

Exploring Faerie:
A Framework for the Fairy Tale Film

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By

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Abstract:

As a generic category, the fairy tale remains largely unexamined in film theory. This thesis will develop a framework for the identification and analysis of the fairy tale film by returning to the rich structural background provided by fairy tale literary theory. An examination of five fairy tales adapted from novel to screen will be used to establish the characteristics of the fairy tale film structure, a structure that will also be applied to two non-adapted fairy tale films.

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Once Upon a Fairy Tale...

Just as we know, almost intuitively, that a particular narrative is a fairy tale when we read it, it seems we know immediately that a particular film is a fairy tale when we see it.

Jack Zipes, *Happily Ever After*

The fairy tale is an old narrative form that has developed from oral to written tale, and been adapted by many art forms, including film. As narratives often learned in childhood, fairy tales are familiar stories, and this familiarity leads to the instinctual recognition of certain narratives as fairy tales. What is being recognized is not always a fairy tale, but a structure related to the fairy tale, containing enough elements for quick identification. This intuitive leap overlooks those elements that may have altered the fairy tale to the point of becoming a different genre. The fairy tale has distinct qualities and characteristics which must remain constant, despite a shift in medium, for a fairy tale to remain a fairy tale when adapted. The narrative structure of fairy tale films is very similar to that of oral or written fairy tales; it is the means by which the narrative is conveyed that is unique to film.

This project will provide an analysis of fairy tales as outlined by Vladimir Propp and Max Lüthi and demonstrate how one can advantageously apply these combined criteria to establish a method for examining and analyzing the fairy tale film genre. While the term genre encompasses structure, a means of labeling a product, a guideline for filmmakers, and a contract between viewer and producer,¹ I will only address the structure and stylistic elements of the genre.² The combined criteria of Propp and Lüthi will be used to examine film adaptations of William Goldman's *The Princess Bride*

(1973), C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and Neil Gaiman's *Stardust* (1998) and two non-adapted fairy tale films, *Labyrinth* (Henson 1986) and *Penelope* (Palansky 2006).

A Review of the Literature on Fairy Tale Film and Adaptation Theory

The fairy tale as a genre falls beneath the broader heading of fantasy, as identified by Alec Worley's *Empires of the Imagination* (2005). According to Worley, the fantasy film is a genre that requires attention because, having been categorized as a part of a "triumvirate" including science fiction and supernatural horror, fantasy has become a dumping ground for all that does not fit in the two other categories.³ Worley places the fairy tale along the fantasy spectrum as the second most fantastical subgenre, between surrealism and earthbound fantasy.⁴ The term "fairy tale" denotes not only a narrative occurring in a magical world, but also the history attached to all narratives labeled fairy tales. Worley relies on instinctual identification, and admits that the term fairy tale is "loosely employed[...] to include any kind of fable, folktale, or fantasy allegory."⁵ Although his analysis of the fairy tale film does address the many facets of the fantasy genre, it turns the fairy tale into a category for films that do not fit within his other fantasy classifications of surrealism, earthbound, heroic, and epic fantasy. Worley's examination of fairy tales is an historical account of the development of the fairy tale that does not clarify what constitutes a fairy tale film. His approach ignores many of the nuances of the generic category, reducing the fairy tale narrative to a tale that involves character transformation in an unearthly realm.⁶ Worley cites *Edward Scissorhands* (Burton 1990) as an example of the fairy tale film.⁷ *Edward Scissorhands* does take

place in a fantastical otherworld, but Edward (Johnny Depp), the hero, is unheroic and fails to live happily ever after. Although presented by Worley as a fairy tale, *Edward Scissorhands* is clearly not, demonstrating that Worley's definition only partially addresses the characteristics of the fairy tale film, and leads to misidentification of some films as fairy tales.

Walter Rankin's *Grimm Pictures: Fairy Tale Archetypes in Eight Horror and Suspense Films* (2007) requires an instinctual identification of the fairy tale. Rankin focuses on fairy tale archetypes and makes direct comparisons between classic fairy tales and horror films. The films addressed by Rankin provide "scares, screams, jumps, and jolts that stem from our understanding of Grimm fairy tale archetypes. We know almost instinctively what to expect from our heroes and villains."⁸ The films examined by Rankin are identifiable as fairy tale related because they contain fairy tale archetypes, despite alterations in the fairy tale narrative. Rankin's study identifies how horror films borrow from fairy tales, specifically from the tales collected by the Brothers Grimm, but does not contribute to our understanding of the fairy tale film genre.

Films that borrow fairy tale narrative elements without maintaining the generic conventions are not fairy tales but are fairy tale influenced. This influence exists in horror films, as well as in any genre that uses a fairy tale narrative and infuses it with elements from another genre. *Pretty Woman* (Marshall 1990) can be considered an adaptation of Cinderella because of the symbolic rescue of Vivian (Julia Roberts) from poverty by a prince. However, the closing scene of the film where the "prince" conquers his fear of heights is more reminiscent of Rapunzel's rescue from her tower prison. Similarly, *Maid in Manhattan* (Wang 2002) borrows from Cinderella, while removing

any traces of magic. The use of a storyline that is only vaguely reminiscent of known fairy tales, the presence of a prince-like hero, and a happy ending make these films fairy tale influenced films, not genre hybrids. This is not to say that fairy tale genre hybrids do not exist, rather that, without an understanding of the generic characteristics of the fairy tale, it is difficult to identify them. For example, Rick Altman's *The American Film Musical* (1987) identifies the three dominant types of musicals, one of which is the fairy tale musical. While Altman uses the term fairy tale musical for any musical containing fantastical elements, many of the films are indeed fairy tales that include musical numbers. Other films within the category of fairy tale musical could be more accurately termed fantasy musicals. Altman's study illustrates the use of the term fairy tale for a film genre containing distinct characteristics that are borrowed by and influence other genres, and the overuse of the term fairy tale for anything vaguely reminiscent of the fairy tales we learned in childhood.

Jack Zipes's various works on fairy tale literature and film address the importance and impact of the fairy tale. For Zipes, the fairy tale film has been appropriated by the culture industry, a term he uses to denote "the mode by which cultural forms are produced, organized, and exchanged as commodities within a capitalist socio-economic system so that they no longer relate to the needs and experiences of the people who create them."⁹ This focus can reduce the fairy tale film to a product of the culture industry, incapable of being anything but commodity. For Zipes, fairy tale films use and abuse the tradition of the fairy tale for commercial purposes. It is undeniable that the film industry is a commercial industry functioning within a capitalist system, but while the fairy tale has been used by film companies for commercial gain, it is also possible that the retelling

of fairy tales through film can contribute something of value to the fairy tale narrative form. Furthermore, the use of the fairy tale in film as a commercially reproducible product, although with a much larger distribution, does not differ greatly from the collection and mass production of fairy tale books by Charles Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, Joseph Jacobs, and others.

For Zipes, it is Walt Disney's manipulation and appropriation of the fairy tale film that best exemplifies the results of fairy tales being adapted to film. Zipes considers Disney a "radical" filmmaker who "changed our way of viewing fairy tales, and [whose] revolutionary technical means capitalized on American innocence and utopianism to reinforce the social and political status quo."¹⁰ Zipes's concern with the culture industry is ultimately ideological, and he critiques the values that Disney propagated in his films. Again, there is little difference between Disney's alterations and those of literary fairy tale collectors. Perrault's adaptations of each tale included a moral, a clear statement reinforcing the values and behaviours to be learned from each tale. Perrault states at the conclusion of "Donkeyskin":

It is not difficult to see that the moral to this story teaches children that it is better to expose yourself to harsh adversity than to neglect your duty. Virtue may sometimes be ill-fated, but it is always crowned with success[...] Finally this story shows that pure water and brown bread are enough nourishment for young women, so long as they have beautiful clothes.¹¹

This comparison is not intended to equate Disney and Perrault, but to underline that the use of fairy tales to reinforce ideologies is not new. Furthermore, while it is useful to examine which dominant ideologies are reinforced by film fairy tales, ideological analysis itself would benefit from a clear identification of fairy tale film conventions. An

examination of a filmmaker's use of and changes to the traditional fairy tale conventions would reveal more about the ideologies in the film.

A second concern I have with Zipes's treatment of Disney films is that he does not differentiate between animation and live action fairy tale films. In the effort to acknowledge animation as a distinct art form, animation theorists have found it necessary to recognize the relationship between animation and live-action. Animation theorists identify cinema as the "step-child" of animation and cite Emile Reynaud's *Théâtre Optique* of 1892 as the first example of animation which establishes the relationship between the two and suggests animation is a precursor to cinema.¹² Animation film theorists must often contend with two common errors: the "mistaking animation for animated drawings (as one might mistake an airplane for a kite)...[and] considering it simply as a sort of 'cinema', while it could just as well be a *painting, drawing, engraving, or even, sculpture* in movement."¹³ Live-action cinema gives movement to the photographic image, while animation includes the movement of many other arts, but both are art forms as complex as any form of fine art. Live-action and animation share the element of art in motion, but should be considered two distinct mediums. Zipes's combined analysis of live-action and animation fairy tales because of the similarities in narrative. Despite the use of similar narrative techniques in both, animation as Paul Wells argues, "possesses distinctive narrative techniques that inform its uniqueness as a medium of expression."¹⁴ Likewise, live-action techniques are unique making Zipes's examination of both as fairy tale films overly simplistic.¹⁵ While animation fairy tales are just as rich an area of study, this project will only examine the characteristics of the live action fairy tale film.

One final concern with Zipes's work on the fairy tale film is that his ideological analyses reflect a hierarchal superiority of written tales over their film adaptations. Zipes's attitude toward film adaptations reflects concerns addressed in adaptation theory. Theories of film adaptations have been plagued by hostility toward film.¹⁶ Robert Stam identifies eight sources of this hostility: historical anteriority and seniority; dichotomous thinking that presumes a bitter rivalry between literature and film; iconophobia; logophilia; anti-corporeality of film; the 'myth of facility' of film production; and parasitic theft of the source text's vitality.¹⁷ Zipes historicizes the fairy tales he discusses, and identifies the oral and literary traditions of fairy tales as superior. He uses historicization to establish the changes, and to his mind damage, that film has made to the fairy tale. Specifically, Zipes believes that film has "silenced the personal and communal voice of the oral magic tales and obfuscated the personal voice of literary fairy-tale narratives," an opinion that illustrates Stam's sources of hostility.¹⁸

A primary concern with the sources of hostility and adaptation is that "literature will always have axiomatic superiority over any adaptation of it because of its seniority as an art form."¹⁹ As the older form, literature is given a privileged place over film, resulting in hierarchal comparisons between the two and qualitative fidelity criticism. Hierarchal comparisons and qualitative fidelity criticism both result in analyses based on the problems or failings resulting from a focus on the differences between film and literature. Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) addresses these concerns, building on the work of theorists who refute earlier theories of adaptation. Hutcheon refers to Michael Alexander's concept of "palimpsestuous" works that are haunted by their adaptations and contribute to an understanding of narratives as a whole, and expands

on Gérard Genette's concept of adaptations as texts of the "second degree" that exist only in relation to previous works.²⁰ In short, Hutcheon theorizes adaptations as adaptations, as works that are "second without being secondary."²¹

Adaptations, regardless of changes in the medium, contribute to the collective narrative. Maria Tatar states that while the various forms of the fairy tale "are attributed to individual authors, editors, or compilers, they derive largely from collective efforts."²² There remains consistency in the structure, despite the changes in the details. The transition to film does not change the narrative structure of the fairy tale, but does change its formal presentation. Consistencies in the adaptation of written text to film indicates the elements of fairy tale films, which can then be used to identify films that are original fairy tales. Both logophilia and iconophobia, sources of hostility toward film adaptation, result in the belief that films have little to contribute to the collective narrative. However, Tatar believes that the meaning of a fairy tale is generated by its performance, meaning "the scene of reading or acting out a text can affect its reception far more powerfully than morals and timeless truths inserted into the texts by Perrault, the Grimms, and others."²³ Film is indisputably a form of performance, one that is in a way closer to the oral tradition of fairy tales, making it a logical medium for the fairy tale narrative.

Which Tales are Fairy Tales?

Few analyses of fairy tales differentiate among the various types of tales, those that do not contain magic, wondertales, folk tales, and fables, and this lack of focus on common characteristics contributes to the endemic confusion surrounding the identification of the fairy tale. Antti Aarne's *The Types of the Folklore* (1971) breaks

tales into three dominant categories: animal tales, ordinary folk-tales, and jokes and anecdotes.²⁴ Aarne's classifications were translated and enlarged by Stith Thompson, and this method of classifying fairy tales is referred to as the Aarne-Thompson tale type index. The Aarne-Thompson classification is useful for identifying existing fairy tales, but is of little use for the classification of tales that have since been created and do not fit into one of the motif-based plot structures of the Aarne-Thompson tale type index.

Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1988) acknowledges Aarne's style of classification, but suggests that while numbers 300 to 749 are fairy tales the categorization is artificial.²⁵ Propp's morphology does not attempt to categorize all folktales, but is "dedicated to the study of *fairy tales*."²⁶ Using Afanas'ev's categorization of tales, Propp analyzes 100 tales to establish the functions of the fairy tale.²⁷ Each function is a required action or interaction of the *dramatis personae*, and occurs in each fairy tale regardless of themes and motifs. The first chapter of this project will examine the narrative structure of the films using a modified version of Propp's thirty-one functions. The functions will then be combined with the characteristics of the fairy tale as identified by Max Lüthi. Lüthi himself suggests, "Propp's structural analysis and my stylistic analysis work hand in hand to complement one another."²⁸ By combining Propp and Lüthi, this chapter will outline the narrative structure of the fairy tale, and explore the translation of the written text to visual medium. While adhering to the narrative functions of the fairy tale, each adaptation demonstrates that the techniques used in fairy tale films reflect the narrative elements identified by Lüthi.

