

The Never-Ending Happily-Ever-After: Serial Fairy Tales in *Once Upon a Time*

Svea Hundertmark

Introduction¹

Stories, especially lore and legends, were always a central aspect of the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003). Acquiring knowledge through research to defeat the villains, monsters and demons was as crucial as were Buffy’s powers, notably so in the earlier seasons. On a structural level, the incorporation of stories about the “forces of darkness”² contributes to the seriality of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (*BtVS*) since they are an integral part of the fight against evil. However, seriality in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is not only established through (re)telling stories. Other means to create seriality, most prominently a fixed set of characters (including the “Scooby Gang”), who develop over time and grow on the viewers (Wilcox 176–78), but also a stable setting along with the continuation of one major plotline, are employed as well. The fact that (re)telling stories, either original ones or ones already known to the audience (cf. Bridges), is central in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, is underlined by references made to tales and stories in the series itself. For example, in the Season Six episode “Normal Again,” a meta-reference to folklore providing the basis for the series is made: “Together they face grand overblown conflicts against an assortment of monsters both imaginary and rooted in actual myth” (“Normal Again” 6.17: 15:33–15:42).

Svea Hundertmark holds a Master of Arts and a Master of Education degree in English and North American Studies as well as German Studies. She works as a media consultant for schools at the Institute for Quality Development in Schools in Schleswig Holstein (IQSH). She is pursuing a PhD at Christian-Albrechts-University Kiel, Germany. The topic of her dissertation is the US-American fairy-tale film of the 21st century.

“Gingerbread” features a demon who embodies two dead children and convinces the residents of Sunnydale to go on a witch-hunt, referencing the fairy tale “Hansel and Gretel.” When the characters establish this connection, Oz sums up Giles’ explanation about folklore being rooted in reality by stating that “fairy tales are real” (“Gingerbread” 3.11: 31:23 31:25), revealing that a story existing in the factual world of the audience is real in the fictional world of the series. In “Hush” (4.10), the solution to the great silence that has come over Sunnydale is provided by the (fictional) fairy tale about the “Gentlemen,” who according to the tale have to be killed by the scream of a princess before they can collect seven human hearts (cf. Wirth). Either way, while fairy tales are referred to on several occasions throughout the series, they never adopt as central a role as the one occupied by other stories, for example those about vampires (Bridges 92).

Jane Espenson, who worked as a writer and producer on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and contributed the teleplay for “Gingerbread,” was also involved as a writer, consulting producer, and co-executive producer on the fairy-tale themed television series *Once Upon a Time* (2011-2018), created by Edward Kitsis and Adam Horowitz. *Once Upon a Time* (*OuT*) takes up the idea of incorporating well-known stories into its plot, focusing mostly on European versions of fairy tales.³ The fact that continuity is established between independent fairy tales in *Once Upon a Time* is interesting since “serial heroes are foreign to the European fairy tale” (Schmitt 130, this author's translation). Fairy tales end once their respective stories have been told and fairy-tale protagonists do not appear in any other story but their own (Schmitt 130-131).

This article examines how these independent fairy tales are implemented in the serial television format of *Once Upon a Time*. To establish seriality in *Once Upon a Time*, strategies similar to those used in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* are

employed: a constant set of characters, stable settings, and an ongoing narrative. Many series create seriality like this. Thus, these strategies are not specific to *Once Upon a Time*. They nevertheless contribute to the establishment of a new narrative connection among certain fairy tales. A joint fairy-tale world, the implementation of the fairy tales in the overall narrative of the series, aspects of seriality in general, and references to earlier fairy-tale adaptations play an important role in the creation of these narrative relations. To examine this new connection, the following questions, aimed at aspects that contribute to the combination of the individual fairy tales, are posed: What is the relationship between the series' 'human world' and the 'otherworld'?⁴ What role do fairy tales play in the overall set-up of *Once Upon a Time*? How are the independent fairy tales included in the continuous plot? How does *Once Upon a Time* refer to fairy tales and their earlier adaptations?

Once Upon a Time was produced by ABC Studios and aired from 2011 until 2018 on ABC. The plot centers on Emma Swan, who arrives in the sleepy East Coast town of Storybrooke after her son Henry, whom she gave up for adoption, seeks her out, only to find that the town's residents are fairy-tale characters who were cursed 28 years before the current plot. *Once Upon a Time* comprises seven seasons of 22 or 23 episodes each. In 2013, a spin-off, partially linked to the plot of the original series and titled *Once Upon a Time in Wonderland* (2013–2014), was produced and broadcast. The plot is based on the events of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*. The following analysis is limited to representative examples, primarily focusing on the first two seasons of *Once Upon a Time*. These two seasons exhibit the strongest connections with the adapted fairy tales. Similar adaptation strategies are used throughout the series, but since most of the main fairy-tale-based characters are introduced in these two seasons,

they are particularly suitable to illustrate the strategies of serial connectivity through the adaptation of fairy tales.

A Fairy-Tale Realm and the Human World

The motif of an unrealistic world juxtaposed with a realistic world originates in fantastic literature.⁵ Especially in fantasy literature for children and young adults, the motif still enjoys great popularity. Despite the freedom of its individual design, two points seem to be obligatory for the depiction of the fantastic world in fantasy literature. First, the literary-fictional world should differ significantly from the world in which the author and readers live. Second, this world should have a ‘fantastic understanding’ of reality, indicating that the existence of magic and mythical creatures is generally possible (Friedrich 4 5). The border that exists between this so-called otherworld and the realistic one can be crossed using a portal-like device (Loidl 49). Many fantastic narratives start off with such a border crossing, thereby creating or shifting a conflict, so that the characters of the story are forced to act. Analyzing the implementation of the ‘two-worlds-motif’ in *Once Upon a Time* while focusing on the two worlds and the borders will help to determine the role that the story world plays in the establishment of a narrative connection between the fairy tales.

In *Once Upon a Time*, the human world mostly corresponds with the audience’s factual world at the time of the series’ production. Therefore, the same rules regarding the fantastic apply to it. Places in the United States that are mentioned or shown in the series include Boston (“Pilot” 1.1: 04:44 06:24), New York (“Broken” 2.1: 00:01 01:45), and Portland (“Tallahassee” 2.6: 03:02 05:35). Additionally, there are references to other regions of the audience’s world, for

example the island of Phuket and Hong Kong (“Selfless, Brave and True” 2.18: 00:01 00:57, 05:22 06:40). Contrary to first appearances, Storybrooke, which functions as the main setting of the plot, does not belong to the human world but is an otherworld integrated into the human world (“Pilot” 1.1: 09:21 09:28, 14:52 15:00). The human world is called ‘Land Without Magic’ by the inhabitants of the fairy-tale world, based on their knowledge of it (“The Return” 1.19: 17:47 17:52). This expression, which is designed as a counter term to the Enchanted Forest, where magic is omnipresent, also extends to Storybrooke. While employing a common fairy-tale realm is not a new concept when (re)telling fairy tales, the innovation in *Once upon a Time* is the creation of the additional otherworld Storybrooke in the Land Without Magic instead of just portraying the fairy-tale characters in the human world.

