To Aunt Vickie, with love
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This dissertation explores intertextuality in children’s and young adult texts from 1805 to the present. I employ the term “crossover intertext” to describe those texts which incorporate pre-existing characters into a new narrative. Crossover intertextuality both promotes and subverts the discourses from which it borrows and in which it resides. This dichotomous function renders it a potent tool, but also one that is double-edged and, at times, unpredictable. I explore these texts’ influence on the canon, how they alter expectations of cultural literacy, how they critique contemporary culture, and how they teach children to understand the way narratives work on the most fundamental level.

The study spans crossover intertexts from their inception in Victorian children’s culture up to the most recent video game releases, including such texts as Jane G. Austin’s *Moonfolk*, Ada Flor Alma’s *Enchanted Forest* picture book series, Michael Buckley’s *Sisters Grimm* young adult series, as well as Disney’s much-anticipated Wii game *Epic Mickey*. My project recasts the current conversation about intertextuality in children’s and young adult literature by examining a much broader range and spectrum
of source materials than any study thus far and by demonstrating that intertexts – and
crossover intertexts, more specifically – function more effectively and subversively than
has previously been suggested. Venturing into an intertext evokes all manner of
questions regarding cultural literacy, (cultural) memory, commentary on structure and
genre, and, above all, questions regarding the nature of narrative itself in all forms and
guises. In this dissertation, I hope to offer some answers to these provocative matters
by guiding the reader through the metaphorical and ideological woods of crossover
intertextuality in children’s and young adult fantasy.
CHAPTER 1
INTERTEXTUALITY AND META-COMMENTARY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH AND AMERICAN CHILDREN’S LITERATURE

Epigraph

“This was a populated wood. All wild creatures lived here, dangerous or benign according to their natures. And all the other travelers you had heard of were in the wood too, at this very moment: kings and knights, youngest sons and third daughters, simpletons and outlaws; a small girl whose bright hood flickered between the pine trees like a scarlet beacon, and a wolf moving on a different vector to intercept her at the cottage . . . . These people, these dangers were not far away, but you would never meet them. The adventures could never intersect, although they shared the forest.”

--Spufford, The Child that Books Built

“Into the woods, it's time to go, / I hate to leave, I have to, though. / Into the woods - it's time, and so / I must begin my journey.”

--Sondheim, Into the Woods

Introduction

In his engaging memoir, The Child that Books Built, Francis Spufford characterizes the world of fairy tales and children’s stories as a populated forest. In this wood, each tale has its own glen, its own path, and so no story ever crosses into another. Contrary to Spufford’s image, the paths and glens have long since converged. Contemporary intertextual stories, such as the popular book series The Sisters Grimm by Michael Buckley, the movie Shrek, and the Kingdom Hearts video game series – and this is only a very abbreviated list1 – all indicate a growing awareness of the presence and usefulness of intertextuality. Intertextuality has come to critical attention relatively recently, but the meta-discourses surrounding intertextual stories have been prowling the proverbial forest since at least the mid-nineteenth century.

1 For a full list of the crossover intertexts I encountered while researching this project, please see the Appendix.
In this dissertation, I examine the uses and ramifications of different types of “pre-texts” (Stephens and McCallum), or original sources, used to create what I term “crossover intertextual” stories for children and/or young adults in fantasy literature from nineteenth-century books through contemporary texts, including books, movies, and video games. These analyses will inform discussions of four main topics regarding children’s and young adult texts. The first relates to cultural literacy. Crossover intertexts influence which texts become “classics” or “canonical” within a society, thus also determining what information a person needs or which books ought to be read in order for a person to be culturally literate. I will also examine the meta-commentary crossover intertexts offer about fantasy and children’s/young adult literature. A crossover story may very well promote a specific aspect of cultural literacy while simultaneously (and often ironically) offering a critique of that very same aspect. Third, I will explore some of the ways by which crossover intertexts can alter readers’ perceptions of the pre-texts, themselves. For my conclusion, I hope to use the material provided by the above three analyses to examine how crossover intertexts work to shape readers’ understanding of the structure and nature of narrative. Although the current study is limited to children’s and young adult fantasy texts, I believe the implications of the unique functions of crossover intertextuality are generalizable and far-reaching.

The term “intertext” has suffered much misunderstanding and misuse in recent scholarship (much like “children’s literature” and “fantasy,” in fact), and so I will begin my discussion with a brief overview of the term. Originally, “intertext” was coined by

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2 This chapter seeks to explore this very notion; while nineteenth-century texts promoted a specific canon of fairy tales, these texts almost invariably offered critiques of the very tales they were invoking. See below.
Julia Kristeva in her work during the late 1960s to unite the semiotic theories of scholars Ferdinand de Saussure and Mikhail Bakhtin, and it referred to every possible semiotic connection a work had within a synchronic system of language (per Saussure) or culture (per Bakhtin). Saussure’s theories concentrated on discovering how individual and arbitrary signs derive meaning from surrounding signs (how they are different and thus meaningful), while Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism focused more on heteroglossia, or the multiple meanings available within a text, and how culture and other texts influence which meanings can be created/Found within the first text. Kristeva combined Saussure’s theory of signs and Bakhtin’s theory of heteroglossia to refer to “a compilation of cultural textuality” (Allen 36). Saussure, Bakhtin, and Kristeva all minimize the contribution of the author by claiming that even if the author is not “dead” in Barthes sense,³ s/he still only “stands behind his or her novel, but s/he does not enter into it as a guiding authoritative voice” (Allen 24). However, in works that draw materials – in this case, specific characters – from pre-texts, emphasis needs to be placed on the author’s conscious use of the pre-textual materials, including both his/her reasons for and ramifications of those choices, instead of on the numerous possible abstract relations the work has to language/signs. The author is a motivating force behind the text and its characters, and s/he cannot be ignored or dismissed so readily.

While Kristeva’s definition of intertextuality downplays the author, Gerard Genette’s definition takes into account authorial intent. For a structuralist like Genette, it is important to define terms in relation to how they inform specific texts rather than the entire system of language. Or, in other words, Genette’s definition of “intertextuality,” as

³ See Roland Barthes’ 1967 work “The Death of the Author.”
Graham Allen puts it, relies on a “structuralist-inspired focus on the . . . closed, or at least semi-autonomous, field of literature” (102). Genette suggests that there are five different types of “transtextuality,” or ways in which authors make texts relate to one another: intertext (direct allusion or quotation), paratext (prefaces, illustrations, footnotes), metatext (text surrounding the text, including reviews, summaries, and commentary the text produces about itself), architext (genre patterns, tropes, and/or conventions), and hypotext (parody, satire, and in some cases pastiche), but this chapter will limit itself to issues of intertext and metatext, or what I refer to more commonly as “meta-commentary.” In the case of the texts studied in this project, Genette’s definition of intertext implies that the reader can know for certain that the messages embedded in the text were, in fact, conscious choices on the author’s part rather than mere influence. Drawing upon this aspect of Genette’s theory will allow me to examine the conscious use of intertextual material instead of remaining in abstract conjecture about whether or not an author intended to allude to a pre-text. In fact, many recent articles concerning intertextuality in children’s literature have used Genette more than Kristeva. Both Maria Nikolajeva (1996) and Kevin Paul Smith utilize Genette’s definition, as they both stress “the intention of writers and their active role in the act of writing” (Nikolajeva 1996, 154) throughout their works.

Although I do not contest Kristeva’s or Genette’s definitions of “intertext,” nor wish to dismiss those definitions, I do see the need to offer a working definition of “intertext”

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4 Genette addresses these transtextualities in his work *Palimpsests*.
5 Although Nikolajeva does not mention Genette by name, she does emphasize the importance of recognizing the author’s intent in a work, something a more Kristevan definition of intertextuality would not allow. Nikolajeva favors dialogics, however, and she admits to wanting to seek out “hidden echoes and latent links” (1996, 154), where I am more concerned with the manifest, blatant links that are incorporated both obviously and intentionally.
that identifies the particular body of works that exists between the cracks of these scholars’ theories, so to speak. Previous definitions of intertextuality do not adequately describe the phenomenon occurring in many children’s/young adult texts that utilize pre-textual characters in new narrative structures, and I believe a more specific term is necessary in order to discuss this particular body of works. This term will describe that body of literature that utilizes previously written characters – not just generic conventions or unconscious allusions – in new settings to create new stories. While Genette’s definition comes closest to describing the body of literature I wish to discuss, his definition still falls short, as it accounts more for passing quotations/allusions and less on texts that sustain this borrowed material and, in fact, center on it.

For the purposes of this study I will define “crossover intertexts” as those texts that focus on pre-existing characters, either as protagonists or primary supporting characters, and rely on these characters’ pre-established stories and traits to develop the new context and storyline in which the author is incorporating them. The purpose or theme of the crossover intertext is, at least in part, developed and supported by the pre-existing characters and the cultural literacy associated with them. These texts are therefore intertexts in Kristeva’s sense, as they do rely on the compilation of meanings culturally associated with the specific characters, but they are not abstract or unconsciously implied (by author or reader). Crossover intertexts rely on the conscious decision of the author to include certain pre-textual characters and not others: a phenomenon for which Kristeva’s theory does not adequately account, though Genette’s theory begins to. Genette’s theory, however, does not seek to engage with texts that include sustained invocations of pre-textual characters.
“Crossover” is a colloquial term recently employed in popular culture⁶ to describe comic books or video games that feature appearances by characters from different comic strips or game series: a character “crosses over” from his/her original series to a new one for a brief time (usually one comic book or one level in a game). In this sense, then, “crossover intertextuality” not only describes the type of intertextuality taking place in the texts but also helps to serve as a suture between scholarly and popular discourses on the phenomena, something that the texts, themselves, do.⁷ The term also connects digital remediations such as video games to the scholarly term “intertext.”⁸ I pair “crossover” with “intertext,” then, because of the former’s association with specific pre-textual characters meeting in one universe and the latter’s scholarly and ideological roots. The term refers both to the manifest behavior of the characters, the surface-level trait of the literature that defines it and delineates it from other texts in which characters remain in their own stories, and to the ideological implications the texts have on potential readers. These ideological implications inform how readers make meaning from intertextual texts and how these crossovers influence cultural reactions to the pre-textual characters and plots on an individual basis. While traditional scholarship on intertextuality maintains that the individuality of storylines and characters is an illusion, crossover intertexts go one step further, suggesting that, while the characters and plots are not entirely discrete, bringing them together does something unique to the characters and unique for the narrative. Thus, I will be relying on the term “crossover intertexts” to describe the body of works this dissertation will explore and analyze.

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⁶ This term has been used in books like, for example, Jess Nevins’ 2003 book Heroes and Monsters: The Unofficial Companion to the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (MonkeyBrain Books) and Groening’s The Simpsons Futurama Crossover Crisis.
⁷ See Chapter 3.
⁸ See Chapter 4.
The goal of this chapter will be to explore those early works of children’s fantasy literature that include crossover intertextuality and to determine what the function of crossover intertextuality in such literature is in relation to the four goals I set forth earlier. The body of literature in this chapter consists chiefly of stories that revolve around fairy tale characters, nursery rhymes, or characters from “children’s classics” such as *Gulliver’s Travels* and *Robinson Crusoe* and will focus specifically on those works that deal with matters of transmission of children’s literature and on the beneficial nature of the pre-textual stories invoked in the tales.

