THE PRICE OF MAGIC: A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF ABC'S

ONCE UPON A TIME

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ABSTRACT

The television series, *Once Upon A Time*, has challenged the traditional fairytale genre with fractured storylines, new character plots and the idea that characters are no longer just heroes and villains, but rather encompass both characteristics as their stories progress. Analyzing the first and fourth season of the series, this research uses Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm and Ernest Bormann's fantasy theme analysis to look at character development, narrative techniques and rhetorical visions as they portray to the vision of heroes and villains in *Once Upon A Time*.

Keywords: Once Upon A Time, Fantasy Theme Analysis, Narrative Paradigm, Narrative Techniques, fairytales, heroes, and villains.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Happy endings are not necessarily the focus of the ABC Series "Once Upon a Time." According to the Snow White character in the series, "Your happy ending may not be what you expect. That is what will make it so special" (Mary Margaret, season one, episode one, 2011). The fairy tale world is filled with happily ever after and triumphant victories over the villain in most stories. The prince always wins the princess and the evil queen is banished from the kingdom. These stories have become somewhat of a treasure within society; a gift that has been passed down from generation to generation. They present the simple ideal that everything can end with a happily ever after.

This simple archetype is what co-creators, Edward Kitsis and Adam Horowitz, had in mind when they crafted the fractured fairytale world of ABC's *Once Upon A Time* (*OUAT*). Bringing fantasy to reality, *OUAT* is a series that tests viewers' knowledge of the fairy tales they loved growing up while bringing a modern twist to the characters. "This is Fairy Tale Land. It's filled with magic, monsters and all of the characters we all know from stories growing up. It's real, and so are the people in it" ("About," 2011, para. 1). The dark curse, bringing the characters from the Enchanted Forest to the viewers' world, spread over fictional Storybrooke, Maine, on October 23, 2011, when Kitsis and

Horowitz collaborated with ABC studios to create the series. Bringing beloved fairy tale characters to the television screen, the series is centered on one thing: hope.

> For us, that's what a fairy tale is. It's that ability to think your life will get better. Adam and I just wanted to write about something hopeful that for one hour a week allows one to put everything aside and have that feeling that your dreams just may come true. ("Kitsis, About," 2011, para. 4)

The meaning of hope extends not only to the heroes of the story, but also to the villains as they participate in their own journeys. This television series allows the audience to experience the other side of the stories they grew up with and creates a new perception of the characters, good and bad.

Looking at the aspect of hope, the purpose of this study was to analyze *OUAT* and how the series has challenged the definition of heroes and villains and the expectations that fall into these character archetypes. This study examines the genre of fractured fairy tales and how narrative structure, scene setting, and gender challenge the traditional genre. Fractured fairy tales have become popular in recent years with shows such as *OUAT* and *Grimm* (2011) and movies like *Mirror Mirror* (2012) and *Happily N'Ever After* (2006). These shows twist the customary tales to entice a new generation, but these twisted tales aren't just showing up in film and television; authors are essentially creating a new genre of fractured fairy tales through a long list of books such as *Wicked* (2007), *An Unfortunate Fairytale* (2012), *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister* (2000), *Dorothy Must Die* (2015), and *Cinder* (2013) to name a few. Using Bormann's symbolic convergence theory and fantasy theme analysis (1972) and Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm (1984), I examine how the dramatis personae, plotline, and scene create a

master analogue of the overall vision of *OUAT's* characters and how it presents a sanctioning agent for their righteous and malicious personas. By looking at the shared group consciousness of the people of the Enchanted Forest, who now reside in Storybrooke, ME, the fictional town that the characters *of OUAT* dwell in, I deconstructed the social reality of who becomes a hero or a villain based on the character, their actions, and the setting in which they reside. Within this analysis, I describe crucial situations for four characters' plotlines that appear in Season One and how they dramatically change as the seasons develop and are played out in Season Four.

Rationale

Bouncing from Storybrooke, ME, the Enchanted Forest, New York, NY, Neverland, and Arendelle, *OUAT* spans several eras of the fairy tale world. From fighting off dragons to the worst villains of the fairy tale worlds, *OUAT* has covered it all and then some when it comes to the classic stories, but like magic, there is always a twist. Horowitz talked about their changes as something more than just a continuation of the tales.

> We're sort of trying to build out our own world and use these characters as the jumping off point for telling this larger story that we're trying to tell about what is essentially a new fairy tale character – the child of Snow White and Prince Charming, Emma Swan, and how she gets embroiled in this huge battle of good versus evil. (Rome, 2012, para 8)

Similar to authors like Gregory Maguire and Chanda Hahn, the writers of *Wicked* and *An Unfortunate Fairytale* respectively*,* Horowitz and Kitsis are using their audience's knowledge of the fairytale word to create a whole new story and develop familiar

characters in ways we have never seen before. This development modernizes narrative

techniques and characterization. Jennifer Morrison, the actress who plays Emma on

OUAT, believes that this modern day fairytale gives us a new profound connection into

the world of stories.

> How do you create a modern day fairytale that has been birthed from these
>
> legendary fairy tales? From a psychological standpoint, fairy tales are about
>
> discovery, which is why people are connected to this material and why people are
>
> connected to fairytales seemingly from the beginning of time. (ABC Studios,
>
> 2011.)

This goes back to the idea that Ingall's presents about fairytales being a reflection of our

inner thoughts and ideas. We learn from these stories and develop ideas of right and

wrong from them, even when they have been modernized, like this series.

The importance of *OUAT* in the scheme of fairy-tale retellings is that it provides a

way of filling in holes and making all of these stories complete and connected. The

creators not only allow us to see what happens to our favorite characters after we read the

last page of the book, but also show us that Snow White and Little Red Riding Hood are

best friends. They let us see how Prince Charming became the hero and why the Evil

Queen and Captain Hook are on the same team. "The fracture in the literary fairy tale,

whether a seam of pain or a narrative fissure, has been the pivotal point for fairy-tale

research since the brothers Grimm" (Blackwell, 1987, p. 163). The importance of

studying fairy tales, especially fractured ones, allows the continuation of beloved stories

and how they shape our culture. For example, the book and Broadway show *Wicked,* has

given us a contemporary twist on *The Wizard of Oz* and shed light on a classic in a new

generation. Gone are the ancient ideals of villains and heroes, of princesses and princes, and here comes the idea that anyone can control the outcome of their stories.

OUAT's significance in the realm of ratings proves that fairytales never stop interesting their audience; they just have to be updated to fit their needs. In March 2015, *OUAT* remained the top show for the young-adult crowd (Kissell, 2015). Four years after its conception and premiere, the show is rated number 12 among the most watched shows via DVR (Bibel, 2015), bringing the re-tellings of the classics to viewers across the world. No longer do we need to be told that happy-endings are the end all; adults know better. Instead, the fractured re-tellings that *OUAT* brings to screen allows the audience to indulge in old favorites in a new way.

In order to best analyze *OUAT* and how it has changed the perspective of the characters traditionally found in fairy tales, the role of a hero and a villain must first be established and connected to the genre of fairy tales. This role, which is constantly challenged from episode to episode, is one of the reasons the audience keeps coming back.

> It's interesting to note that it's the supposed "bad guys" in the show who are the most sympathetic and loved by the audience. And therein lies one of the great successes of *Once Upon a Time*. The delineation between "good" and "bad" is consistently and successfully broken down in the show, giving it a richness and moral depth. (Medendorp, 2012, para. 3)

With the lines of good and evil blurred within the constructs of society on a daily basis, the allusion to it in a fairy tale world allows the audience to see their own lives reflected in a less complicated way. There isn't just good and evil to teach lessons-as was the case

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in childhood, there is growth, failure and redemption. This allows the story to grow with the audience, instead of it becoming archaic and un-relatable.

Of course the role of Walt Disney pictures also plays a part in not only creating the series and some of its characters' storylines, but also bringing out the inner child of those watching. Credited as one of the main creators of happily ever after, the parent company of ABC helps ensure we get the traditional with a twist. Each of these aspects reveals how the television show is shaped and how it begins to mold its own fractured version of the fairy tales we know.

Description of the Artifact

Now in its sixth season, ABC's *OUAT* has been nominated for six Emmy Awards. According to IMDb, the show is rated an eight of 10 from over 161,928 IMDb users. *OUAT* is not only popular with fans, but with critics. Rotten Tomatoes has given all the seasons an average rating of 81% by film and television critics on their website (Rotten Tomatoes, 2015). It has been nominated for three Primetime Emmy Awards, three Academy of Science Fiction and Fantasy & Horror awards, three People's Choice Awards, three Online Film & Television Association awards, three Satellite Awards, and four Teen Choice Awards. Additionally, they have won a Young Artist Award, two TV Guide Awards, and one Joey Award (IMDB, 2015). Its admiration from fans and critics the past five years has shown that it is making an impact in the world of narratives and television.

The story concept developed by Kitsis and Horowitz concerns the small town of Storybrooke, Maine, where the fairy tale characters are transported from the Enchanted Forest by a spell cast by the Evil Queen (Regina). Because of the curse, all of the fairy

tale characters have forgotten their true identities until Henry (Emma's son) finds Emma and brings her back to Storybrooke. In the first season, Emma successfully ends the curse, which allows all the characters to recognize their true fairy tale identity. The second season of the series saw the introduction of magic into Storybrooke by Rumplestilskin (Mr. Gold) that leads to the intertwining of the world of Storybrooke and the fairy tale world. Season Three took the characters away from Storybrooke to Neverland where the Evil Queen, Snow White, Prince Charming, Rumplestiltskin, and Captain Hook are all searching for the boy, Henry, who has been spirited away by a malicious Peter Pan. Season Four introduces the audience to the world of Frozen and gives background to Emma's childhood. Season Four additionally challenges the concept of heroes and villains as many well known villains try to earn their happy endings. ("About," 2011).

Along with the idea of hope, *OUAT* focuses on motherhood and the different relationships that can be associated with it. In each season, the two themes of hope and motherhood are central to character development and their narratives. My research focused on the first and fourth seasons. Concentrating on two heroes, Emma Swan and Prince Charming (David Nolan) and two villains, The Evil Queen (Regina Mills) and Rumplestitskin (Mr. Gold), these two seasons establish the characters' journey through the television series and their rise and fall as heroes and villains within the structure of a fractured fairy tale. By choosing these four particular characters, the research reflects the hero and the villain archetype, as well as their transition and struggles to become something more. All four of these characters internally battle to maintain their moral

center as they see it, as well as externally battle with those around them and the magic that is present in each fictional realm.

Focusing on character development within traditional stories, *OUAT* lets the audience envision what could have happened to their favorites and what caused their most hated characters to become the villains they are. Horowitz affirmed, "To us, that's much more interesting, exploring the missing pieces rather than retelling the story" (Campbell, 2011, para. 11). Digging deeper and allowing the viewer to connect to each character on a more intimate level then their original stories, Horowitz and Kitsis present "mash-ups" of stories. "They tap into particular western approaches to fairy tales, expanding from some of the more popular stories. While incorporating many traditional elements, they also challenge certain aspects" (Taber, 2013, p. 8). Explaining exactly why the Evil Queen is evil or why Grumpy is grumpy, the creators set out to reclaim the world of fairy tales and reexamine the characters that drive the story. Kitsis explained, "We are trying to do our own take on fairy tales and the mythology and try to create our own mythology" (Campbell, 2011, para. 5). The fairy tale is changing and, "a whole new generation is getting their happy endings" (Regina, season 4, episode 15). Heroes are struggling with past mistakes, while villains are using their power for the sake of the kingdom. In this twist of fate, characters are no longer defined as just one persona, but can encompass the good and evil temperaments of their character. It all comes down to the fact that *OUAT* represents each fairy tale with a fractured outlook. Anything can essentially happen to these characters.