In addition to Storybrooke and the Enchanted Forest, more otherworlds are introduced later on, most of which are based on literary works. Examples include Wonderland from Carroll's *Alice* books (“Hat Trick” 1.17: 20:32 21:20), Neverland from Barrie's *Peter Pan* (“The Heart of the Truest Believer” 3.1: 01:37 02:45), and Oz from Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (“It's Not Easy Being Green” 3.16: 00:01 01:20). The fairy tales and other works of literature form the past of what is shown in the series and thus become the backstories of the individual characters. The focus of the following analysis is on Storybrooke and the Enchanted Forest, since they form the main setting for a large part of the series. They also play an integral part in the creation of narrative connections between fairy tales because most of the fairy-tale characters meet here.

In the beginning of the series, Storybrooke appears to be part of the human world. However, it turns out that the small town has certain rules that are incompatible with those of the human world. These include time standing still

(“Pilot” 1.1: 13:08 13:34, 15:27 15:36), the fact that the former inhabitants of the Enchanted Forest cannot leave the town (“Pilot” 1.1: 15:48 15:52; “The Price of Gold” 1.4: 23:44 24:00), and the absence of any memories of both their fairy-tale pasts and details of their new lives (“The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter” 1.7: 15:02 15:25, 17:50 19:26). From the second season on, magic can be used in Storybrooke, which was only possible in the independent otherworlds before (“A Land Without Magic” 1.22: 39:38 39:56). The Enchanted Forest, where the inhabitants of Storybrooke originate, is the independent otherworld that is featured most prominently throughout the series. It is designed as a contrast to both the human world and Storybrooke: As already indicated by the name, magic is a constant force in this world and is taken for granted (“The Doctor” 2.5: 04:44 06:56). The Enchanted Forest is home to many well-known fairy-tale characters. Here their stories take place, although they are presented as being slightly (or very) different from the way the audience knows them. In the first season of *Once Upon a Time*, the audience only sees the Enchanted Forest in flashbacks, showing what happened to the characters before they came to Storybrooke. In later seasons, events taking place parallel to those in Storybrooke are shown, and some characters cross the border between these two worlds (“Broken” 2.1: 01:56 04:07, 32:50 33:22).

As stated above, crossing borders between worlds creates or shifts conflicts, which then serve as starting points for narration. This pattern holds true for *Once Upon a Time* and the borders between the various worlds. Two types of borders can be distinguished: first, the border between the human world and Storybrooke, and second, the borders between the various otherworlds themselves as well as between the otherworlds and the human world. Crossing the border between Storybrooke and the human world does not require any special tools, but the border is often impassable for various reasons. In the first season, the former fairy-tale

characters cannot leave Storybrooke and enter the human world because the aforementioned curse prevents them from doing so (“True North” 1.9: 31:25 31:42; “What Happened to Frederick” 1.13: 39:26 40:32). The characters Regina, Emma, August, and Neal, on the other hand, can enter and leave the town at will, as they are not affected by the curse.⁶ As the series progresses, crossing the border is made impossible for most or all of the characters time and time again, although the curse has been broken. Oftentimes, the respective season’s main antagonist is responsible for this, trapping the fairy-tale characters in Storybrooke for years after the original problem has been solved (“Witch Hunt” 3.13: 10:18 10:48; “White Out” 4.2: 41:10 42:50).

The borders between the otherworlds and the borders between them and the human world can be understood as borders between dimensions. In order to cross them, a portal between the worlds has to be opened, using one of several possible tools. The tools appear in various forms and not every one of them can be used for every border. Magic beans are the most versatile tools since they can open portals to every world (“The Return” 1.19: 20:53 22:20). The initial conflict is transferred to the human world with the use of such a bean when Baelfire/Neal travels from the Enchanted Forest to the human world, arriving in 19th century London (“The Return” 1.19: 28:57 29:45; “Second Star to the Right” 2.21: 00:46 03:15). He crosses the border in the hope that in the Land Without Magic his father, Rumplestiltskin (to use the series’ spelling), will return to who he was before he became the Dark One (“The Return” 1.19: 12:08 13:46). Baelfire’s departure ultimately ensures that Rumplestiltskin empowers The Evil Queen/Regina to cast the curse, which will bring him to the Land Without Magic, as he hopes to see his son again. Thus, in addition to Storybrooke and the Enchanted Forest providing a common space for fairy-tale characters from individual fairy tales to meet and interact,

they are further connected through their involvement in a conflict brought onto them because of a border crossing.

This conflict provides the foundation for many of the other conflicts that are central to the series' plot, for example the one between Regina and Snow White. Their struggle also extends to Snow White's daughter Emma, who in turn is in conflict with Regina over her son Henry, whom Regina has adopted. The opposition between stepmother and stepdaughter is already included in the fairy tale "Snow White," from which these characters originate. Neither there nor in *Once Upon a Time* is it the direct result of a border crossing. Still, Rumplestiltskin's plotting, which is his response to his son crossing the border, leads to the events that cause these other conflicts. Although all the main characters have motives of their own, Rumplestiltskin acts as a puppeteer, orchestrating almost everything that happens in the series. Accordingly, it is Mr. Gold, Rumplestiltskin's Storybrooke persona, who arranges for Henry's adoption, because he knows that only Emma will be able to break Regina's curse, thereby enabling him to look for his own son in the human world.

In sum, the several otherworlds depicted in *Once Upon a Time* are presented as self-contained dimensions that exist independently from the human world and from Storybrooke. Although no tools are needed to cross the border between Storybrooke and the human world, most characters cannot do so. Dimensional boundaries can only be crossed with the help of portals of limited application. The shared fairy-tale realm and the restrictions keeping the characters in Storybrooke enable interactions between fairy-tale characters that never met each other in the stories from which they originate. Furthermore, the initial conflict between a father and his son has come to affect all of these characters once the border between the fairy-tale land and the human world has been crossed. It is especially

interesting that the central conflicts of the series ultimately originate from a single border crossing.