My second chapter will move chronologically from the first, working forward from the early-1900s to the 1950s and the rise of the picture book in Europe and America. While much contemporary scholarship on intertextuality in children’s literature focuses on picture books, these studies often conflate intertextuality with Postmodernity. The first part of my second chapter explores the differences between postmodern and crossover intertextual books; the two categories do not overlap as much as recent scholarship sometimes suggests. I also explore in this chapter how crossover intertexts can impact a reader’s cultural literacy. Although postmodern picture books, like intertexts, presuppose a working knowledge on the reader’s part, postmodern texts tend more to consciously undermine the pre-texts rather than to gently and subtly work with, expand, or augment a reader’s prior knowledge. In short, postmodern picture books are more explicit and actually leave less to the reader’s imagination and critical thinking skills than do crossover intertexts.

Chapter 3 investigates crossover intertexts for older readers, exploring how these texts suture academic and popular discourses about children’s literature. These texts
share goals similar to those in Chapters one and two, but with a slightly different focus; crossover intertexts for older readers offer meta-commentary on the critical discussions surrounding the pre-texts they invoke rather than on the use of the pre-texts or the pre-texts, themselves. The crossover characterization in these texts serves to reflect and refract critical ideologies commonly held regarding children’s literature, and the crossovers themselves support, refute, or offer critiques of the scholarship.

In Chapter 4, I explore digital intertexts and remediations. While I focus primarily on those produced by Disney, I also examine a few other cornerstone texts in crossover video games, as well. Disney’s crossover intertexts offer the most interesting analysis because of the company’s shifting ideologies. Specifically, their recent move to “make over” Mickey Mouse and the strategies they’ve employed to accomplish this makeover are reflected in crossover intertexts from as early as the 1990s. Disney uses their crossover intertexts to manipulate how viewers and players perceive the company, and they have found an ingenious way to accomplish this overwriting of their own history: they have gamers do it for them.

Unfortunately, there are far too many crossover intertexts in existence to permit a study of them all. Therefore, this study focuses on crossover intertexts for children and young adult readers, although a truncated list of crossover intertexts for adults will be offered in the Appendix for further reading. In addition, this project deals only with pre-textual characters from fiction; alternate history and/or historical fantasy that employs fictionalized historical personages invoke matters of “truthfulness,” historical accuracy, and other genre conventions of historical fiction that do not apply to fictional literature.
This study will also forego lengthy discussions of crossovers in comics, as many crossovers in comics are not sustained but are instead guest appearances or cameos. My definition of a “crossover intertext” involves the pre-textual, or “crossed over,” characters functioning as the protagonists or as major supporting characters. In addition, such a study would constitute a dissertation in its own right, as characters within a specific comic series’ company often appeared in other series owned by the same company. Also, those books that include intertextual characters who are periphery or those that simply give cameos (Basye’s Heck: Where the Bad Kids Go and Eager’s Seven-Day Magic, for example) will not be included in this study, as there are far too many to be included practically in such a study.

**Crossover Intertextuality in the Victorian Era**

Crossover intertextuality is not a new concept; in fact, it predates postmodernity by roughly eighteen centuries. The Greek writer Lucian was one of the first authors to pair historical figures anachronistically together in the afterlife in his book *The Dialogues of the Dead*¹¹ (Jacobs 231), a strategy which is now called “Bangsian fantasy” after John Kendrick Bangs.¹² Crossover intertexts popped up continuously throughout the

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³ For further reading on historical fiction’s use of fictionalized historical characters, see Naomi Jacobs’ *The Character of Truth: Historical Figures in Contemporary Fiction*, Southern Illinois University Press (1990), and Joanne Brown & Nancy St Clair’s *The Distant Mirror: Reflections on Young Adult Historical Fiction*, Scarecrow Press Inc. (2006). Beyond literature, painter Chris Consani is known for his paintings of various historical figures (chiefly celebrities) all gathered in the same locale.

¹⁰ One notable exception is Alan Moore and Kevin O’Neill’s *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* graphic novel series (1999-present).

¹¹ Lucian’s *Dialogue* has most recently been translated by Baudelaire Jones in 2007. Jones replaced several ancient characters with more modern counterparts, including Jack the Ripper, Anna Nichole Smith, Sigmund Freud, and Michael Moore.

centuries, but none specifically targeted children, and many were, in fact, too erudite for younger readers. The pre-texts invoked in these intertexts were often mythological and/or historical in nature, and the dialogue often focused on satirizing complex cultural issues.

The first crossover intertexts featuring pre-textual materials that younger audiences could recognize and relate to appeared in the Victorian era in both theater and literature. Pantomimes were extremely popular in this age, and one of the most successful was *Harlequin and Mother Goose; or, the Golden Egg* in 1805. According to Disher:

“Harlequin and Mother Goose; or, the Golden Egg” opened on December 28 [1805], and was the most triumphant pantomime of all time. Most of the praise was given to the ‘variety and ingenuity of the mechanical devices’ of the Harlequinade, but the simple fable [pg] was not altogether negligible. Melancholy magicians and captive princesses had not a fiftieth part of the attraction of the jog-trot incidents of common life in “Mother Goose.” (287-288)

Although documentation on this type of theatrical performance is scarce due to the transient nature of the performances, musicologists agree that such fairy-tale burlesques were abundant in Victorian culture. These performances – more usually operettas – were often based on fairy tales and often contained “songs interpolated from other operas or operattas” (emphasis in original; Traubner 143). Such operettas included Lizette E. Orth’s *Mother Goose Jubilee* (1901) and, perhaps most famously,

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14 Documents such as librettos are scarce because the musical numbers were often published individually and changed week to week to satisfy audience demands and reactions to previous weeks’ performances, as well as performers’ abilities.

15 One can still find sheet music for Orth’s *Sixty Songs from Mother Goose*. The tunes were meant to aid children who were learning to play piano. As the foreword states: “In teaching my own and other children piano playing, I have found it a great help to give with a melody some familiar words in the same rhythm.
Victor Herbert’s *Babes in Toyland* (1903). *Babes* is arguably the work that made Herbert famous (Ledbetter), and his crossover intertext would lay the foundation for future lyricists such as Stephen Sondheim, who wrote the popular musical *Into the Woods* (1986). In addition to the theatrical performances, literary crossover intertexts for children – primarily utilizing fairy tale pre-textual materials – began to proliferate during the last half of the nineteenth century, and while source materials of the performances are limited, examples of literary crossover intertexts are abundant.

In *Twice Upon a Time: Women Writers and the History of the Fairy Tale*, Elizabeth Harries draws attention to the complex and often underestimated history of fairy tales and the politics of their transmission in the nineteenth century and earlier. In our postmodern society, Particularly compelling is Harries’ observation that the fairy tales many Victorian women writers told were meant to covertly subvert the established ideological structures to which fairy tales, themselves, were subject. Many contemporary writers have taken a leaf out of nineteenth-century authors’ books, so to speak, by incorporating subversive meta-narratives. Harries remarks, “throughout the history of the written, literary tale, from its very beginnings in Italy and France, insistent internal voices and narrative strategies have called the shapes and patterns we now see as ‘traditional’ into question” (Harries 16). Harries also notes that some scholars, such as Nancy Canepa, have argued that even the oldest of recorded tales – such as, 

No words are so dear to the child as the nursery rhymes. As versions of Mother Goose vary, I have set down the words the rhythm of which the music follows exactly. This identity of rhythm as well as similarity of spirit will help beginners in music, find response in the home circle, and be of use in the Kindergarten where the words can be repeated aloud while the music goes on. What happier way to awaken the musical instinct than to associate with the nursery rhyme a little melody that expresses the spirit of the rhyme itself in all its childlikeness?” (Orth).
specifically, Giambattista Basile’s tales\(^\text{16}\) – are “modern” in their discussion of differing “realities” of the classes and their denial of the “‘happily-ever-after’ linearity” (qtd in Harries 16). In other words, using fairy tale pre-texts to challenge preconceived notions of the form and content of fairy tales is not a concept unique to nor conceived by contemporary, postmodern works such as *Shrek*.

Nineteenth-century texts that utilize crossover-intertextual storylines and characters, though not generally included in the canon of nineteenth-century children’s literature, are important nonetheless. While the authors in question were divided in their goals, they all had one thing in common; they utilized intertextuality to achieve access to the very discourse they hoped to influence. The authors studied in this chapter sought to speak out on many topics, including didacticism in fairy tales and fairy tales’ transmission, and they used fairy tales to achieve their aims. For instance, Jane G. Austin’s *Moonfolk: A True Account of the Home of the Fairy Tales*, published in 1874, spoke to concerns with the simplification of the tales that occurred during their transmission, while in 1883 Alice Corkran published *The Adventures of Mrs. Wishing-To-Be* to comment on the employment of fairy tales as didactic tools. Maggie Browne, too, in her *Wanted, a King: or, How Merle Set the Nursery Rhymes to Rights* (1890) was concerned with issues of education and learning, while Ray M. Steward (Edgar Stratemeyer) wrote *The Surprising Adventures of the Man in the Moon* (1903) as a didactic tool, simultaneously linking the use of fairy tales to the enculturation of the child reader. Although each author included slightly different meta-discourses in his/her text, each effectively utilized crossover intertextuality both to achieve the authority to make

\(^{16}\) Basile was an Italian fairy tale collector whose collections – which included stories such as “Puss in Boots” and “Rapunzel” – were later adapted and expanded upon by Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm.
their claims and to enter their claims into the contemporary dialogue surrounding fairy tales and their transmission. Their invocation of this authority had lasting ramifications on the canon and structure of the tales they told.

From its inception, children’s literature employed character cameos. Mary Cowden Clark’s *Kit Bam’s Adventures, or the Yarns of an Old Mariner* (1849), for example, featured Ariel and Caliban (from Shakespeare’s 1610 *The Tempest*), who Kit says were described to him by his good friend “Will Wavelance,” possibly standing for Shakespeare himself. The book also features characters like Scylla and Charybdis from Greek mythology. Also, in Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871) Alice encounters Humpty Dumpty. Both *Kit Bam* and *Through the Looking Glass*, while they offer cameo appearances of well-known characters and thus demonstrate that intertextuality was alive and well during the Victorian era, do not rely on these characters for the plot.

One of the first “Golden Age” books to rely on pre-textual characters as a central element to the plot – and thus one of the first crossover intertexts – is Jane G. Austin’s *Moonfolk: A True Account of the Home of the Fairy Tales* (1874). Austin was an American author who was well known for her works addressing the Pilgrim lifestyle. She wrote a total of twenty-four books during her lifetime, most – if not all – meant for children. Some sources claim that her mother, the poet Elizabeth Hammatt Goodwin, authored a well-known translation of German fairy tales (Fox para. 2). If this were the

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17 “Wavelance” is, after all, a combination of two synonyms, “wave” and “lance,” for “shake” and “spear.”
18 While this term is often contended, for the purposes of this study I will refer to the “Golden Age” of children’s literature as the period of time between 1865-1926 (from *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* to the publication of *Winnie-the-Pooh*), during which many children’s books and children’s book publishers flourished in England and America.
Austin’s invocation of pre-textual fairy tale characters, which I will discuss below, would be all the more interesting.