The second chapter will explore how the film adaptations of novels actualize the written narrative voice, translating the written to visual and aural representations. Of the

two types of voice-over narration, third person narration is used for the adaptation of novels to film.²⁹ Although voice-over narration is not always used in fairy tale films, *The Princess Bride* (Reiner 1987) and *Stardust* (Vaughn 2007) offer two types of third person voice-over narration. While Worley addresses few characteristics of the fairy tale, he does discuss the importance of narration in the fairy tale. If the narrator is unreliable, if the realm of the fantasy can be dispelled as a dream or trick, then the narrative is not fantastic.

G rard Genette's classifications of narration, specifically homodiegetic, heterodiegetic, extradiegetic, intradiegetic, and metadiegetic, provide a language with which to discuss the use of narrator in each film.³⁰ The iconic use of 'once upon a time' and 'happily ever after' indicate not the presence of a fairy tale narrative, but the presence of narration. Each of the novels examined is narrated, and this narration is maintained in the film adaptations. Although the adaptations of Lewis's novels do not contain voice-over narration, the very present narration in the novels is translated to film in the visual depiction of the narrative. The examination of the aural and visual introduction, interruption, or influence of the narrative in the films illustrates how the narration maintains the structure and tone established in the written texts, indicates the interaction between narration and narrative in both films, and challenges the categories of voice-over narration.

The first two chapters identify the characteristics of the fairy tale film, and the third applies these characteristics to the non-adapted fairy tale films *Labyrinth* and *Penelope*. The examination of both films will identify the existence of the fairy tale

generic structures in non-adapted fairy tale films, and suggests the potential this structural analysis presents for further fairy tale analysis.

¹ Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: British Film Institute, 1999): 14.

² Although this thesis only addresses the structural aspects of the fairy tale genre, the various components of genre inform the others. The characteristics of the fairy tale genre can inform the analysis of the production, marketing, and viewing of the fairy tale film.

³ Alec Worley, *Empires of the Imagination: A Survey of Fantasy Cinema from George Méliés to Lord of the Rings* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co., 2005): 8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸ Walter Rankin, *Grimm Pictures: Fairy Tale Archetypes in Eight Horror and Suspense Films* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co., 2007): 18.

⁹ Jack Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1979): 108.

¹⁰ Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tale as Myth, Myth as Fairy Tale* (Lexington, UP of Kentucky, 1994): 74.

¹¹ Charles Perrault, "Donkeyskin" in *The Classic Fairy Tales*, edited by Maria Tatar (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999): 116.

¹² Alan Cholodenko, ed., "Introduction" in *The Illusion of Life: Essays on Animation* (Sydney: Power Institute of Fine Arts, 1991): 10.

¹³ Alexandre Alexeïeff, "Preface" in *Cartoons: One hundred years of cinema animation* (London: John Libbey & Co., 1994): xix

¹⁴ Paul Wells, *Understanding Animation* (New York: Routledge, 1998): 8.

¹⁵ A concern Zipes addresses in "Breaking the Disney Spell" is Disney's standardization of the fairy tale. This concern is similar to that of Wells, who believes that while Disney brought the animated film into the public eye. Disney's films became the dominant model for both animation and the fairy tale.

¹⁶ Robert Stam, "Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation" in *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, edited by Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003): 4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4-7.

¹⁸ Jack Zipes, *Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales, Children, and the Culture Industry* (New York: Routledge, 1997): 69.

¹⁹ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006): 4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

²² Maria Tatar, ed., *The Classic Fairy Tales* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999): ix.

²³ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁴ Antti Aarne, *The Types of the Folk-tale: A Classification and Bibliography*, translated and enlarged by Stith Thompson (New York: Lenox Hill, 1971): 20-21.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁶ Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, translated by Laurence Scott (Dallas: University of Texas Press, 1988): 19.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁸ Max Lüthi, *The European Folktale: form and nature*, translated by John D. Niles (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1982): 133.

²⁹ Sarah Kozloff, *Invisible Storytellers: Voice-Over Narration in American Fiction Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998): 73.

³⁰ Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, translated by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980): 244-5.

The Novels Go to the Movies: Story and Discourse

But the movie did so much more than just please me. It brought the book back to life.

William Goldman, "Introduction" in *The Princess Bride*

Rick Altman identifies the first step in the majority of genre theory as selecting a corpus that is "incontrovertibly generic."¹ As I will only be addressing a few films, it is impossible to consider this selection a complete corpus of fairy tale films. What these films represent are fairy tale narratives that present clear examples of the narrative characteristics, while providing variations. I am no more suggesting that the fairy tale film genre is limited to the characteristics addressed here, than I am suggesting that each of these films is only a fairy tale. In fact, in many fairy tales, the interaction between the hero and the princess (two roles of the fairy tale) could be examined under the romance genre. Each film contains traces of other genres, but the examples that will be discussed here are predominantly fairy tales. While film genre analysis has developed on its own, separate from its literary predecessor,² a generic analysis of the fairy tale requires a return to literary genre analysis. It is the narrative consistencies that make a fairy tale a fairy tale, and the characteristics of the narrative structure of the fairy tale are supported by the visual characteristics of a fairy tale film.

Seymour Chatman's analysis of narrative suggests that any narrative is a structure, dependent on two components. The first is a story, "the content or chain of events [...], plus what may be called the existents (characters, items of setting)" and the second is a discourse, "the expression, the means by which the content is communicated."³ Chatman's "story" for the fairy tale film can be identified using

Vladimir Propp's functions of the fairy tale, which include the events and characters that must be present within a tale for it to be deemed a fairy tale. Max Lüthi's analysis of the fairy tale can be used to identify the "discourse" of the fairy tale film, the techniques used in a fairy tale film to communicate the fairy tale characteristics. While the characteristics of the fairy tale can be found within other films or texts, when they are combined with the narrative functions they create a fairy tale. To analyze these films, it must first be established that they are in fact fairy tales.

Story

Antti Aarne's numerical classification of fairy tales, translated and enlarged by Stith Thompson, catalogues them according to their narrative. Vladimir Propp's concern with Aarne's classification of fairy tales is that it is motif based, only addressing an oversimplification of the narrative.⁴ Propp examines the structure of the fairy tales, focusing on the roles in the narrative or the *dramatis personae*, which include the villain, donor, helper, princess, dispatcher, hero, and false hero. The *dramatis personae* are not specific characters but roles that can be fulfilled by any character in the fairy tale, for example, the roles of false hero and villain can be fulfilled by the same character. The structure of the fairy tale, for Propp, develops from the interactions or *functions* of the *dramatis personae*. Propp identifies thirty-one functions of the fairy tale narrative.

Propp's functions are:

1. *Absention*: A family member absents himself from home.
2. *Interdiction*: The hero is faced with an interdiction, which can also be represented by a task that must be completed.

3. *Violation*: The interdiction is violated by the hero, but this function may also result from the disruption of the home by the villain.
4. *Reconnaissance*: The villain attempts to gain information about the hero.
5. *Delivery*: The information the villain attempts to discover during reconnaissance is delivered to the villain.
6. *Trickery*: The villain acts on the information and tricks the hero.
7. *Complicity*: The hero is complicit in the trickery of the villain, allowing the villain to almost defeat the hero.
8. *Villainy*: Villainy can take many forms, but is a malicious action done by the villain, usually as a result of the failed trickery.
 - 8.1. *Lack*: A family member desires something. This function, Propp notes, can occur at the beginning of the tale as it often instigates the action of the tale.
9. *Mediation*: The hero is approached with a request, and departs to rectify the lack.
10. *Beginning counteraction*: The hero decides how he will rectify the lack.
11. *Departure*: The hero leaves home.
12. *First function of the donor*: The donor meets and tests the hero.
13. *Hero's reaction*: The hero responds to the test, satisfying the donor's requirements.
14. *Provision or receipt of a magical agent*: The hero is given a reward for passing the donor's test.
15. *Spatial transference*: The hero travels, by magical or natural means, to the object of the search.
16. *Struggle*: The hero and villain are joined in combat.
17. *Branding*: The hero is branded during the struggle.

18. *Victory*: The villain is defeated in the struggle
19. *Liquidation*: The lack is eliminated, and the object of the action is obtained.
20. *Return*: Having fulfilled the lack, the hero begins the return home.
21. *Pursuit*: The hero is pursued on his return home.
22. *Rescue*: The hero is rescued from the pursuit.
23. *Unrecognized arrival*: The hero reaches home but has changed, and goes unrecognized by those who knew him.
24. *Unfounded claims*: The claims of hero are challenged.
25. *Difficult task*: A task is presented to the hero to prove the claims.
26. *Solution*: The *difficult task* is resolved.
27. *Recognition*: The hero is recognized.
28. *Exposure*: The false hero is identified an imposter.
29. *Transfiguration*: The hero is given a new appearance.
30. *Punishment*: The villain is punished.
31. *Wedding* or *Reward*: The hero is rewarded for his actions, often by marriage to the princess.⁵

Propp believes that these functions operate according to four principles: the functions are stable, constant elements; the number of functions is limited; the sequence of functions is identical; and all fairy tales share the same structure.⁶ Of these four observations, the third, that the sequence of the functions is identical in all fairy tales, presents some problems. Some of the functions must occur in the same order, because there exists a cause and effect relationship between them. For example, the *violation* cannot occur without a character instituting an *interdiction*. However, other functions can occur at

different points in the fairy tale, like *lack* and the functions of the donor. While Propp's elaborate list of functions illustrates the complexities of the actions of the fairy tale's various *dramatis personae*, it overcomplicates its narrative structure. Propp's narrative functions are based on short fairy tales, not novels. Fairy tale novels are more complex narratives not because of an increase in functions, but because their authors rearrange the functions along the syntagmatic axis. Propp's theory puts forth an inflexible set of requirements. Genre is not absolute but evolving, and it is rare that any genre film employs a generic construct without variation.

Propp's thirty-one functions can therefore be reduced, a reduction that is not intended to exclude the intricacies outlined in Propp's functions, but allows for a more manageable and malleable narrative structure. This reduction of functions primarily collapses the associated functions into single functions. For example, *violation* implies the presence of *interdiction*, as well as the *absentment* of the family member who puts in place the *interdiction*. The *delivery* of the information is implied by the causal relationship between *reconnaissance* and *trickery*, because the villain cannot act on the information if it is not received. The *lack*, regardless of its place in the narrative must be present, for it prompts the action of the hero, including the *mediation* and *beginning counteraction* in the *departure* of the hero. Similarly, the *provision or receipt of a magical agent* implies the donor's test and the *hero's reaction*. *Struggle* and *victory* are necessarily linked, and through *victory* the hero liquidates the *lack*. The hero's *return* is marked by the *pursuit*, *rescue*, *unrecognized arrival*, *unfounded claims*, *difficult task*, *solution*, *recognition*, and *exposure*. The hero's *victory* in the *struggle* is linked with the villain's *punishment*, just as the *transfiguration* of the hero is linked with the hero's

reward. Propp's thirty-one functions, although useful to identify the complexities of the fairy tale, will be reduced for the purpose of my analysis. The functions that will be used for this analysis are:

1. *Violation of the interdiction.*
2. *Lack:* Includes the hero's decision for action.
3. *Departure:* The departure of the hero is linked with the lack and the hero's decision for action.
4. *Reconnaissance*
5. *Trickery and complicity*
6. *Villainy*
7. *Receipt of a magical agent* by the hero, who is tested by the donor.
8. *Spatial transference*
9. *Struggle and victory*
10. *Return of the hero*
11. *Punishment of the villain*
12. *Reward*

These functions are numbered, but this is not the only possible arrangement for the functions. If, for example, the hero *returns* before the struggle, or the hero *receives a magical agent* before the *trickery*, the tale is still a fairy tale if all the functions are present. Propp's observation that the sequence of the functions is identical in every fairy tale does not allow a novelist or filmmaker to introduce the actions of the donor before the actions of the villain. Like *lack*, the hero's interaction with the donor comes at a time of need for the hero, which can occur anytime throughout the narrative. The order of the

functions, although they remain limited and stable, becomes individual. Fairy tales still share the same functions, but the order of these functions can be varied.

Another oversight of Propp's analysis results from his use of only short stories, not fairy tale novels. The length of the "modern narrative fiction entails additional complexities of structure."⁷ As a result, novels and films present some variations, not addressed by Propp, which result not from a manipulation of the functions, but from the characters fulfilling various roles in the fairy tale. The hero's interaction with donors or helpers is not limited to a single instance, nor is the hero limited to a single character. To examine the fairy tale narrative structure, it is necessary to identify the consistencies from text to film. For the films to be categorized as fairy tales, the narrative must contain the functions listed above despite the shift in medium.

For example, the adaptation of *Prince Caspian* (Adamson 2008) alters the narrative to the point where it can no longer be considered a fairy tale. This adaptation adds an offensive attack of the villain's castle where the hero and his forces are temporarily defeated. This does not fit within the functions of the fairy tale, because the hero cannot be defeated after attacking the villain. The conflict between the hero and villain is limited to *trickery and complicity*, where the hero acts in defense, and *struggle and victory*, where the hero defeats the villain. Furthermore, the struggle for dominance between Peter and Caspian in the film problematizes the role of the hero, making it indistinct and giving depth to both characters and their actions. The alterations to the narrative in *Prince Caspian* (2008) change the narrative to a tale that Alec Worley would classify as an epic fantasy.

Discourse

Using the criteria above to establish that a film's narrative structure is in fact a fairy tale, we can then examine the characteristics of the fairy tale film by relating them to Lüthi's characteristics of the fairy tale. Whereas Propp's work only addresses the actions of the *dramatis personae*, what Chatman refers to as story, without examining their stylistic devices, Max Lüthi's analysis of the characteristics of the fairy tale serves as a counterpart to Propp's structural analysis. Lüthi identifies five stylistic characteristics of the fairy tale; one-dimensionality, depthlessness, abstract style, isolation and universal interconnectedness, and sublimation and all-inclusiveness.

