters Red Riding Hood and Fairy Godmother to spark sympathy for her cunning plans to go to the palace and meet the prince. This shows the social factor of attracting sympathy for a person wearing dirty shabby clothes and a body full of wounds. This creates a manipulation phenomenon similar to that of Shinderera's characters in Red Riding Hood and Fairy Godmother. The branding function is only found in the mutation section because branding focuses on creating a new identity different from its classic character. Here, Shinderera becomes a manipulative person and is cunning for her goals. Meanwhile, the classic character, Cinderella, is depicted as a naive and innocent person. The cultural function of

the mutation is characterized by how Shinderera tries hard to achieve her goal even though her efforts look cunning to the point of lying and killing the royal hairdresser. This shows the view of social factors that often see risk-taking as a determining factor for success. In contrast, the classic Cinderella character waits for a miracle to achieve her goal (Joseph et al., 2021). However, unlike the original Cinderella, Shinderera takes a more proactive and manipulative approach, challenging historical stereotypes of weak and passive women in fairy tales.

## 2. Little Red Riding Hood

### a. Reimagination Markers

In *Once Upon a Crime*, Little Red Riding Hood undergoes a reimagination shift, her entire outlook and especially the meaning of her red riding cloak changes. The color red in her riding cloak tends to be generally associated with illustrations of innocence in most cases, especially in Perrault's (1697) and Brothers Grimm's (1812) versions there are instances where Akazukin would forsake her red cape. This perspective portrays Akazukin as a helpless girl who is easily duped by wolves and seeks someone to rescue her. On the other hand, in *Once Upon a Crime*, the color red seems to possess courage, strength, and independence aspects. Indeed, this is consistent with Barthes' Semiotic Theory (1967) which explains that meaning is not static but determined by the social and cultural context of the audience.



Figure 3. **The Red Cloak of Red Riding Hood**  
(Source: *Once Upon a Crime* movie)

Moreover, even Akazukin's character has shifted to enhance humor and energy in the story. She is portrayed as clever, bold, and savvy instead of being weak and dorky. Modern interpretations of fairy tales tend to portray female protagonists as active characters who wish to change their surroundings rather than waiting for passive ones to be saved as Peach (2020) notes. As a result of this retelling, Akazukin has reclaimed her own story and transformed from a dazed victim into a female warrior.

#### **b. Reimagination Functions**

Akazukin's reimagination in *Once Upon a Crime* is related to much broader aesthetic, cultural, and strategic values that are involved in revitalizing the traditional art of storytelling. It may be evidencing the stylistic function of a redesign for the sake of narration by assuming a novel, contemporary storytelling method. Dynamic comedy and razor-sharp wit make Akazukin's story at once timeless and new in ways those qualities still appeal to the audiences of today. From a cultural point of view, her change marks the transition of women's power from the stereotypical portrayal of a helpless and powerless creature to that of a strong and independent one. This aligns with Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity, which claims that gender identities are created through performances and enactments. The modern Akazukin advances a progressive view of autonomous womanhood and, through her rebellion against traditional stereotypes, reflects ideas on gender equality. Branding in this type of recontextualization is also very important.



Figure 4. **Red Riding Hood expressed her desire**

(Source: *Once Upon a Crime* movie)

Furthermore, the branding function is also seen. The movie is more acceptable due to Akazukin's charming and characterful personality, while she also helps to enhance the brand's reputation and the broadest audience. Empowerment narratives naturally attract a larger audience while creating emotional connections. These reimaginings demonstrate how classic fairy tales can serve as tools for carrying important social messages while continuing to engage an audience's attention in the ludic or entertainment venue. The application of wit and humor adds to the lightheartedness, making Akazukin an engaging and motivating protagonist.



Figure 5. **Red Riding Hood offers her help to Cinderella.**

(Source: *Once Upon a Crime* movie)

This harmonious combination of serious concerns and humor raises the plot and gives even more depth. This reimagination is a demonstration of how classic stories can continue to be relevant to today's values. Akazukin is a symbol of today's strong and independent women, not just a little girl from the past.