Austin’s *Moonfolk* recounts little Rhonda’s adventures in the Moon, home of the fairy tales and nursery rhymes. There, she hears the “true” accounts of such characters as Whittington’s Cat and Puss-in-Boots, and she meets several of the characters, including Cinderella, King Arthur, and the Fairy Godmother. The reader is told that the reason we, on Earth, don’t know the true stories is due to the fact that moonbeams on which the stories are transported to Earth are both finicky and fragile beings that do their job to the best of their ability, most often resulting in minor changes or omissions in the tales.

I counted well over sixty nursery rhymes and fairy tales, many of which were unfamiliar to me, suggesting that they no longer circulate in contemporary fairy tale compendiums. Robinson Crusoe and Sinbad the Sailor are the only two literary characters that appear; the rest are from nursery rhymes or fairy tales. Unfortunately, much of the text reads like a recitation of nursery rhymes and fairy tales; the first half contains most of the intertextual characters, but they are only given brief and passing notice, precluding any productive close readings. For example, in Chapter 5, “The Egg-Woman” (51-61), the Chimney-Elf tells Rhonda the stories of Trinculo, the Egg-Woman, Johnny Green, Puss in Boots, and the mouse from “Hickory, Dickory, Dock” all within the span of a page and a half (53-54). The second half of the book focuses primarily on the Fairy Godmother, Cinderella, Rumpelstiltskin, and King Arthur. This half of the book

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19 Unfortunately, the only poem that scholars are sure Elizabeth Goodwin translated is “‘Tis Dawn, the Lark is Singing.” “‘Tis Dawn” was the original poem to the song George James Webb composed, now known as “Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus” (Graeter qtd in Fox, “Jane Goodwin Austin and Elizabeth H. Goodwin”).
provides the most interesting content, as each character is given more time to interact and develop.

The Fairy Godmother is arguably the most intriguing character invoked, as she orchestrates a great many of the nursery rhyme characters’ lives. She not only saves Cinderella from both the evil stepmother and Rumpelstiltskin, but she also watches over Dorma (Sleeping Beauty) and her prince, as well. She is, in fact, the same fairy who cast a spell over the castle causing its inhabitants to sleep for a hundred years, primarily because she wanted to marry the king, who married the “Fair One with the Golden Locks,” instead. The Fairy Godmother seems to be the linchpin binding the rest of the tales together, and so I will begin my investigation of nineteenth-century crossover intertextuality with her.

As mentioned, the Fairy Godmother acts as a force of both good and evil in Austin’s text: an unusual position for a fairy godmother to be in. Austin plays with the boundaries of the loving mother/evil stepmother characters commonly found in fairy tales by having the Fairy Godmother embody both. This duality promotes a meta-commentary on the simplicity of most fairy tale characters that is sustained throughout the text. According to Brian Attebery, early fairy tales were told orally by peasants in order to “provide a counterbalance to the lives of the peasant hearers: in the tales authority and property are challenged by benevolent forces of nature, ancient wisdom, and the hero’s own boldness” (The Fantasy Tradition 4). These stories are structurally

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20 For more on common characters and archetypes in fairy tales, see Bettelheim’s The Uses of Enchantment.

21 Attebery is speaking of a specific study performed by Linda Dégh in Hungary, though he generalizes her results to include all receivers of oral tales (The Fantasy Tradition). For more information on Dégh’s study, see her book Folktales and Society: Story-Telling in a Hungarian Peasant Community, translated by Emily Schossberger (Indiana Univ. Press, 1969).
identical to fantasy tales, to which he assigned five necessary criteria. Of the five, one of
the most important is the “polarization of good and evil” (*The Fantasy Tradition* 13).

Bettelheim, too, notes the importance of the clear divide between good and evil
characters in fairy tales:

> The figures in fairy tales are not ambivalent – not good and bad at the same
time, as we all are in reality. . . . Presenting the polarities of character
permits the child to comprehend easily the difference between the two,
which he could not do as readily were the figures drawn more true to life.
(Bettelheim 9)

Bettelheim argues that the split between good mothers/evil stepmothers and
good/evil fairy godmothers is a literary device that allows children to comprehend the
complexities of human nature that are currently beyond their capacity to truly
understand (67, 230). But Austin muddies these proverbial waters by having her good
and evil godmothers wrapped up into one character. Harries also notes this polarization
of good and evil mentioned by both Attebery and Bettelheim, and she discusses how
many feminist authors in the Golden Age used this polarization to their advantage in
order to undermine the “patriarchal, often sexist systems that lie beneath most classic
fairy tales” (100). This reversal tends to “merely redistribute guilt and responsibility”
(100) rather than offer a revised ideological system. Austin offers no such easy
distinction for her young readers, and thus does not merely offer a redistribution of guilt
or power.

> What complicates Austin’s use of the Fairy Godmother is that she is not a new,
more complex character. She is that simple, polarized character of whom both
Bettelheim and Attebery speak, and yet she is both the polarized good and the

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22 He refers specifically to a case where a little girl decides that the woman yelling at her in the
supermarket is not her mother, but rather a Martian imposter who only looks like her mother, in order to
secure her vision of her mother as an omni-benevolent being (67).
polarized evil. Austin uses Perrault’s and Grimm’s versions of the fairy tales she invokes, and so when we find that the Fairy Godmother is both the evil fairy who doomed Dorma and her father to their slumber and the good fairy who helped Dorma’s prince rescue them (116-117), both the good fairy who gives Rumpelstiltskin’s name to the princess and the evil fairy who gives her a magical spinning wheel that wounds her (132), our understanding of this “simple” character is undermined.

Austin thus uses the Fairy Godmother to comment on the simplistic views of good and evil that fairy tales present to readers. As Bettelheim notes, Basile’s original version of “Sun, Moon, and Thalia” stressed marital fidelity and was for a more mature audience than Perrault’s version (228). Austin’s text seems to be a throwback to Basile’s original tale. Although the scorned lover is not the king’s queen, as in “Sun, Moon, and Thalia,” the scorned lover is still a woman in power – and this woman helps her lover’s child, rather than trying to throw her in a fire. Indeed, much as in Basile’s version, Austin’s Fairy Godmother simply warns the vain queen and unfaithful king to never allow their daughter into the fairy’s room and to beware spindles, as Basile’s wise men had done before her: “they forgot to ask me to the christening. I was a little hurt at that, but all I did about it was to tell them to keep the child out of my turret of the palace; and another thing I told them was never to let her learn to spin, for as surely as she did she would come to grief” (114-115). Austin, then, is trying to mediate between the older/lesser-known versions such as Basile’s and more popular versions of the tales like those of Perrault’s and the Grimms’. But only part of the problem stems from the simplistic depiction of good and evil female characters. One of the biggest reasons this polarization became popular has to do with issues of literacy and print culture. The
notion of the fairy tale as a simple, polarized, “chaste” (Harries 12) tale came about partly due to issues with their transcription from oral to print culture, another issue that Austin subtly pursues in her work.

In the beginning of Rhonda’s journey, the Man in the Moon explains to her, and subsequently the reader, how fairy tales and nursery rhymes come to exist on earth:

All fancies, and a great many ideas, come from the moon. The moonbeams go when people are asleep, and put them into their heads, and when they wake up they write them down, and call them their own. . . . The moonbeams know whom to carry them to. Sometimes, however, they make a mistake, and stuff too many fancies into the brain of somebody who can’t write them, or tell them, and so get rid of them, and he keeps them stored away until they turn his brains upside down. . . . Sometimes the moonbeams pour in ideas faster than the brain can arrange or pat them together, even if the person does write them down, and then they make queer work enough of it for a while, but finally join the lunatics. (27-28)

Austin’s character is effectively stating that some authors simply got it wrong. Sometimes they didn’t transcribe the works they should have, and other times their stories were “queer work.” I see Austin’s Moonfolk as a critique of the fairy tales that were “pat[ted] together” in a mish-mash manner by writers with “patriarchal assumptions and nineteenth-century bourgeois attitudes” like Perrault and the Grimm brothers (Harries 13). Austin seems particularly put off by the patriarchal motifs that find their way into 19th-century retellings of oral tales; her complex Fairy Godmother is proof of that. The Man in the Moon’s speech states directly that which the Fairy Godmother could not: ‘my story has been mis-told.’

In order to repair the damage, Austin invokes the characters and structures of the fairy tales with which children of her time were most familiar. Instead of trying to rediscover the old versions of the tales, Austin tips her hat to the famous Perrault and Grimm versions, but not without subtly inserting her own argument into the fray. The
Fairy Godmother includes a fascinating observation about her own powers: “Nobody know whether they wear fairy spectacles or not; and it is one of the best jokes I know, to hear people praise their own clear-sightedness, and boast how far into a mill-stone it will carry them, when all the time, bless you, it is nothing but my glasses” (200-201). I believe Austin is here using the Fairy Godmother as a mouthpiece to throw one last jab at Perrault and the Grimms: that even though the men have made the fairy tale popular, they have done so only because of the power inherent to the fairy tale. By using pre-textual characters in an intertextual context, Austin comments effectively both on the transmission of fairy tales and the resulting loss of female power due to an obsession with the simplification of good and evil for the child audience. Austin would not be the last to make such meta-textual comments.

In 1883, Alice Corkran published *The Adventures of Mrs. Wishing-To-Be*. Corkran published several children’s books in her lifetime, including her two most popular texts *Down the Snow Stairs: Or, From Goodnight to Goodmorning* and *Bairn’s Annual of Old Fashioned Fairy Tales.* In *Mrs. Wishing-To-Be*, Corkran presents a slightly different case from *Moontfolk*. Whereas Rhonda discovers the way things “really” were in fairy tales, Dorothea/Dolly/Dodo just wants to meet her favorite characters. Rhonda is presented as a bit neglected, but Dodo is simply an only child. Puss-in-Boots – who shows Dodo the way to the land of the fairy tales and assures that reader that it is real upon her return to Earth – insinuates that Dodo is worthy of learning about the land of the fairy tales because she maintains an innocence and a sense of wonder in the world.

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23 What this power is, exactly, Austin leaves to her reader to decide. But the Fairy Godmother’s declaration regarding her rose-colored glasses seems to be a statement of ownership and value: fairy tales do something for their readers independently, regardless of how they are (mis)transcribed or (mis)translated.

24 Unfortunately, not much more information is available about her.
As he guides her to his own world, Puss laments, “People they have grown so wise / that they only care for books” (15). Dodo, too, wants to be wise, but only if she can accomplish her goal without having to work for it: she hopes to gain a mirror like the one the Beast gave to his bride (“Princess Beast”) so she could always have answers to her lessons without having to study, thus giving her more time to play and read fairy tales. The title of the book, in fact, comes from one of Dodo’s favorite games; she enjoys wondering what it would be like to be anything other than what she is, and during one of her bouts (she wishes she could try being a pigeon), her father dubs her “Mrs. Wishing-To-Be” (10).

Interspersed throughout Mrs. Wishing-To-Be are twenty-eight nursery rhyme and fairy tale characters, most of which would be familiar to a modern reader. A short list includes “Cinderella,” “Sleeping Beauty,” “Wee Willy Winky,” “The Babes in the Woods,” and Robinson Crusoe. Jack is there, as well: he is portrayed as being the same Jack in “Jack the Giant Killer,” “Jack and the Bean Stalk,” and “The House that Jack Built.” Jack functions as the second of Dodo’s three main guides after Puss leaves her. Jack, in turn, hands over her care to Little Red Riding Hood. Whereas Rhonda’s guides were worried about the transmission of their tales, Dodo’s friends seem to be more concerned with their own affairs and living their lives beyond the stories that humans tell about them.