Lüthi's term "one-dimensionality" refers to the presence of otherworlds in the fairy tale which are accepted by all characters without question. The fairy tale characters "do not feel that an encounter with an otherworld being is an encounter with an alien dimension."⁸ The dimension that is singular in the fairy tale is found in the lack of the characters' surprise when presented with the wondrous, numinous, or otherworldly. While creatures and occurrences may be unusual, the hero takes these in stride, accepting them not as something from another world, but as a possible and necessary part of his world. The hero's reactions in the tale are "of the everyday kind. He is afraid of dangers, not of the uncanny."⁹

Like one-dimensionality, depthlessness in the fairy tale is the acceptance of things as they are. The characters of the fairy tale are "without substance, without inner life, without an environment; they lack any relation to past and future, to time altogether."¹⁰ The characters do not question their environments or the events in which they are involved; furthermore, they are, Lüthi argues, unattached to all events, existing only in

the moment. The characters in the fairy tale do not exhibit curiosity at their situations, but react to whatever occurs and only draw on previous knowledge or magical agents when necessitated by the narrative. Film is literally a depthless medium, a projected two-dimensional image, light and shadows on a screen. As a result, film is an ideal medium for the fairy tale as the depthlessness of the characters is paralleled by the filmic presentation of the narrative. Within a fairy tale film, the characters' emotion dominates the scene, mirrored in the framing, lighting, and weather of the sequence. Depthlessness is also found in the otherworld's extensive landscape when the fairy tale, "represents spiritual or psychological distance in terms of physical separation."¹¹ This landscape can be crossed by journeying or *spatial transference*, but, regardless of the method of travel, the land is traversed with minimal effort. The framing of the action and the setting of the narrative are used to establish depthless in the fairy tale film.

The third characteristic, the use of an abstract style in the fairy tale, does not translate to film. Lüthi states that in the fairy tale the "world is captured in the word," excluding the other mediums possible for the fairy tale.¹² While the word is by nature abstract, allowing for any noun without adjectival qualification to be subject to the reader's imagination, a single image is very specific. Thus the abstract of "old hag" in a fairy tale, when translated to the screen becomes defined by appearance, costume, lighting and possibly associated with an actress portraying the hag. While film can be abstract, narratives are predominantly conveyed in the Classical Hollywood style, as are the films that will be addressed here. While the stylistic traits of the fairy tale film are not necessarily abstract, the narrative still addresses abstracts like love, a common motivator in the fairy tale. That said, the film provides a specific depiction of the abstract

concept of love, and abstract style becomes a moot point in the depiction of the fairy tale in film. The cinematic style used to convey the narrative of these fairy tales eliminates the sense of the abstract found in the novels. Lüthi's remaining characteristics, one-dimensionality, depthlessness, isolation and universal interconnectedness, and sublimation and all inclusiveness, are very present in the films, reinforced by camera techniques used to convey the narrative.

The framing used to illustrate depthlessness also contributes to the sense of isolation throughout the film. Although isolation and universal interconnectedness appear contradictory, each scene within the fairy tale narrative is "presenting only pure action and forego[ing] any amplifying description."¹³ The characters are alone, acting in isolation, except when it is necessary for them to be connected in the narrative. Lüthi believes that only "a single one of [the protagonist's] components may be evident and may take effect in any one scene, and yet in the end these components form one integral whole."¹⁴ Isolation and universal interconnectedness of the fairy tale narrative is distinct in film. The camera is able to isolate a character within a busy scene or depict the absolute emptiness of a character's surroundings. This potential for isolation is combined with editing, where a simple cut connects the actions of the hero and the simultaneous actions of the villain and false hero. This isolation and culminate in the accelerated cross-cutting and the collision of characters during the *struggle and victory*.

Sublimation and all inclusiveness are present in the fairy tale in two ways, both of which are linked to the element of magic. First, the characters can become anything within the tale, transformed by perseverance or magic. Zipes alludes to this, stating that while characters are defined "according to their social class or profession, they often

cross boundaries or transform themselves.”¹⁵ Second, the fairy tale uses motifs representative of the world, allowing the fairy tale, “to incorporate the world... [it] becomes world-encompassing.”¹⁶ The fairy tale can reflect any aspect of the world, transforming it into a fairy tale by including magic. Film has the unique ability to represent magic, from the earliest trick photography used by Georges Méliès to the current computer generated effects.

The BBC adaptations of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (Fox 1988) and *Prince Caspian* (Kirby 1989) use blue screening, matte scenery, and a small amount of animation. In both, the majority of creatures of Narnia which live on the ground are created by costumes, for example, the Beavers, Badger, the Dwarves. Hybrid animals, such as fauns and centaurs, are also created by costumes in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. In *Prince Caspian*, centaurs are created using blue screen technology, filming the body of the horse and the human separately and combining them to create the centaur. However, the creatures that require flight are created through animation. Pegasi, griffins, and eagles sit overlooking the events of Aslan’s camp. The witch calls on all the forces of evil, and is swarmed by animated demons. Both Narnia films illustrate the incorporation of all available film techniques for the creation of the fairy tale world.

This use of all available techniques has been replaced, because “[s]ince the late 1990s, computer-generated imaging has become the cinematic standard in special effects.”¹⁷ As a result, the magical elements of the fairy tale film are dependent on and result from developments in film technology. The dominance of computer-generated imaging (CGI) can be seen in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (Adamson 2005) and *Stardust* (Vaughn 2007). Both films use CGI for all effects for example, “zoom[ing]

out from the subatomic level to outer space, and do[ing] so in a single shot without any traditional editing and constrictions on shot duration because of physical limitations, [which] transcends standard cinematography and offers an array of storytelling benefits.”¹⁸

Using the reduced list of functions to establish the narrative as a fairy tale regardless of variations and changes in the adaptation, along with Lüthi’s four characteristics, it can be established that *Stardust, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1988), *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (2005), *Prince Caspian* (1989), and *The Princess Bride* (Reiner 1987) are indeed fairy tales.

Neil Gaiman’s *Stardust*

Of the films addressed here, *Stardust* is the most conventional in that it exhibits a fairy tale narrative structure with minimal variations. *Stardust* is the tale of Tristan Thorne, a hero, who sets out to find his heart’s desire. The film’s narrator states that this is the story of how “Tristan Thorne becomes a man... And to achieve it he must win the heart of his one true love” (*lack*). He sets out from his home, the village Wall named for the wall that surrounds it, a wall which no one is allowed to cross (*interdiction*). Tristan (Charlie Cox) leaves to retrieve a fallen star for Victoria (Sienna Miller), whom he believes to be the most beautiful girl in the village. The depiction of Victoria is an example of the depthlessness of the fairy tale. Tristan’s love for Victoria in the novel is depthless, reduced to her appearance. In the text, “she was in all probability, [Tristan] was certain, the most beautiful girl in the British Isles.”¹⁹ In the film, Victoria’s beauty is presented in her physical appearance, but the depthlessness of Tristan’s love is revealed

in a conversation between Tristan and Yvaine the Star (Claire Danes). When captured aboard the airship, Yvaine requests: "Tell me about Victoria." Tristan replies, "Well she... she... there's nothing more to tell you" and when Yvaine succinctly analyses the absurdity of Tristan's quest, he responds "You'll understand when you meet her." He is unable to describe her personality, reducing her to something that can only be understood when seen.

Tristan is isolated, despite his interaction with the various characters. Tristan is introduced in a close-up, framed by the too-small doorway he ducks through, followed by a long shot and extreme long shot of Tristan walking through the deserted streets. He remains isolated within the town of Wall, despite working in a busy shop. Tristan is shown in solitary close-up, while Victoria's close-ups include various shop patrons in the background. Following this incident, Tristan speaks with his father who states, "so you don't fit with the popular crowd. Now I take that as a very good omen." Tristan is an outsider in his own home, isolated from everyone. Once Tristan leaves Wall and obtains the Star, his progression remains isolated from the progression of the false heroes and the villain. Tristan and Yvaine are shown in extreme long shot while walking across the hillsides of Stormhold. This is followed by individual shots of Primus (Jason Flemyng), Septimus (Mark Strong), and the Witch (Michelle Pfeiffer) travelling across different sections of the expansive landscape. This trend continues throughout the film, as the scenes of Tristan's progress are intercut with the progression of his pursuers, the Witch and Septimus.

Tristan, upon discovering the magical land of Stormhold, in both text and film, is far from shocked. Tristan is unsurprised when he finds himself magically transported to

the location of the star. His confusion results from his misidentification of Yvaine, when he crashes into her and asks “Mother?” It is not the magic that confuses him, but a mistake caused by thinking about the Star, not his mother, when he used the candle. Furthermore, his reaction, in both the novel and the film, to discovering that a star is a maiden is to capture her. He does not allow the fact that the star is a girl to stop, or even pause, his quest.

The landscape is an extension of depthlessness, a vast space that is traversed with ease. The depthlessness of the landscape is illustrated in the transition from Victoria and Tristan’s picnic to the deathbed of the King of Stormhold. Using an accelerated computer generated pan-zoom, the camera transports the viewer across the landscape. To further emphasize the depthlessness of the landscape, when Dunstan (Nathaniel Parker) enters the caravan during the introduction of the film the camera pulls back to an extreme bird’s eye shot that converts to a map depicting the wall and the two lands of England and Stormhold. Using candlelight Tristan crosses the distance to the star with ease, moving as swiftly as the camera does when moving from the picnic to the deathbed of the king. Tristan travels back to Wall with the help of a flying pirate ship, again traveling over the expansive landscape of Stormhold. Upon leaving home, Tristan’s mode of transportation illustrates the depthlessness of the tale. He crosses the Kingdom of Stormhold without effort, capturing the Star and returning home within a time restriction imposed by Victoria. Throughout his travels Tristan crosses the landscape by means of walking, candlelight, and airship. Tristan, in the novel, begins his journey walking, before meeting a hairy little man, who gives him a magical candle. This donor is replaced by Tristan’s father, who provides both the candle and the protective flower. The

candle provides a means of spatial transference, while the flower provides protection when necessary. This change does not alter the narrative significantly, just reduces Tristan's travel time and enables his *violation* of the *interdiction*.

Tristan's progress throughout the film also shows the depthlessness of the film. Each scene focuses on and mirrors his degree of progress. Before breaking the interdiction, Tristan is confined to the village of Wall, a confinement emphasized in shots of him trapped on the narrow streets, or close-ups of him alone in the crowd. Not only are the heroes motivated by singular desires, but their emotions mirror their lack of depth. Each fairy tale hero's story begins with the *violation* of the *interdiction*. The hero is confined by his initial situation. As the narrative progresses, the hero leaves this dark and confining initial situation and enters an open, lighter space. We are first introduced to Tristan as he is leaving his house in the dark. With the exception of the shop scene, the film is set at night until Tristan and Yvaine begin their journey to Wall. Similarly, Tristan is shown in small, enclosed spaces, confined by his surroundings. When Tristan first appears, he is in the village of Wall, at night, a small being dwarfed by the houses along the street and looked down upon by Victoria, illustrated by the high angle perspective shot of Victoria looking out her window. In the shop scene, the only daylight scene before Tristan leaves Wall, Tristan is shot almost exclusively in close-up, with the occasional medium shot. In contrast, when Tristan meets Yvaine, he is shot in medium-long shots, with the occasional close-up shot. The difference in shot length between these two scenes mirrors Tristan's literal progression away from the confines of Wall, a village with a name that indicates enclosure and confinement.

Upon leaving Wall, Tristan is thrust into open spaces with wider framing. He meets Yvaine, and is shot predominantly in medium and longshots. As he and Yvaine begin their travels, shots of the two walking together vary between long and extreme long shots, when dialogue does not require close ups. Along with the framing, Tristan and Yvaine's progress back to Wall occurs during the day, unlike his time in Wall which is shot in darkness.

Weather is also used to mirror the narrative progression of the characters, most clearly illustrated during the *trickery*, *complicity*, and *villainy* functions in the film. During a story the Witch sets a trap in an inn to capture Yvaine, Prince Primus, and Tristan. Thunder begins to rumble as the witch sets her trap, serving a narrative function by making the inn a necessary stop for all characters. The rain has just begun as Yvaine enters the inn, while the rain pours when Primus and Tristan arrive. Primus destroys the trap, by recognizing the stone and is killed by the Witch (*villainy*). Upon escaping the Witch's trap, Tristan and Yvaine are transported into the sky where a violent argument takes place in the middle of a violent storm. Surrounded by thunder, lightning, and pouring rain Yvaine and Tristan scream at each other. Not only are night and day used to illustrate the emotions of the characters, but the weather itself becomes an extension of the characters. Each scene is centered on the single emotion of the character or characters in the scene.

Throughout this journey, Tristan and Yvaine are pursued by Prince Septimus, the false hero, and the Witch, the villain. The progress of both the Witch and Septimus is intercut with Tristan's progress. In the novel, isolation and universal interconnectedness is established by the chapters, but is maintained in the film by the editing. A second

alteration from text to screen is the struggle, of which there is a more literal depiction in the film. However, the false hero Septimus is removed by the Witch, while the Witch fails to obtain Yvaine's heart. For his actions, Tristan is rewarded by receiving Yvaine's heart and the Kingdom of Stormhold. Thus, the narrative, reinforced by the editing and mise-en-scene, remains true to the fairy tale genre

C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*

C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, the second novel in the Narnia series, has been adapted twice to film. *Prince Caspian*, the fourth novel in the series, has also been adapted twice, but, as addressed above, only one of these adaptations is a fairy tale. In both novels, the narrative shifts between the actions of the hero or heroes and the villain. This is maintained in each of the adaptations by intercutting between the progress of the heroes and the pursuit of the villains.