<center>**Research Questions**</center>

Looking into the field of research present over hero narratives, this research extends the view of a fractured fairytales and how *OUAT* is challenging narrative archetypes. I also extend the definition of a hero and his/her journey in mythological sense as it applies it to the fairy tale narrative. Furthermore, my study looks into the narrative genre of fractured fairy tales, and what elements it entails. Examining the stories told within the television series, *OUAT,* will provide important insights into the different facets of mediated fractured fairy tales. My study sought to identify and answer the following questions:

> RQ1: How has *Once Upon a Time* challenged how we define a "hero" and a "villain"?
>
> RQ2: What narrative techniques are used to determine the likability of heroes and villains?
>
> RQ3: How does gender of the hero/villain impact the story line?

These three questions hit on many of the concepts that Kitsis and Horowitz had in mind when initially writing the show. They wanted to have strong female characters and explain both the heroes side of the story and the villains version, in hopes that both tales would shed light on fairytales plots. To answer these questions, research on heroes and villains within literature, fairytale origins, and Disney's twist on fairytales must first be looked at.

Heroes and Villains

According to Camara (year), the idea of heroes and villains was created for an audience to have someone to relate to. Whether we suffer or celebrate with them, these

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textual beings allow us to dig deeper into our psyche and channel emotions. It allows us to recognize motifs and traits that symbolize who we are and the role we attribute to society (Arenas & Camara, 2011, p. 1). So where does the villain's role in the whole scheme of things stand?

> The villain, then, is much more than a character who opposes the hero or a deliberate scoundrel or criminal. The villain is the maker, the plotter of the story. Yet, s/he only belongs to the realm of stories. Without the villain, a hero simply would not be. (Arenas & Camara, 2011, p. 151)

Without the villains the heroes have no significance, they have no journey to go on and really no story to tell. Villains in many ways are the roots of literary narratives, because they encompass the reasoning and need for the heroes.

According to Joseph Campbell, a hero is someone who has "extraordinary powers (and) is able to lift Mount Govardhan on a finger, and to fill himself [sic] with the terrible glory of the universe – is each of us: not the physical self visible in the mirror, but the king within" (Campbell, 2008, p. 315). Describing such a personality creates a vision of what a hero is meant to be in all types of mythologies. Ramaswamy (2014) reiterates that heroes are those who overcome doubt from superiors and accomplish any obstacle set in their way. Ramaswamy, like Campbell, doesn't believe that a hero needs to be gifted in any way, but should have a sense of justice that carries him/her along a journey (Ramaswamy, 2014, p. 20). Essentially, both authors suggest that a hero can be anyone in any situation.

These symbols become the vision in which readers/viewers denote reoccurring story plots and characterization. Villate (2012) concludes that everyone has a chance to

be a hero and will become the Orphan, the Wanderer, the Warrior, the Altruist, the

Innocent, or the Magician. These six archetypes categorize heroes and what task and gift

they are given along their journey. "Heroes or myths, like Odysseus, are often scarred by

marks of distinction, reminders of brave battles fought and these give special identity to

the bearer" (Ramaswamy, 2010, p. 17). Heroes are distinctly marked by their journey,

just like their audience is marked in some way. This is why we as readers and viewers

can relate and find ourselves within the realms of a narrative.

Taking form at the end of the fourteenth century, folklorists such as Charles

Perrault (1628-1703) and Madame d'Aulnoy in France aided the well-known brothers

Jacob and Wihelm Grimm in Germany in commencing the fairy tale genre. Based on

mythical cores, the literary constructions were mirrored through history (Gruian, 2011).

Beginning with the Grimm brothers, western fairy tales began to take the shape of

lessons, based around different mythos. Writing some of the most well-beloved stories

such as *Cinderella, The Frog Prince, Hansel and Gretel*, *Rapunzel*, *Sleeping Beauty*,

Snow White, and *Rumpelstiltskin,* the brothers published the first collections of folk tales*,*

Children's and Household Tales, in 1812. Hans Christian Anderson, a Dutch author,

followed their lead in the 1800s and told tales such as *The Emperor's New Clothes*, *The*

Little Mermaid, *The Nightingale,* and *The Snow Queen.* Gruian (2011) writes that fairy

tales are written to be adaptable to be molded into the concerns of today.

Demonstrating the power of stories, Anderson taught about the power of humility,

innocence and sacrifice.

Along with modernization in society, these mythical morphologies from fairy

tales were affected by the demitization phenomenon. We are witnessing the

degradation of sacred and falling into profane, aspect that is obvious in literary

fairy tales due to creation of fantastic characters. (Gurian, 2011, p. 113)

Stories and their characters have morphed into what the society of the time needs. In today's society, a happy ending is the expected outcome of these tales. With the white knight saving the day and the evil witch being banished eternally forever,

we have constructed illusions of life stories revealed through "once upon a time"

and "happily ever after" narratives of our childhood. This illusion, juxtaposed

against real life narratives that occasionally just end, creates a dissonance between

our desire for resolution and the reality of lived experiences. (Purnell & Bowman,

2014, p. 177)

Fairy tales give audiences a way to escape their own troubles, all while recognizing how they fit into the scheme of the story. They are relatable, but allow us to change the ending to fit what we would describe as our own happiness.

Shifting from lessons that would intimidate the reader from various moral situations in life, fairy tales have become a way for readers and viewers to live out their dreams and find a happy conclusion. "'Happyendingifcation' refers to our indoctrination of happy endings through fairytales and Hollywood films" (Purnell & Bowman, 2014, p. 178). But where did the need for a happy ending come from? Fairy tales often ended with a death and depicted the hero as someone who stepped away learning that life isn't about what is easy or what we want, but rather about living morally solid. Over time, the overall lesson turned into something more positive and most stories ended with a happily ever after.

When looking at narrative elements such as setting, theme, characterization and the journey that these characters go on, Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm and Bormann's fantasy theme analysis allow us to take a closer look at what narrative elements go into making a hero and a villain. Stories of any genre, fantasy or non-fiction, are grounded in their narrative. According to Walter Fisher (1982), the narrative is "seen as one way to tell the story of how persons reason together in certain settings" (p. 3). Fisher's narrative paradigm challenges the mode of human communication and compares its action of telling stories, connecting it to the narrative of *OUAT*.

Describing people as "homo-narratives," Fisher's narrative paradigm correlates not only with the storytelling aspect of the series, but with the characters' ability to share their experiences between worlds and connect them through different perspectives. These narrative elements pair nicely with Bormann's fantasy theme analysis as the characters live throughout the different portals in which their stories take place. Their characters operate differently depending on which plain they are living. This questions the narrative fidelity within the character's lives and their moral structure as a character.

Fisher's narrative paradigm will allow me to analyze the characters, as well as the audience's reaction, to envision if the character is a hero or a villain within the stories plot and narrative.. Fisher states that, "the difference between imaginary characters and real ones is not the narrative form of what they do; it is in the degree of their authorship of that form and of their own deeds" (Fisher, 1982, p. 8). Audiences are shaped by the narrative of a story so much that it's not only the author who paints the picture, but our own minds as well. We see characters as we wish them to be, the hero or the villain, and place our recognized versions of these characters from our own lives into the narrative.

Fisher's paradigm and Bormann's analysis speaks of a collective narrative from groups and their experiences, "meaning the creative and imaginative interpretation of events that fulfills a psychological or rhetorical need" (Bormann, 1983, p. 43). The narrative paradigm enriches the work of Bormann and expands on the communication of groups.

Bormann believed that the vision of each group, whether heroes or villains, creates a sense of importance to their cause. The emotional state of the group will drive the narration of the drama (Bormann, 1972, p. 402). "The rhetorical vision of a group of people contains their drives to action" (Bormann, 1972, p. 402). When characters acknowledge which collection of characters they belong with, their motivation changes to form similar ideas with those in the group; heroes will always want to do what's right and fight for love while villains tend to look for revenge and vindication for their wrongs. These create what Bormann would call a fixed schedule of motives within the narrative.

The culture of fantasy and fairy tales rides on shared memories, rituals, and symbolism that are shared through stories and various narrations. *OUAT* relies on these shared experiences and creates a sharing of group fantasies. Focusing on the characters, their actions, and the setting they are placed in, the different group ideals change not only between realms that the characters participate in, but within the seasons. By analyzing *OUAT* and the characters Emma, David, Mr. Gold, and Regina with Fisher's and Bormann's theories I was able to connect the narration of their stories and their journey as a hero with the mentality, setting, and actions of either a hero or a villain.

Summary

The first chapter examined *Once Upon A Time*, the ABC television series and its development, overall theme, storylines, and characters. Chapter One also explained the rationale for the study and gave a brief summary of supporting research found on the topic of heroes and fairy tales. Chapter Two gives a more in-depth look at that research discussed in Chapter One. Chapter Three provides the theoretical framework used for this study. Chapter Four-analyzes *OUAT* using Walter Fisher's narrative theory and Ernest Bormann's fantasy theme analysis to frame character development of Emma, David, Mr. Gold, and Regina. The final chapter provides observations about gendered images and portrayals related to the hero's journey and fairy tale literature.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Heroes and villains aren't born. Good intentions are learned and evil ones are born out of circumstances. Characters create versions of our own lives with an abstract setting. This is why fairy tales have been popular since the Grimm Brothers decided to take the oral and make it written. Whether we want to take an epic journey, learn a lesson or save the princess and fall in love, narratives have shown us we can accomplish all of it. In Chapter Two, I discuss the idea of Joseph Campbell regarding heroes , the concept of teachable moments and the influence of Walt Disney on how we envision what a fairy tale should contain

I Need a Hero

Joseph Campbell's short characterization of a hero reiterates that the common theme of what creates a hero in society's interpretation is their story. "The hero is the man of self-achieved submission" (Campbell, 2008, p. 11). Whether it's retrieving the Golden Fleece, rescuing the princess, or slaying the dragon, the hero's task means nothing if the tales of the heroics are not shared. Ramaswamy (2010) believes that heroes are marked with reminders from their battles, which in turn create a special identity for them to wear (p. 17). Heroes are common literary characters, but the journey they discover themselves in is a personal one that is later combined and distributed to the masses in a way that creates a persona.

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Everywhere, no matter what the sphere of interest (whether religious, political, or

personal), the really creative acts are represented as those deriving from some sort

of dying to the world; and what happens in the interval of the hero's nonentity, so

that he comes back as one reborn, made great and filled with creative power,

mankind is also unanimous in declaring. We shall have only to follow, therefore,

a multitude of heroic figures through the classic stages of the universal adventure

in order to see again what has always been revealed. . . . the singleness of the

human spirit in its aspirations, powers, vicissitudes, and wisdom. (Campbell,

2008, p. 29)

Simply put, heroes aren't born; they are made. Accepting their fate as something more

than the average, heroes must be reborn and declare their power. That power can be

almost anything, as long as it's needed in that particular state of life and in that particular

universe. Those powers and what the hero does with them helps determine the

classification of hero (see Table 1).

Table 1
Tasks and Gifts of the Six Hero Archetypes

Archetype	Task	Gift
Orphan	Survive difficulty	Resilience
Wanderer	Find his/herself	Independence
Warrior	Prove his/her worth	Courage
Altruist	Show generosity	Compassion
Innocent	Achieve happiness	Faith
Magician	Transform his/her life	Power

*Adapted from Villate (Villate, 2012, p. 2)

The different archetypes of heroes and their growth and self-discovery can be broken down into the different phases that Joseph Campbell describes as the hero's journey (see Table 2).

Table 2

A Hero's Journey

Journey Stages	Task
Departure	The beginning of the hero's journey
The call to adventure	Destiny beacons the hero to accept the tasks ahead
Refusal of the call	The character is uncertain of accepting his/her fate
Crossing the first threshold	The hero takes his/her first steps unto his journey
Supernatural aid	A helper of sorts, representing power, helps the hero
Belly of the whale	The hero experiences total isolations during the journey
Initiation	The hero has departed from home and begins their tasks
The road of trials	A series of tests that hero must do to become a hero
The meeting of the goddess	A beautiful being bestows gifts and tests on the hero
Woman as temptress	The hero is tempted to leave his/her quest for something else
Atonement with the father	The hero becomes his/her own person and faces his fears
Apotheosis	The hero becomes aware of his/her fame but denies it
The ultimate boon	The hero achieves his goal and begins his/her triumphant return
The Return	The final stage of the hero's journey
Refusal of the return	The hero is faced with staying or returning home
Rescue from without	The hero receives help with his/her return from an outside force
Crossing the return threshold	The hero returns home to normalcy

A Master of Two Worlds   The hero is accepted at home and the lands of his/her

journey

Freedom to live   The hero has completed his/her journey and lives in peace

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Note: Adapted from Joseph Campbell's (1949) outline of the stages of the heroic quest.