The Role of Fairy Tales in *Once Upon a Time*

This section examines the relevance of the canonical versions of the fairy tales for the overall plot with the help of narratological concepts, focusing on the relationship between extradiegetic and intradiegetic narrative levels (Martinez and Scheffel 75-76) as well as on anachronistic storytelling. Most fairy tales in *Once Upon a Time* are presented in the form of embedded narratives. Sometimes another story is added within the embedded narrative, placing it on the metadiegetic level. An additional narrative that is embedded within this story then is positioned on the metametadiegetic level (Martinez and Scheffel 76). Anachronistic storytelling is analyzed since the tales are also presented as past occurrences to the events presently taking place in Storybrooke. Anachrony can take the form of both prolepses and analepses. Prolepses refer to sections in a narrative in which future events are anticipated, while analepses describe sections in which past events are reported (Martinez and Scheffel 33). These techniques ultimately distance the story from the canonical versions of the fairy tales while developing the ‘true’ nature of the characters.

A large number of fairy tales and other fantastic stories are incorporated into *Once Upon a Time*, which is why only a small selection is mentioned here. The fairy tales “Snow White” and “Rumpelstiltskin” take central roles, since the most important characters of the series’ complex plot originate from them. Other central narratives are “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Cinderella,” “Sleeping Beauty,” the *Alice* books, *Pinocchio*, and *Peter Pan*. There are also non-

European literary works, such as *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, which can be regarded as modern fairy tales (Riley 51-52). In terms of content, it is noticeable that some of the fairy-tale characters and their stories are completely revamped in *Once Upon a Time*.⁷ This is already hinted at in the introduction of the series: “Once Upon a Time / There was an enchanted forest filled with all the classic characters we know. / Or think we know.” (“Pilot” 1.1: 00:01-00:11) Not only have the stories of the fairy-tale texts been changed, but the familiar narratives are expanded with both backgrounds and continuations. At the same time, the fairy tales are updated for contemporary audiences, leaving out aspects that could be critiqued, for example from a feminist point of view.⁸

In the first season, fairy tales appear mainly in the form of flashbacks to the Enchanted Forest. Their function is to clarify the backgrounds of the characters living in Storybrooke. The retrospective also provides information about the characters' motivations and goals, especially those of the antagonists. Primarily in the first season of the series, many episodes introduce one character each, illuminating both the human and the fairy-tale identity of that character (cf. *OUaT* 1.4, 1.5, 1.7, 1.9, 1.11, 1.13, 1.14, and 1.15). The series' central characters appear in many of these episodes as well, being related to the fate of the fairy-tale characters introduced (e.g., *OUaT* 1.4, 1.9, and 1.15). (At least for the first season, the most central characters are Regina/The Evil Queen, Emma, Henry, Mary Margaret/Snow White, David/Prince Charming, and Mr. Gold/Rumpelstiltskin.) The events in Storybrooke often mirror what happened in the Enchanted Forest, and thus in the fairy tales: They are transposed into a modern context in which the happy ending would fail to occur without Henry and Emma's interventions, for instance in the episode “True North” (*OUaT* 1.9). A reversed version of this mirroring is used for “Snow White” since in Storybrooke it is the prince who must be awakened

(“Snow Falls” 1.3: 08:55 11:15). Sometimes, fairy tales are integrated into the series as excerpts from Henry’s storybook: Images from the book are used as camera focus before or after a flashback (“Pilot” 1.1: 04:06 04:10), the fairy tales are read aloud from it, or references to the book in general are made (“Snow Falls” 1.3: 08:55 09:35; “True North” 1.9: 13:30 13:50).⁹ Henry also uses the book to find out which fairy-tale characters the inhabitants of Storybrooke actually are (“Snow Falls” 1.3: 05:45 07:50; “The Price of Gold” 1.4: 19:40 19:50).

The presentation of the tales as analepses and embedded narratives will be illustrated with one example each, although in comparison to embedded narratives analepses occur much more frequently, all in all covering several centuries. In the fourth episode of the first season, “The Price of Gold,” several flashbacks, albeit without camera focus on Henry’s book, are used to present the recipients with the fairy-tale identity of 19-year-old mother-to-be Ashley (“The Price of Gold” 1.4: 00:40 04:03, 14:34 19:14, 24:13 26:04, 27:24 30:20, 31:18 33:47). She is Cinderella (or Aschenputtel), who goes to the royal ball without the permission of her abusive stepfamily, but with the help of Rumplestiltskin instead of her fairy godmother (“The Price of Gold” 1.4: 00:40 04:03). At their wedding reception, Rumplestiltskin wants the first-born child of Cinderella and the prince in return for his previous help (“The Price of Gold” 1.4: 16:39 17:22). Mirroring this altered fairy-tale plot, Ashley, who works as a chambermaid in Storybrooke, has made a contract with Mr. Gold that requires her to give her child up for adoption (“The Price of Gold” 1.4: 07:31 08:57, 13:59 14:02, 20:28 21:58). The way Rumplestiltskin demands a child from Cinderella illustrates how fairy tales are brought together in *Once Upon a Time* by introducing not only characters but also motifs from other fairy tales into the tale central to the respective episode.

An example of the inclusion of fairy tales in the form of an embedded narration can be found in the third episode of the first season, “Snow Falls” (*OUaT* 1.3), in which Mary Margaret reads to the unconscious David from Henry's storybook (“Snow Falls” 1.3: 08:55 09:35). She reads about the first meeting between Snow White and Prince Charming, during which the two fall in love (“Snow Falls” 1.3: 09:09 09:35), picking up where the flashback at the beginning of the episode leaves off (“Snow Falls” 1.3: 00:38 03:10). The narration read aloud is condensed, and Mary Margaret concludes with the end of the last flashback (“Snow Falls” 1.3: 32:50 35:01). This is a verbal anticipation of the events that will be visually presented in the rest of the episode. Parallel to the recounting of the first meeting of the two fairy-tale characters in the Enchanted Forest, the relationship between Mary Margaret and David in Storybrooke is initiated. The story read aloud by Mary Margaret is thus positioned on a metametadiegetic level. The initial epigraphic remark “One day they [the classic characters] found themselves trapped in a place where all their happy endings were stolen. / Our World. / This is how it happened...” (“Pilot” 1.1: 00:13 00:24) represents the intradiegetic level, while the production in its entirety belongs to the extradiegetic level. These sentences open up a frame that encapsulates the rest of the series' plot.¹⁰ This plot forms the metadiegetic level and the framework for the embedded narrative on the metametadiegetic level about Snow White and Prince Charming read aloud by Mary Margaret.