Whereas Rhonda’s newfound friends are apprehensive about the diffusion and simplification of their tales, Dodo’s acquaintances are more preoccupied with the acquisition of knowledge in general. Corkran’s use of pre-textual characters creates a tension between things “known” and things “learned,” positing Dodo as – not to play out
the pun too far – a dodo. She is not at all concerned with learning her arithmetic and geography lessons, but instead would prefer to know everything all at once by an easy method. Early in the story, Jack scolds her for this: “No trouble, no credit, no fun” (40-41). While some of the characters – such as Jack – express their dissatisfaction with Dodo’s lackadaisical attitude to learning, others – such as Puss in Boots and Mother Goose – seem to share Dodo’s apathy and stress knowledge of fairy tales, instead. Puss disagrees with society’s new enlightened sentiments. Mother Goose, too, seems not to value book-learning. When she delivers the mail to the wrong people on Robinson Crusoe’s island, she confides to Dodo that it doesn’t matter to whom she delivers the letters, as no one in the land of fairy tales can read.

Corkran makes her subtext clear when Dodo meets Goody-Two-Shoes and her schoolchildren; they all look and act practically identical (43), a fate which Dodo hopes to avoid. Rather than being indoctrinated into a system which seems threatening (because of its forced conformity) and difficult, Dodo hopes to avoid school and institutionalization by borrowing Belle’s mirror. But her knowledge of fairy tales, which seems to be positioned in opposition to “book learning,” is, ironically, what saves several of the characters from Bluebeard’s murderous impulses. Dodo hears the rhyme: “Ding-dong, Ding-dong-ding / Soon I’ll toll the knell / of the bride who rides / If she cannot tell / where the secret hides / Jack must learn that / Bluebeard means to kill his new wife” (97-98). In other words, Dodo must somehow express to Jack that Bluebeard has murdered his other wives. Jack must then find the key to Bluebeard’s infamous

25 *The Jolly Postman* might be seen as an interesting – if subtle – response to Mother Goose’s statement, as *The Jolly Postman* delivers letters to different fairy tale and nursery rhyme characters. As a book that plays with binding conventions, *The Jolly Postman* allows children to actually pull the “original” letters out of their envelopes to read for themselves. For more on *The Jolly Postman*, please see chapter two.
locked room and expose Bluebeard as a murderer in order to save Cinderella’s stepmother (the bride). Only by knowing Bluebeard’s story and effectively teaching it to the other fairy tale characters can Dodo save the bride.

The transmission and value of fairy tales come into question. Whereas Austin made the statement that fairy tales are passed on by third-party mediators (moonbeams) and that sometimes the stories go awry for various reasons, Corkran illustrates the importance of passionate readers passing on the fairy tales in order to preserve (save) them. Only Dodo can save the fairy tale characters from Bluebeard by transmitting his story – his murderous desire – to the other fairy tale characters. Again, issues of proper transmission and preservation are present in Corkran’s text, as they were in Austin’s. But instead of having her intertextual characters providing commentary on power balances, Corkran focuses more on the Victorian concern with didacticism and the acquisition of knowledge. In an age where fairy tales are gaining popularity over “classic” and “educational” works like *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes* (1765),

Corkran seems to be trying to promote the importance of maintaining cultural literacy of the popular tales of the time. Indeed, many authors shared her view that fairy tales and nursery rhymes could “educate and discipline the child” (Harries 80).

G. K. Chesterton agreed in his famous article “Education by Fairy Tales” (1905), wherein he stressed that fairy tales are essential to children decades before Bettelheim would make a similar argument:

> The whole human race that we see walking about anywhere is a race mentally fed on fairy-tales as certainly as it is a race physically fed on milk. If you abolish seven-headed dragons you would simply abolish babies.

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26 *Little Goody Two-Shoes*, published by John Newberry in 1765, champions literacy and illustrates how literacy can lead to financial success and a high quality of life, among other such didactic lessons.

27 For more on Bettelheim, please see Chapter 3.
Some swollen-headed, dehumanized little tadpoles might be remain behind, making a ludicrous pretence of infancy; but they would probably die young, especially if they were brought up on the life of Julius Caesar. (9)

Chesterton here supports Corkran on two very important fronts: first, that fairy tales are necessary to education; and second, that to be a healthy child, you must be properly “fed” fairy tales, a theme that I will discuss shortly in Maggie Browne’s *Wanted, a King*. Didacticism was, in fact, a common theme with which nineteenth century authors were concerned.²⁸ But whereas many authors such as Chesterton and Corkran agreed that fairy tales and nursery rhymes could be used to educate, others — such as Martha Mary Sherwood²⁹ and Sarah Trimmer — dismissed them as “giving way to publications of a far more interesting kind, in which instruction and entertainment are judiciously blended” (Trimmer qtd in Harries 90). Corkran brilliantly shows just how education and pleasure can both be readily found in fairy tales, and she is able to make her arguments about didacticism and transmission by using characters in an intertextual environment. Using these characters allows Corkran the freedom to explore the difference between “book-learning” and “knowledge,” specifically of fairy tales — perhaps the term “cultural literacy” would be applicable here — without having to sound “preachy” or didactic, herself.

After *Moonfolk* and *Mrs. Wishing-To-Be came Maggie Brown’s *Wanted, a King: or, How Merle Set the Nursery Rhymes to Rights*. Maggie Browne authored eight books, two of which were illustrated by famous children’s book illustrator Arthur Rackham (*The Surprising Adventures of Tuppy and Tue* [1904] and *The Book of Betty Barber* [1914]),

²⁸ Harries notes two individuals, in particular, who were fond of employing the fairy tale as a didactic tool: Sarah Fielding and Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont (81-89).
²⁹ According to Harries, Sherwood was an educational reformer who, when she revised Fielding’s popular tale *The Governess* in 1820, “omitted both of Fielding’s fairy tales, adding an anodyne and didactic one of her own, as well as a lot of evangelical Christian commentary” (90).
and only one of which was published under a pseudonym.\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Wanted, a King}, which made its debut in 1890, is the story of Merle, a girl incapacitated by a rough “tumble” (2). Merle is invited by a dying leaf to enter the kingdom of Endom, the realm of fairy tales and nursery rhymes. Upon entering, Merle discovers that something is terribly wrong. Because the land has no king, an evil wizard named Grunter Grim has infiltrated the land and messed up all of the fairy tales’ and nursery rhymes’ stories, forcing them to do things they would otherwise not do. For example, the Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe does not want to beat her children, but cannot help doing so, as Grunter Grim rewrote her rhyme to force her to beat any children she sees. This text is ambitious because, unlike \textit{Moonfolk} and \textit{Mrs. Wishing-To-Be}, Browne suggests that the tales, as we know them, are completely wrong.

Beyond that, the Rhyme Fairy, the most important fairy in the land after the Fairy of Contentment, does not wish to continue in her current position: “Down with Grunter Grim! I’m sick of Rhymes. Give Endom a king, and I’ll make no more Nursery Rhymes. I shall be free” (173). This odd statement, coupled with Browne’s choice of names for the evil wizard (“Grim,” perhaps referring to “Grimm”), seems symptomatic of a deep concern for fairy tales and their longevity. In the very first pages of the text, Merle’s Uncle Crossiter claims, “I should like to burn all the silly nursery rhyme books” (4) because they “[fill] children’s heads with . . . rubbish” (3). Merle responds softly, “That would do no good, Uncle . . . the rhymes are in children’s heads, and they will never be

\textsuperscript{30} Browne is an elusive character; on the cover page of my copy of \textit{Wanted, a King}, an annotation was penciled in that reads: “pseud. Margaret (Hamer) Andrewes.” I’ve been unable to determine anything about her other than the other books she published under her real name (if, indeed, Margaret Andrewes is her name).
forgotten" (4). This sentiment appears to be Browne’s main concern: that fairy tales are being manipulated and, ultimately, are disappearing due to the ignorance of adults.

Grunter Grim causes much vexation and anxiety in Endom, as none of the fairy tales are right because of him. When Merle meets the rhymes and tries to express her knowledge and fondness of them, many become cross with her because she knows Grim’s version, not the “true” story. Nowhere is the anti-Grimm sentiment so strong as in Browne’s intertext. By using crossover intertextuality, Browne is able to express her displeasure at the violence and “silliness,” as Uncle Crossiter called it, in the Grimm tales. For example, when Merle meets Mistress Crispin (“The Little Old Lady Who Lived in a Shoe”), she learns that Mistress Crispin always knew exactly what to do with all her children and always made them scrumptious meals. However, Grim came, “changed the beef and plum pudding into broth” (37), and forced Mistress Crispin to continually beat any child she saw.

Little Bo-Peep, one of Mistress Crispin’s children, also suffered at the hands of Grunter Grim:

Are you Bo-Peep?’ said Merle, eagerly. ‘I have long wanted to know you. I have heard of you so often,’ and she began to sing – ‘Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep, / And doesn’t know –’ But she stopped suddenly, for she saw the girl look very angry, and then run away from the window. (38)

The other nursery rhymes – including Jack and Jill, Simple Simon, Tommy Green, and all the rest – are unable to resist Grunter Grim. As Harries notes, although Perrault’s and the Grimms’ tales became popular in the late eighteenth century, many scholars still maintained a belief that fairy tales should be abolished. In 1803, for

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31 The “ignorance” here seems to be a disavowal of the positive things fairy tales and nursery rhymes can do for children. In this particular case the stories make Merle well again, so obviously at least one of the benefits of fairy tales – according to Browne – is physical well-being.
example, Sarah Trimmer vilified an edition of Charles Perrault’s fairy tales because they were guilty of “‘exciting unreasonable and groundless fears’ in children, and not supplying ‘any moral instruction level to the infantine capacity’” (qtd. in Hunt & Lenz 16). In one of her own texts, *Fabulous Histories* (1786), Trimmer set out to teach children to be kind to animals via a beast fable, replete with talking birds. In her introduction she sternly warns that her book should not be read as “containing the real conversations of birds (for that is impossible we should ever understand), but as a series of FABLES [sic], intended to convey moral instruction applicable to [the child reader]” (viii). Although she relied on the basic structure of fairy tales in her own writings, Trimmer still distrusted fairy tales’ content, preferring to set apart her literature as “fables” – a name implying didactic or moral goals in each of the tales – to make her use of fantasy elements more acceptable.