A hero's duty isn't completed just because he or she has been identified or

classified. To truly become the hero that one is destined to be, Joseph Campbell (1949)

suggests that the hero must go through three main stages of a journey: the departure,

initiation, and return (p. 35). Within those main stages are 16 other sub stages. These

stages are described in Table 2.

Each stage is unique to each hero, but without the journey through the different

stages, the character cannot truly claim to be the champion he or she sees himself or

herself to be. "The story of the hero and his (her) quest is essentially the same. It appears

in countless legends, folk tales, children's stories and adult thrillers" (Hourhan, 1997, p.

2). The biggest change in literature that applies to the journey is that the hero could

instead be a heroine. "What has been presented as a universal hero figure is actually the

male vision of a hero, and an equally valid, but different hero vision exists for females"

(Ingalls, 2010, p. 349). Most often women must portray men or fight like them to

become the heroine of the story. However, the one skill that women seem to possess

over men when it comes to conquering their foe is the ability to use their words.

A reread of some of the best-loved heroines from all walks of French fairy-tale

life reveals that many exhibit traits that either are formally associated with men in

the seventeenth century, such as cunning and physical strength, or derive from

intellectual traditions, such as education and publishing, that conventionally

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excluded women. One of the most notable, if easily overlooked, of these

commonplace skills among heroines is linguistic competence. Even the famously

passive heroines in the French corpus – including the likes of Cinderella and

Sleeping Beauty – have a witty, often ironic, command of language. (Jones, 2013,

pp. 17-18)

By simply tapping into the power of their words, women become the heroes of their own

fairytales, eliminating the damsel in distress stereotype.

Although being a hero is considered a masculine trait, the tables have turned and

OUAT uses this social progress to retell fairytale favorites while empowering their female

characters. "The hero, therefore, is the man or woman who has been able to battle past

his/her personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human

forms" (Campbell, 2008, p. 14). Similar to Stevie Smith's versions of fairytales in the

1950s, the stories are "a metaphor for women's potential power in remaking their own

lives" (Severin, 2003, p. 205). Ingalls (2010) explains that while a male hero's traits are

generated towards displays of power, female heroes are generated to show compassion

and concern over the aspect of family. Kitsis explained that, "Adam and I had no desire

to write damsels in distress. These are women who stand in front of their men. They don't

need saving, they can save themselves" (Kitsis & Horowitz, 2013). Kitsis and Horowitz

display this numerous times through the television series, especially in the main theme

being centered on a mother's love. But, whether the hero is a male or female, the villain

of the story will still seek to ruin his or her success along the journey. If a hero is

described to be a person who returns home successfully, then how is a villain described?

Obviously, studying villains presents other opportunities and challenges than

studying the hero. The hero - who usually wins - cannot exist without an opponent

in one form or other. The villain embodies this opposition and can present a

fascinating complex of characteristics. Villainy is integral in narratives that reflect

the innermost fears of the human psyche, and is often a significant part of the

construction of loss, whether it is loss of innocence, loss of loved ones, loss of

power, or loss of self and/or identity. The conflict that in the end produces and

constructs the hero is the battle to overcome the antagonist or opposition, and

resolve the transgressions that disrupt harmony, order, etc. (Fahraeus & Camoglu,

2011, p. 1)

OUAT "is a show about heroes. What good are heroes if they don't have villains to

fight?" (Abrams, 2014, para.19). Kitsis and Horowitz counteract their brave heroes quite

nicely with villains that you want to root for. While heroes represent hope and success

from a long journey, villains embody loss, fear, and in many cases revenge.

OUAT spins the plot around to exhibit the struggle and journey the villain is going

through in order to fulfill what is necessary to achieve their happy ending or revenge.

Many times, according to Hill (2010), the villains for Disney characters, as we see in

OUAT, are usually those who are close to the hero. This can be family members or

friends who have turned on them. This in turn causes its own intricate storyline in how

the characters are related not only in the fight against good and evil on their journeys but

their relationships outside the struggle (Hill, 2010). *OUAT* looks to change the perception

of both the hero and the villain by simply comparing the two stories and telling both

sides. Horowitz and Kitsis (2011) explain in the Season One DVD bonus features that

there are always two sides of the story. They show the villains' journies and their struggles compared to the journies of the heroes (Horowitz & Kitsis, 2011). This, in turn, changes how we perceive both character archetypes. Reflecting on each other, these characters, both good and evil, guide each other through the different storylines, both in the Enchanted Forest and Storybrooke. But the use of fairytales was not always about good versus evil, but rather about what outcome would teach the best lesson.

Fairytales 101

Centered on the psyche of humans, fairytales are vehicles of insight that teach us about our basic instincts. "The wonder is that characteristic efficacy to touch and inspire deep creative centers dwells in the smallest nursery fairytale" (Campbell, 2008, p. 1). From fairytales we learn that the grass is not always greener on the other side, that true love is in the eye of the beholder, and that magic always comes with a price. These stories take our own world, re-describe it with a magical twist, and let us take a look into our own psyche, desires and needs; sometimes through the vision of a magical mirror.

> Fantasy can be described as an internally coherent story dealing with events and worlds, which are impossible. Though the roots of fantasy go down to myth, it was in the late nineteenth century that modern fantasy began to take shape. The turbulent years of the twentieth century threw up a stream of traumatized writers, some of who turned to the fantasy genre to find meaningful answers to the question of existence. (Ramaswamy, 2014, p. 2)

The genre of fantasy didn't simply appear; it was created in order to see our world, our struggles, our triumphs, our journey through the eyes of someone else, something that Horowitz and Kitsis kept in mind as they created the pilot of *OUAT*.

When you're a kid, the world can be a very confusing and scary place and

hearing stories and learning about these characters and experiencing things

through their eyes is a way for us to deal with the problems of our world.

That is one of the approaches we took to writing the pilot. (ABC Studios,

2012)

Fairy tales and fantasy allow readers and viewers to disconnect from their own reality

into one similar and different enough to escape and connect all at the same time.

From the Grimm Brothers to Tolkien and now to J.K. Rowling and many other

up-and-coming fictional authors, fantasy, folklore, and myth have become a staple in our

culture, an escape from reality that is rewritten and passed down through various

interpretations and scenarios. Based around the medieval atmosphere, the stories included

castles, princesses, witches, and phantoms (Gruian, 2011). The stories included a hero by

the example of Homer's characters where they would battle against evil. In many cases,

good did not always conquer evil, but that was the message emphasized by the story.

Lessons of humility, fear, love, jealousy, and many other tropes have been created by the

Grimm Brothers, Hans Christian Anderson, and various other authors and continue to

teach generations. "From this perspective, it is natural to consider epic as the first literary

genre in their chronological hierarchy . . . with narration (either of true facts, real or

fictional), as it is the case of the fairytale" (Gruian, 2011, p. 113). By taking life's joys

and struggles as they are, fairy tale authors created the genre to reflect simply on

everyday life. Mitchell (2010) believes that these types of stories resonate with readers

and listeners because they recognize something within them that is personal, whether it

repels them or attracts them; fairytales become an unconscious process of self-discovery.

These stories translate through different centuries and cultures through the simplicity of their retelling. Authors take old rhetoric and re-imagine it for the modern society. Campbell believed that these tales were imported and then transported to fit the local culture in which the tale was being told. He believed that even though details were changed, the intentions were inevitable (Campbell, 2008, p. 212). This is why there are hundreds of versions of Cinderella and Snow White. The essence of the story is the same, but cultures have changed it to fit their needs and the stories themselves evolve to fit the needs of society.

Weisberg (2011) stated that the narrative forms of fairytales and their content and lessons are similar to a puzzle. The reader must think over the tale and piece together the lesson that is gained from it. The reader must interpret his or her own philosophy from the story. When looking at how these lessons developed into stories over many generations, Tosi (2001) believes that it is because within stories lies an imaginative and simple way for children to grasp lessons. Stories rather than the explanation of training and forms of culture can be remembered and recited (Tosi, 2001). By creating new worlds and characters for children to relate to, storytellers develop ways for others to connect through the lives of characters that are similar to their own person. This is an indirect way to demonstrate a cultural meaning and reasoning, especially to child, whose imagination is already vivid and accepting. Ana-Drobot (2015) adds that although the lessons are pieced together over and over, the same symbols have become a disappointment and that maybe the modern world needs a change. This notion plays off the vision that Walt Disney had when he took the fairytale world and decided that it

needed to create a sense of hope, rather than strictly teach a lesson. This process became known as Disney's "happyendingifcation" (Purnell & Bowman, 2014, p. 178)

A Man, A Mouse, And A Princess

From the movies to the park, Walt Disney reimagined fairytales as not only a fictional world, but as something to aspire to be; to live within. Long gone were the stories of teachings, but rather a story envisioned in which viewers and readers would want to become participants.

> Walt Disney stands in relation to the twentieth century as the Brothers Grimm did to the nineteenth century. Disney took their work, and the writing of numerous other authors, and retold their tales through animations and film with such consummate skill that they became the modern definitive versions. (Inge, 2004, p. 132)

His retellings became the standard versions in a world that looked for hope; similar to how *OUAT* has become the standard version of fairytales with a modern twist.

While delivering newspapers as a child, Walt Disney was invited to a special screening of the 1916, silent version, of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.* Later on as he created his magical kingdom, Disney would look back at the moment and soon create his first animated feature after its namesake (Inge, 2004, p. 135). Although loosely based on the Brothers Grimm version, Disney made the story lighter and with a romantic twist. This was the first instance in which we see the happy ending come to life. Little did he know that this would become the mantra of Disney films.

Disney concluded that his version was still true to its original form:

A film version can give wider scope and even added characters without damage to the original tale…In every case, no matter what form we choose to tell a story, we always hold its author in the highest respect. We do our utmost to keep the qualities that have made his tale immortal. (Disney, 1953, p. 317)

Not everyone agreed with him; his changes were seen as simple and petty. Bruno Bettelheim (1976) indicated that Disney and other film adaptors produced "fairy tales only in prettified and simplified version which subdue and rob them of all deeper significance" (p. 24). Disney reshaped these famous tales to include the values and morals of American vision; such as the public attitude towards women. Basing many of his princess characters after Hollywood actresses of the time in which the films were released, Disney plugged into what drove the American psyche instead of what drove the original story. Battling against the Great Depression, Disney sought to bring happiness back into the world, ultimately creating what we know as the happily ever after formula. "Character takes precedence over all, and Snow White never gives up hope; her dream of success in finding love and happiness remains alive" (Mollet, 2014, p. 115). Continuing with the goal to inspire and encourage dreaming, Disney's collection of films continues to push the happy ending motive.   "In other words, the Disney fairytale is no longer confined to the sphere of the imaginary, but enjoys an alternative world, continually spilling from the fantastic fairytale realm into a real one" (Deszcz, 2002, p. 83). It could be said that Disney simply created his own version of the fairytale genre. These ideals of the hope and happy-ending could be considered Disney's own version of a lesson. One in which the American public needed to take to heart during disheartening times.