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe replaces the single hero with four heroes: Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy Pevensie. With four heroes, the functions do not need to be fulfilled by all four children. The Pevensies do function as a unit, but they also act separately. Edmund is incredibly isolated when he is *complicit* to the Witch's *trickery*, as are the girls when they see Aslan killed. As isolated as Edmund is when he betrays his siblings, his actions are intercut with the actions of the others. While Edmund is captured by the White Witch, Susan, Peter, and Lucy encounter Santa Claus, the donor, who gives them the gifts they use to defeat the witch. Edmund does not receive a gift, but the functions are not affected because of his connection with the other children.

The Pevensies are sent to the country, during the evacuation, and find themselves at the Professor's house. The 2005 *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* film begins with the war in London where the family is threatened by the bombing. This beginning sequence is marked by darkness, and tight framing. Upon entering the house, they are informed by Mrs. Macready that "there are a few rules we need to follow. There will be no shouting or running. No improper use of the dumb waiter. *No* touching of the historic artifacts. And above all, there should be no disturbing of the professor." The rain reinforces this sense of restriction. When the children are confined to the house by the rain, they play hide and seek, closing themselves into small places after running around the labyrinthine hallways. Peter (William Moseley) instigates a game of hide and seek which is punctuated by Susan (Anna Popplewell) shutting herself in a chest, and close up shots of Edmund (Skandar Keynes) and Lucy's (Georgie Henley) legs running up stairs. During their game the children are confined by shots and the *mise-en-scene*.

In the 1988 adaptation, upon entering the house, Peter (Richard Dempsey), Susan (Sophie Cook), Edmund (Jonathan R. Scott) and Lucy (Sophie Wilcox) are shot in medium and close shots, illustrating their confinement. Their first day in the house they are trapped indoors, as shown by a shot from outside the house of rain beating against the small window. As the children traverse the dark, labyrinthine hallways they peek in the doors of the various rooms. They are framed by small doorways, and shot from a high angle as they find the stairs and climb them. Their entrance to the room containing the wardrobe is a full shot as they step through a small door barely high enough for the children to pass through without stooping.

While exploring and playing, Lucy discovers the land of Narnia in the Wardrobe. When she first enters, in the novel and both adaptations, she is unsurprised. In the 1988 *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Lucy's response to seeing a lamppost in the wood is "How funny." She is more surprised by finding a lamppost in the middle of the woods than discovering a magical land inside a wardrobe. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (2005) uses no audible reaction, while in the novel, Lucy comments "This is very queer" as she passes through the wardrobe, which is shortly followed by "Why, it's just like branches of trees!"²⁰ Lucy finds the lack of a back of the wardrobe odd, but accepts the strange things she is brushing against as trees, before meeting and having tea with a faun. In each film, Lucy's discovery of Narnia is no more shocking than the presence of fur coats and moth balls in the wardrobe. Her siblings have similar reactions when entering Narnia and apologize for their disbelief in Lucy's 'stories'. When presented with the fantastic, such as talking beavers, they accept their help while ignoring the fact that the animals can speak.

Depthlessness is found in the use of maps and the depiction of landscapes. A map is used in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1988) to depict the land of Narnia, indicating a level of depthlessness from the outset. The 2005 adaptation also uses a map. When Peter is planning the battle, he is examining a map. The shot of the map zooms into an extreme close up, giving the appearance of entering the map, before fading into the battlefield, where the movement of the camera is paralleled by the flight of a griffin. The depthlessness of the landscape is also portrayed in early shots. When Susan, Edmund, and Lucy escape the wolves, the Beavers tell them "Aslan's camp is near the stone table, just across the frozen river." The children look out on the landscape from a

high angle, making the mountains appear diminished. The next shot of the children crossing an open, snow covered expanse is shot from a high angle. In both shots, the landscape of Narnia is given a lack of dimension, similar to a map.

Once in Narnia, the four children agree to help fulfill a prophecy, freeing Narnia from the power and tyranny of the White Witch.²¹ Their progress through Narnia illustrates several of the characteristics of the fairy tale. As Lucy first enters Narnia, she steps away from the wardrobe and the camera is stationary, allowing Lucy to escape the confinement of the initial close up. Her release from confinement is not complete, as she walks into a trap, and is led to the confines of Mr. Tumnus's house. However, when Lucy and Edmund return to the wardrobe, it is no longer night, but day time. This progression in the framing continues as the narrative continues, providing longshots and extreme long shots as the children travel to meet Aslan. Their crowning at the conclusion of the film is shown in long shot and brightly lit.

In the 2005 adaptation, unlike the 1988 adaptation, Lucy arrives in Narnia for the first time during the afternoon. This does not contradict the depthlessness of the narrative, as Lucy is then taken to Mr. Tumnus's small, dark house. Furthermore, her conversation with Tumnus in the woods is shot almost entirely in close up. It is not until her siblings enter the wardrobe that all four begin to escape the confines associated with the professor's house. The four children arrive during bright daylight in both adaptations, and are shown in long shots as they travel to the Beavers' lodge. Their time in and escape from the Beavers' lodge is threatened as a result of the Witch's *trickery*, returning them to confining framing. Both films use close-ups and low lighting to convey this sense of threat, but the 2005 adaptation shows the Pevensies and Beavers in close up as

they escape through a small tunnel. The threat of the wolves is actualized by the small, enclosed space. Once the children escape the Wolves and reach Aslan's camp, both films use more medium, long, and extreme long shots. Again, the sense of freedom illustrated by the framing is most notable during the coronation sequence at the conclusion of the film. In both films, Cair Paravel is shown in a long, establishing shot. The children are then crowned in an open, brightly lit hall, shot in medium and long shots, using close-ups only when necessary to show minute facial expressions.

The depthlessness found in both adaptations' use of framing can be found when the weather mirrors the characters' progress and in the characters' motivation. The White Witch has made it "Always winter, and never Christmas" in Narnia, which begins to melt as the children proceed toward Aslan's camp. Furthermore, each Pevensie represents a different emotion, resulting in arguments throughout the novel and both films. This association of each Pevensie with a different characteristic is solidified at the conclusion of the 1988 film, when the children are identified as "King Peter the Magnificent, Queen Susan the Gentle, King Edmund the Just, and... Queen Lucy the Valiant." Despite this, the children are not in competition with each other, but are driven by the single goal of rescuing Narnia from the grasp of the White Witch. Although Peter does voice reluctance, and is unwilling to believe his own ability to fight, he does not hesitate to defend his siblings. Similarly, Edmund's petulance fades as he joins his siblings in the battle against the White Witch. Like the Pevensies, Prince Caspian depthlessly accepts the challenge of freeing Narnia. When he first meets the Narnians, he agrees almost immediately to lead them to battle, despite his inexperience in war. Each hero in the

adaptations of Lewis's novels fights a battle that is not theirs, easily accepting their joint roles as future rulers of Narnia.

Prince Caspian, the fourth novel in the Narnia series, returns to a single hero. Caspian (Jean Marc Perret), the nephew of King Miraz (Robert Lang), is the rightful heir to the throne. Miraz tries to have Caspian killed, and so, with the help of his teacher, Caspian escapes from the castle. Prince Caspian escapes at night from the confines of his uncle's castle. He is then rescued by Narnians who discuss what to do with him. During this sequence, Caspian is shot entirely in close up with low lighting. Likewise, when Caspian's escapes from the castle the climax of the chase is marked by lightning. The lightning not only causes Caspian to fall from his horse, but also highlights the danger of his escape.

Upon meeting the Narnians, Caspian agrees to free Narnia from King Miraz's rule and is delighted to find that the talking beasts and magical beings of Narnia do exist. Caspian uses a magical horn to call the four Pevensies back to Narnia, and the Pevensies' reaction to finding themselves in Narnia again is similar to Caspian's discovery that Narnians *do* exist. Caspian has lived his life without magic, but he believes that blowing the horn will have an effect. Just as he accepts the magic of the horn, he accepts the presence of the Narnians, specifically dwarves and talking animals.

Caspian hides among the Narnians until the threat of death diminishes, and Caspian and the Narnians are able to venture outside. Caspian's and the Narnians' confinement to caves and woods is in direct contrast to the situation of the helpers, Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy, who are shot with bright lighting in medium and long shots. Because the Pevensies are helpers, they are not shot the same way as the hero. Caspian's

confinement and gradual escape from this confinement is very similar to that of the Pevensies in both adaptations of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

Prince Caspian is a fairy tale however, Peter, Edmund, Susan, and Lucy are not the heroes, but the helpers. They are called to Narnia by Queen Susan's horn, which is given to Prince Caspian by his teacher Cornelius, who fulfills the role of the donor. When used, its magic brings the Pevensies to Narnia. They then assist Caspian in his battle to gain Kingship of Narnia. Like Aslan in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* narrative, the Pevensies are only present to provide assistance, only fighting and defeating Miraz, the false King, because Caspian is injured. The Pevensies' return to Narnia is linked with that of Aslan, whose presence is necessary for Caspian's coronation. The four Pevensies and Aslan work in conjunction with Caspian to achieve his goal and resolve Narnia's *lack*. There is no conflict between the old Kings and Queens and Caspian, as there is in *Prince Caspian* (2008). Despite the variations to the fairy tale structure, both film adaptations of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and the film adaptation of *Prince Caspian* (1989) maintain the fairy tale narrative structure and characteristics.

William Goldman's *The Princess Bride*

The Princess Bride, a narrative easily mistaken for an epic fantasy, is the most complex of the fairy tale narratives discussed here. At first glance, it may appear that *The Princess Bride* is the tale of one hero, Westley (Cary Elwes). After leaving to seek his fortune, Westley's love, Buttercup (Robin Wright Penn), is tricked into marrying Prince Humperdinck (Chris Sarandon), Westley's villain. A variation on the *trickery* of the fairy tale found in *The Princess Bride*, is that it is carried out by the agents of the villain. In

both novel and film, Vizzini (Wallace Shawn), Inigo (Mandy Patinkin), and Fezzick (André the Giant) kidnap the Princess. As a result of this kidnapping, Prince Humperdinck is able to capture, torture, and kill Westley. When faced with capture after leaving the Fireswamp, both Buttercup and Westley are complicit when Buttercup asks “...will you promise not to hurt him...?”²² Westley’s failed rescue of Buttercup enables Prince Humperdinck’s villainy, the imprisoning of Westley in the Pit of Dispair.²³

Inigo, the second hero, seeks revenge for the death of his father, who was slaughtered by his villain, Count Rugen (Christopher Guest). In the film, Inigo explains, “the six-fingered man returned and demanded the sword, at one-tenth his promised price. My father refused. The six-fingered man slashed him through the heart. I love my father, so naturally, I challenged him to a duel.” This story is provided in the novel by the chapter “Inigo”, followed by the chapter entitled “Fezzick.” These two chapters introduce the initial situations for each title character. While Inigo’s story is reduced to an anecdote, Fezzick’s narrative is excluded from the film, reducing the number of heroes in the text from three to two. Fezzick is therefore the helper for both Westley and Inigo. This alteration does not change the fairy tale structure, but reduces the complexities of the interwoven heroes.

Westley and Inigo exist in a fairy tale world, and are accepting of the presence of miracle men. The wonderful, in *The Princess Bride*, is not the presence of miracle men, but the miracles themselves. Westley is given a pill to bring him back to life, and when Miracle Max’s wife asks “Think it’ll work?” he responds, “It would take a miracle.” However, Westley’s reaction to being revived is “I’ll beat you each apart, I’ll take you

both together. Why won't my arms work?" When Inigo and Fezzick explain that he has been mostly dead all day, his first questions are "Who are you? Are we enemies? Why am I on this wall? Where's Buttercup?" He is not concerned with his being dead and being brought back to life, but with how he will rescue Buttercup and if Inigo and Fezzick are truly allies. This also occurs in the novel, with Buttercup's easy acceptance of Westley's almost dying again, but coming back to life thanks to the "Lord of Permanent Affection."²⁴ It is no surprise to any of the characters that death is only a miracle pill away from revival.

In *The Princess Bride* there are no maps, but the depthlessness does extend to the distances which are easily crossed. The Dread Pirate Roberts' ship gains on Buttercup and her kidnappers, at a speed which Vizzini describes as "inconceivable." The film is self reflexive, drawing attention to the conventions of the fairy tale. The impossibility of The Dread Pirate Robert's ship gaining on the kidnappers is suggested, but it is necessary for Westley aboard the ship to catch up and capture Buttercup. This same ease of crossing landscapes is again highlighted as Humperdinck pursues Buttercup and Westley, who declare that they will evade him despite their being on foot.

In *The Princess Bride* the weather remains flat throughout the entire film. While this may appear to be an exception to the use of mise-en-scene to parallel character emotion, it also reinforces the depthlessness of the fairy tale narrative. *The Princess Bride* is a fairy tale narrative that is self-reflexive, both using and mocking the narrative structure and characteristics. The flat weather used throughout the film illustrates the flatness of the fairy tale narrative, no character is ever truly in danger as the tale is only

ever being retold, a statement that is reinforced by the use of narration in the film and text.

In *The Princess Bride*, framing, and day and night are effectively used to emphasize the degree of threat and confinement. When Buttercup is captured by Vizzini, Inigo, and Fezzick, she is shot in close up, sitting on the deck of the boat. However, as the Man in Black gains on them the day light increases. In the novel, the Man in Black's battles with Inigo, Fezzick, and Vizzini occur at night, as does his rescue of the princess, indicated by the passage: "'Then *run!*' cried the man in black, and he broke into a run himself, flying across rocks in the moonlight, pulling the Princess behind him."²⁵ However, the film changes this sequence to day, and the framing becomes long and extreme long shots as Westley and Buttercup enter the 'safety' of the fireswamp. When they are captured as a part of Prince Humperdinck's trickery, Buttercup and Westley become confined again. This is accented by the tight framing of Buttercup in the castle, which never extends beyond a full shot. The fear in Buttercup's nightmare is conveyed through the close-up of her face when she is attacked by the old woman. Within the castle, her entire body is caught within the frame of the shot, just as she is trapped by the stone walls as she walks down the hallways. Paralleled with this, is Westley's confinement in the Pit of Dispair. Although the Pit is not always shot in close-up, the medium and longshots of Westley emphasize that he is strapped to an operating table, unable to move beyond the confines of the Pit, and is very small in comparison to The Machine, a torture device. It is not until the conclusion of the film, as the characters ride off into the sunset, that they achieve an escape from this confinement. Like *Stardust*, and

the Narnia adaptations, *The Princess Brides* reinforces the situation of the characters by the framing, thereby mimicking the progression from confinement to freedom.

