

Folklore and the Media

by Kassondra Torraville

Folklore has and is currently attracting plenty of attention in the media. It has always been present in the film and television industry, although geared particularly towards children. Disney has been a large influence on Western portrayals of folktales, starting with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in 1937. Over the last ten years, however, there have been great strides in producing and reproducing media with folkloric elements. This movement began with the *Twilight* (2008-2012) and *Harry Potter* (2001-2011) films (Kroll, 2011). The trend continues as Disney plans almost a dozen more live action retellings of their animated classics (Gajanan, 2016) and other films, such as *Into the Woods* (2014) and *Jack the Giant Killer* (2013). Not to be outdone, other production companies are doing their own retellings of folklore and mythology: from both big and small screens to video game platforms.

There are a variety of reasons for this surge in popularity: special effects have progressed significantly during this period, allowing filmmakers to

reimagine fantastical stories in ways never previously thought possible (Kroll, 2011). These leaps in special effects also affect the creation of video games, which rely heavily on animation and dialogue to push the narrative. There is also a more cynical reason for why folklore-themed media is on the rise: due to the age and nature of folklore, there is rarely one known author for a particular work, or the copyright of the story has long expired (Kroll, 2011). Producers do not need to pay any legal fees to buy rights to a story, allowing for greater profits once the media is released.

Going back to old stories from all aspects of folklore (fairy tales, mythology, fables, etc) are easily marketable. Folktales are inherently traditional stories that the audience may already know, and remakes of classic tales give an audience something familiar and recognizable (Kroll, 2011). The remakes often add something different to the narrative. Re-imaginings of classics stories often take a darker, more mature theme in order to appeal to older audiences: for example, New Line

Cinema's *Jack the Giant Slayer* (2013) created a darker, more violent version of the well-known Jack and the Beanstalk fairytale. The continuous remaking of stories also fits into the definition of folklore: each new rendition is another transmission of the story, another adaptation that can be accepted into current folklore or otherwise rejected (Carthy, n.d).

Folklore in video games is not a new concept. Video games are known to draw on folklore in two separate ways. They may choose to go the route of the filmmaker and do a retelling of a story, or they may adapt the narratives into the lore of game. Bethesda does this with its game *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*

(2011), which incorporates aspects of Norse and Scandinavian mythology and folklore into the world building and heavily influences how characters interact throughout the narrative (Back, 2015). Video game developers may also take inspiration from retellings of other contemporary tales, such as Telltale Games *The Wolf Among Us* (2013), a sequel story to the *Fables* comic book series created by Bill Willingham. The following film, television shows, and video games are all based on folklore (mythology, legends, and fairy tales) that appeal to both teens and adults due to their reimagining of old stories, as well as their darker, more mature content.

Television Shows

Supernatural

Kripke, E., Carver, J., Glass, A., Sgriccia, P. J., Singer, R., Collins, M., Ackles, J., ... CW (Television network),. (2005-2017). *Supernatural*.

Once Upon a Time

Horowitz, A., Kitsis, E., Goodwin, G., & Morrison, J. (2012-2017). ... Buena Vista Home Entertainment (Firm). *Once upon a time*.

The Almighty Johnsons

Griffin, J., Lang, R., Beesley, M., Keene, M., Skilton, E., Balme, T., O'Gorman, D., ... PBS Distribution (Firm),. (2011-2013). *The almighty Johnsons*.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer

Whedon, J., Gellar, S. M., Hannigan, A.,
Brendon, N., Head, A. S.,
Carpenter, C., Boreanaz, D., ...
Twentieth Century Fox Home
Entertainment, Inc. (1997-2003).
Buffy, the vampire slayer.
Beverly Hills, Calif.: Twentieth
Century Fox Home
Entertainment.

Teen Wolf

Ashby, L., Hoechlin, T., Haynes, C.,
Posey, T., O'Brien, D., Adelstein
Productions., MTV Networks.,
Twentieth Century Fox Home
Entertainment, Inc. (2011-2017).
Teen wolf.

Films

Into the Woods

Marshall, R., Sondheim, S., Lapine, J.,
DeLuca, J., Platt, M., McDougall,
C., Streep, M., ... Buena Vista
Home Entertainment (Firm),.
(2015). *Into the Woods*.

Jack the Giant Killer

Atkins, M., Cross, B., March, J., Asylum
(Firm), & Asylum Home
Entertainment. (2013). *Jack the
Giant Killer*.

Pan's Labyrinth

Baquero, I., López, S., Toro, G. ., & Verduú,
M. (2009). *Pans Labyrinth*.
München: Universum-Film.

My Neighbor Totoro

Miyazaki, H., Fanning, D., Fanning, E.,
Daly, T., Carroll, P., Salonga, L.,
Welker, F., ... Buena Vista Home
Entertainment (Firm). (2006).
My neighbor Totoro. Burbank,
CA: Walt Disney Home
Entertainment.

Spirited Away

Miyazaki, H., Tokuma Shoten., Sutajio
Jiburi, Kabushiki Kaisha., Walt
Disney Pictures., & Buena Vista
Home Entertainment (Firm),.
(2015). *Spirited away*.

Video Games

The Wolf Among Us

Telltale Games (Firm). (2014). *The wolf among us*.

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim

Bethesda Softworks (Firm),. (2016). *The elder scrolls V: Skyrim*.

The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt

WB Games (Firm), & Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment. (2016). *The Witcher III*. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment.

Age of Mythology

Microsoft Corporation., & Ensemble Studios. (2007). *Age of mythology*. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corp.

Fatal Frame

Tecmo, Inc. (2002). *Fatal frame*. Torrance, CA: Tecmo.

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- Back, Emma Louise. (21 October 2015). Contemporary Folklore in the Digital Age. *The Geek Anthropologist* Retrieved April 09, 2017, from <https://thegeekanthropologist.com/2014/10/03/contemporary-folklore-in-the-digital-age/>
- Carthy, J. (n.d.). "84.04.01: Folklore in the Oral Tradition, Fairytales, Fables and Folk-legend." Yale Teacher's Institute. Retrieved April 09, 2017, from <http://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/curriculum/units/1984/4/84.04.01.x.html>
- Gajanan, M. (11 October 2016). Disney Live-Action Movies: Beauty and the Beast, Aladdin. *Time Magazine*. Retrieved April 09, 2017, from <http://time.com/4525871/disney-live-action-movies/>
- Kroll, J. (2011, Jan). FAIRY TALES GETTING GRIMMER. *Variety*, 421, 4-4,6. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.dal.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/docview/851272515?accountid=10406>