Disney films continue to make viewers question their own happiness in life, making them ask themselves what they need to do to accomplish their dreams. "Wish upon a star" and "someday my prince will come" guide us to a place where we yearn for our own happily ever after. "However, despite its many accolades, scholars have struggled with Disney's adaptations of classical fairy tales" (Mollet, 2014, p. 109). Although the stories are familiar, the "Disneyfied" version of them, create a completely new lesson for us to learn happiness. They are no longer about teaching morals, but instead how to achieve unrealistic dreams. *OUAT* takes the lessons from the early beginning of heroes that Homer created, along with the values of fairytales and presents us with a unique twist, not only on the original fairytales, but their Disney counterparts. "The happy ending of the fairy tale, the myth, and the divine comedy of the soul is to be ready, not as a contradiction, but as a transcendence of the universal tragedy of man" (Campbell, 2008, p. 21). Kitsis and Horowitz take this transcendence of universal happiness and tragedy and create a balance of happy-endings with the idea that anyone can create their own contentment. Through narrative qualities such as character development, scene setting, and overall theme, Walter Fisher's narrative theory and Ernest Bormann's fantasy theme analysis, I examined the stories told within the television series, *OUAT,* and provide an important insight into the different facets of a fairytale that have been discussed.

Summary

The second chapter discussed Joseph Campbell's explanation of a hero and the journey characters must venture on before claiming their titles. Campbell's research explains his perception of how fairy tales function in today's society, while the Grimm

Brothers, took these stories and made them into gateways in which readers learn life lessons. Finally, I discussed how Walt Disney created his own genre of fairy tales by creating the idea of happy ending for characters. Campbell, the Grimms, and Disney took the idea of a hero in the realm of fantasy and created the base in which *Once Upon A Time* was created. In Chapter Three, I use the narratives discussed in Chapter Two, tying them to the interpretation provided by Fisher's narrative paradigm. I also discuss the relationship between Fisher's paradigm and Ernest Bormann's fantasy theme analysis and how it relates to specific narrative decisions within *OUAT*.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Stories of any genre, fantasy or non-fiction, are grounded in the narrative.
According to Walter Fisher (1982), the narrative is "seen as one way to tell the story of
how persons reason together in certain settings" (p. 3). Fisher's narrative paradigm
challenges the mode of human communication and compares its action of telling stories,
connecting it to the narrative of *OUAT*.

> By "narration," I refer to a theory of symbolic actions – words and/or deeds – that
> have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them. The
> narrative perspectives, therefore, has relevance to real as well as fictive worlds, to
> stories of living and to stories of the imagination. (Fisher, 1982, p. 2)

By using Fisher's paradigm as one of the rhetorical lenses used in analyzing *OUAT*, I
explore the television show and its characters' interactions through the mode of
expression and genre (Fisher, 1982). Fisher's structure of the narrative paradigm, which
states that humans (characters in my situation) are essentially storytellers who use
decision making and communication in varying forms across situations, genres, and
media is useful for analyzing what makes a character a hero or villain. This perspective
also allows matters of history, biography, culture, and character to determine the story's
narrative. Lastly, Fisher's paradigm allows humans to see the "narrative probability" of
their story and continue to retell it in their own recreation. This exhibits that characters

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essentially choose their path and recreate the stories through different portals and places in time.

These stories have been passed down from generation to generation and retold according to different cultures and their unique perceptive. Horowitz says that this shared connection from the array of fairytales that have been passed down is what started it all. "We all have these shared moments from these stories, so how do we take these icons and make them into flesh and blood characters? That allowed us to take our own take on the stories" (ABC Studios, 2011). *OUAT* takes the different interpretations spanning from French literature, to the Grimm Brothers, and Walt Disney and enables viewers to see the narrative through different perspectives than what they initially saw it as children. "Because we all live out narratives in our lives, and because we understand our own lives in terms of narratives" (Fisher, 1982, p. 8), we can relate to each other through these stories. "Any form of rhetorical communication, not only says something about the world, it also implies an audience, persons, who conceive of themselves in very specific ways," (Fisher, 1982, p. 14). This holds true to the characters as well, as they live throughout the different portals in which their stories take place. *OUAT's* characters operate differently depending on which plain they are living on. A study conducted by Jason Mittell (2007) over the show *Lost* demonstrates how Fisher's narrative paradigm looks at character development through the show to create an atmosphere of great storytelling. "*Lost* is a unified text, with every episode contributing to a larger whole. Perhaps more than any other American television series, this 'wholeness' is central to our understanding and appreciation of the programme" (Mittell, 2007, p. 12). The creators of *OUAT*, were also part of the creative process of the television show *Lost*. The process of

writing *Lost* was to capture a unified narrative through a series and not one episode each week (Mittell, 2007, p. 14) The same process exists in the narrative aspects of *OUAT* as each episode and each season builds on the other creating an evolving characterization and intense plot lines.

The building and expanding of plot lines allows the audience to see the narrative fidelity within the *OUAT's* characters' lives. They are aware of what happens in each of the story portals and how the actions their characters choose to take relates to the world in which they are currently living. Changing the outcome of the story through the realizations of different characters changes the probability of the expected outcomes. To change the narrative is to change what the characters know to be true in their minds.

> Rationality is determined by the nature of persons as narrative beings – their inherent awareness of narrative probability, what constitutes as coherent story, and their constant habit of testing narrative fidelity, whether the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives. (Fisher, 1982, p. 8)

When a character or audience member questions the fidelity of the story or the character's true nature, this is when we can see true change and progress from a hero to a villain or vice versa.

Fisher's narrative paradigm allows the characters, as well as the audience, to envision if the character is a hero or a villain. Fisher states that, "the difference between imaginary characters and real ones is not the narrative form of what they do; it is in the degree of their authorship of that form and of their own deeds" (Fisher, 1982, p. 8). Basically, Fisher's statement signifies that there isn't a difference between what a

fictional character and a real person does, except for whom the author of the story is. We are the authors of our own lives and someone envisions these characters and the deeds that they do. However, characters are relatable, because they do act in similar ways to us. We find ways to transmit our own stories and make them fit into other narratives to help make sense of our journeys.

Fisher's narrative paradigm serves as a way to analyze text and how it affects those that participate with it. Ernest Bormann's fantasy theme analysis similarly looks at a text, but rather than looking at it as a whole like Fisher's paradigm, Bormann's theory establishes a repeated notion throughout several texts that lead to a significant theme. Springing from Robert Bales' work on group communication, Bormann looked at how the group consensus dramatizes their discovery and journey to that decision.

> The content consists of characters, real or fictitious, playing out a dramatic situation in a setting removed in time and space from the here-and-now transactions of the group. (The "here-and-now," a concept borrowed from sensitivity and encounter group practice refers to what is immediately happening in the group. Thus a recollection of something that happened to the group in the *past* or a drama of what the group might do in the *future* could be considered a fantasy theme. (Bormann, 1972, p. 397)

Bormann states that repressed problems will resurface in a fantasy change and help characters interpret the other group's hidden agenda and themes within a narrative. When these different groups respond emotionally to situations, their group dramatization becomes a force to be reckoned with and fuels their motives (Bormann, 1972, p. 397). "The relationship between a rhetorical vision and a specific fantasy theme within a

message explains why so much "persuasive" communication simply repeats what the audience already knows (Skykes, 1970, p. 17). These messages that are repeated several times become themes within genres; themes such as happy-endings, good versus evil, and heroes and villains.

This then makes these groups emerge with suitable roles for their members, labeling them within the community in which they live (Bormann, 1982, p. 55). These groupings create the narrative in which characters become the character they were written to be and challenge that norm with the characters they want to be. Hill discusses this in her research over the fantasy theme analysis of Disney Princesses. She explains that Disney films shape the way young children view the world through the ideals, appearance, and dreams of characters. She also believes that the setting and friends of the princesses play a significant process in how children begin to visualize the world around them (Hill, 2010, p. 87). Similarly, the characters of *OUAT* visualize how the "real world" in Storybrooke should be, based on the ideals, settings, and friendships they had developed in the Enchanted Forest. "In addition to helping groups work out their internal problems, symbolic convergence theory provides a perspective for the analysis of communication difficulties between or among groups and communities" (Bormann, 1982, p. 55). Symbolic convergence creates an atmosphere for the narration to unfold and change from the stories we know and love to what is written and played out in *OUAT*.

According to Bormann (1983), there are three phases to developing a rhetorical vision. They consist of consciousness creating, consciousness raising, and consciousness sustaining (p. 58). Although fantasy theme analysis has been applied to small group communication in the past more frequently than to the analysis of rhetoric, the

significance of this theory in this particular analysis is in the role it plays in describing and applying major themes within the series. Joshua Gunn (2003), reimagined what Bormann's fantasy theme analysis meant within the realm of rhetorical study by looking at the "imaginary" concept of a text.

> Yet in the work of Bormann one finds both the imagination as a central concept and the genesis of "postmodern" modes of criticism. Bormann's symbolic convergence theory and its corresponding method of fantasy theme analysis posit the existence of a social imaginary by stressing the relative autonomy of social forms or 'rhetorical visions,' 'fantasy types,' and 'fantasy themes.' (Gunn, 2003, p. 48)

Gunn goes on to explain that audiences use fantasies and the characters, scenes, and plots to make sense of common experiences (p. 48). This idea of fantasy linking text to reality, goes back to Fisher's paradigm, which suggests that we learn and process life through narratives and texts. "When a theme becomes so popular that it forms a genre, it becomes a 'fantasy type.' When groups assemble types and themes into a larger narrative, they become a 'rhetorical vision,'" (pg. 49). This contemporary concept of Bormann's fantasy theme can be used as an extension to connect Bormann and Fisher's vision together.

For example, William Benoit's (2001) study on the rhetorical visions found within political cartoons drawn about the Clinton-Lewinsky-Starr affair. Bonoit states that, "Cartoons may include fictional and fanciful elements, but these ideas contribute to public dialog on important political and social issues" (2001, p. 392). Research like Bonoit's proves that fictional storylines and characters are integral in communication

about political and social issues. Plot lines and characters can spark ideas and help audiences understand important issues in reality.

> A rhetorical vision is constructed from fantasy themes that chain out in face-to-face interacting groups, in speaker audience transactions, in viewers of television programs. . . . Once such a rhetorical vision emerges, it contains dramatis personae and typical plot lines that can be alluded to in all communication contexts and spark a response reminiscent of the original emotional chain. (Bormann, 1983, p. 398)

Taking a look at setting, character, and the actions of the character only helps support that narrative and fantasy theme analysis go hand in hand with what Horowitz and Kitsis are writing. Schrag, Hudson, and Bernabo (1981) use a similar analysis in their research over how the themes of primetime television create shared ideas and ultimately affects the overall content seen across television. "The flexibility of the method stems from its ability to encompass the most complex rhetorical acts. As Bormann describes it, within the rhetorical vision there abound fantasy themes, heroes and villains, outsiders and insiders, and each works to shape the vision" (Schrag, Hudson, & Bernabo, 1981, p. 3). Bormann's insight into the culture of groups helps shape the rhetoric needed in analyzing characters and their settings and interactions. This idea enriches the narrative qualities and gives them an overall leitmotif and vision within the narrative constructs.

Fisher's narrative paradigm will be used to analysis *OUAT's* narrative structure and it's effect on the audience that watches the series. It will also look at how different narrative techniques carry the story's plots forward and give insight into the fairytale realm that traditional fairytales don't. Bormann's fantasy theme analysis will then add to

the analysis of the narrative structure and look for an overall theme in the series and how that rhetorical vision impacts the characters and their decisions.

Summary

Chapter Three focused on the methodology that I used to analyze *OUAT* and discussed the idea that the characters of *OUAT*'s live through different narratives that come together in one collective theme with the narrative aspects of the fairytales. This chapter also discussed Bormann's fantasy theme analysis and how the conscious creating of setting, theme, and characters influenced how characters develop into heroes, villains and in some cases both.