### 3. Fairy Godmother

#### a. Reimagination Markers

The reimagination of the Fairy Godmother into two different witches, Barbara and Tekla, signals a different improvement of female characters, as explained by Purnomo, Adila, and Adzhani, in their concept of mutation (2023). The fairy godmother has always been described as being alone, kind, and having only one major role in supporting the main character. In *Once Upon a Crime*, the traditional fairy godmother archetype is reimaged as two contrasting personalities: Tekla, quiet and reflective, and Barbara, outspoken and confident. This reimagination extends beyond traditional archetypes to complex forms of mentorship and empowerment. This story highlights the diverse paths to self-realization, exposing the complexities of female empowerment and the many ways women inspire and support others.



Figure 6. Tekla and Barbara

(Source: *Once Upon a Crime* movie)

#### b. Reimagination Functions

In *Once Upon a Crime*, the new personnel of the Fairy Godmother are Barbara and Tekla. Purnomo, Adila, and Adzhani (2023) have provided insight that it allowed nuanced meaning-making of empowerment in both mutations and presentness. In nontraditional fairy tale stereotypes, creative thoughts devoid of stylistic, cultural, or reimagination components provide independent women. Barbara is a stylistically and culturally important piece of work. Her bright costume captures her powerful expressive character so wonderfully. With all of her vivid hues and eye-catching patterns, she defies

the idea of a lady as a gentle and compassionate character, which is prevalent in many of these fairy tales.



Figure 7. **Barbara Appearance**

(Source: *Once Upon a Crime* movie)

However, Tekla is a strong figure because of her self-reflection and composed approach, as well as both the stylistic and cultural functions of reimagination. She is calm and considerate; such traits reflect inner strength and calm decision-making. Through the example of Tekla's leadership, Shinderera learns that the source of empowerment is not just bold outer actions but also developing inner self-awareness and wisdom as well. Her approach has brought out that more often than not, strength lies within and can be catalyzed by will, self-introspection, and critical thinking.



Figure 8. **Tekla Appearance**

(Source: *Once Upon a Crime* movie)

Barbara's and Tekla's thoroughly different approaches to empowerment reinvent the traditional role of the fairy godmother. This contradiction challenges the usually passive representation of women in fairy

tales and allows an inclusive perspective on empowerment. *Once Upon a Crime* puts out contemporary ideas of gender and power by showcasing all the ways women may lead and inspire. Thus, it gives the classic paradigm a whole new lease on life while reinforcing that empowerment is a multifaceted concept that ranges from the courage to act morally to self-reflection.

#### **4. Anastasia – Anne**

##### **a. Reimagination Markers**

The classic version of Anastasia is portrayed as Cinderella's jealous step-sister with an antagonistic personality. However, in *Once Upon a Crime*, Anne is no longer only centered on the rivalry with Cinderella but has an emotional journey and motivations. As Tatar (2003) explains, modern adaptations increase the depth of female characters to reflect changing social dynamics. This shows how fairy tale reimagination can create new relevance, especially in the representation of stronger female agency.

Anne is reimagined as a more sympathetic character than the classic Anastasia, shifting from a self-centered antagonist to a nuanced figure. Her vulnerability and personal growth align with modern cultural values of empathy and development. As Truman (2017) argued, cultural icons are dynamic entities that reveal changing collective norms, allowing them to remain relevant to modern audiences while maintaining the essence of the original character. This reimagination also reflects modern fairy tale adaptation patterns that modify traditional concepts to reflect contemporary values (Schwabe, 2016). Anne's journey is not only about winning the prince but also about internal struggle and self-discovery.

The merging of classic fairy tale elements with the detective mystery genre in this movie creates a unique blend of Western tradition and Japanese sensibility. This approach reflects an appreciation for the complex narratives often found in Japanese media, such as anime and manga, which combine various genres to create layered stories. This allows *Once Upon a Crime* to

present audiences with a familiar yet fresh story.