In short, the canon fairy tales are presented as embedded narratives. Some fairy tales are read aloud from a storybook, or references are made to its contents. However, most of the time the fairy tales are visualized in the form of flashbacks. The flashbacks to the Enchanted Forest and the excerpts read aloud from the storybook have the primary

function of illustrating the backgrounds of the characters living in Storybrooke. The events in Storybrooke are often a reflection of what took place in the Enchanted Forest. Additionally, there is a focus on the events that took place before or after the familiar fairy-tale plots as well as on changing these plots. These alterations create a distance from the canon in terms of content while presenting these deviations as the true, previously unknown history of the fairy-tale characters. The inclusion of fairy tales offers a familiar starting point for the audience to get to know the characters in Storybrooke. The focus is on the action taking place here, while the flashbacks and embedded stories provide additional information. By deviating from the well-known versions of the fairy tales at the same time, the analepses and metadiegetic narratives simultaneously disrupt the flow of the Storybrooke narrative and undermine the audience's expectations regarding the presented fairy tales. Accordingly, while fairy tales as such have a certain relevance to the overall series, the canon fairy tales serve primarily as a basis for fleshing out the characters to the point where they have little in common with the fairy-tale archetypes.

Establishing Seriality and Creating Narrative Connections

In order to examine the creation of narrative connections among the fairy tales and the establishment of seriality in *Once Upon a Time*, it is necessary to clarify what gives rise to seriality. There is no clear consensus about which aspects are indispensable in order for something to be considered a series. For each possible criterion, there seems to be an example that disproves the necessity of fulfilling it. In this analysis, the minimal definition proposed by Tanja Weber

and Christian Junklewitz will be used: “A series consists of two or more parts held together by a common idea, theme, or concept and can be found in all media” (Weber and Junklewitz 18, this author's translation). Although this definition is rather general, it shows that all series consist of multiple parts that share a conceptual framework, regardless of their specific characteristics. Other criteria, such as a consistent set of characters and unchanging settings, further support the impression of seriality (Bleicher 704). While narrative connections support the impression of seriality, and the factors establishing seriality can also strengthen narrative connections, both aspects are initially considered separately in the following analysis. In *Once Upon a Time*, seriality reinforces the connection that is created between individual fairy tales without relying on these fairy tales to create seriality in the first place. Still, the links between the fairy tales also increase seriality.

The factors that establish seriality in general also apply to *Once Upon a Time*. The series consists of 155 episodes, whose overarching theme is love in every form, but especially that of family members for each other. Love is treated as one of the most powerful forms of magic: At the end of the first season, it is Emma's kiss of true, maternal love for Henry that not only saves him but also breaks the curse the fairy-tale characters are under (“A Land Without Magic” 1.22: 35:44-37:25). Seriality is additionally established through consistent characters and settings. The main as well as some minor characters are already introduced in the first episode of the first season. Since most of them cannot leave Storybrooke, this is the central location of the present plot and remains so for six of the seven seasons. Other locations, such as the Enchanted Forest or the human world, are shown (as noted before) mainly in flashbacks. Nonetheless, as the series progresses, more and more places in the fairy-tale world, but also in other dimensions and the human

world, are introduced. Moreover, cliffhangers are used at the end of some episodes (“True North” 1.9, 39:35–40:41). Most of the time, however, the plot of the individual episode is resolved at the end, while the overarching narrative of the season is in contrast wound up to a higher level of tension. In the first season, almost every episode begins with a summary of the most important data of the events: Thus, it is always explained that Mary Margaret is Snow White, that Regina is the Evil Queen, and that the latter has cast a curse to deny the fairy-tale heroes their happy endings (e.g., “The Thing You Love Most” 1.2: 00:01–00:28).

The narrative connection among the independent fairy tales is established mainly through the common otherworld and the fairy-tale characters living in it. The encounters between the characters of independent fairy tales, through which narrative connections emerge, are only possible because all the characters of the fairy-tale canon are at home in a common world. Some of them, most notably Rumpelstiltskin, The Evil Queen, and Snow White, are incorporated into a variety of fairy tales and stories in which they take on more or less central roles. There are many examples of this in the series, which vary in complexity. The Evil Queen's involvement in the fairy tale “Hansel and Gretel,” for example, is relatively simple. She takes on the role of the stepmother, who does not exist in the series, by separating the children from their father (“True North” 1.9: 02:55–03:46, 31:55–34:10). She then forces them to enter a house made of gingerbread and to steal something from the blind witch living there (“True North” 1.9: 11:48–13:24). The role of Rumpelstiltskin is much more complex (and often developed in Espenson-written episodes). On the one hand, he is the protagonist of his own fairy tale, spinning straw into gold for a miller's daughter and demanding her firstborn child in return (“The Miller's Daughter” 2.16: 11:20–11:40). On the other hand, he is also the one who initiates the casting of

the curse by the Evil Queen while pursuing his own goals (“The Return” 1.19: 05:20 05:35; “A Land Without Magic” 1.22: 39:38 39:56). In addition, Rumplestiltskin takes on the role of both the Beast from “La Belle et la Bête” (“Skin Deep” 1.12: 01:10 03:37) and the Crocodile from *Peter Pan* (“The Crocodile” 2.4: 14:30 14:45).¹¹ Within the series' own storyline, in most of the otherworlds he is also the most powerful wizard, called the Dark One, and is therefore sought out by a wide variety of characters when they need magical help (“That Still Small Voice” 1.5: 15:05 16:30). In exchange, they make deals with Rumplestiltskin, through which he eventually becomes more and more powerful (“7:15 A.M.” 1.10: 06:50 08:47; “Heart of Darkness” 1.16: 39:35 40:23). When new characters are introduced into the series, it often turns out that they have already met Rumplestiltskin.¹²

The new characters who are not part of the fairy-tale canon (in Season One, these are Emma, Neal, and Henry), hardly contribute to establishing narrative connections between the independent fairy tales. These connections are mainly established in the Enchanted Forest, which Neal left voluntarily, while Emma enters it only briefly, and Henry does not go there at all (“The Return” 1.19: 28:57 29:45; “Broken” 2.1: 40:32 40:38; “Queen of Hearts” 2.9: 31:48 33:35). These characters, however, provide a link between the main fairy-tale-based characters, as they establish a family connection between them: Neal is Rumplestiltskin's son (“Manhattan” 2.14: 05:15 05:40) and Henry's father (“Tallahassee” 2.6: 39:15 39:22; “Manhattan” 2.14: 28:08 28:18). Emma is Snow White's and Prince Charming's daughter (“Pilot” 1.1: 14:35 14:54) and Henry's mother (“Pilot” 1.1: 07:48 08:21). Henry is not only the son of Neal and Emma, but also the adopted child of Regina (“Pilot” 1.1: 18:52 20:10), who is Snow White's stepmother (“The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter” 1.7: 03:33 04:45), and the grandson of both Snow White and Prince Charming (“Broken” 2.1: 06:02 06:12) and

Rumpelstiltskin (“Manhattan” 2.14: 18:41 18:44; “The Queen Is Dead” 2.15: 16:34 16:40). Thus, the fairy-tale characters are brought into a family constellation that for the most part did not exist in the Enchanted Forest, but is established in the human world and resolved in Storybrooke (“Manhattan” 2.14: 18:40 19:12; “Tallahassee” 2.6: 39:15 39:22; “The Heart of the Truest Believer” 3.1: 00:01 01:07).