The in-depth analysis of the series is discussed in Chapter Four. This analysis applies the theories discussed in Chapter three. Finally, I examine how gender plays a significant role in how the audience views these four specific characters, Emma, Rumplestiltskin (Mr. Gold), The Evil Queen (Regina), and Prince Charming (David), and their roles within the series.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

Since the pilot aired in 2011, *Once Upon a Time,* has pushed the boundaries of fairytales by mixing original stories with modern interpretations and allowing the audience a deeper glance into what really motivates the characters. In Chapter Four, I apply the perspectives of both Walter Fisher and Ernest Bormann in analyzing the narrative structure and content of *OUAT.* In applying the Narrative Paradigm, it is important to consider the elements of the narrative which include characters, setting, themes, and backstories.Within this analysis I will look at context from the actors who portray the characters, producers from the show, and quotes within from within the series. These elements were found when I read the text and are available on the season DVDs. These insights from those within the show help frame the idea of the narrative and why the audience is emotionally involved with these characters. This in turn helps explain why there is no definite idea of a hero or villain within the shows context. When applying fantasy theme analysis to *OUAT* these narrative techinques will be looked at along with the idea of gender role reversal and how it creates a rhetorical vision for the series.

Applying the Narrative Paradigm

Characters

Horowitz and Kitsis love playing with the idea that stories don't end with happily ever after and that the characters, good and evil, have more to tell. They like to share their characters' joy, hopes, dreams, anger, devastation, and redemption. The story isn't simply a cautionary tale full of wisdom or a feel good story with a happy ending; these fairy tale stories and characters have become complex and that complexity changes and molds to fit their surroundings, their friends and enemies, and assembles their intentions of good and evil according to whether they are in Storybrooke, The Enchanted Forest, or a tangible city such as New York or Boston. Within the narrative, characters such as the Evil Queen and Prince Charming become something more than the stories' protagonist and antagonist. They are challenged with a journey to become something more than what the author of their story wrote them to be; sometimes reversing the roles of heroes and villains altogether. These specifically chosen narrative techniques drive not only the characters, but also the perceptions that the audience has towards them. Fisher's narrative paradigm (1984) states that narratives, such as *OUAT*, are relevant to the audience, because "narratives enable us to understand the actions of others" because we live and understand the world around us in terms of stories (p. 8). Therefore, the characters and narrative techinques that push the story along become relevant to the reaction of the audience and their perception of the characters. Along with creative storylines, *OUAT* is made up of strong characters, specifically female characters who challenge their male counterparts. This series isn't your typical fairytale; its fractured state has evolved and pushes the boundaries of the Grimm Brothers, Disney, and many other authors weekly.

From Season One to Season Four, *OUAT* has dramatically tested the waters of what can really happen after happily ever after and what happens when you bring fairy tale worlds together into one kingdom.

Scene one of the pilot episode heroically exhibits Prince Charming dashing through the woods on horseback, racing to save his beloved Snow White. With the typical characterization of a prince, an attractive face and a charismatic personality, David, or Charming as Snow calls him, presents the hero of the story. A few scenes later, as Charming and Snow are to be wed, Regina, the Evil Queen, enters, swooping into the hall with a menacing smile. With the all-encompassing swish of her magical hands and a foreboding threat, the villain is introduced. But as the story unfolds and the seasons continue, the dark-hearts of our heroes are unveiled and the light within the villains shines through. Horowitz explains that, "characters have destinies, whether those destinies are heroic or villainous is not always known" (ABC Studios, 2014), which allows for the fall of the hero and the redemption of the villain.

Bormann's fantasy theme analysis describes these gray areas as themes that capture the imaginations of groups (villains and heroes) and hits a common psychodynamic cord or common difficulty. "The group grows excited, involved, more dramas chain out to create a common symbolic reality filled with heroes and villains" (Bormann, 1989, p. 399). Both Kitsis and Horowtiz discuss that these gray areas are where the audience learns to side with the villain. Audiences begin to sympathize with them and root for them to have their happy endings. Emma (The Savior), Regina (The Evil Queen), David (Prince Charming), and Gold (Rumpelstiltskin), challenge the perception of who truly encompasses the heart of a hero and the dark soul of a villain.

"You need a villain, you need a pirate, you need a hero, you need a savior. You need them all to be who they are" (ABC Studios, 2014). Season One focuses on the introduction of these characters and their origin stories in and out of the Enchanted Forest. Season Four shows the struggles of the characters as the villains try to find their happy ending and the heroes try to stay within the light. Kitsis said that placing villains and heroes in the opposite playing field was an interesting stretch for him and his partner.

> For us, what's interesting is watching villains take a page from the hero playbook. Heroes always work together and never put their ego first. Villains so often put their ego first and lose. These are smarter villains coming back to correct the mistakes from their past. (Abrams, 2014, para. 8)

To better understand the development of our four main characters, I take an individual look at who they are.

The Savior. Emma Swan is not your typical hero, in fact she doesn't believe in fairy tales, she doesn't believe in love, nor does she believe in herself. The product of true love, Emma is an ironic character, because although she is the daughter of a prince and a princess, she is not distinguishable as royalty. Although not a princess, her strong character fits into the perception of strong women Kitsis and Horowitz set out to portray and create as the main female hero of the show. Challenged with the mission of breaking the curse cast by Regina, the Evil Queen, Emma's hero's journey begins when she meets her son Henry, whom she had given up for adoption.

Along her journey, Emma must face the fact that the walls she has built up around herself because her parents abandoned her closed her off to feelings and believing she can be loved. She learns that a mother's love, a true love, is the only way to break the curse

and become the Savior she was born to be. Kitsis explains that every season, Emma learns to let down one of her walls. "Every year you let your wall down. Season one it was Henry, season two it was your parents, season three it was your life. Our good guys have had terrible things happen to them in their pasts as well. Emma had a terrible childhood, but I think it's how you react to it that makes you a hero or a villain" (ABC Studios, 2014). By letting her walls down, Emma passes through several hero archetypes: the orphan, the wanderer, the magician, and the warrior. But her journey doesn't end with accepting her fate as the Savior, it really just begins; Kitsis believes that part of Emma's journey is discovering her true self, fairy tale version and all.

> Emma had spent so much time ignoring her magic and being different because she has spent so much time trying to be normal that she was kind of ready to say, this is who I am, but that doesn't mean that she knows how to do that. (ABC Studios, 2014)

Learning who she is doesn't come easy, especially during Season Four. Not only is Emma faced with villains and their plot to overturn the happy endings of the heroes of the series, she is faced with the possibility that she has darkness within her that could compromise her hero status. "Obviously she [Emma] had choices along the way where she could have become a villain, but in the end she did continue to try and make the right choice" (ABC Studios, 2014). In typical OUAT fashion, several well known stories are intermixed in Season Four. Characters introduced in Season 4 include the villains Cruella De Vil (from *101 Dalmations)*, Maleficent (from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*), and Ursula (from *Little Mermaid)*. As the story unfolds, Emma must battle each of the villains to secure the safety of her son (Henry) and in a plot twist protect her

arch enemy (Regina). As the Savior, Emma chooses as the season ends to accept the darkness of the curse from the Dark One to allow Regina (Henry's adoptive mother) to have a happy ending. Viewers see Emma's transformation from someone who doubts her strength to save those she loves to someone who is willing to sacrifice her own happiness. With her discovery that her parents (Charming and Snow White) tried to ensure Emma's protection from darkness by kidnapping Maleficent's child, Emma says: "I am only the savior because you altered the entire state of my being at the expense of someone else's soul" (Season, 4, Epsiode 4). Emma must embrace the darkness that her parents tried so hard to prevent as her hero's journey continues.

Challenged with staying in the light, learning to control her magic and learning to love again, Emma's journey to become a hero spans several stages. From her departure with Henry into Storybrooke and the fairytale world away from her normal life, the call to break the evil curse and begin the adventure as the savior and the refusal to accept her role within the fairytale context, Emma's journey is complex. She eventually becomes the master of both the real world that we live in and the fictional world her parents are from, securing her hero status. That is until she is faced with the ultimate hero's journey at the end of Season Four, which is taking up the mantle of the Dark One to prevent it from happening to Regina: the sacrifice.

The Evil Queen. One of the most interesting relationships in OUAT is the friendship between Emma and Regina. Although constantly on the rocks and teetering towards being enemies, this hero and villain combo has one thing in common: Emma's biological son and Regina's adopted son Henry. Jennifer Morrison believes that this camaraderie is one way the show has changed the concept of heroes and villains,

especially between two women. "I just think that it's great to show such a strong friendship between two women, because obviously it makes sense for them to be in conflict. It is so rare to see two such strong women want to be friends and want to help each other out and to want to have each other's backs and it's important for people to see" (ABC Studios, 2015). Their friendship blossoms in Season Four as Emma is being faced with darkness. Regina has been challenged by the dark the majority of her adult life as she became the Evil Queen and used dark magic to enact revenge on Snow White. In a twist, Regina decides to become the hero and help Emma combat the temptation of becoming dark. With her knowledge of what could potentally turn Emma into a villain, Regina's friendship ends up saving her. This friendship isn't one sided. The relationship between the two has helped mold Regina from being the Evil Queen to becoming a hero and staying on that path,: well that and her quest to find her happy ending. In season four, episode one, Emma explains to Regina that her goal is simple: to help.

> You can have happiness. I know it doesn't seem like, it, but you just have to fight. Henry brought me to Storybrooke to bring back happy endings and my job is not done until I do that for everyone, including you. (Emma Swan, Season Four, Epsiode 1, 2014)

This unique friendship allows Emma to be the hero and save others, yet have someone who has been tempted by the darkness to guide her. On the other hand, it allows Regina to finally see that not all heroes are out to get her and with that help, she too can cross over into the light.

Andrew Chambliss, one of the show's producers, explains:

The thing that heroes and villains have in common is that they both want happy

endings and I think what makes them different is the way they approach getting it.

Villains don't often realize when they have something good in front of them that

could be their happy ending and it causes them to want more and more and then

they trip over themselves getting it. (ABC Studios, 2015)

In season one, Regina has everything she has ever wanted. She rules over Storybrooke as

the Mayor, has a son, sees Snow White/Mary Margret suffering withour her true love and

yet, she still wants more. She wants more revenge and more suffereing. This is because

she doesn't see what is making her happy, all she sees is destruction. It's all summed up

in this quote by Regina, after the curse is broken and people react to her revenge: "I just

wanted to win, for once" (Season One, Episode 21, 2012). Along Regina's journey from

hero to villain she learns to fight for several of her happy endings, one of which includes

Henry. Although only his stepmother, she finds a bond with her son that helps her

understand that being evil and getting revenge doesn't always equal happiness. "She still

possesses this evil side but because of the love she possesses for her son, he slowly

changes her and open her eyes to see things differently" (ABC Studios, 2015). While a

mother's love saves Regina, a father's love haunts Rumpelstiltskin causing him to fall

further into the darkness.

The Dark One. Abandoned by his father for magical power, Rumpelstiltskin (Mr.

Gold) vows to never do that to his own son. But on his journey to be a supportive father,

he finds himself lured by the same mystical forces experienced by his father and

eventually gives in, which turns him into the Dark One, the ultimate villain within the

Enchanted Forest.

He (Rumple) was a really sweet kid who wanted to be accepted by his father and

he was rejected so many times that you can identify with someone who doesn't

really make good choices from that point on. He chose the power of the dagger

over his son and it's a mistake he regrets from that point on. (ABC Studios, 2014)

Like Regina, Gold seeks out his own happy ending to become the hero he tried so hard

to be in the beginning; the difference is he is unwilling to relinquish his power. Belle, his

true love, shows him that he has a heart and can use it for good, but his idea of good is

always having the upperhand. He explains to Belle in the first season that he is truly a

coward, but that he has tried to make up for that by collecting power. That plan fails,

because he eventually loses the person he loved most, his son. By opening up to Belle

and being honest, he shows that he does have a heart. These types of scenes are the

reason the audience roots for him, even though he is so evil. But, his idea of becoming a

hero is taking the position from those who already have it:

If you don't think villains can get happy endings, just watch me take mine. There

is no author of my fate, no Storybooke with my destiny. I've been a villain a

thousand times over, yet I'm about to get everything I desire. (Mr. Gold, Season

4, episode 7, 2015)

Revenge fuels the villains of *OUAT*, but as the audience watches, they are stricken with

disgust at the villains' actions. The audience seems to feel that the villains, like Gold,

deserve their happy endings.