The portrayal of Anne as a character with deeper motivations also reflects changes in the representation of women in the media. The emphasis on personal growth, empathy, and redemption aligns with modern values that value the complexity of women, in contrast to traditional stereotypes that tend to be one-dimensional.

The visual elements of the movie reinforce this analysis. In certain scenes, Anne wears clothes with modern designs that reflect her individuality and boldness, in stark contrast to the classic stereotype of Anastasia as the envious stepsister.



Figure 9. **Anne's Modern Dress at the Ball**

(Source: *Once Upon a Crime* movie)

#### **b. Reimagination Functions**

Anne's interaction with Prince Gilbert shows Anne's courage to express her feelings directly. This action reflects modern values of female courage and agency and shows her emotional development beyond the conflict with Cinderella. Anne's focus is on her meaningful personal growth.



Figure 10. **Anne confronting Prince Gilbert**



(Source: *Once Upon a Crime* movie)

## 5. Drizella – Margot

### a. Reimagination Markers

Drizella Tremaine has a substantial metamorphosis in modern renditions, most notably in the movie *Once Upon a Crime*, portrayed as one of Cinderella's antagonistic stepsisters. This reimagination emphasizes how character development has changed in contemporary storylines. Drizella is defined by her malice, envy, and conceit in the original Disney version (Fadhel & Muhammed, 2023). She is the quintessential evil stepsister, mostly acting as a hindrance to Cinderella's happiness. Drizella's character growth and depth are limited by her primarily shallow goals, which center on her appearance and social standing (Elnahla, 2015). She lacks a complex past that could explain her behaviors.



Figure 11. **Drizella's name changed to Margot.**

(Source: *Once Upon a Crime* movie)

Drizella is reimaged as Margot. This change represents a change in the representation of female characters across modern fiction. Drizella's name change to Margot is noteworthy because "Drizella" implies negativity and hostility, whereas "Margot" has more neutral or even good connotations across cultural boundaries in modern storytelling that aims to give characters who are typically seen as straightforward villains more nuance and personality (Brassear, 2023). Margot evolves from a simple antagonist to a

more complex character, participating in a murder mystery that reveals her emotional depth, unlike her traditional portrayal.

### b. Reimagination functions

The presentness in the ludic function shown by Margot's character in this murder mystery offers a complex portrayal, in contrast to the flat and antagonistic portrayal of Drizella. This modern approach emphasizes characters shaped by decisions and circumstances rather than a clear moral binary, with Margot's design and storyline reflecting a preference for multidimensional storytelling.



Figure 12. Margot is involved in a mystery case

(Source: *Once Upon a Crime* movie)

The reimagination of Drizella as Margot in *Once Upon a Crime* reflects shifting gender norms and a growing demand for stories that showcase the complexity of the female experience. Modern cultural ideals prioritize character development over conventional crime, with Margot portrayed as a nuanced and relatable figure. This shift, influenced by social movements in favor of female representation, shifts from portraying women as mere enemies to highlighting their diverse identities and unique stories.

## 6. Prince Charming – Prince Gilbert

### a. Reimagination Markers

The reimagination in *Once Upon a Crime* involves changes in plot and character dynamics that deviate from the traditional Cinderella narrative. For

example, in the classic story, the Prince naturally falls in love with Cinderella (Parashar, 2022), whereas in this movie, the prince is already engaged to Remi. However, in the end, the prince stays with Remi and not with Cinderella. This reimagination highlights how reimagination allows the narrative to reflect modern or culturally relevant values, such as prioritizing pre-set commitments over fairytale spontaneity.

The Presentness marker is used to connect the story with contemporary audiences. Prince Gilbert's character is shown through his submissive attitude. The prince, while seemingly polite, bowed to each girl. This is in line with the norms of Japanese society, showing how the narrative is adapted to resonate with the target demographic.