In *Once Upon a Time* the means of creating narrative connections between fairy tales and the factors establishing seriality clearly reinforce each other. The appearance of fairy-tale characters in fairy tales in which, according to the canon, they should not appear, provides a link between these tales. At the same time, this technique enables the use of a constant set of characters, since the fairy-tale characters have not yet fulfilled their roles after the end of their own fairy tales. This constant set of characters, in turn, ensures that the fairy-tale characters have to act ‘outside’ of their fairy tales, creating an escalating cycle. The factors establishing seriality according to the minimal definition are present in *Once Upon a Time*. In addition, the most important characters are introduced at the beginning and retained throughout the series. Consistent settings and recurring characters as well as summaries of previous events and cliffhangers further reinforce the impression of seriality. It should be noted, however, that the already existing fairy-tale characters take on roles that would have been played by other characters in the canonical fairy tales, characters which are thus replaced in the series. The new characters do not take part in establishing the narrative connections among the fairy tales, but they do create family relationships among the central fairy-tale characters. Thus, *Once Upon a Time* takes up the common idea of a fairy-tale realm, in which all fairy tales take place. What is new compared to other fairy-tale themed TV series that also make use of a fairy-tale land, like the Czechoslovakian series *Arabela* (1979 1981) or *The 10th*

Kingdom (2000), is that connections between these fairy tales are established by employing both fairy-tale and original characters.

***Once Upon a Time's* Web of Transtextual References**

Transtextual references in *Once Upon a Time* should be examined with a twofold focus. On the one hand, the interaction of the series with the canon fairy tales needs to be analyzed. On the other hand, the incorporation of Disney's fairy-tale films and self-references in *Once Upon a Time* must be considered. To analyze this web of references, the structuralist notion of intertextuality, which was reworked by Gérard Genette for literary studies, is effective. Genette coined the umbrella term “transtextuality” to summarize five types of relationships that can be established between texts (Genette 1). The first type is “intertextuality” which Genette defines as “the actual presence of one text within another” (Genette 2). Specific forms of intertextuality include quotation, plagiarism,¹³ and allusion (Genette 2). Genette calls the second form of transtextuality “paratextuality.” Paratexts are all the information that, in addition to the actual text, belong to a literary work, for example, the title. Paratextuality describes the relationship of a text to its paratexts (Genette 3 4). The third type is “metatextuality.” It refers to a critical relationship between two texts, in which one of the texts comments on the other without naming or quoting it. This critique is therefore often suggestive (Genette 4). “Hypertextuality” is the fourth form of transtextuality. It describes the relationship between a hypertext and an earlier hypotext. The hypertext could not exist without the hypotext it originates from, being the result of a transformative process. Genette describes two forms of transformation. While the “direct transformation” draws on

the action of the hypotext (a plot is reproduced in an altered form; Genette gives the example of *Ulysses* as a reproduction of the *Odyssey* transposed into the twentieth century), the “indirect transformation” or “imitation” mirrors the structure of the hypotext while conveying a different story (Genette continues to refer to the *Odyssey*, naming the *Aeneid* as a hypertext to it) (Genette 57). The fifth type Genette identifies is “architextuality.” The term “architext” denotes “the entire set of general and transcendent categories—types of discourse, modes of enunciation, literary genres—from which emerges each singular text” (Genette 1). Architextuality therefore describes an unarticulated relationship between a text and other texts, for example, through genre (Genette 45). These types can readily be applied to transtextual analyses of films and television as well (cf. Stanitzek; Gray).

Clearly, *Once Upon a Time* features a variety of fairy tales. “Snow White” and “Rumpelstiltskin” are indeed at the center of the series, but other stories, such as “Little Red Riding Hood,” *Peter Pan*, and “La Belle et la Bête,” are adapted as well. While these tales form the past of the respective characters in Storybrooke, the fairy tales are fleshed out and altered, with a focus on what happened after the respective fairy tale's happy ending. However, events that precede the fairy-tale plot and parts of the canonical versions are depicted as well. Since the fairy tales are modified in various ways, it is not possible to speak of one type of transtextuality that applies to all the fairy-tale incorporations. In sections in which the familiar fairy-tale plots are reproduced, some fairy-tale characters are replaced by characters from the series. For example, the function of the stepmother in “Hansel and Gretel,” as noted, is taken on by the Evil Queen: She ensures the separation of the two children from their father (“True North” 1.9: 02:55–03:46, 31:55–34:10). One character is exchanged for another, the

story remains basically the same, and only small changes are made. The adaptation of the fairy tale “Hansel and Gretel” can therefore be described as a direct hypertextual transformation. This also applies to the way the fairy tale “Cinderella” is integrated into the series when Rumpelstiltskin replaces the fairy godmother (“The Price of Gold” 1.4: 01:42 04:03). In addition, motifs from “Snow White” and “Rumpelstiltskin” are incorporated into “Hansel and Gretel” and “Cinderella,” respectively: The Evil Queen forces the children to steal an object that turns out to be the poisonous apple she later gives to Snow White (“True North” 1.9: 27:40 28:30), and Rumpelstiltskin demands Cinderella's first child in exchange for his help (“The Price of Gold” 1.4: 16:38 17:20), which corresponds to the payment he wants from the miller's daughter in his own fairy tale (Grimm and Grimm 274). These incorporations of motifs from the newly added characters' source fairy tales into the other stories can be regarded as intertextual allusions. They strengthen the connections between the individual fairy tales, moving beyond the mere interaction of two characters from different fairy tales.

The presentation of events happening before and after the well-known fairy-tale plots can be recognized as hypertextuality. Audience members can experience this recognition, whether or not they would use the term. The new parts of the narrative could not exist without the old fairy tales. Thus, the former are hypertexts to the fairy tales, which are the corresponding hypotexts. An example for this is the reason that the Evil Queen wants to kill Snow White, which is presented in more detail compared to the fairy tale. It is not an attempt to eliminate a more beautiful and younger competitor, but an act of revenge since Snow White is indirectly responsible for the death of Regina's lover. As a result, Regina turns evil and becomes queen, since she only agrees to marry Snow White's father afterwards (“The Stable

Boy” 1.18: 29:50 37:10; “We Are Both” 2.2: 32:41 33:50). Adding material like this, which illustrates motivations and backstories, contributes to reworking the fairy-tale archetypes into rounded characters. *Once Upon a Time* is a long-running television series with an ongoing, complex plot, which is driven by the characters. Thus, retaining the fairy-tale archetypes, whose origin stories often only comprise a few pages, would not suffice to carry the narrative.