The depthlessness found in the framing extends to the heroes' motivation to resolve their respective lacks. Like Victoria in *Stardust*, Westley's true love, Buttercup, is reduce to physical appearance in both the text and the film. Westley and Buttercup's love is based on appearance, illustrated by Buttercup's assertion "Oh Westley, I must never disappoint you" before asking her parents how best to improve her appearance.²⁶ Furthermore, the result of her love for and loss of Westley results in the description of her as "the most beautiful woman in a hundred years."²⁷ For the film, Buttercup's beauty is given a literal face. In both novel and film, the actions of Westley and Humperdinck are motivated by the superficial appreciation of Buttercup's beauty. Inigo's actions are motivated by revenge, a revenge so single-minded that he is unable to think of anything else. His revenge has been the focus of his life for twenty years, and is so strong that he does not know how to live life after killing Rugen. Both heroes are single minded, lacking any sense of depth in their actions.

The characteristic of isolation and interconnectedness is best illustrated by Buttercup and Westley's escape from Humperdinck, which is intercut with shots of Humperdinck following their trail. It is not until just before Buttercup and Westley enter the Fireswamp that they are shown in the frame with Humperdinck. This editing indicates the isolated action of the characters in the film, characters who are geographically and filmicly separate until a function requires their interaction. Westley's torture, Buttercup's imprisonment in the castle, and Inigo's drunken stupor are intercut

with Humperdinck's plotting, and while Humperdinck is rarely shown alone, those he is in contact with are extensions of himself.

Unlike fairy tales with a single hero, or a group of heroes working as one, the two interwoven heroes of *The Princess Bride* remain isolated during their respective *struggles and victories*. Although Westley, Inigo, and Fezzick require each other's assistance to enter the castle, they are separated upon meeting Inigo's villain, Count Rugen. Inigo's fight with Count Rugen is intercut with Westley's battle to the pain with Prince Humperdinck. Despite their early interaction, Westley and Inigo's lacks are separate and must be resolved in isolation from each other according to the fairy tale narrative structure. Although Inigo, Fezzick, Westley, and Buttercup depart from the castle together, the final shot of the film is of Westley and Buttercup, again emphasizing the isolation of each hero's narrative progress.

Each of these five films illustrates the various filmic possibilities for the fairy tale narrative and characteristics. The modified functions and Lüthi's characteristics of the written fairy tale withstand the translation from text to screen. Although the framing and mise-en-scene techniques used to emphasize depthlessness, editing to illustrate isolation and inter-connectedness, and special effects for sublimation can be found in many films (they are hardly uncommon techniques), it is their combination with each other and the narrative structure of the fairy tale that identifies them as conventions of the fairy tale film.

¹ Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: British Film Institute, 1999): 17.

² *Ibid.*, 13.

³ Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (London: Cornell UP, 1978): 19.

⁴ Propp's assertions regarding the shortcomings of Antti Aarne's classifications were made before Stith Thompson translated and enlarged Aarne's *Types of the Folk-tale: A Classification and Bibliography*. However, Propp's concerns remain relevant as Thompson's enlargement has added to motifs, not altered Aarne's approach to classifying fairy tales.

⁵ The italics are Propp's. Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, translated by Laurence Scott (Dallas: University of Texas Press, 1988): 25-65.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 21-3.

⁷ Chatman, 15.

⁸ Max Lüthi, *The European Folktale: form and nature*, translated by John D. Niles (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1982): 10.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹² *Ibid.*, 25.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁵ Jack Zipes, ed. "Cross Cultural Connections" in *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: From Straparol and Basile to the Brothers Grimm* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1994), 848.

¹⁶ Lüthi, 73-4.

¹⁷ Stephen Keane, *Cinetch: film, convergence and new media* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007): 61.

¹⁸ Shilo T. McClean, *Digital Storytelling: The Narrative Power of Visual Effects in Film* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007): 47.

¹⁹ Neil Gaiman, *Stardust* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006): 37.

²⁰ C.S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (New York: HarperTrophy, 1994): 6. Herein referred to as *LWW*.

²¹ The White Witch is portrayed by Barbara Kellerman in the 1988 adaptation and Tilda Swinton in the 2005 adaptation.

²² William Goldman, *The Princess Bride*, 25th Anniversary ed. (1973, New York: Del Rey, 1998): 188. All quotations are taken from the 1998 edition. This line from Buttercup's remains consistent from text to film.

²³ The Zoo of Death is used in the novel. The elaborate sequence involving Inigo and Fezzick passing through the levels of the Zoo however is reduced in the film. The only challenge they face is the location of the entrance. As a result, the name of the Zoo is change to the Pit of Dispair for the film, because there are no animals housed there.

²⁴ Ibid., 313.

²⁵ Ibid., 158.

²⁶ Ibid., 56.

²⁷ Ibid., 59.

Telling the Tale: Visual and Aural Narration

It was the sort of house that is mentioned in guide books and even in histories; and well it might be, for all manner of stories were told about it, some of them even stranger than the one I am telling you now.

C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*

A fairy tale element not addressed by Propp's functions or Lüthi's characteristics has been present since the days of oral fairy tales: the *telling*. The narrative functions and characteristics must be conveyed to the reader, listener, or film audience. The role of the narrator is as important as the narrative. The fairy tale is marked by the narrator's use of the iconic phrases "once upon a time" and "they lived happily ever after." While these exact phrases may not always be used, the introduction of a fairy tale includes the presentation of a situation that occurred at one time, often signified by the term *once*, indicating that a story from the past is going to be related. The happy resolution of the tale is associated with the reward received by the hero and the defeat suffered by the villain and false hero. The trials faced by the hero are over, and the hero and princess live their life without disruption, enjoying their rewards. Of interest is not that the stories happened in the past, nor that they are resolved happily, but that these tales are narrated by an omniscient voice indicative of the *telling* of the tale. In the film adaptations this narrative voice is maintained by the camera as well as the soundtrack. In *Stardust* and *The Princess Bride* voice-over narration is used, while the Narnia films rely on the omnipresence of the camera to convey the narrative voice.

Visual Narration

The presence of the camera in every film provides a narrative point of view. In film, the “most evident trace of the narration’s omniscience is its *omnipresence*. The narration is unwilling to tell all, but it is willing to go anywhere. This is surely the basis of the tendency to collapse narration into camerawork.”¹ The narrative is subject to the narrator, who can decide to convey information. The camera is used to show the events that are relevant to the narrative, while ignoring those events which are not. Thus it is the camera’s perspective that not only creates a narrative voice, but also reinforces the narrative characteristics, such as permitting the *mise-en-scène* to depthlessly mirror the character’s emotions, and allowing for the association between narrative progress and hero’s journey across vast landscapes. The camera’s narration remains consistent throughout the adaptations of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and *Prince Caspian*. However, it is the introduction and conclusion of the fairy tale that are of particular interest. The “once upon a time” and the “happily ever after” are not only iconic of the fairy tale, but the narrative voice created by these two phrases also reinforces the isolation and universal interconnectedness of the fairy tale narrative.

Lewis’s *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* begins with “[o]nce there were four children whose names were Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy. This story is about something that happened to them when they were sent away from London during the war because of the air-raids.”² Both film adaptations maintain this introduction. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1989) begins with the children at the train station. “Once” is established by the caption “London 1940”, and reinforced by the appearance of the train station and the children’s clothing. The children board the train in silence, and

Edmund voices his frustration at being sent to the country. During this discussion, the children's names are introduced. Instead of a caption to establish the reason for evacuation, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (2005) opens with a CGI sequence of planes bombing London. Again, the children are introduced through dialogue. The children speak to each other as they leave their house for shelter from the bombing. In both opening sequences, the camera is established as the narrative voice, mimicking Lewis's narration in the novel.

Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* concludes the action of the narrative with, "now, as you see, this story is nearly (but not quite) at an end. These two Kings and two Queens governed Narnia well, and long and happy was their reign."³ Although it is not a typical "happily ever after", this conclusion to the struggle with and defeat of the White Witch indicates the success and contentment of the Pevensies. In the adaptation, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1988), a narrator is introduced in the character of Mr. Tumnus, whose voice is played over the image of him writing, and states:

And so the seasons pass and the years pass, and all Narnia grows in gratitude to its young rulers. They have made good laws and kept the peace and saved good trees from being cut down. They are all loved: the stolid warrior King Peter the Magnificent, Queen Susan the Gentle, King Edmund the Just, and, my first little friend, Queen Lucy the Valiant.

Tumnus takes up the place of the narrator when the camera ceases to narrate, substituting for the time between the resolution of the *lack* and the Pevensies' return to England. The fairy tale narrative does not extend past the happily ever after of the *reward*, but the tale of Lucy, Susan, Edmund, and Peter does. It is necessary to bridge the gap between the conclusion of the fairy tale and their return to England, and this is achieved through

Tumnus's narration. The 2005 adaptation bridges this same gap with a dissolve from the end of the Pevensies' coronation to their hunt for the white stag. The children's identities are established, as in the introduction, by their dialogue, when they refer to each other by name. The dissolve illustrates the camera's omnipotence as well as omniscience, by having the camera to show the relevant components of the narrative.

Lewis's *Prince Caspian* begins with the same introduction: "Once there were four children whose names were Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy."⁴ However, *Prince Caspian* is not the story of the four Pevensies but of the title character, who is introduced by Trumpkin's narration modified by Lewis' own voice:

So the Dwarf settled down and told his tale. I shall not give it to you in his words, putting in all the children's questions and interruptions, because it would take too long and be confusing, and even so, it would leave out some points that the children only heard later. But the gist of the story, as they knew it in the end, was as follows[...] Prince Caspian lived in a great castle in the center of Narnia with his uncle, Miraz, the King of Narnia.⁵

Lewis's narration indicates not only his role as omniscient narrator supplying the facts of Prince Caspian's tale and the Pevensies's actions, but also the fact that he is retelling the narrative. The adaptation of the novel to film maintains this sense of retelling. The film reorganizes the information, just as Lewis admits to reorganizing the information. The opening of the film adaptation alternates between the Pevensies waiting at the train station and Prince Caspian's life at and escape from the castle. The camera is as omniscient and omnipresent as Lewis, knowing all and using discretion to reveal and manipulate relevant information. This alternation between characters also occurs in both adaptations of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, intercutting between the White Witch and the four Pevensies. Not only does the omniscient camera indicate the

narrator's voice, but uses the same film techniques that maintain the isolation and interconnectedness of the narrative.

Voice-Over Narration

Voice-overs in fiction film are often considered a last resort, because they “connect inner and outer states in a less explicit way than do camera associations.”⁶ Although considered inferior to the filmic image, voice-overs can elaborate on and unify the action, working in conjunction with the image to create a narrative. The combination of voice-over and image can, in fact, accentuate the connection of inner and outer states made by camera associations. Voice-overs are often used in film adaptations of novels for this reason, as well as to maintain the narrative voice present in the written text. Film adaptations of novels actualize this written narrative voice, translating it to an aural representation.

Voice-over narration, although not necessary, gives a voice to the narrator associated with the camera's gaze. First person narration, the narration of a narrative in which the narrator is a participant, and third person narration, the narration of a narrative in which the narrator is not a participant, is the most basic distinction between types of narration. Both *Stardust* and *The Princess Bride* use third person voice-over narration. Third person voice-over narration in fiction film, according to Sarah Kozloff, is used less commonly than first person narration, and films using third person voice-overs consist of three dominant types.⁷ The first of these film types, “consists of adaptations of novels with indispensable narrators,” the second includes epic and fantasy films that “need to impart a great deal of expositional information or unify a story,” and the third includes

imitations of documentaries and newsreels.⁸ *The Princess Bride* and *Stardust* fulfill the characteristics of the first and second film types. As fairy tales, the voice-over narration in the “once upon a time” introduction provides the initial situation of the narrative, while the “happily ever after” concludes both the action and the narrative. The use of third person voice-over in epic and fantasy films for the purpose of exposition not only introduces the characters and narrative but “because it is oral, voice-over can remind viewers of traditional storytellers, and so evoke the proper atmosphere for the legendary or pseudo-legendary subject matter.”⁹ Since both films are adaptations, the narrator’s voice present in the novels persists in the voice-over narration of the film. To some degree all written stories are conceptualized by readers as “being told... [positing] the figure of a narrator in the text whose voice they seem to apprehend as emanating from the pages of the book.”¹⁰ In these films, the narrator’s voice literally emanates from the film in the form of the voice-over.

Of the uses of third person voice-over narration examined here, *Stardust* is the most conventional because the narrator is unseen and omniscient. The narrative voice in the text is third person omniscient, illustrated by the opening lines: “There was once a young man who wished to gain his Heart’s Desire... The tale started, as many tales have started, in Wall.”¹¹ This narrative voice is maintained by the chapter titles, for example: “Two: In Which Tristran Thorn Grows to Manhood and Makes a Rash Promise.”¹² This narrative voice is retained in the film through voice-over narration. The film’s introduction begins as the novel does, with the initial situation, Tristan’s birth and unconventional conception. The film begins with narration, introducing the village of Wall:

Our story really begins here. 150 years ago in the Royal Academy of Science, London, England, where a letter arrived containing a very strange inquiry. It had come from a country boy, and the scientist who read it thought it might be a practical joke of some kind. But, he duly wrote a reply, politely explaining that the query was nonsense, and posted it to the boy, who lived in the village called Wall. So named, the boy had said, for the wall that ran alongside it; a wall that, according to local folklore, hid an extraordinary secret.