This division of didacticism and pleasurable reading was a cornerstone sentiment in Corkran’s *Mrs. Wishing-To-Be* and can also be seen in *Wanted, a King*. Browne seems to be ‘anti-Grimm’ not because of didacticism, but for the opposite reason. She parodies figures like Trimmer in her cantankerous Uncle Crossiter character because she obviously believes a little fantasy is necessary for children both physically and mentally. The fairy tales do help Merle get better, as the reader is to assume at the end of the tale. Browne pushes this message one step further; although she sees fairy tales as beneficial to children, she seems to find something wrong with Grimms’ tales, particularly, positioning “Grim” as an evil wizard who enjoys violence and antagonism.32

32 A similar message is offered by Sondheim’s finale of *Into the Woods*, “Children Will Listen,” which cautions audience members that the stories they tell – like the story performed in the musical and, by proxy, the fairy tales they read to their children – will have a lasting impact on children: “Careful the things you say, / Children will listen. / Careful the things you do, / Children will see / And learn. […] Careful the
Perhaps – ironically, much like Trimmer – Browne sees the necessity of the fairy tale form, but does not approve of the Grimms’ editorial license. Endom’s king, after all, must be a baby who is first and foremost “contented” (168), even though many tales in their original forms, “in fact, turn out badly” (Harries 10). Fairy tales and nursery rhymes do not always end well, but Browne claims that only a “baby that’s glad / when others are sad” (154) can rule the land of contentment known as Endom.33 Harries makes the point that one of the reasons people tend to (erroneously) ascribe fairy tales to children’s literature is the (again erroneous) belief that many of the tales turn out well. Thus the phrase “It has a fairy-tale ending” (10) has a positive connotation. Although Browne seems to disagree, instead arguing that fairy tales are, in fact, for children, and are good for them, she also seems to be making the case for less violent and “fearful” (Trimmer) content. By positing that the characters, themselves, are discontent with their transcriptions and translations, Browne is able to act as both a proponent for fairy tales and an opponent of the Grimms’ particular translations and editorial choices. By this point in time, many transcribers and collectors were admitting to having “abridged” or “adapted” the tales,34 and Browne effectively uses her text to argue against such editorial whitewashing.

spell you cast, / Not just on children. / Sometimes the spell may last / Past what you can see / And turn against you… / Careful the tale you tell. / That is the spell. / Children will listen” (emphasis in original, 136). This message corresponds to Browne’s, but whereas Browne cautioned against violence, when taken in context Sondheim’s lyrics seem to be referring more to the tropes and underlying messages of children’s literature. For more on this specific concern, please see chapter 3.

33 Many of the characters remind Merle throughout the story that their land is supposed to be the land of contentment; that’s part of what is wrong with Grunter Grim being king. Under him, none of the stories end well, and the characters are therefore not content. The Spirit of Contentment comes to Endom again only once Grunter Grim is banished “to live with the people who call Nursery Rhymes nonsense” (181). 34 Harries points out that Andrew Lang used these terms copiously in the preface to his Blue Fairy Book, suggesting that he and others were aware that their editorial choices were, in fact, changing the stories (98). Nathaniel Hawthorne, too, makes similar points in the introduction to his Tanglewood Tales in 1853;
My final example of nineteenth-century crossover intertextuality comes from the popular tale *The Surprising Adventures of the Man in the Moon* published in 1903 by Ray M. Steward. “Ray M. Steward” is actually a loose anagram and pseudonym of Edgar Stratemeyer (Keeline 3), founder of Stratemeyer Syndicate, who wrote the story for his young daughters. Interestingly, whereas in the other texts the protagonist is a human intruding into fairyland, in Stratemeyer’s book the Man in the Moon is the main character. According to Stratemeyer, the Man in the Moon had been human once, but was turned into the Man in the Moon as punishment for chopping wood on a Sunday and for losing his brother and sister in the woods. He gets swept up into the adventures of Santa Claus and his friends, who are storybook and nursery rhyme characters, in a quest to save his brother and sister from the evil Bluebeard, while his other friends – including Robinson Crusoe, Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, Mother Hubbard and her dog, Jack, Jack, and Jack from “Jack and the Beanstalk,” “Jack Sprat,” and “Little Jack Horner” – search for buried treasure. Seventeen fairy tale, nursery rhyme, and storybook characters are used in this text, and because there are fewer characters, each is allowed the opportunity to develop and interact with the other pre-textual characters.

This text caught my attention because the characters, though thrown together in a seemingly random fashion, all behave as expected: that is, according to standardized versions of Grimm and Perrault, specifically. Cinderella clings to her prince and pours sand out of her glass slipper, Jack the Giant Killer kills a giant, and Jack Horner sticks his thumb into a crab hole: “I – I saw a hole in the – the sand!” blubbered Jack Horner.

Hawthorne states: “The objectionable characteristics seem to be a parasitical growth, having no essential connection with the original fable” (6) and these parasitical growths were, in turn, easy to excise from the tale (regardless of the fact that doing so altered the tales themselves).
‘And I put my thumb into it, and then ca-crab caught m-m-me!’ ‘He put in his thumb, but pulled out no plum,’ came from Jack Sprat” (80). In this text more than any other, each character seems to be included for a particular reason. Jack the Giant Killer protects the group, Mother Hubbard cooks for them all, Cinderella and Little Red Riding Hood entertain the groups with songs, poems, and rhymes, while Santa Claus provides magical transportation. But all of these predicable character traits add up to one very interesting meta-textual observation; Stratemeyer seems to be commenting on the very act of reading and how reading can civilize a child.

The plot gets underway when the Man in the Moon, bored from years of solitude, asks his servant Lollypop to find him some amusement. Lollypop finds many old, dusty books in closet and brings them to his master. The Man in the Moon is fascinated with the texts, but each has a flaw: a missing page, a torn corner, or even a missing chapter. The Man in the Moon tries to read The True Life of Robinson Crusoe (13), Cinderella (14), Jack the Giant Killer (17), Mother Goose (19), Little Red Riding Hood (20), and many other short tales. But each story serves only to whet his appetite for more:

The Man in the Moon was still hungry for something to read, and he picked up one book after another, reading a page here and a page there. But not another book was complete, and so he could not satisfy his curiosity concerning the people he had read about. It was a dreadful state to be in. (22)

Lollypop eventually calls to Santa Claus, whose existence he knows about because of a book he reads after his master goes to bed, to help his master, and Santa Claus appears in the chimney to take them on their journey.

Stratemeyer appears to be making an argument about the “dreadful state” of not being able to finish a story. By learning the ending of the stories – straight from Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, Jack, and Robinson Crusoe, themselves – the Man in the
Moon is able to finally put his curiosity to rest and move on to his ultimate goal: saving his brother and sister, atoning for his misbehavior all those years ago. Whereas the other intertextual narratives in this study tended to stay away from – or directly comment on fairy tales’ use of – didacticism and morals, Stratemeyer seizes the opportunity to do what many translators and editors did before him; he uses his book as a didactic tool to teach children about responsibility and manners. The Man in the Moon ended up on the moon because he disobeyed his parents, losing his brother and sister and condemning himself to a lonely life. Lollypop continually speaks when he shouldn’t, earning harsh words from his master and the other characters. Each character receives his/her fortune from the fairies, and each is given a warning about how he/she ought to behave.\textsuperscript{35} Only the other fairy tale and nursery rhyme characters are able to help the Man in the Moon find his brother and sister and to temper Lollypop’s outbursts, and then only when the Man in the Moon has learned their full stories. Likewise, the characters can only act on their fairy-fortunes when the story - \textit{The Surprising Adventures of the Man in the Moon} – comes to a close. Stratemeyer seems to be linking the act of reading to enculturation and socialization, an unsurprising connection given the Victorian consciousness regarding education. Stratemeyer’s text reflects the commonly held belief that the fairy tales and nursery rhymes – though perhaps not “educational” in the strictest sense –

\textsuperscript{35} For example, Mrs. Sprat’s fortune reads: “You do not love lean meat, they say / So you eat naught but fat each day; / If you keep on you’ll get so big / Some day they’ll sell you for a pig” (106). Lollypop’s says simply: “Mind your master / and avoid disaster” (108). Cinderella’s prince also receives a warning, though it sounds much softer than the others: “When you are king, be good and wise / And you high in this world shall rise” (109). The warning is implicit; if you do good, good will happen to you; but if you do bad things, bad things will happen to you.
were good for teaching children etiquette, subservience, and other general attributes, much as Sarah Fielding\textsuperscript{36} did.

Whether concerned with the transmission of fairy tales, education, or balances of power, each author chose to use crossover intertextuality to make his/her claim. The only downside to using pre-textual characters to enter into a meta-narrative is the uncertainty of longevity. Crossover intertexts necessarily have shelf-lives almost entirely dependent on that of their pre-texts. For example, when the story of “The Fair One with the Golden Locks” and “John Whittington’s Cat,” among several others, fell out of fashion, so too did Austin’s Moonfolk. When the fables surrounding the “Man in the Moon” became obscure, Stratemeyer’s The Surprising Adventures of the Man in the Moon became an artifact for rare booksellers, no longer for children. Part of the message these authors were sending was that fairy tales need to be kept alive; transmission was a prime concern. Many of the tales these authors incorporated have survived the test of time thus far by being included in classroom curriculum and popular media.\textsuperscript{37}

Some excellent examples of fairy tales that were mainstreamed into educational content are the late nineteenth-century alphabet primers, many of which invoked fairy tales and nursery rhymes. For example, the 1890 Fairy ABC used popular characters to depict the alphabet: “A Was A-LAD-DIN, whose wonderful lamp / Made him a prince, though a very great scamp . . . . B Was the BEAU-TY, be-loved by the Beast, / Who was not a-fraid of the Brute in the least” (2). This text should not be confused with

\textsuperscript{36} See Harries, pages 81-87.
\textsuperscript{37} It is undeniable that many tales have maintained popularity due to Walt Disney’s remaking of the “classics” (chosen at his discretion) in feature-length animated films. For more on Disney, please see Chapter 4.
Fairyland ABC (c.1890), which used generic characters ("E is for the Elves who are serving their queen," [3]). Our Brownies’ ABC (1898) interspersed tales and verses throughout the alphabet. These tales included saucy observations such as “Y is YUCATAN, a wonderful town, / Where, strange to relate, all the Brownies are brown” (71). After the nineteenth century, the tradition of interlacing fairy tales with educational materials continued. For example, the 1948 picture book Fairy Folks Picture A.B.C. follows the nineteenth-century fairy tale alphabet primer, and Joan Wolf’s The Beanstalk and Beyond: Developing Critical Thinking Through Fairy Tales (1997) for grades 4-8 instructs teachers on how to make the best possible use of fairy tales in their classroom. The back cover blurb of Wolf’s book reads: “Fairy tales offer great opportunities for learning. This book shows educators how to use popular fairy tales and fairy tale characters to help students develop problem-solving abilities, critical thinking skills, and writing proficiency.” Many such guides touting similar claims exist.

