

Everything is a Remix

I wrote in a Facebook discussion that all creative works were derivative. I think that's true. Consider "orcs". I understand that orcs were invented by Tolkein in *LOTR*. In *The Hobbit*, they were simply "goblins," but were sized slightly larger than humans. Other writers used "goblins" as a creature much smaller than humans, so when he came around to furthering the story, he came up with "orcs" in order to distinguish them from goblins. Today, "orcs" are used all over. Ultima Online and Everquest had orcs. Did they copy Tolkien? Apparently. But I think that's okay.

In Harry Potter, we have several concepts that JKR copied: witches, wizards, wands, potions, charms, curses, magical objects, apparently Muggles, goblins, elves, giants, London, Europe, Salem witches, Potters, storing a part of your soul in an object, etc., etc. The point is: "Everything is a remix". In fact, the only originality there is in how things are re-mixed. Stories are repeatedly told over and over again using different ingredients, different elements that originated elsewhere, often including the plot. I don't think there's anything despicable in doing this. I think you have to do this and it's smart to do this. Remix the old into something new, sell it and become rich.

Had the entire story, elements and plot, been lifted by JKR, then she would be committing fraud when selling it as her creation. But everyone takes elements created or innovated by someone else and remixes them into something new. That's just how artistic creation works. I highly recommend this 4-part video series on how "everything is a remix" by Kirby Ferguson.

What's despicable is using violence (government) to keep others from copying or remixing your ideas. If JKR is doing this to anyone, even those creative individuals who want to use her entire world to make their own stories, then that is despicable. But very few artists think like I do. Steve Jobs once said (copying Picasso), "good artists copy, great artists steal." He was absolutely right. Unfortunately he reneged and went after Samsung for "copying" the design of the iPad. He was right before, and wrong later. And many artists today are realizing that allowing others to copy your work is a great way to increase exposure, and hence profits.

Skyler.