Many of the changes between the fairy-tale canon and the television series that have not been addressed yet can be traced back to the Disney fairy-tale films. Their inclusion in *Once Upon a Time* is closely connected to the production of the series. The ABC Studios belong to the Walt Disney Company, which is therefore also involved in the production of *Once Upon a Time*, especially regarding the rights to their animated fairy-tale films. For instance, Kitsis and Horowitz requested permission to use the characters from *Frozen* in the fourth season of the series, instead of directly adapting Andersen's “The Snow Queen” (Hibberd; Ng). Overall, a high affinity for Disney's fairy-tale adaptations can be observed in *Once Upon a Time*, which at least in part accounts for the high frequency of references to these films (cf. “Fairy Tales in the Modern World”). References to other aspects of popular culture, such as *Harry Potter*, are also present. Compared to the Disney references, however, they are of only minor relevance for the series and therefore will be considered merely in passing. The following analysis of transtextual references to Disney's fairy-tale adaptations does not further explore the involvement of the Walt Disney Company in the production of *Once Upon a Time*, but that involvement should be kept in mind.

The incorporation of songs, costumes, names, motifs, and plot elements from the Disney fairy-tale films is omnipresent in *Once Upon a Time*. The showrunners

apparently presumed that the viewers are familiar with the Disney films, as some characters refer to them both directly and indirectly, creating a metatextual relationship between *Once Upon a Time* and the fairy-tale films produced by Disney.¹⁴ In the following, a few examples will be given for each of the mentioned categories, and the changes made in comparison to the Disney version will be addressed. Many of these changes enable the creation of connections between multiple Disney films, making some of the references to the Disney fairy-tale adaptations both intertextual and hypertextual.

Once Upon a Time refers to some songs known from Disney fairy-tale films, including “Heigh Ho” from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (“Dreamy” 1.14: 10:15 10:28; Hand et al. 00:23:01 00:24:23) and an instrumental version of “Beauty and the Beast” (“A Tale of Two Sisters” 4.1: 18:55 19:31; Trousdale and Wise 01:03:08 01:05:48) from *Beauty and the Beast*. The inclusion of these songs might be regarded as intertextual plagiarism, since they are used without mentioning the source. “Beauty and the Beast” could also be classified as an intertextual allusion since only the instrumental version of the song without the original lyrics is used. However, since the music is not changed, it would not be considered a hypertextual transformation despite this deviation. One reason for implementing references to music is the evocation of nostalgia, which is an important concept in twenty-first century Disney fairy-tale productions, including *Once Upon a Time*, as has been pointed out by Tracy Mollet (Mollet 98 99).

There are some instances when the characters’ clothing from the Disney fairy-tale films can be recognized in the costumes of the characters in *Once Upon a Time*, which also evokes nostalgia. Cinderella's ball gown (“The Price of Gold” 1.4: 03:40 04:03; Geronimi et al. 00:46:50 00:47:20), Anna's and Elsa's dresses (“A Tale of Two Sisters” 4.1: 41:42 42:06;

Buck and Lee 00:15:39 00:16:40), and both Rumpelstiltskin's suit and Belle's dress ("A Tale of Two Sisters" 4.1: 18:50 19:30; Trousdale and Wise 01:03:07 01:08:01) in a scene based on the dance from *Beauty and the Beast* are particularly close to these models. These references are intertextual allusions, as the costumes are strongly based on the drawn clothes, but do not resemble them exactly. In addition to nostalgia, the association that already exists between fairy tales and Disney is reinforced by indicating that this is the music that belongs to those fairy tales, and that the fairy-tale characters look exactly like this, no matter how much the stories change.

While many characters in the fairy-tale canon have no names or carry only telling or descriptive names, all characters in *Once Upon a Time* are named as part of their becoming characters instead of archetypes. In many cases, the choice of names is based on the Disney adaptations, provided that an adaptation of the relevant fairy tale exists. For example, the sleeping beauty is called Aurora in accordance with the animated film, her prince is called Phillip, and the evil fairy is called Maleficent ("Broken" 2.1: 03:03 03:56; "The Thing You Love Most" 1.2: 05:51 06:02; Geronimi et al. 00:02:03 00:02:48, 00:04:23 00:04:43, 00:07:40 00:09:30). The characters whose names stem from the Disney films also include the ensemble of Andersen's "The Little Mermaid," which since Disney's *The Little Mermaid* consists of Ariel, Eric, and Ursula ("Ariel" 3.6: 01:30 01:33, 04:24 04:30, 05:07 05:11; Clements and Musker 00:04:15 00:04:20, 00:20:40 00:21:05, 00:36:35 00:37:52). There are several other examples in *Once Upon a Time* where the characters' names are taken from Disney films. Since the origins of the names are not mentioned, their use can be regarded as intertextual plagiarism in Genette's sense of the term. Mollet shows that Disney uses *Once Upon a Time* to support their position as an integral part of the fairy-tale canon, replacing older versions of the fairy tales rather than

existing alongside them (Mollet 89).¹⁵ Keeping the names the audience is familiar with from the Disney films contributes to the impression that these films tell the “original” stories to which *Once Upon a Time* refers while relating the “true” versions of them. The way in which the series does that, by respecting the Disney legacy despite making changes, thus strengthens Disney’s claim on the fairy tales.

Many motifs introduced to the fairy tales through the Disney films have been incorporated into the series. The kiss with which Prince Charming awakens Snow White from her sleep (“Pilot” 1.1: 01:05 02:05; Hand et al. 01:20:20 01:21:35) and the happy ending of the Little Mermaid with her prince (“The Jolly Roger” 3.17: 37:21 38:20; Clements and Musker 01:14:18 01:17:55) are only two examples. However, motivic references to other films of the Walt Disney Company can also be found. One of the most famous Disney motifs is Mickey’s magic hat from the movie *Fantasia* (1940). It exists in *Once Upon a Time* initially as an intertextual allusion, being visible in Rumplestiltskin’s castle (“Skin Deep” 1.12: 08:18 08:28). In the fourth season, however, “the sorcerer’s hat” (“A Tale of Two Sisters” 4.1: 38:58 40:09; “The Apprentice” 4.4, 00:24 03:05) becomes an object of great importance to some characters (“The Apprentice” 4.4: 02:40 03:05, 23:58 24:22; “Darkness on the Edge of Town” 4.12: 02:58 03:13). Here, a part of the plot of *Fantasia*, the section “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice,” which is based on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s poem “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice,” is taken up.¹⁶ Since these motifs are included in *Once Upon a Time* as well as adapted to its plot, their employment can be regarded as both intertextual and hypertextual. Again, the series’ affinity with Disney becomes apparent in the way it alludes to their films, even those that would not necessarily be considered fairy-tale adaptations (albeit belonging to the fantastic genre).