This voice-over, despite its divergence from the text, also introduces the initial situation surrounding Tristan's conception. Although it omits that Tristan "makes a rash promise," the voice-over narration outlines Tristan's trajectory:

Eighteen years passed, and the baby Tristan grew up, knowing nothing of his unconventional heritage. But nevermind how the infant became a boy, this is the story of how the boy becomes a man (a much greater challenge altogether). For, to achieve it, he must win the heart of his one true love.

In both narrated passages, the narrator introduces not only the situation and the character Tristan, but one of Lüthi's characteristics of the fairy tale. The numinous and the one-dimensional acceptance of the numinous is found in the acceptance of the Wall and what it hides. Tristan's stated quest to "win the heart of his one true love" indicates the lack that the hero is attempting to fill.

Like the omniscience of the camera's narration in the adaptations of the Narnian fairy tales, the voice-over's omniscience indicates the interconnectedness of the individual characters. Following the introduction of Tristan's situation, the narration shifts the focus to Stormhold, "where the king of all Stormhold lay on his deathbed, which was a coincidence, because it was the King's final act that would change Tristan's destiny forever." The voice-over narration does not continue throughout the film, but the interconnectedness remains present through the omniscient camera.

The voice-over narration resumes at the conclusion of the film, echoing the “happily ever after” of the novel. Gaiman writes, “Tristan and Yvaine were happy together. Not forever-after, for Time, the thief, eventually takes all things into his dusty storehouse, but they were happy, as these things go, for a long while.”¹³ While more detailed than that of other fairy tales, this conclusion provides the happiness associated with the hero defeating the villain and receiving the reward. In the film, the voice-over narration states:

They ruled for eighty years, but no man can live forever, except he who possess the heart of the star, and Yvaine had given hers to Tristan completely. When their children and grandchildren had grown, it was time to light the Babylon candle, and they still lived happily ever after.

Like Mr. Tumnus’s voice-over, in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1988), this voice-over resolves the action while reinforcing the reward received by the hero.

The narrator in William Goldman’s *The Princess Bride* is more complex. To determine the type of narration used here, it is necessary to go beyond the distinction of first and third person narration. Gérard Genette uses the terms homodiegetic and heterodiegetic to distinguish between types of narration, as well as the labels extradiegetic, intradiegetic, and metadiegetic to apply to the levels of narration.¹⁴ Homodiegetic narrators are present within the narrative, usually in the form of a first person narrator relating their involvement in the narrative, for example Walter Neff’s confession in *Double Indemnity* (Wilder 1944). Heterodiegetic narrators are usually third person narrators and are not a part of the narrative, like the disembodied narrator in *Stardust* who tells the story of Tristan Thorne. Within these two major distinctions, there are three levels of narration. Extradiegetic narrators frame the story, as does the narrator

in *Stardust*. Intradiegetic narrators are embedded narrators who tell a story within the film, for example, Mr. Tumnus's voice-over narration in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1988) where he narrates the passage of time from within the narrative.

Metadiegetic narrators are doubly embedded, telling a story within the story of the film. Metadiegetic narration occurs rarely in film, because it occurs when a character is telling a story to another without the story becoming the diegesis.

In *The Princess Bride*, the Grandpa's narration alternates between intradiegetic-homodiegetic and intradiegetic-heterodiegetic. The visual presence of the Grandpa and Grandson is homodiegetic, present within the film world, because the film is about a Grandpa reading a story to his sick Grandson. Embedded within this narrative of the Grandpa reading is the story he reads about Westley and Inigo. Grandpa exists within the film world, but is not a part of the story book narrative. When the world of Buttercup and Westley is visually depicted, Grandpa's voice-over becomes heterodiegetic. Therefore in *The Princess Bride*, Grandpa's narration is intradiegetic-homodiegetic when shown reading to his grandson, and his voice-over is intradiegetic-heterodiegetic third person narration. The film adaptation of William Goldman's *The Princess Bride* uses narrators within the film for third person narration, illustrating the vocalization of the narrative and role of the storyteller. The narration not only introduces the narrative, but interrupts and influences the story. The aural introduction, interruption, or influence of the narration in the film illustrates how the narration maintains the structure, tone, and characteristics established in the written text.

The presence of an intradiegetic-heterodiegetic third person narrator in the film can, in part, be attributed to the narration used in the novels. William Goldman's *The*

Princess Bride is constructed as an abridgement, already complicating the categorization of narration, because a first person narrative frames a retelling of a third person omniscient narrative. Goldman's novel is also heterodiegetic, because there are two separate narratives told alternately by the first person abridging voice of Goldman and the "original" third person voice of Morgenstern.

The Princess Bride is an "abridgement" of *S. Morgenstern's Classic Tale of True Love and High Adventure*, and the two narrative voices are that of Morgenstern's "original" and Goldman's "abridgement." Goldman's *The Princess Bride* is not actually an abridgement, but multiple layers of fiction. S. Morgenstern is a fictional character created by Goldman as a literary device, establishing an ironic contrast between the "original" and the abridgement." The abridging remarks, the introduction about Goldman's wife and son, along with the narrative about Wesley and Buttercup are all a creation of Goldman's fiction.¹⁵ During the narrative, Goldman's abridging commentary interrupts. The first interruption occurs in the first chapter:

In sum, the Rugen's were Couple of the Week in Florin, and had been for many years...

*This is me. All abridging remarks and other comments will be in this fancy italic type so you'll know[...] This chapter is completely intact. My intrusion here is because of the way Morgenstern uses parentheses.*¹⁶

The use of third person voice-over narration in the film echoes Goldman's "retelling" of Morgenstern's tale, along with the intrusions Goldman's abridging remarks make on the narrative. The narrator is given a literal voice in the film adaptation, maintaining both the tone and style of the written text.

In the film, the narration begins with a voice-over before the visual introduction of the fairy tale world. *The Princess Bride* introduces the storybook narrative with

Grandpa reading, “Buttercup was raised on a small farm in the country of Florin. Her favourite pastimes were riding her horse and tormenting the farmboy.” The scene dissolves from Grandpa reading to a long shot of Buttercup riding her horse in the countryside, during the narration of “in the country of Florin. Her favourite pastimes.” The voice-over introduces the location, the primary characters, as well as information about the characters’ thoughts and feelings, adding to the character development. Grandpa’s voice remains consistent during the dissolve, connecting the narrative of the book to the images of Buttercup and Wesley. Grandpa’s voice also connects both location and time, unifying the narrative. Grandpa’s voice-over continues when “Wesley had no money for marriage, so he packed his few belongings and left the farm to seek his fortune across the sea” and “The law gave Humperdinck the right to choose his bride, but she did not love him.” Grandpa’s narration explains the events of each sequence and connects them with the phrase “Five years later.” The voice-over narration allows for time to elapse without the narrative becoming disjointed or confused.

While Grandpa’s narration is the predominant soundtrack element during the opening of the storybook narrative, it is not the only soundtrack element. There is dialogue between Buttercup and Wesley which is interwoven with Grandpa’s narration. Grandpa narrates that “Nothing gave Buttercup more pleasure than ordering Wesley around,” Buttercup voices a command, Wesley replies “As you wish,” and Grandpa continues the narration with “‘As you wish’ was all he ever said.” The image remains consistent, while the sound cross-cuts between the dialogue and the narration. Like cross-cutting of images, the sonic cross-cutting indicates that the two sounds are being created simultaneously. In this case, the two sounds are interchangeable because they are

vocalizations of the same narrative. The sonic cross-cutting between narration and dialogue connects the process of telling with the story, and establishes the voice-over's involvement with and control over the narrative.

The interruptions in *The Princess Bride* occur often, and are both visual and aural. When Grandpa introduces the narrative, he asks "Now isn't that a wonderful beginning" to which the Grandson replies "Yeah." The image does not cut to the Grandson's bedroom during this commentary on the narrative, thereby visually maintaining the story book world. Interruptions throughout the film continue to provide commentary, presenting reactions to the story that is being told. Similarly, the Grandson frequently interrupts his Grandpa's narration. When the visual narration has taken over during the scene when Westley and Buttercup are saying goodbye, the Grandson interrupts with "Hold it, hold it. Are you trying to trick me? Where are the sports? Is this a kissing book?" Later in the story, the Grandson interrupts again when Prince Humperdinck announces "My father's final words were..." with "Hold it, Hold it. Grandpa. You read that wrong." After "Grandpa" the film cuts to the Grandson in his bed. Not only does this provide a reaction to the narrative, but it creates suspense. The narrative is suspended while Grandpa and Grandson argue about whether it was narrated incorrectly. In this example, the frustration voiced during the argument is maintained with the reintroduction of the narrative. The film abruptly cuts to Humperdinck's announcement without a voice-over. The voice-over is reintroduced when Buttercup wakes up from the nightmare of the wedding announcement, with the explanation "It was ten days to the wedding, the king still lived, but Buttercup's nightmares were steadily growing worse and worse." Again the Grandson interrupts, although this interruption is only verbal,

when he says, “See! Didn’t I tell you she wouldn’t marry that rotten Humperdinck” and the Grandpa retorts, “Yes. You’re very smart, shut up.” The voice-over provides a reaction to the narrative, but in this case it also provides a somewhat self-reflexive critical tone toward the continual interruptions.

Grandpa also interrupts the narrative. Like the Grandson’s interruptions, Grandpa’s are intended to create suspense, and, unlike the Grandson’s interruptions, they make a direct reference to the abridgement of the novel. In both the novel and the film, the narrative is paused when Buttercup jumps in the water, trying to escape from Vizzini. In the novel, Goldman interrupts with “*She doesn’t get eaten by the sharks at this time.*”¹⁷ In the film, the image of Buttercup in the water is paused when the grandfather’s voice-over interrupts with “She doesn’t get eaten by the eels at this time.” Similarly, both pauses result in explanations, one by Goldman and the second by Grandpa. When the Grandson asks “What?”, the film cuts from the paused image of the story, to the bedroom where Grandson and Grandpa discuss the interruption. This pause in the narrative references the process of storytelling, the fact that the narrative can be delayed and if Grandson is scared the narrative can be paused. Furthermore, it reflects the tone of the novel, where the “abridgement” is intended to be the “good parts version” for the enjoyment of the reader.¹⁸ The pause in the narrative to reassure the Grandson and, by extension, the audience, reproduces the tone of concern for the reader of the novel.

In *The Princess Bride*, the Grandson asks his grandfather if it’s “a kissing book” and his grandfather replies “you’re sick, I’ll humour you” before skipping over that segment of the narrative. This occurs a second time, when Wesley and Buttercup are reunited. The two begin to kiss, and the Grandson complains “Oh no, no... please”

stopping the narrative. When the Grandpa restarts the narration, he begins with “Now where were we here...ok. Buttercup and Wesley raced along the ravine floor.” The Grandson’s protests, which interrupt the images of Buttercup and Wesley, alter the visual narrative controlled by the third-person voice-over of Grandpa. In direct contrast, the conclusion of the film is altered by the Grandpa’s compliance with his grandson’s wishes. When Buttercup and Wesley escape Humperdinck, the voice-over only says “As they reached for each other” before both the voice-over and image cuts and Grandpa closes the book. The incompleteness of the ending is amended when, with the Grandson’s encouragement, the Grandpa finishes the narration. The manipulation of the narrative indicates that Grandpa is no longer telling the narrative but controlling it. The story already exists, Westley, Buttercup, and Inigo’s futures are as predestined as Tristan’s or the Pevensies’, but as the narrator, Grandpa has control over the story. This control satirizes the control held by the omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent narrator who knows all, but does not tell all. What is conveyed in the narration is the details that are necessary for the fairy tale narrative. The kissing parts are removed from *The Princess Bride* because the Grandson objects, but also because Westley and Buttercup have not completed all the functions of the fairy tale narrative and cannot receive the *reward*. The cut in the action alludes to a romantic reunion, but the narrative structure is restricted to that which is shown and told. Narration in film in general is a “hearkening back to simple oral storytelling”,¹⁹ a variation on oral tradition. The influence the narrator within the film has over the narrative reflects the oral tradition, that adjusts the narrative for the benefit of the audience. However, the narration exists within the fixed narrative of the

film, only functioning to voice the potential concerns and reactions of the audience through the presence of the Grandson.

The Grandpa interrupts the narrative a second way when, out of concern for his Grandson, he halts the narrative with the reassurance that “She doesn’t get eaten by the eels.” Again, the interruption is reminiscent of oral storytelling tradition and adjusting the narrative to the audience. This moment also maintains the tone of the novel, closely adhering to the text which includes the side note that Goldman’s father would interrupt the narrative as well to “soothe” him.²⁰ When the narrative resumes, the grandfather’s voice is overlaid with the image of Vizzini asking, “Do you know what that sound is Highness.” Grandpa’s voice asks the questions, while the image is of Vizzini speaking to Princess Buttercup. His voice is literally controlling the narrative, as his narration intrudes on both the actions and speeches of the fairy tale characters. Along with this clear influence on the narrative, the Grandson protests that “You passed that part, Grandpa” and the grandfather skims, stating “She was in the water, the eel started to charge her, and then.” As the grandfather quickly repeats the information already conveyed in the narrative, visuals that accompany the narrative information repeat at the same speed as the narration. The overlaying of image with narration illustrates the level of control the narrator possesses over the narrative, as well as giving an audible voice to the narrator of the novel. The narrator, who ‘creates’ the narrative with words, gives voice to the characters through the telling of the story. This reintroduction of the narrative through the absolute control of the voice-over suggests that the images are a product of the narration and the novel.