#### **b. Reimagination Functions**

The stylistic function shown by Prince Gilbert, who brings the close-knit Japanese culture of honoring others by bowing the head, further emphasizes this cultural nuance. Moreover, the prince is not a flawless person. Rather, he is also a fallible person, such as in his confession of committing the serious crime that Prince Gilbert threw away his father's crown (King Bovell). The reimagination of Prince Gilbert aligns with stylistic and cultural functions by transforming the stereotypical perfect prince into a flawed and multidimensional character. His internal conflict between family loyalty and personal happiness adds realism and relatability, which resonates with modern audiences.

The presentness that is seen in the cultural function is to adjust to the target audience from Japan. The change in attitude of the prince who submits to the King's orders reflects respect for his elders.

### **7. Gusgus the Mouse – Porru**

The classic story has the mouse, GusGus as a dear friend who always accompanies Cinderella. Porru is portrayed as a talkative human carriage driver.

#### **a. Reimagination Markers**

The reimagination of GusGus into Porru in *Once Upon a Crime*

illustrates mutation markers, a concept by Purnomo et al. (2023) that involves creating a new narrative by changing textual, visual, and operational elements while maintaining core aspects of the original. Textually, Porru's name and characterization are adapted for humor and context. Visually, the transition from rat to human aligns with Genette's (1997) concept of tranquilization, which significantly changes the style for a new perspective. The depiction of Porru as a knowledgeable and talkative character further emphasizes the markers of this mutation.



Figure 13. **Porru tells his ability**

(Source: *Once Upon a Crime* movie)

The presentness marker is also seen when Akazukin mentions the term driver's license. Porru notices and denies that there is a regulation to have a driver's license to drive a horse-drawn carriage. This marker aligns with the idea that presence markers connect original narratives to modern audiences, as seen in *Dragon Ball Evolution* with its integration of contemporary cultural references.

#### **b. Reimagination Functions**

The ludic function is seen in the character development and physical form of GusGus from a mouse to a human. This change supports the ludic function, as Porru's greedy nature and speaking ability add elements of humor and hilarity that entertain the audience.

The stylistic function is also achieved through Porru's more complex and active characterization, giving the story a fresh feel and providing a

unique storytelling style in the re-imagination.

In addition, medical function is reflected in the regulation regarding driver's licenses. There is also a cultural function of the habits of Japanese people who obey the rules. Thus, this movie mentions the necessity of having a driver's license. Culturally, the movie demonstrates sensitivity to Japanese norms and values, such as adherence to rules. This negotiation between the source material and the target audience's cultural framework.

Reimagination, presented as a whole character reimagination in *Once Upon a Crime*, is not just about individual change but also about how each character functions within a larger narrative that supports each other. For instance, Porru was originally a simple character who became a more active and complex role, serving to drive the main story that focuses on the quest for justice and empowerment.

Although each character originates from a different fairy tale, it functions in this movie to provide a new take on an old story by combining classic and modern detective elements. These characters do not just stand alone but complement each other, conveying a deeper message about social and individual change in modern society. These reimagination markers and reimagination functions play a role in conveying the film's grand theme, which sheds light on the expectations of today's audience, who want fairy tales with more developed characters.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study highlights how reimagination takes shape through mutation and presentness, as seen in the transformation of iconic characters. The findings align with Purnomo, Adila, and Adzhani's (2023) theory, showing that stylistic and cultural functions largely influence these changes. Stylistic updates help characters resonate with modern audiences, while cultural adjustments introduce new meanings and relevance. This research reinforces the idea that reimagination is a balance between changing continuity and keeping the core of the original story while making it feel fresh and engaging for today's viewers.

The implications of the significance of balancing stylistic and cultural functions are essential in reimagining classic fairy tales for a global audience. Stylistic functions like modernized visuals, genre-blending, and character redefinition appeal to contemporary audiences. Meanwhile, incorporating cultural functions in elements such as gender equality

and current social issues ensures relevance while maintaining universal themes such as “good triumphs over evil.”

Further research and works could profoundly reimagine legendary characters, such as adapting mythology to a modern context. Works like *Once Upon a Crime* illustrate this by blending genres and incorporating Japanese culture, broadening appeal and offering new creative opportunities for writers, directors, and producers.

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