An important plotline in *Once Upon a Time* that spans several episodes is the meeting of Snow White and Prince Charming. While the two do not meet in the Grimm version of the fairy tale until the prince has Snow White's body brought to his castle and she awakens due to a concussion (Grimm and Grimm 265-266), an encounter between them is one of the first scenes in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Hand et al. 00:04:48-00:07:15). In the first season of the series, falling in love, various relationship difficulties, and finally the wedding of the two characters take up a large part of the story in the Enchanted Forest ("Pilot" 1.1: 02:09-02:30; "Snow Falls" 1.3: 32:50-35:01). However, since all of this is portrayed very differently than in the Disney version, intertextuality in Genette's sense cannot be assumed at this point. Instead, this elaboration is hypertextual, drawing on an aspect of the plot introduced by Disney, namely the acquaintance of Prince Charming and Snow White before she awakes from the death-like sleep. Thus, while drawing heavily on the Disney fairy-tale films, *Once Upon a Time* still reworks their plots and the fairy tales into a story of its own.

There are many other references to the productions of the Walt Disney Company in *Once Upon a Time* apart from these examples. However, there are also references to other pop culture phenomena, especially to the television series *Lost* (2004-2010)¹⁷ and the movie *Tron: Legacy* (2010) ("The Stranger" 1.20, 09:00-09:29), for which the creators of *Once Upon a Time* wrote scripts (Seiler 313). Young adult literature, like *Harry Potter* (1997-2007) ("Breaking Glass" 4.5: 18:30-18:40; "Heroes and Villains" 4.11, 22:02-22:18), and Marvel comics like *Wolverine* (1974) also make an appearance ("Smash the Mirror" 4.8: 35:40-35:51). These references are mostly intertextual allusions. Since the relevance of these allusions is rather low compared to the references to the fairy-tale films by Disney, they will not be examined in more detail. However, these allusions indicate that the web of

references established by *Once Upon a Time* goes beyond Disney.

The series' metatextual as well as architextual engagement with its own nature is of comparatively little significance as well. A frequently recurring example of self-reference with a focus on the rules that apply in fairy tales (and thus in *Once Upon a Time*) is the statement that good triumphs while evil does not receive a happy ending ("Pilot" 1.1: 17:36 18:00, 35:35 35:46; "The Stranger" 1.20, 09:35 09:48; "Queen of Hearts" 2.9: 25:31 25:35, 30:05 30:35; "The Heart of the Truest Believer" 3.1: 04:23 04:49, 05:23 05:31). Similarly, Neal's announcement that the events in the Enchanted Forest are considered fairy tales in the human world reinforces the connection that *Once Upon a Time* has with the genre of fairy tales ("The Heart of the Truest Believer" 3.1: 18:20 18:40). It might even be argued that the series fashions itself to be a modern fairy tale by employing fairy-tale plots and motifs in Storybrooke and thus outside of its fairy-tale retellings.

Once again, to generate transtextuality, in *Once Upon a Time* the canon fairy tales are used as individual backstories for the various characters. For this purpose, the fairy tales are strongly fleshed out and linked with each other. This is done with the help of characters and motifs that are not actually part of the fairy tales being told. The processing of the fairy tales occurs predominantly in the form of intertextual allusions, but hypertextual procedures are also employed. A great variety of references to the Disney fairy-tale films can be found in *Once Upon a Time*, which is not least due to the involvement of the Walt Disney Company in the production of the series: songs, costumes, names, motifs, and plot aspects from the world of Disney appear in the series. In terms of transtextuality types, there are intertextual plagiarism as well as intertextual allusions. The influence of the Walt Disney Company's fairy-tale adaptations on the

series is so dominant that transtextual references to other pop culture phenomena and the series' own nature must be classified as comparatively irrelevant. Those transtextual references to the genre of fairy tales can be classified as architextual, since they establish a connection to other texts of the same genre. However, since they are not completely unarticulated relationships due to their commentary function, these references might also be categorized as metatextual. The web of transtextual references in the series simultaneously evokes nostalgia and challenges the audience's preconceptions about fairy tales and their adaptations. The result is a complex text that prompts viewers to look for the familiar while constantly highlighting the differences between itself and the presumably well-known stories and characters.

Conclusion

This article has explored the question of how European fairy tales, whose plots are self-contained and whose respective characters commonly appear only in a single story, are incorporated into the long-running television series *Once Upon a Time*. The use of opposing worlds, the role canonical fairy tales play for the series as a whole, the creation of a narrative connection between these fairy tales, and the web of references that is created by *Once Upon a Time* create a complex text.

In *Once Upon a Time*, while the otherworlds tend to be explored, explained, and visualized in more detail, the human world is presented as being identical to the audience's factual world and therefore does not require detailed explanation. The action is set in motion when the border between these worlds is crossed, because a father-son conflict has come to affect previously uninvolved characters

in both worlds. Additionally, the otherworlds play an integral part in establishing relations between individual fairy tales because they enable the respective characters to interact in these shared spaces.

Fairy tales are important for the overall conception of the series, but the canonical versions of fairy tales are of rather minor importance for the plot of *Once Upon a Time*. Fairy tales are introduced into the series in the form of embedded narratives or flashbacks and function as basis for the development of the series' storylines. There is a tendency to change them and to detach their characters from the well-known plots in order to create new narratives. Thus, fairy tales also serve as a starting point for character development. However, this procedure both preserves the fairy-tale material and updates it for contemporary audiences, since it creates a tension between retelling the familiar stories and undermining audience expectations.

While *Once Upon a Time* uses common strategies to create the impression of seriality, such as a consistent theme and a fixed set of central characters, the methods used to bring the various fairy tales into an overall narrative context are highly individual. Although a shared fairy-tale realm enables various fairy-tale characters to meet, it is their involvement in each other's stories that distinguishes *Once Upon a Time* from other fairy-tale-themed series. Thus, aspects that create the impression of seriality and techniques that establish narrative connections between individual fairy tales reinforce one another. The canonical fairy tales are used as a basis for telling new, often equally fairy-tale-like stories, while simultaneously being assigned certain functions for the overall plot. In order to fulfill these functions, the fairy tales are modified and linked to each other.