**Concluding Thoughts**

Several generalizations can be inferred from the patterns that become apparent among the “Golden Age” texts. First, each author is concerned with a tradition, or canon, of fairy tales and children’s literature, more broadly. Perhaps the authors were not concerned so much about “canon formation” – to say such verges on an anachronistic imposition of critical jargon – but they did emphasize the importance of transmission and preservation of specific tales. Their choices of pre-textual characters influenced which stories and, in some cases, specific versions of stories would remain popular. In much the same way that parody functions, a crossover intertext borrows authority from its pre-text as much as it lends authority back to the pre-text. As Stephens and McCallum assert:
Reversions [retellings] disclose the ideologies and metanarratives driving those classic texts because they both legitimize and open to question their 'classic' pretexts. They affirm the status of such classic texts, while at the same time entering into a dialogue and calling into question the ideologies informing both the texts and, by implication, the ideological basis of the canonical enterprise. (8)

The same can be said not just for "reversions," as Stephens dubs them, but for crossover intertexts, as well. While simultaneously relying on and calling into question their pre-text's authority, crossover intertexts both support and critique the current canon – or body of popular literature – at a given time. In addition, as Lorna Sage has noted, "Parody seems to offer a perspective on the present and the past which allows an artist to speak to a discourse from within it, without being totally recuperated by it" (qtd. in Makinen 147). Crossover intertexts, too, allow this critical distance, since both parodic texts and intertexts rely on the reader's cultural literacy to function. Knowing that crossover intertextuality both relies on and calls into question a pre-text's authority, while allowing room for the new text to comment on the pre-text, the author must carefully choose which aspects of the pre-text to mimic/borrow/parody in order for the audience to understand both the story and its meta-commentary. Although Austin, Corkran, Browne, and Stratemeyer all attributed different meta-discourses to their characters, each used crossover intertextuality to his/her advantage; the pre-textual characters spoke about fairy tales with the specific authority of a fairy tale. By using specific texts, these "Golden Age" authors were – wittingly or not – promoting a specific group of fairy tales to be continued in popular literature.

For a group of authors so concerned that the "right" fairy tales be passed along correctly, as evinced by their meta-commentaries, the authors’ choices of fairy tales included in their own intertexts are quite telling. Each intertext serves as a milestone by
which to judge the direction “canonical” children’s literature like fairy tales and “classics” such as Robinson Crusoe were taking at the time of publication. By the time Stratemeyer’s book was published, several tales and characters, such as the woman who sweeps cobwebs from the sky, were already being left behind. Many of the pre-texts Stratemeyer relied on are still popular and still circulate in anthologies of children’s stories and fairy tales. In earlier books by authors such as Austin, however, the reader encounters more unfamiliar tales. Austin included several tales that time has forgotten, especially in the first portion of her book, which rather reads as a recitation of all the nursery rhymes and fairy tales she was familiar with. Corkran’s book contained mostly-recognizable – though some arcane – characters; Browne contains more easily-recognizable characters than Austin. Though some of Browne’s characters have been forced out of the ‘canon’ of classic children’s literature, most of them still remain recognizable. Likewise, Stratemeyer’s pre-texts are entirely recognizable (Jack Spratt, Jack the Giant Killer, Cinderella, Red Riding Hood). There is a clear progression in the number of recognizable pre-textual characters incorporated into the crossover intertexts, ranging from many unrecognizable tales in earlier texts to all well-known stories in later texts.

Another generalization that can be made concerns the alterations the characters undergo when they are borrowed and abridged to serve in the new crossover intertext. Intertexts rely on their pre-text’s pre-existing authority, but the intertext also simultaneously alters our perception of the pre-text even as it relies on it, oftentimes with the ultimate outcome of modifying the shape of the canon.38 Many of the texts

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38 I use the term “canon” with some misgivings; in this study, I am referring more to the body of literature that a given society considers “classical” or worth preserving, tales that one must know in order to be
examined in this chapter incorporated such characters as Gulliver and Robinson Crusoe, but neither *Gulliver’s Travels* by Jonathan Swift nor *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe was meant for children. Both characters were adapted, transposed, and abridged to suit the growing child audience of the nineteenth century. These abridgements are reflected clearly in the depiction of these characters in several of the stories discussed throughout this chapter.

As Linda Hutcheon has phrased it, “cultural selection is a way to account for the adaptive organization, in this case, of narratives. Like living things, stories that adapt better than others (through mutation) to an environment survive: those of Carmen, Don Juan, Don Quixote, Robinson Crusoe, Dracula, Hamlet, and so on” (Hutcheon 167). The “mutation” of texts allows the texts to be preserved, but only in an altered form. This new form may be equal to that of its pre-text – as both Hutcheon and Stephens & McCallum note of adaptations and reversions, respectively – but it is still a new text with new, changed characters, events, and/or settings. In the case of the crossover intertexts I examine in this chapter, the alterations – the depictions for children of characters originally from adult texts – are based on censorship for the purposes of making them more appropriate for younger audiences.  

By incorporating characters from books that were not meant for children, Austin, Corkran, and Stratemeyer effectively reinforced this popular nineteenth-century culturally literature. I am not necessarily referring to any inherent value system, but rather am using “canon” in terms of an indicator of society’s reaction towards/treatment of children’ literature. Defining a canon of children’s literature is “only ostensibly informed by notions of literary excellence […]}. Instead, it is largely driven by ideologies – ideologies which inform the decisions made by the culture about “what matters most” in children’s literature, including decisions as to the criterion of literary merit” (Stephens & McCallum 8).

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39 Hutcheon briefly mentions such censorship; see page 118.
40 Browne’s characters were all from nursery rhyme and fairy tales.
impulse to abridge stories and characters so they would be suitable for children.⁴¹ As a result, in today’s society we tend to view stories such as *Robinson Crusoe* as children’s literature, reading the original adult version only in college classrooms. A search on Amazon.com for *Robinson Crusoe*, for example, results in three main “adult versions” – the Norton, Penguin, and Modern Library Classics publications – but well over three hundred versions of the story for young readers, including an edition illustrated by Avi and another starring the dog-actor “Wishbone.” In addition, a preliminary search of the Baldwin Library of Historical Children’s Literature at the University of Florida results in three hundred and eighty different books, two hundred and ninety-eight of which are attributed to Defoe. The nineteenth-century authors of this study, then, contributed – even if only in a small way – to the practice of abridging adult texts and/or characters for younger readers.

⁴¹ Characters are often simplified in children’s stories, and oftentimes only very obvious, specific personality traits survive a character’s transition from the adult to the children’s version of his/her story. A thorough examination of exactly how each character is adapted would constitute a study in its own right and is, unfortunately, outside the scope of this project. Many scholarly examinations of adult books adapted into children’s stories exist, but they often focus on adaptations of one specific text. For example, in his book *Children’s Literature: A Reader’s History from Aesop to Harry Potter*, Seth Lerer discusses how various adaptations of *Robinson Crusoe* for children focused on different didactic messages (see chapter 6 of Lerer’s book, “Canoes and Cannibals: *Robinson Crusoe* and Its Legacies”). One notable exception to this rule is “Rewriting for Another Audience,” chapter two of Sandra Beckett’s book *Crossover Fiction*. In this chapter, Beckett discusses several instances of famous books and characters being rewritten for younger audiences. She uses case studies of rewritten texts like Marguerite Yourcenar’s *How Wang-Fo Was Saved*, Carmen Boulosa’s *The Pirate’s Doctor*, and Noel Streatfield’s *Ballet Shoes*, among others, to discuss general trends in adapting adult works for children. She notes that retellings often exclude issues such as death, violence, and cruelty, and the tones of the children’s versions are often more positive than their original counterparts. She also borrows Michel Tournier’s term “compression” to describe the simplified and condensed nature of children’s versions of adult tales, but she notes that language is not always simplified (though that’s often the case). While Beckett obviously cannot discuss every adult story that has been adapted for child audiences, she does offer a thorough overview of several case studies. In a slightly different vein, Maria Tatar discusses the alterations many folk and fairy tales underwent when they were written down and revised for children in her book *Off With Their Heads!*. She notes in her first chapter that many tales were rewritten as cautionary tales, and many ribald episodes were left out of the children’s versions (Sleeping Beauty’s somnambulant pregnancy, for example, is often excised from children’s renditions of the tale).
The more often a text is rewritten for younger readers, the more likely it is that a population will remember, and thus perpetuate, their childhood impressions of a character. This nineteenth-century practice of abridging texts for children has impacted cultural literacy today, as the versions of characters passed down from generation to generation have changed to simplified, whitewashed versions of their predecessors. For example, audiences arguably no longer automatically think of Jonathan Swift’s Gulliver, but instead of Mickey Mouse in Lilliput\(^{42}\) or other children’s versions of the – originally adult – classic. The “Golden Age” characters that were adapted for children thus influence the perceptions that modern readers have of storybook characters\(^{43}\) like Crusoe, Gulliver, and Sinbad, not only by perpetuating certain texts, but also certain versions (children’s versions) of that text.

Beyond altering perceptions of specific pre-texts, the stories in this study have ramifications for how we understand the nature of children’s literature, in general. According to some scholars, children’s literature was always already fundamentally about ideological transmission. For example, Stephens & McCallum state, “under the guise of offering children access to strange and exciting worlds removed from everyday experiences, [retold stories, such as folk and fairy tales] serve to initiate children into aspects of a social heritage, transmitting many of a culture’s central values and assumptions and a body of shared allusions and experiences” (3). Fantasy, too, is generally accepted to perform this function, as Attebery states that fairy tale characters are “a social phenomenon – the product of generations of public performance”

\(^{42}\) Originally aired in 1934, the episode was titled “Gulliver Mickey.” The episode is included in the Disney Animation Collection 1: Mickey and the Beanstalk DVD released in 2009.

\(^{43}\) These perceptions are informed by the adaptations of these texts that readers encounter in childhood, whether they are formed by Disney versions, picture book renditions, or books along the lines of the Great Illustrated Classics series.
In other words, authors utilize children’s literature and/or fantasy texts to pass on socially accepted values and ideologies. The perpetuation of specific stories over the years betrays a silent consensus among a population about a story’s worth to young readers, and standardization of those stories acts as a way of preserving that worth exactly as the society wants it. The goal of reversions, as Stephens & McCallum see it, is to either wholeheartedly support or completely deny and revise the values a story propagates. But intertexts, as the texts in this chapter have suggested, twist that function of ideological transmission to new ends.

Any specific fairy tale character may be a product of social consensus and cultural dissemination, but in the context of a new, usually intertextual tale, characters are removed from their original setting and placed in a new environment, allowing them to suggest new, and not necessarily culturally shared, ideologies. The nineteenth-century authors examined here used the standardized elements of their pre-textual characters to their advantage, both relying on the inherent authority such long-sustained texts have, and also twisting those standardizations to promote their own beliefs. Using characters in situations beyond the bounds of their original context allows authors to show their readers the vehicle of ideological transmission more clearly (using a child’s story to show how children’s stories function) by relying on the preconceived notions audiences will have about specific characters. For example, Austin’s use of the fairy godmother character complicates and draws attention to the dichotomous functions of women in fairy tales and children’s stories, making readers conscious of tropes they may not have noticed before.

44 Take, for example, Jack Zipes’ feminist fairy tale reversion anthology Don’t Bet on the Prince or Roald Dahl’s Revolting Rhymes.
As Hutcheon has pointed out, “part of this ongoing dialogue with the past, for that is what adaptation means for audiences, creates the doubled pleasure of the palimpsest: more than one text is experienced and knowingly so” (Hutcheon 116). Not only is more than one text experienced in a crossover intertext, but more than one meaning can be inferred from each pre-textual character, as well. Both the original and culturally-defined meaning, plus the author’s new, unique meaning, allow for the characters to each function as a micro-palimpsest within the larger palimpsest, the intertext. These nineteenth-century crossover intertexts, then, helped to shape readers’ understanding of what a child’s story should be, both by their meta-commentary on the subject and by their use of the average characteristics of their intertextual characters, which draws attention to the palimpsestuous nature of children’s stories.