Kitsis explains that throughout the seasons, Emma, Regina, and Rumple all have

parallels where they are trying to fight the darkness. Emma fights to resist it, Regina does

resist it, but Rumple can't because he is addicted to magic and that always comes with a

price (ABC Studios, 2015). Rumpelstiltskin's lack of friendship has also hindered his ability to truly become a hero. After striking so many deals that intentionally hurt others for his gain, Rumpelstiltskin has no friends to turn to, not even his true love, Belle. Unlike Regina, this villain has no one to turn to in order to escape the darkness, so it continues to eat at him. Robert Carlyle believes that people can identify with his character. "Characters that are struggling and persevere are so powerful to people. I think people identify more with Rumple than with Charming, because people go through emotion that Rumple is going through here" (ABC Studios, 2011). Rumple is not alone in his struggle to be a good father and to resist the urges to use dark sources to protect his family.

Prince Charming. On the surface, David Nolan seems perfect, which is probably why his wife calls him Charming, but his façade is easily broken when it comes to protecting his family. Like his daughter, David is faced with finding himself. Whether it's trying to figure out how to measure up to his twin brother, the real prince charming who he is impersonating, trying to save his daughter from the evil curse and a life of darkness, or figuring out who David Nolan is in Storybrooke, he is faced with the idea that he may not be good enough to be the hero for the story. Josh Dallas, the actor who plays David, explains:

> In David's case, for sure he just went full on Charming in Storybrooke in season 2. His Storybrooke David and his Fairytale version make him who he is. His charming came out in full force in the first few episodes of season two. This is his redemption from his mistakes in season one, because he couldn't be who charming was in Storybrooke. (ABC Studios, 2013)

The imposter syndrome defines David's reactions to everything that happens both in the enchanted forest and in Storybrooke. It also helps explain the relationships he has with the different characters. He doesn't know how to be the daring prince for Snow White, so she overpowers him. He doesn't know how to be a father to Emma, so she does without one. Prince Charming is trying to figure out how to be the hero he was once perceived as, while being the hero he thinks his daughter needs. His demons come from wanting the best for his family, which includes an act that most villains wouldn't even think about. In Season Four, we see Snow White become pregnant with Emma, but there is a catch. This daughter of true love has potential darkness within her. To make sure that their daughter remains a hero, they must transform all of Emma's potential darkness from the womb to another child, Malficent's daughter, and send it off to another world. This in turn hurts his relationship with Emma even more. Emma reponds with, "I am only the savior because you altered the entire state of my being at the expense of someone else's soul" (Season Four, Episode 20, 2015). How can she be the hero she needs to be, when her parents made her a hero by sacrifing another child? This selfish, villainous act, demonstrates that heroes are not always who they seem to be. Josh Dallas, the actor who plays David, believes that heroes and villains both are powerful, determined and wounded (ABC Studios, 2014). "Sometimes a hero must sacrifice everything to save the people they love" (Belle, Season 4, Episode 5, 2015). Which is why when faced with tough situations, such as the one mentioned above, David believes that he is being the hero, even if the task is essentially one of a villain.

OUAT has turned the tables when it comes to writing strong characters in the villain and hero categories. Their characterization and storylines have made the audience

sympathetic to the woes and ways of the villain and really question if heroes have pure intentions in their motives. These reactions are due to the creative narrative techniques that come into play as the stories that involve the four characters I am focusing on progress from Season One to Season Four. Shaped by major narrative themes such as hope, love, and magic, Kitsis and Horowitz use different settings, backstories, and plot twists to help develop characters and help sway the emotions of the audience and how they associate with different characters.

Setting

The storylines that take place in *OUAT* carry over into various lands associated with different fairy tales. Throughout all the seasons, these characters visit Neverland, Arendelle, Oz, and even venture to real world cities such as Boston and New York. Although adventures take place across the literary spectrum, the two main settings in Season One and Four in which the characters' storylines are written are within the boundary lines of the Enchanted Forest and Storybrooke, ME. While visiting the different settings, magical realism becomes prevalent as Kitsis and Horowitz create stories within a story and Emma, Regina, Gold, and David all take on different personas.

While in the Enchanted Forest, everything becomes exactly like the page of a fairy tale. Filled with magic and enchantment, characters' personalities are enhanced. Regina encompasses the Evil Queen, threatening the kingdom with magic, searching to kill Snow White, and making unforgettable deals with Gold. She can't help but become evil and give in to being the villain. Mr. Gold takes on his persona of Rumpelstiltskin. Gone is his physical limp from war, as well as his pristine skin. Covered in scales and almost imp like, Rumple is the most magical being in the land and knows it. Making

deals and collecting magical items, he is the person you scream at the television for characters not to trust. David is the quintessential Prince Charming. Killing dragons and trolls, riding horseback through the forest and fighting side-by-side with his wife, Snow White, he is the typical prince from a storybook page. The only character that seems to be unaffected between worlds is Emma. Jennifer Morrison, the actress who plays Emma, explains how being a part of both worlds, genetically a princess and growing up in the "real" world, allows Emma to balance both worlds. "She [Emma]had felt like an outsider and being in Storybrooke was the first time she felt like she belonged in the book. She came back to Storybrooke and found that it was her home" (ABC Studios, 2015). Her biggest challenge when entering the Enchanted Forest is remembering that the things she read about as a child are indeed real.

Storybrooke could be seen as a foggy mirror to the Enchanted Forest. Regina serves as the Mayor instead of Queen. Rumple still makes deals, but does it in the background in his pawn shop instead of in his obnoxious fashion in the forest. David has heroic tendencies, but is not as smooth talking or charming. Emma starts out as the outsider in Storybrooke, but grows into a leader of the community soon after her arrival as she picks up the mantle of Sheriff. The two worlds allow the audience to experience the characters as they know them from the fairy tale books, but the modern day setting brings a new twist that makes them relatable and tangible, as if they really could exist as your next-door neighbor in a small town. These different portals not only show the audience the backstories to many characters and the different worlds that these characters are apart of, but help us to understand who they truly are. These aren't the one dimensional characters that are represented in fairytale books. These characters are

complex and have pasts that affect their actions in the different settings. By learning about the lives of each character in the various portals, we see how complex the entire narrative is and how their pasts and interactions in one portal propel the story forward in another portal.

Setting becomes crucial as each storyline progresses. Fisher describes the narrative paradigm as a way for "The rational world paradigm [to be] seen as one way to tell the story of how persons reason together in certain settings" (Fisher, 1982, p. 3), which reflects on the plot of *OUAT* perfectly in its relation to the many characters and their agendas in the different settings. As the characters process what seems like a permanent arrival in Storybrooke, Kitsis and Horowitz show you the backstory of each character through flashbacks. Switching between the two main settings, along with others mentioned, the backstories for each character becomes vital to how the audience assesses them and starts to associate who is a hero and who is a villain, as well as if they like or dislike them.

Recurring Themes and Fracturing the Stories

One of the most frequent narrative techniques used by Kitsis and Horowitz would be the unique twist they place on the plot of stories that people have grown up watching and reading.

In *Once Upon a Time*, we've approached these stories in different ways. Sometimes it's like the Peter Pan way, where there's a complete flip on the character and that's our twist on it. And other times it's about how these characters that we know fit in this world on this show. (Hibberd, 2014, para. 4)

In Season One, this flip appears on the cusp of the show's creation. Bringing together characters from all different tales and placing them in one central location brought upon the biggest twist: the fact that they know each other and have interacted in a connected fairytale realm the audience didn't realize existed. The second twist comes when they are placed in the real world through a magic curse. In each world the obstacles that the characters face bring along twists and turns within the storylines and characterization that keep the audience guessing. "One of the things we are doing on this show is that we're sort of telling mash-ups" (Campbell, 2011, para. 10). Many of the plot twist revolve around the stories picking up where many of us stopped reading: happily ever after. This allows the audience to see the characters in a new light, in different situations, and helps them determine if the characters are truly who they say they are.

Regina doesn't hate Snow without reason and has the capacity for true love. David isn't truly Prince Charming at heart and Rumple wasn't always the powerful being he came to be. "The plotting of both author and characters is meant to exercise control: for the author, control over the reader, who must undergo a certain experience; for the characters, control over other characters and over the randomness of life" (Ryan, 2009, p. 56). This new experience has allows Kitsis and Horowitz to delve deep into the psyche of characters through twists in traditional storylines. One of the biggest plot twists would have to be Emma and her journey back into the land of magic and fairytales.

Snow White and Prince Charming having a baby is a story everyone can envision, but taking the baby out of their world and making her a lost orphan brings a new twist. We see this twist play out with her becoming the savior who rescues everyone and returns the happy endings. This creates the entire plot line of the show. Emma becoming

the Savior places a twist not only on the whole idea of the main story, but on what true love means. No longer is it meant to be shared between the prince and the princess, but through the show's theme of motherly love. Parallell to Charming breaking Snow's sleeping curse with a true love's kiss, Emma breaks the Curse with a mother's true love kiss to Henry. We see the true love of a mother change Regina from the Evil Queen to a hero who will do anything to protect her son. Kitsis explains that this type of familial love also creates unfathomable friendships and bonds, which help create a very modern and interconnected family. Baelfire, Rumples son, said, "You don't need magic. You have family right here. That's all you need" (Season 2, Episode 22). This sums up the idea that family is what creates heroes, stops villains, and creates unbreakable bonds. The friendship between Regina and Emma is unique because it allows the hero and the villain to share a bond that ultimately changes both of them. This change is reflected throughout Storybrooke's inhabitants as Season One develops. Because the Savior trusts the Evil Queen, the town learns that she can help them just as much as she can destroy them. Friendship is also carried over into how Rumple interacts with his fellow characters. Friendship also plays a vital role in connecting all of the characters together through there different plot lines and creates the twists we see as new characters are introduced; such as Snow White and Red Riding Hood being best friends or the Wicked Witch of the West and the Evil Queen being long lost sisters.

In Season Four there are plot twists that play an important part of the last half of the season as villains try to take control over their destiny and get their happy endings. The Author, a character in Season Four who writes all of the stories in the book of fairytales, believes that audiences are so used to seeing the villains of the story destroy

happiness, that is an interesting twist to see them want to see their own happy endings play out.

> Someone once told me that I don't tell storyies people want. But I say write what you are passionate about, that's what matters. Heroes and Villains is [sic] close to my heart. It has been a passion for a long time. I wrote it because I think people are sick of heroes getting everything they want in classic fairy tales, hence the dramatically different endings for Snow White and Prince Charming and the rest. Something different for a modern audience. What happens when the villains win the day? (The Author, Season Four, Episode 23)

This unique twist not only allows us to see the backstory of some major villains in the history of fairy tales, but lets the audience sympathize with them and root for them to win. In the second half of Season Four, we see how human and vulnerable villains like Cruella De Ville, Malificent, Regina, Gold, and Ursalla can be, but we also see how desperate and evil heroes like Snow, Charming, and Emma are when faced with becoming villains from their decisions to save their family. Snow White/ Mary Margeret explains how these descisions effect everyone:

> Because when you betray the people you love, when you make them see the worst parts of you, what you've done change everything and there's no going back. You have shattered the bonds you've worked so hard to forge and the stronger those bonds were, the harder they are to put back together, if they can be at all. (Season 4, Episode 19, 2015)

These small, but instrumental plot twists are what drive the unique plot of *OUAT* and fracture its origins.

Many of these plot twists are brought upon through the use of the backstories and the switching between the various settings. These backstories for each character becomes vital to how the audience assesses them and starts to associate who is a hero and who is a villain, as well as if they like or dislike them.