Apart from incorporating fairy tales into every part of the series, *Once Upon a Time* also establishes a web of other transtextual references. Most of them are connected to the

Walt Disney Company's fairy-tale films, which can be explained by the company's involvement in the series' production. Many of these references are intertextual in nature, but metatextual and hypertextual references occur as well. They aim to evoke nostalgia for the Disney fairy-tale films and to strengthen the association of fairy tales with Disney. There are nevertheless references to other pop culture phenomena, mostly in the form of intertextual allusions. Compared with the references to Disney, they have a relatively small relevance for the series as a whole. The same can be said about self-referential comments, which create architextual and metatextual references to the genre of fairy tales.

Christoph Schmitt is right when he says that the European fairy tale does not know serial heroes. However, this circumstance need not necessarily stand in the way of reworking the material into a television series. Seriality is also, but not exclusively, established through a constant set of characters. In *Once Upon a Time*, seriality is not solely based on the fairy-tale material, but rather general factors establishing seriality are at work. However, the fairy tales are linked on a narratological level by three specific features of the series: a common otherworld, the integration of canon fairy tales into the narrated world, and references to earlier fairy-tale adaptations. By establishing these relations, *Once Upon a Time* goes beyond the usage of fairy tales (and other tales) that can be observed in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* by promoting them from an underlying, reoccurring theme to a central aspect of world building and storytelling in the series. The idea of fairy tales being real that is put forward in the Espenson-written "Gingerbread" (*BtVS* 3.11) is elaborated on in *Once Upon a Time* when its creators (including Espenson) make the fairy-tale characters inhabitants of "our world." Thus, it seems that *Once Upon a Time* has more to say about

these characters than either the canon fairy tales or a few “monster of the week” episodes.

Notes

¹ An early version of this article was presented as a paper at the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association conference, online, June 2021.

² The phrase recalls the opening voiceover repeated in early episodes of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

³ When speaking of European fairy tales, I am referring primarily to the stories that were written down in the period between 1697 and 1858 in European fairy-tale collections. Examples include but are not limited to the *Histoires ou contes du temps passé, avec des moralités (Contes de ma Mère l'Oye)* (1697) by Charles Perrault and the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812-1858) by the Brothers Grimm as well as other folk/fairy tales, e.g., “La Belle et la Bête” (1740), and literary fairy tales like the ones by Hans Christian Andersen. Furthermore, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871) by Lewis Carroll, *Le avventure di Pinocchio* (1881) by Carlo Collodi and *Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* (1904) by J. M. Barrie might be considered part of a “European fairy-tale canon” because of their use of fairy-tale themes. The problems that the concept of a canon entails cannot be thoroughly discussed here. The term will be used to refer to those fairy tales that have been (re)told time and time again, rendering them especially popular and well-known. The use of the term canon for these European versions of the tales is not meant to imply superiority above other versions of those tales or other, lesser-known fairy tales in general.

⁴ In *Once Upon a Time* at least two different worlds are portrayed, one magical and the other non-magical. The non-magical world is referred to as the ‘human world’ because it is primarily inhabited by human characters.

⁵ ‘Fantastic literature’ serves as an umbrella term for literary works in which something happens that cannot be explained with the understanding of the recipients’ factual world.

⁶ The curse has mainly positive effects on Regina (“The Thing You Love Most” 1.2: 14:26 14:45; “Welcome to Storybrooke” 2.17: 02:58 06:23, 11:20 14:00), while Emma, Pinocchio/August, and Baelfire/Neal left the Enchanted Forest

before the curse was cast (“Pilot” 1.1: 31:15 31:58; “The Return” 1.19: 28:57 29:45; “The Stranger” 1.20: 24:45 27:05, 28:35 29:15).

⁷ An example for this is Little Red Riding Hood, who is herself the wolf of her story, as can be seen in “Red-Handed” (*OuAT* 1.15) and “Child of the Moon” (*OuAT* 2.7).

⁸ For an overview on feminist fairy-tale scholarship cf. Haase.

⁹ The use of a storybook as camera focus before and after the visualization of the actual action can also be found at the beginning and the end of early Disney fairy-tale adaptations, for example *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Cinderella* (1950), and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959).

¹⁰ This frame has not been closed in the same manner (white sentences on a black screen), arguably not being closed at all since the final scene shows the town line of Storybrooke and the road sign saying “Leaving Storybrooke” (“Leaving Storybrooke” 7.22: 43:05 43:11).

¹¹ By cutting off Hook's hand (“The Crocodile” 2.4: 28:20 28:58), Rumplestiltskin takes on a more active role than the crocodile in Barrie's story and in Disney's *Peter Pan* (1953). In both works, it is Peter Pan who cuts off the pirate's hand, while the crocodile merely eats it. Later, it turns out that Peter Pan is actually Rumplestiltskin's father (“Think Lovely Thoughts” 3.8: 29:03 31:00; Geilert and Voorgang 171).

¹² This is especially, but not exclusively, true of antagonists like Cora, Zelena, and Ingrid (“We Are Both” 2.2: 13:30 14:53; “The Miller's Daughter” 2.16: 10:10 12:20, 16:50 20:24, 22:58 25:44, 34:05 36:05; “It's Not Easy Being Green” 3.16: 15:25 16:15, 20:09 22:56; “The Snow Queen” 4.7, 24:20 27:05).

¹³ Just as in academic contexts, “plagiarism” as a form of intertextuality means using an other's work without indication and without referencing the source. Here, however, no valuation is implied by Genette. In the filmic medium, plagiarism is more common than quotations, since the usage of quotation marks as an easy form of indication is not generally possible. Still, if the source is referenced in other ways, for example by naming it in the context of the quoted material, it could be classified as quotation instead of plagiarism.

¹⁴ Understanding certain story arcs requires knowledge of the Disney films. In the fourth season, for instance, there are many references to the film *Frozen*. Overall, the reception of fairy tales is additionally portrayed as tied to the reception of images, as evidenced by a statement Emma makes that Henry “thinks everyone is a cartoon character from it [the book]” (“Pilot” 1.1: 20:59 21:01).

¹⁵ Mollet even uses the term “Disney fairy tale canon” to describe their versions of well-known fairy tales (Mollet 10).

¹⁶ Another example would be the brooms appearing in *Once Upon a Time* (“The Apprentice” 4.4: 03:05 03:10; “The Snow Queen” 4.7: 23:00 23:12; “Darkness on the Edge of Town” 4.12: 08:28 09:08) and in *Fantasia* (Algar and Armstrong 00:27:22 00:29:20). Additionally, Disney's filmic adaptation of Goethe's ballad establishes a hypertextual relationship between this text, the film, and the series.

¹⁷ In addition to contextual, mostly intertextual allusions, such as the appearance of “Apollo” candy bars (“That Still Small Voice” 1.5: 10:35 10:36; “7:15 A.M.” 1.10: 08:53 08:56) parallels in terms of analeptic storytelling between both series can be identified (cf. Seiler 314).

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