Many scholars define intertextuality as a feature of postmodernism; but as this chapter has shown, intertextual tales were being told long before postmodernism was conceived. Attebery has gone so far as to claim that “postmodernism justifies the practice of fantasists [my emphasis]” (Strategies 50). Obviously, writers of fairy tales and children’s fantasy predated postmodernism and used “postmodern” techniques before they were considered “postmodern” in order to authorize their own agendas regarding the nature of children’s literature. Attebery does concede later that:

Even the simplest of fantasies sets up an initial paradox on the order of ‘everything I tell you is a lie, including this.’ The blatancy of this untruth deconstructs the text before it begins — in a fairy tale, the words ‘once upon a time’ really mean never, upon no time. From this paradox grows fantasy’s potential for reinvigorating narrative forms. (Strategies 53).

Beyond simply using the “once upon never” paradox, the intertexts in this chapter further the reader’s understanding of children’s fantasy or fairy tales by drawing attention to the very constructs which that fantasy relies on to function: what Attebery
calls the “reconstructive function” (*Strategies* 67) of fantasy. These constructs – character motivation and narrative time, for example – help readers to make sense of the story they’re reading. Introducing pre-textual characters to a story forces readers to simultaneously rely on their pre-existing knowledge of the character and to revise their understanding of that character, allowing the construct to make itself apparent and to be changed by the reader’s recognition of the construct as a construct. In the case of nineteenth-century crossover intertexts, the characters in question are mainly nursery rhyme and fairy tale characters, and the authors’ uses of those characters serve to complicate readers’ perceptions of those characters.

Jane Austin’s Fairy Godmother is the perfect example of this concept. Readers accept her as a force of good in the text, someone Rhonda can trust. And indeed, the Fairy Godmother does help Rhonda in several circumstances. But as the dialogue at Dorma’s castle proves, she is also a “Bad Fairy,” the same fairy who put the entire castle to sleep in the first place. By using the Fairy Godmother as both a good and evil character, Austin is able to draw attention to the typical construct of a fairy tale fairy godmother and complicate it. Good and evil are no longer polarized as they usually are in fairy tales but now are embodied within one character. The fairy godmother is imbued with characteristics of the stereotypical, simplified good fairy godmother, but she becomes a palimpsest of meaning when her actions within Austin’s intertext prove her to be a bad fairy, as well. This layering of traditional fairy tale figures allows the Fairy Godmother to be something new, a creation of both traditional all-good or all-evil fairy tale archetypal characters and something more complex: a thoughtful grandmother who was once a scorned lover, but who has presumably matured and moved on. Her
complexity allows readers the chance to examine what it is they believe a fairy tale godmother ought to be (simple and polarized), and to ask themselves why Austin’s Fairy Godmother does not fit that role.

Although the “Golden Age” heralded the rise of children’s literature, it would be years before fairy tales and children’s fantasy, more generally, would gain permanent popularity. During the stretch of time between the late 1930s-1950s, as picture book scholar Barbara Bader has observed, fairy tales in children’s books unfortunately suffered a “dry spell,” creating a gap in the body of literature relying on fairy tale pre-texts: “In the new era fairy tales were old hat or worse, poison, and save for an exceptional Seven Simeons creative energies turned elsewhere. In the Forties there did not exist single-volume picturizations of even the most famous of the traditional tales” (314). Although Bader’s research suggests a lack of fairy tales – and thus a lack of intertexts drawing from fairy tales – in the period from the 1930s to the 1940s, she does remind us that there was light at the end of the proverbial tunnel. In the late 1950s the popularity of picture books and the demand for a large market of picture books encouraged authors to seek far and wide to find new stories to publish in picture book format. These fairy tales, so long neglected and found to be trite at best or dangerous at worst, made a major comeback. Likewise, stories that relied on several fairy tales at one time came back into favor.

As previously discussed, crossover intertexts make use of the standardization of well-known characters to help form and authorize their meta-commentary and narrative structure. As Anna E. Altmann has noted, many archetypal characters were standardized permanently when they became illustrations in picture books: “the picture
book format necessarily presents the young reader with images that make St. George a particular man rather than an archetype. There is little in our popular culture that encourages an understanding of the essential meaning of myth or symbol” (145). Although Altmann argues that picture books necessarily make gender-neutral archetypes male, as her essay is focused on the female hero in fantasy novels, her statement does bear a relation to the topic at hand. When a picture book illustrator concretizes the image of a particular character for child readers, that image becomes part of the fabric of the child’s understanding of the tale at hand. It is unlikely that a child will question the representation of the character unless presented with unusual circumstances: an intertext, for instance. In fact, picture books from the 1960s through to today confirm Altmann’s observation quite vividly, as the proliferation of intertextual fairy tale and nursery rhyme characters in picture books suggest. I will now turn my attention to such crossover intertexts – picture books that simultaneously concretize characters and utilize crossover intertextuality – in Chapter 2.
CHAPTER 2  
PICTURE BOOKS: INTERTEXTUAL TALES IN A POSTMODERN WORLD

Epigraph

“Mom and Dad / just sit and dream. / Is that a troll / beside the stream?”

--John Prater, *Once Upon a Picnic*

Crossover Intertextual Picture Books

Crossover intertexts are by no means unique to the “Golden Age” of children’s literature. With the rising popularity of the picture book came many more and varied opportunities for authors to engage with storylines featuring several well-known characters combined in the same tale. Some picture books do such a good job of conveying multiple storylines and allowing children to create their own interpretations of the story and its pictures that many scholars have suggested a category for this new subgenre: the “postmodern picture book.” This subgenre, however, is not a viable category conducive to the study of crossover intertexts.

The crossover-intertextual picture books I deal with in this chapter should not be lumped under the umbrella-term “postmodern picture book”¹ for two main reasons. First, they do not share all (or even many) of the attributes generally found in postmodern picture books,² and second, because doing so causes them to be overlooked in many

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¹ While most scholars do not distinguish meta-fiction or intertextuality from postmodernity -- instead calling these attributes by-products of postmodern literature -- three scholars do note that such a distinction ought to be made. Stevenson admits that “traditions of self-referentiality occur, of course, prior to postmodernism” (32), while Nelson notes that “metafiction, or its variants, need not inevitably be approached in terms of postmodernism” (223). Lewis, too, states that “one can see why metafictional devices are essential to the postmodern enterprise, with its sustained attack on all manifestations of authoritative order and unity, but we should not make the mistake of assuming that the two concepts are identical” (94). Unfortunately, these scholars say no more about misidentifying (inter)texts in their arguments.

² See my discussion below.
While these books are not necessarily postmodern by definition, they do function in very important ways similar to those of postmodern picture books, helping to teach children about literacy and canonicity. To call many of these texts “postmodern” is both anachronistic, as the texts in the previous chapter suggest, and potentially dismissive. Crossover intertexts were requiring child readers to “employ a range of knowledge and grammars” and “background knowledge” (Anstey 447) long before “postmodern” became a popular buzz-word and “postmodern picture book” a viable sub-genre classification. It just so happened that because picture books provide a versatile medium for the crossover-intertextual tales, intertextual stories began to proliferate at the same rate as the genre of the picture book. In addition, these crossover intertexts – even contemporary intertextual picture books – contrive to teach readers the same reading strategies that postmodern picture books ostensibly teach, and they do so without participating in the metafictional strategies ascribed to “postmodern picture books.”

Definitions: The Postmodern Picture Books versus the Crossover Intertextual Picture Book

Although scholars agree on several different elements present in postmodern picture books – and therefore agree on those elements that define what a postmodern picture book is – they often use different terms and place greater emphasis on different elements in their various definitions and discussion. That said, a number of shared

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3 Most studies of postmodern picture books take one or two books as a representative example (usually Wiesner’s *Three Pigs*, Macaulay’s *Black and White*, and/or Scieszka and Smith’s *The Stinky Cheese Man*) and generalizing the results to all other texts.

4 See the previous chapter on nineteenth-century crossover intertexts.

5 The terms used below to describe the various aspects of postmodern picture books are my own. Although many of scholars of postmodern picture books agree on these aspects, they call them by different names; to avoid confusion, I have used my own terms. The terms and/or phrases originally used by each authors have been noted in the following footnotes.
features can be identified in order to offer a working definition of “postmodern picture book.” Generally, in a more or less forthright manner the scholars declare that postmodern picture books share many – if not all – of the attributes of postmodern (adult) works. Specifically, the elements that scholars most often invoke to define postmodern picture books are: interrupted reader expectations of conventional plot devices (Anstey; Nelson)⁶; subversion of those plot devices/parodies of traditional narrative forms (Sipe & McGuire; Stevenson; Lewis; Pantaleo)⁷; intertextuality, traditionally in the Kristevan sense (Anstey; Sipe & McGuire; Nikolajeva)⁸; non-linearity of plot (Sipe & McGuire; Goldstone)⁹; plot indeterminacy requiring the reader to construct large amounts – if not all – of the text him- or herself (Sipe & McGuire; Anstey; Goldstone; Nikolajeva)¹⁰; contradiction between the text and image, within an image or images, or in the text, or any sort of arbitrariness or “excess” of meaning (Goldstone; Lewis; Stevenson; Nikolajeva; Anstey)¹¹; playfulness or an invitation to view the text as

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⁶ According to Anstey, postmodern picture books “interrupt reader expectation [...] and require different ways of reading and viewing” (447), while Nelson notes that “the [postmodern picture] book will afford little pleasure unless the child reader knows that there is a ‘correct’ version of the tale,” (230), which implies that the child reader’s expectation of the original tale has been thwarted.

⁷ What I dub “subversion” refers to the breaking or twisting of plot devices and tropes common to children’s literature, such as the princess always marrying the handsome prince. Sipe and McGuire call this technique “subversion” (277), Stevenson prefers to call it “questioning of meaning” (32) as the reader is not provided the expected storyline, Lewis refers to this attribute as “parody” (95), and Pantaleo note that a common postmodern picture book “problematises [sic] ideologies about traditional narratives” (35).

⁸ What Anstey calls “intertextuality” (447) Sipe & McGuire call “layering” (280), invoking Gerard Genette’s metaphor of the multi-layered palimpsest. Nikolajeva refers to intertext more broadly, defining it as “all kinds of links between two or more texts” (227-228).

⁹ “Non-linear plots” (Sipe & McGuire 281) are stories that cannot easily be read front to back because of the inclusion of “the most unexpected interruptions and additions” (Goldstone 197).

¹⁰ Scholars often stress the importance of the reader to meaning-making in postmodern picture books. Sipe & McGuire draw attention to the “multiplicity of meaning” (281) a reader can choose from, or what Anstey terms “indeterminacy” (447). Goldstone calls more attention to the reader than the text, preferring to term this attribute “horizontal power order” (197), stating that the reader has as much – if not more – authority than the author, as it is the reader who makes meaning from a text. Nikolajeva, too, is more concerned with the reader, focusing her definition of indeterminacy on the “reader’s active participation in the decoding process” (230).