Backstories

Crucial to character development and the overall narrative of the series, backstories become the hidden gems that audiences yearn for as plot developments unfold. As Kitsis and Horowitz developed the idea for the series, one of their main goals was to explain why characters have become who they are (Campbell, 2011, para. 14). They wanted to explain why the Evil Queen hates Snow White, what happens after happily-ever after and most of all bring characters from different stories and different lands together to form a cohesive notion that all stories are connected. Fisher believed that "The meaning and value of a story are always a matter of how it stands with or against other stories. There is no story that is not embedded in other stories" (2003, p. 11). The concept of interwoven backstories pairs nicely with Bormann's rationale that if a rherotical vision has manifested within a fantatsy theme analysis, then specific questions and elements of the drama can be answered and provide background into the overall story (1972, p. 401). Taking creative license, the creators came up with detailed backstories for each of the four main characters. The backstories of these characters used in this analysis play an important role in the overall concept of fractured fairytales.

Untold in the storybook, the Evil Queen was not always evil. Her story of true love that goes beyond the crown her mother wants for her would make anyone root for her. Too bad a young Snow White ruins her secret love by telling Regina's mother and

ultimately causing Regina's mother to kill him, so her daughter can become the queen and not a stable boy's wife. But before the plot for revenge, Regina cares for Snow and sees how the death of her mother has influenced the kindness of the young girl. Talking to Lana Parrilla about her character, Regina, the creators point out that Regina is the one who teaches Snow White what true love is, even when the audience, without this information, believes she is incapable of it (ABC Studios, 2012). As more flashbacks continue, viewers learn that Regina has another chance at true love with Robin Hood and they see her love for Henry as she adopts him. Unfortunately, the audience also experiences how Regina's own mother's over controlling love ruins her life on various occasions, Her mother kills her true love, lies to her about magic and a half sister who hates her, and tries to control how she rules the kingdom. Regina's backstory gives light to her inner demons and justifies her actions for revenge, as well as clarifies her obsession with love. Once the audience is let in on her backstory, they can no longer mark her has the villain, but rather as the victim, blurring the line as to who is really in the wrong.

> We wanted to write it where both characters (Emma and Regina) were in the right, making it hard to side with them. Regina feels completely in the right to be protective over Henry. She is a working mom who has dedicated her life to her son, only to meet the birth mother. The only thing that makes her unjustified is that she is the Evil Queen. (ABC Studios, 2012)

Regina's longing for love and her loss, creates a connection to the audience. She is no longer the Evil Queen who is after Snow White for her kingdom, she is the woman who has lost love and despite all of that wants it back.

Rumpelstiltskin isn't far behind from playing the victim. After being abandoned by his father, losing his wife to a pirate, and losing his son to another world because of his obsession to magic, the audience almost begin to feels sorry for the most powerful man in the Enchanted Forest. The difference with Rumple's backstory is that he is the cause for almost everything wrong that has happened in his life. Unlike Regina who has someone to blame, Mr. Gold chooses to enact revenge on everyone, hoping to spread his misery, not direct it. But his ability to seem like the giver of dreams, makes him less of a villain and more of a tricky fairy godmother. Robert Carlyle, the actor who plays Rumple, believes that, "People want to instinctively like him, and I think a lot of that is because we have Regina as a villain. People aren't used to having two villains and they want to make one of them a hero" (ABC Studios, 2012).Rumple's charisma and charm make the audience want to like him. You root for him when he falls in love with Belle. You want him to help the heroes beat Regina in the first season and break her curse. His love for his son and regretful decisions make the audience sympathize with him. However, his deal making creates a warning with the audience. They can see where he is emotionally hurt, but are still wary, because with Rumple, once a villain, always a villain.

Unlike Rumple and Regina, David's backstory isn't as tragic. In fact, it's more of a story of good luck. Andrew Chambliss, one of the shows writers, said, "We sort of came up with the idea of making the Prince, the prince and the pauper and asking what if prince charming wasn't really the prince" (ABC Studios, 2012). His rise from poor shepherd to daring prince makes David relatable to the audience. He wasn't always well known and brave, he had to learn to become the hero of the story. "David is a complete and utter disconnect from Charming. He can't have the same moral code, he can't be as

honorable" (ABC Studios, 2012). Trying to be the twin brother he never knew he had, David struggles with accepting his fate as the replacement prince to serve a purpose or to be his true lonely shepherd self with no power. His internal struggle to be more than what he truly is plays with the humble beginnings of Campbell's mythology. He must take up the mantle and overcome many obstacles to prove his worth and create his ultimate hero story.

Like her father, Emma struggles to be known as the hero. Instead, she would rather just live within her own moral code and not worry about its consequences within the fairytale world. Not wanting to be seen as the orphan who had to find her own way through the world, Emma finds her strength through her struggles, much like her villain counterpart, Regina. Jane Espenson, a producer for OUAT, compared the characters of Regina and Emma. "Emma has this very grounded real-world strength and Regina has this great- magical vengeance power of being justified in what she is doing. Neither says she is heroic, but she will say she is justified" (ABC Studios, 2014). Audiences see Emma as she is sent off to a magical world, put into foster care, and given up multiple times. They see her fall in love with the wrong man, turn to a life of stealing, become pregnant and get thrown in jail. Yet, she lands on her feet and finds a job where she can do well as a bail bond agent. Her hard life as a child gains sympathy from the audience and gives her street cred. She grows from a helpless child to a strong woman who takes nothing from no one.

These various backstories create three-dimensional characters, far more complex than their origin stories. The audience can emotionally become connected to them because they are not fictional characters that represent good and evil; these characters are

people they know, people they have loved or fought with. The audience is able to see the reasoning behind their decisions rather than a simple plot line made to warn children or create a simple happily ever after. But the backstories aren't the single attributor to how the audience becomes connected to the characters and learns to like or dislike them. Gender plays an important role in how the audience sympathizes and relates to the four main characters.

Portrayal of Gender and Creation of a Rhetorical Vision

Bormann envisioned that people or characters would come together united under themes in a rhetorical vision. These themes would be found in setting, characters, and actions. These visions are what drive groups of people into action (1989, p. 406) I examined the themes found in *OUAT's* setting, character narratives, and actions as I considered the journey of heroes and villains, strong female characters and their friendship and motherly and fatherly love. These refrains enable the audience to see how narrative strategies in *OUAT* are breaking gender roles and how it influences the audience's reaction to the four characters being analyzed.

The Heroine and the Wicked Stepmother

Having no desire to write tales of damsels in distress, Horowitz and Kitsis use love as a driving force that creates female characters who are strong, relatable and for the modern audience.

> Post-modern fairy tales that are self-conscious of genre, using and abusing the fairy tale form to comment on how the genre creates gender narratives without simply reproducing or riving them, offer rich possibilities for both postmodernists and feminists wishing to reclaim a much-loved tradition for viable use in a culture

at odds with the master narratives that popular fairy tales can reinforce.

(Williams, 2010, p. 262)

In keeping with the idea that this is not a reproduction, but the creation of something completely new, the female characters of *OUAT* are creating new narratives that are driven by female strength. You see this in Emma who defies the damsel in distress motif. Instead, she wields a sword, battles dragons and ogres, and fights for family. Emma leads her troupe of heroes into battle and takes charge when it comes to any force that threatens to ruin happy endings in Storybrooke. "While incorporating many traditional elements, they also challenge certain aspects with some female characters as good and strong (Emma), and some formerly evil characters as reformed" (Taber, 2013, para. 28). *OUAT* has taken the broad idea of a hero and transferred all of those heroic qualities to females, even down to the fact that Emma wears pants and a leather jacket instead of the traditional dress of a Princess, which Jones (2013) alludes to as an outward expression of masculinity and heroism (p. 28). Emma's progression to hero is one of the highlights of gender norm transformations and fracturing of the fairy tale genre. However, Emma is not alone in breaking gendered stereotypes. Regina reclaims the idea that stepmothers can overcome the convention of evil.

Throughout the fairy tale genre, the absence of mother is usually replaced with the presence of the Evil Stepmother. "The wicked stepmother is a staple of the popular fairy-tale tradition and arguably its most famous villain" (Williams, 2010, p. 255). This sets the stage for Regina's authority within the *OUAT* realm. Williams also states that Stepmother's in fairytales "struggle against their predetermined fairy-tale functions" (2010, p. 256). Her idea that the stepmother figure is destined to be a villain is one of the

ways that *OUAT* is breaking the mold. As the series progresses, Regina finds that being evil and wanting revenge isn't always the answer, proving that character growth and development can go beyond gender and character stereotypes. One of the ways that Regina is able to break the evil woman gender pigeonhole is by loving her son. This atypical behavior of a stepmother helps her to see that her revenge against Snow White hurt her more than helped her. The idea of a mother's love helps Regina prove to Henry that she can be the hero he knows her to be as she fights against other villains trying to bring her down.

Horowitz and Kitsis have also said that one of the main themes of the show is motherly love, a counterpart to their show *LOST*, which plays on the aspect of fatherly love (Campbell, 2011, para. 7); however, this theme isn't just a tool to bring characters together, but to create a mighty force. Both Emma and Regina find strength in making sure that no harm comes to Henry. This unites the pair, making an unstoppable female force.

Regina plays the role of a strong female character by going after her happy ending, changing her morals for the sake of her son, and not taking no as an answer. Whether she is enacting an evil curse or playing a spy to villains to help save Emma's light, Regina finds a solution that ensures she comes out on top. Emma is the guardian of her own destiny and demonstrates leadership not only in the show as the main character, but in her love life, her family life and, over her entire destiny.

By the end of the fourth season, both Emma and Regina are willing to sacrifice themselves in order to ensure that everyone else is safe. Emma takes upon the mantle of the Dark One to save Regina from that fate, and Regina swears to protect Emma's light in

order to save their family. This martyr characteristic and motherly strength allows the audience to relate to these female characters. Viewers can find solace in Emma's journey of becoming a mother and the savior and learning her strength through loss and acceptance. They can also relate to Regina and her struggle to fight for love and be loved, while still being a powerful woman that can rule her kingdom. Kitsis and Horowitz explain that strength comes in all different shapes and forms, some mental, some physical, and in this case, emotional (ABC Studios, 2013). The audience supports Emma in her heroic actions and roots for Regina to be more than the villain she is seen as. The audience can find strength in Emma's journey and hope in Regina's. No longer are they the hero and the villain, but two women defying the odds set against them.

Even though *OUAT* brings a refreshing aspect to the female characters by making them strong and independent, their appearance in the portrayal struggles to hit the right note. Emma is often seen wearing pants, boots, a white tank top, and a red leather jacket. Her modern appearance allows her character to play rough and be active in fighting whatever mythical being threatens Storybrooke. When Emma is dressed up, whether as bait to catch criminals as a bails bondsman, on a date, or as a princess, it provides another defense into letting those around her get too close. Kitsis explains that when Emma is in a dress instead of her usual attire, the dress provides a mask for her emotionally; it's a way for her to confide in someone without revealing too much (ABC Studios, 2012). Emma's wardrobe also represents the male emphasis on being a hero. Emma cannot be the hero of the story in the dress. She must be in pants and boots. When dressed as the princess, she loses her confidence and her representation of being heroic.

Regina on the other hand represents the opposite. When in power as the queen, her wardrobe is what Kitsis and Horowitz call fairytale couture. She is dressed in extravagant dresses, with plunging necklines, high neck backs and over the top headpieces. When she is in Storybrooke and loses control, her wardrobe consists of pantsuits. This shows that Emma relies on her physicality, while Regina relies on her magic. Regina's strong characteristics take the backseat to her being sexualized in her fairytale wardrobe. Sara Martin (2011) believes this wardrobe choice is a gender setback to female villains. "Female villains appear to be marked by their gender and overt sexuality in a way that seemingly does not apply to male villains, who, in their maleness, even constitute somehow a norm from which the comparatively few villainesses deviate" (p. 29). Regina's power physically doesn't resonate except through over exposed bosoms and figure flattering dresses. Both women, even though written as strong female characters, have their setbacks even in the modern retelling of these tales. Their wardrobe plays an important part in their characterization and growth throughout the series. However, Regina and Emma are not the only characters that play a part in the identification through gender abnormalities.