In each film, the narration introduces and concludes the narrative providing the iconic bookends of “once upon a time” and “happily ever after.” The visual and aural narrators of films maintain the strong omniscient narrative voice found in each of the novels. The voice-over or omniscient camera introduces the *dramatis personae* and conveys the events that occur within the narrative, while sustaining the presence of Lüthi’s fairy tale characteristics. By alternating between the actions of the various characters in the tale, the narrator reinforces the isolation and interconnectedness of the *dramatis personae* and reveals information that helps to establish each character as depthless and one-dimensional. Thus, the fairy tale film requires not only the narrative functions for the story or the formal techniques of the discourse, but also a narrator to tell and retell the tale.

¹ David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge, 1985) 30.

² C.S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (New York: HarperTrophy, 1994): 1.

³ Ibid.,200.

⁴ C.S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian* (New York: HarperTrophy, 1994): 1.

⁵ Ibid.,40-41.

⁶ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006): 41.

⁷ Sarah Kozloff, *Invisible Storytellers: Voice Over Narration in American Fiction Film*, (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988), 72.

⁸ Ibid.,73-4.

⁹ Ibid.,73.

¹⁰ Monika Fludernik, "Narrative Voices – Ephemera or Bodied Beings," *New Literary History* 32:3 (Summer 2001): 707.

¹¹ Neil Gaiman, *Stardust* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006): 2.

¹² Ibid.,34.

¹³ Ibid.,247.

¹⁴ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, translated by Jane E. Lewin (Ithica: Conell UP, 1980), 244-5.

¹⁵ S. Morgenstern and Florin do not, and have never existed. Simon Morgenstern is a pseudonym used by William Goldman for other novels, such as *The Silent Gondoliers*. The introduction about his wife, Helen, and son, Jason is fictitious; Goldman has two daughters and his ex-wife's name is Ilene.

¹⁶ William Goldman, *The Princess Bride*, 25th Anniversary ed. (1973, New York: Del Rey, 1998): 39. All quotations are taken from the 1998 edition..

¹⁷ The sharks were changed to eels in the film. Aside from the change of animal the interruption is consistent. Ibid.,93.

¹⁸ Ibid.,30.

¹⁹ Kozloff, 128.

²⁰ Goldman, 94.

Beyond the Novel: Non-Adapted Fairy Tales

[S]ince the dawn of time, each land that has been forced off the map by explorers and the brave going out and proving it wasn't there has taken refuge in Faerie; so it is now, by the time that we come to write of it, a most huge place indeed, containing every manner of landscape and terrain.

Neil Gaiman, *Stardust*

Examining film adaptations of fairy tale novels can help connect the literary fairy tale theory to the techniques used in fairy tale films. The conventions of the fairy tale narrative and its characteristics as established in the previous chapters can also be applied to non-adapted fairy tale films. *Labyrinth* (Henson 1986) and *Penelope* (Palansky 2007) are two original fairy tale films. The film *Labyrinth* was novelized after the release of the film, showing that the adaption of the fairy tale between novels and films is not unidirectional. Although the narratives are not adapted from novels, the narrative functions of fairy tales and Lüthi's characteristics are present within both films, along with a strong narrative voice. Both adhere to the conventions established in the first two chapters, but also present a degree of variation that hints at the development of the fairy tale film genre.

Labyrinth

Labyrinth is the story of Sarah (Jennifer Connelly), who travels to the Goblin city to retrieve her baby brother who has been taken by the Goblin King, Jareth (David Bowie). The film does not use aural narration, relying on the omniscience of the camera to convey the actions of the *dramatis personae*. Although there is no traditional "once upon a time" in the opening of the film, the introduction to Sarah is somewhat

misleading, while suggesting the fairy tale nature of the narrative. Sarah enters a park, dressed as a princess, reciting lines: “Through dangers untold and hardships unnumbered, I have fought my way here to the castle beyond the Goblin City, to take back the child you have stolen.” Sarah’s appearance and words at first suggest that we are entering a fairy tale narrative during the *struggle*, but then reveal that she is reciting the lines of a play. Her speech foreshadows the events of the film, and highlights her fascination with the fantastic and magical. Sarah is confined by the banal, everyday world of her home, compounded by the task of taking care of her infant brother, Toby (Toby Froud). The “once” becomes the story of a girl who had to stay home and take care of her brother against her will.

The sense of *interdiction* and confinement are illustrated by Sarah’s transition in the opening of the film. She enters a brightly lit, open park, where she is free to run around and play make-believe. However, as she realizes her responsibilities, the sky darkens, it begins to rain, and she enters her house. The close-ups and medium shots inside the house are in direct contrast with the long and extreme-long shots used in her dash through the rain. Sarah is not only confined by the responsibility of looking after her brother, but by the house itself. Her room is filled with toys and books, shown in close up, and she locks herself in the room, intensifying the sense of her confinement. It is Sarah’s desire to escape this confinement and her resentment that causes her to declare, “I wish the goblins would come and take you away, right now.”

This declaration marks the *violation*, establishes the *lack*, and introduces the *reconnaissance*, *trickery*, and *complicity*. The *violation* of the *interdiction*, while usually breaking a rule, can also be fulfilled by a refusal to follow the rules or a denial of

responsibility. When Sarah refuses to take care of Toby, she is violating her responsibility to keep him safe. As she begins to wish for the goblins, the camera cuts to a screen filled with goblins who whisper, "Listen." The goblins listen to Sarah's wish for her brother to be taken away, and this absent-minded wish becomes a binding contract with the Goblin King. Sarah is tricked into giving away her baby brother, and is complicit in his kidnapping as a result of her wish. When Toby is taken by the goblins, Sarah realizes her lack. She makes a bargain with Jareth, King of the Goblins, in an attempt to retrieve Toby. Sarah must travel through the labyrinth to the goblin city in thirteen hours, or Toby will belong to the goblins forever.

One-dimensionality is apparent as Sarah accepts Jareth's existence, the magical spatial transference to the labyrinth, and the existence of goblins. Indeed, Sarah is not shocked when Jareth arrives in her parent's bedroom, but is shocked that he actually took her baby brother. She accepts Jareth's claim on Toby and agrees to the terms of the challenge of reaching the castle in time to save Toby. Sarah never states that things are not real or impossible, just that things are "not fair." She wastes no time entering the labyrinth, and takes all the magical and wondrous things she finds there in her stride.

Sarah's deal with the goblins marks the end of her confinement. However, the framing remains constricting as she is threatened first by an owl, then is confronted by Jareth, and transported to the outskirts of the labyrinth. Rapid cutting of close-ups creates a sense of danger, mirroring Sarah's reaction to finding the Goblin King standing in her house. This depthless focus on the hero's situation continues as Sarah enters the labyrinth. When Sarah takes up the challenge of the labyrinth, the camera begins to shift from close-up to medium and full shots. Not only does the distance of the shots change

as Sarah progresses toward the castle, but the appearance of the labyrinth changes as well. As Sarah enters the maze, the lighting is relatively low, and heavy shadows are cast by the tall walls as Sarah walks down the narrow passage ways of the labyrinth. Sarah feels trapped as she first walks, then runs along the labyrinth, exclaiming in frustration when she discovers that there are no turns in the labyrinth. As the walls tower over her, seeming to close in, the camera shifts between close-ups of her face, full shots of her running, and close-ups of her feet running. Each shot includes the walls, emphasizing how small the space is and how long the labyrinth seems. It is not until Sarah, with some help, discovers an opening in the wall that she discovers the twists and turns of the labyrinth and begins to make some progress. The next shots of Sarah show that the narrow passage has opened up into wider walkways with many intersections and shorter walls. Instead of towering over Sarah, these walls are only slightly taller than her. The framing is no longer restricted to close-ups and full shots, but includes long shots and extreme long shots. These shots that illustrate the openness of the space also include shots from higher angles and bird's eye angles that illustrate the progress that Sarah is making.

The shots of Sarah's progress through the maze are reminiscent of the shot when Jareth first brings Sarah to the labyrinth. They stand on a hill above the labyrinth, surveying the distance that Sarah must travel to reach the castle. This image provides a sort of map, which is referenced each time Sarah's progress through the maze is shown from a high angle. There are also shots from Sarah's perspective, showing the distance from where she is to the castle. These images also reference the original map-like shot, showing how far she has come. Each of these map-like shots illustrates the depthlessness

of Sarah's travel. Despite detours to the Oubliette and the Bog of Eternal Stench, her progress is shown as linear and effortless. Regardless of Sarah's complaints, she travels to the castle with relative ease.

Sarah is aided in her quest by three characters, Hoggle the goblin, Ludo, and Sir Didymus. They fulfill the roles of donors and helpers. Sarah trades her jewelry and friendship for their assistance in her quest. For example, Hoggle rescues Sarah from the Oubliette in exchange for her bracelet. In the Oubliette, Sarah is returned to a space of confinement. She is trapped, in the dark, confined in a small, underground space, with only a shaft of light shining through a hole in the ceiling. When Hoggle enters, he brings with him a torch, lighting the room, but Sarah remains confined. The long shot used when Sarah asks Hoggle where she is, illustrates her sense of relief and imminent freedom from the Oubliette. However, Sarah's body is framed within a loop of chain, indicative of her unknowingly being trapped. Hoggle has been instructed to lead her back to the beginning of the maze, and close ups and the chain provide a reminder that she is still trapped. She makes a deal with Hoggle, giving him her bracelet in exchange for helping her through the labyrinth, and following this she begins to be free and make progress again. Upon making this deal, the camera changes angles and frees Sarah from the framing of the loop of chain. She and Hoggle exit the Oubliette through a secret door, into a passageway, and eventually reach the surface level of the Labyrinth.

Sarah then rescues Ludo, a large hairy monster, from goblin guards. She offers Ludo her friendship in exchange for his company on her journey. Sarah's friendship with Ludo ensures the help of Sir Didymus, who pledges his assistance when he discovers Ludo is his equal. All three donors help Sarah navigate her way through the labyrinth,

fight her way through the goblin city, and enable her to reach the castle. Upon reaching the castle, Sarah rejects their offers to follow her to the end because she must face Jareth, the villain and false hero, by herself.

Jareth, the Goblin King, is the clear villain, kidnapping human children to be raised as goblins. However, he also plays the false hero by confessing that he loves Sarah, and telling her he will give her everything she ever asks for. He wants to be her fairy tale prince. He offers himself as prince on three occasions: when he and Sarah first meet, during their final confrontation, and during the second moment of trickery. Sarah rejects Jareth's romantic overtures because she is the hero, not the princess. Sarah fulfills all the functions of the hero, while her brother Toby fulfills the role of princess. Jareth's attempts at being the hero are designed to cast Sarah in the role of princess. This is most apparent when he tricks her into entering a ball, where she is dressed as a princess. Sarah's rejection of Jareth is also a rejection of the gender roles associated with the heroes and princesses in fairy tales. This break with gender assumptions in the fairy tale film can also be seen in *Penelope*.

Labyrinth presents one significant variation in the functions of the fairy tale: the villain repeatedly attempts to trick the hero. *Reconnaissance*, *trickery*, and *complicity* recur throughout the film. The *villainy* which follows the failure of the *trickery* occurs primarily in the form of more obstacles Sarah has to pass to reach the castle. Jareth's first act of *trickery* is taking Sarah at her word when she accidentally wishes for him to take Toby. His refusal to accept Sarah's wish as a mistake is an act of *villainy*, as is forcing her to traverse the labyrinth in order to retrieve Toby. It is the initial act of *trickery* and *villainy* that creates a *lack*. Without this first trick, Sarah would not need to embark on

the quest. Jareth, once Sarah takes up his challenge, monitors her progress through the labyrinth. The film cuts between Sarah working her way through the labyrinth and Jareth sitting in his castle and watching her through magical orbs. As she outsmarts him and boasts that the labyrinth is easy, Jareth performs another villainous act, reducing her time limit for getting through the labyrinth from thirteen to eleven hours. Jareth exercises *villainy* not only when he fails to succeed at tricking the hero, but whenever he feels the hero is getting too close to victory. A second instance of *trickery* occurs in the Bog of Eternal Stench. Jareth gives Hoggle a peach, and tells him to give it to Sarah. As in the Oubliette, Sarah becomes trapped despite her progress through the labyrinth. As she takes the peach, her face is framed by the branches of the tree. This *mise-en-scene* is similar to the use of the chain in the Oubliette. Sarah is given the peach by Hoggle, and when she bites into it she enters a dream world. In the dream world, the framing mirrors Sarah's entrapment. She is in a crowded ball room, and is shot in close up throughout the sequence and has difficulty moving because of the crowd.

Sarah escapes from the ball and falls into a junkyard. In the junkyard, she is tricked into entering to a place that looks like her room. As she sits, looking in the mirror, the garbage goblin piles her possessions on her. Sarah is confined by her belongings. Both the ball and the dump sequence are a result of eating the peach. She becomes trapped in fantasies. Although Sarah is unaware that her progress through the labyrinth is being impeded, the framing and *mise-en-scene* provide a reminder of how confined Sarah is. Both sequences reinforce Sarah's situation, as well as emphasizing the results of Jareth's trickery and Sarah's complicity. While there are more examples of

trickery and complicity in *Labyrinth*, they do not alter the functions of the fairy tale narrative.

The fairy tale concludes when Sarah reaches the castle, completes an Escher staircase maze, and confronts Jareth. As Sarah tries to reach Toby in the maze of stairs, the camera cuts between Jareth, Sarah, and Toby. As in other films discussed in this project, the cross-cutting between the actions of the characters becomes more rapid until the characters collide in their final struggle. As Sarah reaches Toby, having completed the labyrinth, she comes face to face with Jareth. She rejects him, *defeating* him in this final *struggle*, and returns home with Toby. Jareth's *punishment* is to not keeping Toby or Sarah, and his world shatters as Sarah refuses him for the final time. Sarah's reward is two-fold. First she returns home with Toby, rectifying the lack, and second she discovers that all the friends she made in the labyrinth are in her room and they begin to party.