The Emotional Prince and Cowardly Villain

While Regina and Emma reflect strength and sacrifice through motherly love and representing strong women in the media realm, David and Gold show humility and regret through their representation of fatherly love and their reversal of the durable male hero. Both David and Gold lost their children to the forces of magic. David's loss was to save his family, while Gold's was the result of a selfish decision; however, both characters regret that they weren't the fathers they could have been. Their fatherly love plays a

different role in their journeys than the mother's love of Regina and Emma. Instead of strength, it shows a twist on gendered stereotypes.

David's fatherly love demonstrates that he isn't perfect. Long gone are the days when he was Prince Charming and saved the day. When it comes to his daughter Emma, he missed being her knight in shining armor. This realization comes with humility; he isn't the strong man he thought he was when he sent her off to save her family. Instead, Emma shows strength without him, making him feel hopeless. This emotional and humiliating persona of a hero and prince rivals those the typical male character found in fairytales. Ingalls (2010) writes that, "specifically, male-generated heroes should have more showy displays of power, while female generated heroes should, in comparison, display more concern over family members" (p. 334). This concern over Emma's well-being and his undying love for Snow White proves that David represents a softer and more sensitive male hero in the realm of fairytales. David's ability to feel and worry could stem from the fact that he was never intended to be the hero, but rather a lowly shepherd. "If selective forces have shaped the male psyche obsessed with gaining dominance, then males should be driven to achieve the alpha position, and displays of power may help establish and maintain high status" (Ingalls, 2010, p. 347). In David's case, he allows not only other male characters to take up the mantel as the alpha, but also the females in his life, Snow Whie in the Enchanted Forest and Emma in Storybrooke. He relinquishes control over to the female characters and simply aids them in their quests. As the audience watches these chains of gender swapping, they begin to see David not as Prince Charming, but as a character who has lost control over his strength physically and

emotionally. But as David resigns control, Gold uses it to ensure he is the stereotypical, powerful male hero instead of the coward he truly is.

Gold/Rumple was left behind to face the world without a mother or a father. Unwilling to let his son face the same fate, he shoots himself in the leg to leave war and return home, alive and safe. However, his fatherly love labels him as a coward. His wife leaves him for a pirate who isn't afraid to be a real man and then Gold's actions leave his son looking at him as an unsuitable role mode. This forces Rumple to find ways to amend his hopelessness and become the strong hero his family needs. "Anger, revenge, or rebellion either motivates the hero or stimulates the action at the beginning of the story" (Ingalls, 2010, p. 343). Rumple's anger at being the laughing stock of the village causes him to become the Dark One. This act brings him all the power in the kingdom and a new sense of self. He is no longer a coward, but a powerful man. But, Rumple soon feels that power can just as easily cripple a man as being weak can. He feels the same sense of hopelessness as he loses his son to another world because of his addiction to magic. Gold represents the vulnerable side to men that heroes weren't allowed to show in traditional fairytales. "The typical mission of the hero of fantasy is to save the world. Or at least the community to which he belongs" (Rahamswamy, 2014, p. 17) Rumple was unable to save anyone, including his own courage, which left him representing a broken and lost man.

This idea of gender reversal brings into focus the rhetorical vision that these characters are breaking the idea of traditional fairytale and modern tale roles and bringing us new characters within the media to admire. Within the confounds of the traditional fairytale setting, the Enchanted Forest, the female characters can be brave, but are riddled

with emotional troubles, while the male characters are the heroes, saving the day. This idea flips when the characters are transported to Storybrooke. "The rhetorical vision of a group of people contains their drives to action" (Bormann, 1972, p. 406). Our female characters become the heroes, making decisions and fighting for what they believe in while their male counterparts take a back seat and experience emotion and humility. It isn't about the stereotypical hero and villains in *OUAT*, but rather the fact that women can be strong and powerful and men can be emotional and vulnerable. Wood (2015) explains that 70% of major characters in television and film are male and even when women are the main characters, they are represented by actions of shopping, talking, flirting, being domestic and being sexual. Whereas men, Wood explains, are independent, strong, aggressive, and in charge (p. 235). *OUAT* completely dismiss the idea of these stereotypes and bring to life new modern day characters within the fairy tale realm. With Kitsis and Horowitz writing and Fisher's theoretical direction, we can begin to see ourselves in the shoes of Emma, Regina, David, and Gold, no matter what gender we are.

> In theme, if not in every detail, narrative, then, is meaningful for persons in particular and in general, across communities as well as cultures, across time and place. Narratives enable us to understand the actions of others because we all live out narratives in our lives an because we understand our own lives in terms of narratives. (Fisher, 1982, p. 8)

The rhetorical vision created by Kitsis and Horowitz is made clear to the audience through their characters and shows us that gender norms are unconventional as well as the idea that characters must either be a hero or a villain.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Four examined *OUAT's* four main characters, Emma, Regina, David and Gold and analyzed how their characterization has challenged gender stereotypes within fairy tales. In this chapter the perception of heroes and villains was discussed using narrative techniques that identified unusual gender actions and insights of these fairy tale characters. The next and final chapter discusses the implications of these findings on fractured fairy tales, and future studies.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

The predominant focus of this study was to see how the series *Once Upon A Time* has

extended the genre of fairy tales and how the audience perceives heroes and villains.

Using Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm and Ernest Bormann's fantasy theme analysis

as my theoretical framework, I looked at narrative themes such as characterization,

setting, plot twists and backstory to develop a rhetorical vision and identify themes for

the characters Emma, Regina, David, and Gold and how they have grown and changed

from Season One to Season Four in the series. In this chapter I summarize my findings

and suggest ideas for future studies regarding *OUAT* and this new concept of heroes and

villains.

Summary of Major Findings

This research analyzing the series *OUAT* and its characters extends the view of a

fractured fairytales and how its plot lines are challenging narrative and gender

archetypes. By presenting major themes such as love, strength, magic, and hope, Kitsis

and Horowitz have more than created a popular television series, they have reconstructed

the idea of the fairytale genre. The research questions I posed in Chapter One included:

RQ$_1$ How has *Once Upon a Time* challenged how we define a "hero" and a

"villain"?

RQ$_2$ What narrative techniques are used to determine the likability of heroes and villains The following discussion summarizes my findings.

Challenges to Traditional Views of Heroes and Villains

My analysis uncovered three ways in which OUAT challenges how we define hero and villain through the technique of fracturing fairy tales and challenging gender stereotypes. Heroes are no longer defined as overly confident characters that achieve self-actualization, but rather humble characters with a changed heart and determination to help others. No longer defined by the storylines that describe villains as the evil counterpart to the hero, this series displays a challenged and lonely soul. In the realm of the Enchanted Forest and Storybrooke, fairytale labels hold no merit, because heroes have dark pasts and hearts and the villains are seeking their happy endings. The Evil Queen can find love and redemption while the Savior can be tempted to trade purity for darkness. Prince Charming can fall from being the knight in shining armor who saves everyone, while the Dark One can rise up and sacrifice himself for his family. Using Joseph Campbell's (2008) mythology about heroic journeys I note that both villains and heroes accomplish the task, just in their own unique way. Both heroes and villains are parallel to each other, and without the other, their stories would not exist. Through this characterization process, major themes, like parental love, develop to create a clear divide in the strength and motivation between male and female characters. Females are no longer stuck in ivory towers, but are fighting villains and dragons with their own weapons and male characters are vulnerable and need saving in an emotionally supportive way. The motivation of family and strong mothers allows for the standard

fairytale gender stereotypes to be broken and rewritten. This reversal of gender roles creates characters with whom every audience member can relate, cheer for, and hate all at the same time.

Narrative Techniques and Likability

In answering my second research question, my analysis concludes that four narrative techniques are employed by the writers of *OUAT* to influence how the audience responds to heroes/villains, creating a more complicated rhetorical vision than previously associated with fairy tales. These narrative techniques include: (a) fracturing the original fairy tales; (b) using multiple story settings and the concept of "portals," which allow characters to inhabit many worlds; (c) adding backstories which provide clues to characters' motivation; and, (d) choosing to bypass the duality that often is attached to fairy tales (good/bad, dark/light) with more complicated views of these standard archetypes. One of the main goals of Kitsis and Horowitz when they set out to produce this series was to create more complicated and nuanced versions of familiar characters (Campbell, 2011, para. 15). The fine line between good and evil is danced continually as the series progresses, but through narrative techniques such as setting, plot twists, and backstory the audience can begin to cheer on vulnerable villains and despise heroes for their overconfident nature.

The fracturing of fairytales is not a new concept, but *OUAT* brings a new element to the fractured fairytale genre by allowing characters from several different stories to exist in one plotline where different story portals and settings allow them to interact. This concept brings forth a new insight to character relations. These different portals also allow the audience to be taken back before the evil curse and Storybrooke and given

insight into why the characters behave the way they do. As Bormann (1972) emphasized, setting and character themes play an important role in shaping the rhetorical vision. There is no longer a superficial reason for the Evil Queen to want revenge on Snow White, or for the audience not to understand why Emma battles with the concept of true love and family. These backstories and intertwined plots play an important part in the audience's reaction to characters. The ideals of good and evil, or light and dark become arbitrary. Villains are learning to use their powers for good and obtain their happy endings, while we see heroes fall from the light through dark deeds and the struggle to maintain the light in their life with the lure of magic.

OUAT has turned the one-dimensional fairy tale characters used to teach children lessons into complex characters that have pasts, dreams, regrets, and determination to achieve their happy endings. Analyzing Emma, Regina, David, and Gold, shows that as our perceptions of the world change and the lines between good and evil become blurred, so do the ideas of viewers who observe storylines through television series. Audiences no longer have to hate villains because they are the bad guys, but can cheer them on and enjoy their evil persona. These action themes further influence the rhetorical vision. On the other hand, heroes don't always have to be the protagonist of the story or the one the audiences applaud. You can hate Prince Charming and his morals while laughing at the witty responses of the Evil Queen. OUAT has shown that characters with real depth are a clever fusion of both hero and villain, which allows them to be relatable to the audience. The storyline is no longer about who saves the day, but about how they achieved their journey and with whose help.

Finally, *OUAT* has shown that everyone deserves a happy ending and ironically, happy endings aren't always what they seem. One character's happy ending is not suitable for someone else and the pathway to getting that happiness isn't as easy as Disney would have us think. Fairy tales aren't just about happily ever after or slaying the dragon and marrying the prince, they are about something much deeper. As Mary Margaret would say, "What do you think fairy tales are? They are a reminder that our lives will get better if we just have hope" (Season 3, episode 11). Kitsis and Horowitz have produced storylines that are more than true love's kiss, but the journey to discovering the power of that kiss and the implications it has on one's life. The idea of a happy ending can be achieved if a character has hope that they can find it. Happy endings aren't meant just for heroes or the prince and princess, but for anyone who has the courage to pursue it, because every character has a little bit of hero and villain in them and that is what makes their story fit so well within the modern, fractured versions of these tales.

Implications for Further Research

I believe that future research could examine how the series continues to challenge the idea of heroes and villains as well as gender roles and identify new narrative techniques used as the seasons progress. Looking at relationships, self-fulfilling prophecies, and thematic pattering, I also believe that the rhetoric of villains with good intent and bad motives could be studied with characters such as the Wicked Witch of the West, Peter Pan, and Regina's mother, Cora. The concept of diminished labels could be applied to any television or book series, and major films. It would be interesting to look at the concept of heroes and villains in the comic book universe through this particular

research lens and see how they have grown as the characters are revamped for modern readers; similar to fairytales and *OUAT*. Obviously, the concept of "Savior" and Emma's role as the savior could be explored through a religious communication analysis.

Finally, I believe that a comparison of motherly love and fatherly love could be analyzed in the two series written by Horowitze and Kistsis, *Lost and OUAT*. By comparing the two series, researchers could analyze the narrative techniques used to differentiate between fatherly love and motherly love and what underlying themes fall within those two main ones.

This series has become more than just a television show, but rather a new fairytale for the modern generation. *OUAT* has expanded our view of fairy tales and the impact these fractured fairy tales can have in how we perceive the world around us, because as Fisher reminds us, "we are all storytellers.

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