Many of the objects and creatures found in the labyrinth can be seen in Sarah's room at the outset of the film, including a doll in the dress Sarah wears to the ball, a stuffed Sir Didymus, a copy of a book titled *Labyrinth*, Jareth in a photo with her mother, and a poster of M.C. Escher's *Relativity*. It could be argued that Sarah's journey through the labyrinth is just a dream; however, a dream presents an otherworld just as relevant as faerie. The world of the labyrinth represents Sarah's struggle to reconcile the responsibility of babysitting and her desire for something beyond a banal teenage existence.

To create the magical world of *Labyrinth*, several special effect techniques are used. In one of the earliest examples of computer generated imaging (CGI) in a feature film, the owl that watches Sarah in her world becomes a CGI owl when flying inside the

house and during the opening credits. The owl is Jareth's representative in Sarah's world, watching Sarah in the beginning of the film and turning into Jareth when Sarah calls him to take Toby away. The goblins and creatures in the labyrinth are created using puppetry and costuming, and the Firey puppets that attack Sarah perform their tricks with the help of bluescreening. These techniques, when combined with the narrative and mise-en-scene, identify *Labyrinth* as a fairy tale film.

Penelope

Penelope is the story of a girl who is born with the nose of a pig and longs to break the family curse that caused her pig nose. Penelope (Christina Ricci) does not enter a magical world, but exists in one, a world where curses come true. The one-dimensionality convention can be found in the family's acceptance of Penelope's nose. Although her family is not happy with it, and they attempt to have it removed, and even fake her death, they accept the existence of the nose and the curse that caused it. Furthermore, when Penelope is revealed to the public, they embrace her and her nose. It could be argued that their fascination with Penelope is because she is a 'freak'. However, this does not change the fact that her friends and family accept her before and after she breaks the curse.

Penelope is both hero and princess, rescuing herself from the curse. Penelope is also the narrator. The film begins with Penelope's "Once upon a time." Penelope's voice-over introduces her parents and the curse, provides the background information for the narrative, and serves as a third person narrator relating events in which she had no part. She states, "local legend had it that a curse was put on the Wilhern family when my

great, great, great grandfather Ralph had a fling with Clara, a lowly servant girl.” She frames her own story, making her an heterodiegetic narrator, but she is also a homodiegetic narrator involved in the story. As she completes her introduction to the tale, she states, “The first born Wilhern girl... was Me.” This statement takes the narration from third person to first person, from heterodiegetic to homodiegetic. The voice-over narration only frames the tale, returning at the conclusion of the film. The homodiegetic narration continues, as Penelope explains, “I was determined to find my own light.” Penelope concludes the film somewhat traditionally, despite the unconventional use of narration throughout the film. Completing the framing narration, she tells the film audience and her class, “And we lived happily ever after... Well, happily ever after so far, at least.”

The use of narration in the film serves several purposes. First, it frames the story according to fairy tale tradition, using the iconic “once upon a time” and “happily ever after.” Second, the shift in focus from the past to present puts emphasis Penelope’s progress. She starts the film focusing on the past, relating how the curse was put on her family and how her nose is the fault of her great, great, great grandfather. This is something that her mother stresses when Penelope fails to find a man to marry. However, as Penelope runs away and begins a life of her own away from her parents, she begins to look forward to what could happen. Penelope phrases her final statement as “happily ever after so far.” She is no longer looking to the past, to local legend, to define her, but focusing on what will happen next. Finally, the blending of traditional phrasing with an unconventional blending of narration types parallels the mixture of fairy tale tradition and revision in the film.

The narrative of *Penelope* is complicated by red herrings and promoting false assumptions. The phrasing of the curse, “Only when one of your own kind claims this daughter as their own til ‘death do they part’ will the curse be broken.” Penelope’s mother (Catherine O’Hara) assumes that this means someone of the same social standing must marry Penelope to break the curse. The mother’s assumption, along with the phrasing of the curse, promotes this idea of a “blueblood” being the one to break the curse. As a result of this confusion, there are two false heroes. If there can be multiple donors and helpers then the role of false hero should be no different.

Edward (Simon Woods) is the first false hero. Despite his fear of Penelope, he agrees to marry her and break the curse. His social standing suggests that he will be able to break the curse. Edward’s attitude toward Penelope throughout the film makes him a more overt false hero. Because of Edward’s insistence that Penelope is a dangerous beast, his courtship and marriage to Penelope are based on a false pretence. He never truly accepts Penelope, and therefore could never be the real hero. He cannot be the one to save her, he cannot be her hero. Johnny Martin (James McAvoy), posing as Max Champion, is the second false hero. He and Penelope develop a relationship, and, by pretending to be Max, he makes Penelope and her mother believe he might break the curse. It is revealed that Max is really Johnny Martin, who is not of the same social standing as Penelope, and therefore not able to actually break the curse and be the real hero. Johnny, as Max, is also the dispatcher to some degree. It is his encouragement that causes Penelope to *violate* the *interdiction* of never leaving the house that her mother has put in place.

Penelope's mother is the villain of the tale, although she is a villain with the best intentions. She is blinded by her hatred of the pig nose, and she traps her daughter inside the house. She repeatedly tells Penelope, "You are not your nose. You are not you. You're... you're... you're somebody else inside, waiting to come out." Throughout Penelope's childhood, Penelope's mother "protects Penelope from herself" by locking her inside, which is emphasized by shots of a locked gate, and shutters and curtains closing. Penelope spends much of the film trapped in her room, a dark, cluttered, and confining space. The mother tricks Penelope into an unwanted marriage, which Penelope barely escapes. This unwanted marriage results in the final *struggle* and *defeat* between mother and daughter. As her mother begs to be let into the room, Penelope refuses stating that she likes herself the way she is. Penelope runs from the wedding, locks herself in her room, and keeps out her mother who tells her, "we're one step away from a whole new you." Penelope replies, "I don't want a whole new me, Mother... I like myself the way I am." It is this confrontation that breaks the spell, breaking the control her mother held over her. By keeping Penelope locked away from the world, and rejecting her nose as not her, Penelope's mother keeps her trapped within the curse. However, she is not a completely evil villain, for she recognizes that she could have saved Penelope from the curse if she had loved her as she should. In spite of accepting the blame, Penelope's mother is punished for her villainy. In the end, she receives a fitting punishment for her poisonous words and is silenced by Jake, the witch.

The donor in Penelope's tale provides some variation to the fairy tale structure. The fairy tale is about the hero travelling to an otherworld, a place that is magical and foreign. Penelope's journey takes her from her home, where the magic of her nose is

accepted, to the village. For her the everyday is magical because it is beyond her realm of experience. Penelope meets Annie (Reese Witherspoon), who buys her beer on tap, takes her for rides on her Vespa, and quickly becomes Penelope's first friend. Annie is Penelope's donor, providing her with magical things that allow her to temporarily break free from the villain. Although this is in some ways a reversal of the *receipt of a magical agent* function, Annie's interaction with Penelope fulfills this function.

Penelope's escape from confinement is much more subdued than Sarah's. She does not enter an otherworld, but leaves her house and enters the outside world. However, Penelope is not truly free from confinement until she runs from the wedding and leaves home for good. Thus, the camera's mimicry of Penelope's degree of confinement can be found in subtle changes throughout the film. Our first introduction to Penelope is an extreme close-up of her eye, heavily shadowed, and framed by the two-way mirror through which she watches Edward. This extreme close-up runs parallel to Edward and Penelope's discussion about feeling imprisoned by their respective situations. However, Edward upon seeing Penelope is able to break free, and is shown running through the gate in a long shot. Edward is able to escape from Penelope's prison, as are the other suitors who are shown jumping through the window and running out the door. Penelope, however, is kept in medium and close-ups as she argues with her mother.

Penelope's voice-over returns to tell of her childhood and her mother's reaction to her nose. Her mother faked her death, and kept Penelope "safely hidden away from the outside world." In close-up, shutters and curtains are closed to separate Penelope from the outside world. Penelope is shown in a series of medium shots, in her room, confined

by the number of toys and lack of windows. It is not until Max visits her several times that she shows herself to a stranger without attempting to scare them off. It is also his encouraging, “you gotta get out of there sometime,” that prompts Penelope’s escape.

As Penelope exits her home at night, she is shown in long shot as she runs across the grounds and exits through the back gate. The camera returns from this long shot to close-ups as Penelope explores the fair. While she has left her home, she keeps her nose covered with a scarf, since she is still ashamed of her nose. Her mother’s words still have some degree of control over her. Penelope removes this mask once inside her hotel room, looking out the window at the city. This window differs very little from the two-way mirror in her library. Penelope is able to look out, but no one can see in. She is still trapped to some degree. As she explores the city with her scarf covered nose, she remains predominantly in close-up and medium shots, although there is the occasional full shot.

During Penelope’s time outside her parent’s house, her parents perform *reconnaissance* by searching for her. It is a chase with her parents that causes her scarf to be removed in public. Following this incident, the camera work shifts from predominantly close-ups and medium shots to medium and full shots. The public embrace her, accepting both her and her nose. Penelope begins to experience a freedom from confinement and her mother when the public accepts her. However, she is tricked into entering her parents’ home again. Edward, coerced by his father, proposes to Penelope. The marriage preparations are shown in close-ups, indicating that Penelope has re-entered the confinement and control of her mother. It is at the wedding altar that she is given a true choice, shown by the use of a rare long shot. As Penelope says “no”

and runs from the wedding, she is shown in long shot despite the fact that she is running to her room, the original place of confinement.

Following Penelope's transformation, she is first shown in a medium shot which focuses on the change of nose which shifts to a full shot. Shortly after her transformation Penelope packs and leaves home in medium and long shots. In a long shot, Penelope teaches her class and states that she is finding her "own light." This room which is now hers is bright, with many windows. She is no longer confined by the camera or her situation. This lack of confinement persists as she finds her *reward*. Penelope remains in medium, full, and long shots as she enters Johnny's apartment and they are reunited. The final shot in the film is a long shot of Penelope and Johnny on a hillside. She is out in the open, free from her mother and the curse.

The use of mirrors is not a requirement of the fairy tale, but mirrors play a large role in both these non-adapted fairy tale films. Sarah in *Labyrinth* speaks to herself in her bedroom mirror, speaks to the goblins while looking in the mirror in her parents' bedroom, and breaks the mirrored walls of the ballroom to escape. Similarly, Penelope talks about her nose while looking in a hall mirror, speaks to all her suitors through a two-way mirror, and begins her reunion with Johnny by talking while looking in his bathroom mirror. In both films, the mirror represents complete confinement. By gazing into the mirror the face is literally framed by the edges of the mirror and the hero's position is reflected back at them. If they are confined, this sense of confinement becomes double when looking in a mirror. Sarah turns to the mirror when she is the most restricted. When she is asked to babysit, she runs to her room and looks at herself in the mirror. When Toby refuses to stop crying, she looks in the mirror. When she is tricked

in the junkyard, she sits in front of the mirror, and it is not until she turns away from the mirror that she is able to remember her search for Toby. To escape from the ball, Sarah must break the mirrored walls of the ball room. By destroying and rejecting the confining mirror, she is able to proceed with her quest. Penelope is trapped behind a mirror within her room. No one can see her through the mirror. However, she also is trapped by what the mirror reflects back at her, illustrated when she looks in the mirror in the kitchen and covers her nose. For Penelope, the mirror offers a protective confinement, a place where, for many years, she felt safe. It is for this reason that she returns to the mirror when trying to find the courage to face Johnny. In both films, mirrors are central to the restriction and confinement of the heroes.

Not only are both fairy tales which adhere to the structural characteristics established in this project, but the two films share some similarities in their respective applications of the fairy tale structure. Both films reject the suggestion of a male character as the hero. While I do not want to digress greatly from my structural analysis of the films, the use of female heroes can be interpreted in several ways. Sarah and Penelope can represent a break from the patriarchal assumptions of the hero as male. Their confinement within mirrors and reflections can be considered a critique of our image obsessed culture, suggesting females can be successful when divorced or freed from assumptions and judgments about their appearance. Or perhaps they can only succeed as heroes by rejecting the feminine associations with appearance. Regardless of the interpretation, the similarities in these films bring to light patterns or variations in the fairy tale structure that can be fruitful in the analysis of both films.

Final Thoughts

“The accuracy of all further study depends upon the accuracy of classification. But although classification serves as the foundation of all investigation, it must itself be the result of certain preliminary study.”

Vladimir Propp, *The Morphology of the Folktale*

In an effort to identify the fairy tale film, this project returned to the work of early fairy tale theorists Vladimir Propp and Max Lüthi. By combining these two complementary analyses of the fairy tale, I believe I have set forth a framework through which one can examine a fairy tale film. First the film must be identified as a fairy tale. A fairy tale film must contain characters that fulfill the twelve functions of the *dramatis personae*, and the narrative is communicated by a narrator, and is one-dimensional, depthless, isolated and interconnected, and includes magic. This preliminary framework allows for a clear distinction between fairy tale films and films that resemble fairytales but cannot be productively labeled as fairy tales because they lack core elements of the genre.

For the application of this framework, two possibilities emerge. First, scholars could use my findings for the purpose of establishing extensive lists of fairy tale films, like that of Alec Worley, to create a corpus beyond the examples used here. This initial corpus could then serve as a basis for a second avenue of inquiry, namely, contextual interpretation. Indeed, further research could build on my methodology to delve into the social and cultural richness of the fairy tale film. Issues such as the cultural significance of cinematic depthlessness are beyond the scope of this study, but could be fruitfully analyzed in a body of fairy tales identified through my method. The extensive work on fairy tales by theorists like Zipes suggests the continued relevance of fairy tale narratives,

and this project suggests one method of approaching the fairy tale film. I began this project by addressing the various theoretical approaches to the fairy tale film, and I think it is only at this point that these approaches can begin to be reintroduced.

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