¹¹ Contradiction, or “contesting discourses” (Anstey 447), in a text can come from many sources, such as “threads and themes in either text or illustration [that] contradict the main plot” (Goldstone 197), “literary
a type of game (Coles & Hall; Sipe & McGuire; Goldstone; Stevenson; Lewis; Anstey)\textsuperscript{12}; metafiction, specifically in the form of attention to the physicality of the picture book (Sipe & McGuire; Nikolajeva; Pantaleo; Anstey)\textsuperscript{13}; dependence on culture for meaning or reflective of contemporary beliefs/concerns (Nikolajeva; Lewis; Stevenson; Malarte-Feldman)\textsuperscript{14}; and the ability to reach larger audiences than traditional picture books and traditional “adult” postmodern texts – specifically, an ability to interest older readers – because of potential multiple meanings (Anstey; Malarte-Feldman; Stevenson)\textsuperscript{15}. These ten features are the most often cited elements used to distinguish postmodern picture

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\textsuperscript{12} The term “playfulness” is utilized by several scholars, including Sipe & McGuire (283) Goldstone (197), and Stevenson (32). Many other authors invoke the term casually without defining exactly what they meant, so for the purposes of clarity I will not be invoking those scholars. Playfulness of text has also been described as postmodern picture books’ “ludic nature” (Coles & Hall 112), their textual “performance” (Lewis 98), and as a “pastiche of styles” (Anstey 447).

\textsuperscript{13} According to Sipe & McGuire, “the postmodern text constantly interrupts or punctuates the illusion of the secondary world of the story by drawing attention to itself as a story [sic].[…] Postmodern picture books also frequently puncture the story world by emphasizing the sheer physicality of the book” (285). Similarly, Nikolajeva notes that this type of text “brings to our attention the existence of other “realities” outside the given text” (227), in effect drawing our attention back to our own reality (outside that of the story in the picture book) and thus emphasizing the book’s physicality. While Nikolajeva claims that intertextuality is the cause of this reality-blurring, she does note that intertext has other functions. Pantaleo draws attention to the way that a postmodern picture book “communicates messages about the nature of stories and their fictionality” (35), generally by using “new and unusual design and layout” (Anstey 447).

\textsuperscript{14} Nikolajeva reminds her reader that Kristevan intertextuality is “culturally dependent” (230); “allusion only makes sense if the reader is familiar with the hypotext” (230). However, most, if not all, postmodernism requires some level of cultural literacy in order for the meaning-making process to occur. Likewise, Lewis quotes, “it has been suggested that the makers of picturebooks […] are doing no more than responding to the tenor of the times and either consciously or unconsciously importing the approaches, techniques and sensibilities of postmodernism into their work” (87). Stevenson agrees but sees the need to emphasize the organic nature of this inclusion of postmodern elements; postmodern elements appear in literature not because of authors’ educations but “because of the prevalence of these impulses in postmodern culture” (32). Or, more simply put, readers depend on a “shared cultural heritage” with the author (Malarte-Feldman 210).

\textsuperscript{15} The “cross audience” (Malarte-Feldman 210) associated with postmodern picture books come from the multiplicity of meanings these texts afford. “Traditionally the picture book has been seen as the province of the young, inexperienced reader. However, the postmodern picture book appeals to a much wider age span, level of sophistication, and a range of reading abilities” (Anstey 447). Stevenson also notes that some texts, which may appear popular only to older viewers, do in fact interest younger viewers; Stevenson notes that postmodern texts, specifically the fractured fairy tales in Rocky & Bullwinkle, “appeal not only to older viewers […] but also to that postmodern creation, world-weary preteens” (32).
books from ‘normal’ or ‘regular’ picture books. The scholars who invested the time and effort to identify and label these shared traits all argue for the categorization of postmodern picture books as a subgenre in its own right.

Picture books that are crossover intertexts do *not* necessarily – or even usually – share these traits. They do not always interrupt reader expectations\(^{16}\); they generally follow familiar narrative patterns, most often linear ones,\(^{17}\) and many of them do offer definitive – rather than ambiguous or open-ended – endings. Contradictions between images and text, while they do occur occasionally, are usually easily interpreted as daydreams on the narrator’s behalf and are therefore not subject to uncertainty.\(^{18}\) In addition, although the texts are playful in their invocation of storybook characters, they do not necessarily “[invite] readers to explore them as linguistic and visual playgrounds” (Sipe & McGuire 283), since the text and images are straightforward and descriptive. Crossover-intertextual picture books do draw attention to the boundaries between stories in their suggestion that such boundaries do not exist, but rarely do they encourage child readers to examine the picture book as an object in and of itself. These picture book crossover intertexts do also rely on cultural norms; however, this attribute is not unique to postmodern picture books (nor is it unique to any type of book, really). And, of course, whether or not specific titles are reaching larger audiences and wider age groups is next to impossible to determine. The only trait that crossover-intertextual

\(^{16}\) In fact, crossover intertexts often rely relatively heavily on reader expectations by their invocation of pre-textual characters.

\(^{17}\) Whether they are chronological or reverse chronological, such as Allan Ahlberg’s *Previously*, they are still linear.

\(^{18}\) An excellent example of this type of crossover intertext is John Prater’s *Once Upon a Picnic*, wherein the little boy protagonist does not discuss the fairy tale characters depicted in the images more than once or twice – his lack of commentary does not make the actions in the image contradictory or ambiguous in any way, however.
picture books consistently have in common is their intertextuality and, occasionally, some subversion.¹⁹

Some scholarship on postmodern picture books also overemphasizes the images contained within the text. Although illustrations are obviously essential to any successful picture book – and are, in part, what define the contemporary picture book as a picture book in the first place – some scholars spend so much time analyzing the pictures that they lose the thread of the narrative. Because picture books rely equally on pictures and text to make meaning, the text of a picture book should not be forgotten in an analysis simply because the pictures are doing interesting things, too. In the case of crossover-intertextual picture books, most of the images simply support the narrative. The largest exceptions to the rule are the Ahlbergs’ Each Peach, Prater’s Once Upon books, and Cowell’s Little Bo Peep’s Library Book. For example, Each Peach requires children to find and name specific fairy tale characters in a Where’s Waldo?-like situation; the characters are hidden in the setting of the pictures, and generally only a hand or leg can be seen. The character then appears in full on the next page, where the child reader is asked to locate another character hidden in the picture. Similarly, the Once Upon books depict fairy tale characters playing out their tales, while the text barely acknowledges the characters frolicking around the main character. The pictures do not contradict the text, but they do inform it. Little Bo Peep’s Library Book is a toy book that allows children to pull mini-books off the “shelves” present in the images, becoming interactive in ways that most traditional picture books are not. Even these texts, which are

¹⁹ It is also noteworthy that many scholars seemingly cannot decide if authors’ and illustrators’ inclusion of postmodern elements in picture books is or is not a conscious enterprise; most authors simply skim over this problem in a sentence or two – if they mention it at all. The crossover intertexts I discuss in this project are all undoubtedly consciously made to be so, as the characters from disparate texts are overtly, deliberately invoked.
exceptions to the general rule that crossover-intertextual picture books have more traditional images, do not have the drastic impact on the story that many scholars of postmodern picture books suggest the images should do. The frame of the book is not called into question, as it is in Wiesner's *Three Pigs*, nor are the images contradictory to the tale being told, as occasionally occurs in Scieszka and Smith's *The Stinky Cheese Man*. Although the images support the stories, the illustrations in crossover-intertextual picture books generally do not have the radical function that scholars claim for postmodern picture books.

I found over sixty crossover-intertextual picture books to discuss in this chapter, and for the sake of ease and accessibility I have organized these books into three categories based on the reading skills discussed above: those in which the main character changes or acts as a catalyst for other characters' stories, those that focus on expanding readers' background knowledge of the characters and their stories, and tales that expose the canon by the way they 'test' children's knowledge of literary characters/plots. Although many of the crossover-intertextual picture books fall into more than one category, I have divided them in order to make the body of literature easier to examine. While I will be using only a few sample texts from each category, an appendix of each crossover intertext I found – including those from other chapters – can be found at the end of this project. Before I discuss the categories and texts, a brief sketch of the origins of the crossover-intertextual picture book will help to contextualize the subject matter and goals of the picture books in the three categories delineated above.

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20 Although all of the crossover intertextual picture books I discovered easily belong to more than one category and are by no means mutually exclusive, it is best to examine the books in context with other, similar works in order to discern their similar methods of instructing children in literacy skills.
Pre-Intertextual Picture Books: Maurice Sendak, Allan & Janet Ahlberg, and Alma Flor Ada

Because of their pictorial and textual intertextuality, books such as those by popular children’s book authors Maurice Sendak, Allen and Janet Ahlberg, and Alma Flor Ada are frequently classified as the forerunners of “postmodern picture books,” as they began teaching the reading strategies listed above before postmodernism became fashionable. They were also some of the first authors and illustrators to employ crossover intertextuality. Intertextual allusions and external pictorial references arguably did not occur in picture books with much frequency or conscious forethought until Maurice Sendak hit the literary scene. His illustrations often offer pictorial allusions to other books and movies. For example, as biographer Selma Lane has noted, a two-page spread from *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) invokes a visual reference to the 1930s production of *King Kong.* In *The Night Kitchen* (1970) features a trio of Hardys inspired by Laurel and Hardy’s *Nothing But Trouble* (Lane 179) as well as impressions from his childhood in Brooklyn. There are even depictions of Mozart, Sendak’s favorite composer, playing the piano in a log cabin in *Outside Over There* (1981) and conducting a choir of little children in *Dear Mili* (1988). According to Nikolajeva, “Sendak’s allusion to Rodin’s sculpture *The Thinker* in *Where the Wild Things Are* has been noticed by all critics discussing the book” (235). Part of the purpose of these visual allusions is verisimilitude. As Sendak quoted, “all successful fantasy . . . must be

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21 As Selma Lane records it, Sendak “feels almost certain that his conception of the wild things owes a decided debt to *King Kong,* a movie he saw as a child and never forgot. In fact, long after the book was published, an old friend who collects still pictures from films of the thirties pointed out that one of the compositions from *Wild Things* was all but identical to one of the frames from *King Kong.* On her next visit, she brought the King Kong still photograph in question and Sendak remembers, ‘I was amazed at how alike they were, from the positioning of the monster outside his cave to the cliff he’s standing on.”’ (Lane 88).

22 This list is only a very abbreviated inventory of the multitude of allusions present in Sendak’s work.
rooted in fact” (Lane 85). But more than verisimilitude is achieved by use of these intertextual references. A whole new type of readership is expected of the child reader when such allusions are in either the text of their picture books, the images in their picture books, or both. While the visual intertextual references in Sendak’s books generally belong more to the category of “allusion” than intertext in the strictest sense, Sendak did, indeed, help to lay the foundation in America for crossover intertextual picture books and “postmodern picture books” that came later.

Sendak is not alone in pioneering crossover intertextuality in picture books. Popular British writer Allan Ahlberg and his illustrator (and wife) Janet Ahlberg are well known for their use of storybook characters. Irritated and feeling somewhat stifled by their jobs, Janet one day asked Allan to write a book for her to illustrate – specifically, a children’s book. Allan, “having always wanted to write but being unable to find his niche, suddenly felt ‘as though [he] was a clockwork toy and she had turned the key’” (“Allan Ahlberg” par. 2). Thus the dynamic writer-illustrator duo was born. They began publishing together in 1975 with their first text The Old Joke Book (1976), eventually going on to write and illustrate over 100 books23 together until Janet’s untimely death in 1994 (“Allan Ahlberg”). Allan Ahlberg still, to this day, writes and publishes children’s picture books, and he works with many various artists.

The Ahlbergs produced several of the first truly crossover-intertextual picture books for children. Their book Each Peach Pear Plum and the Jolly Postman series inspired a generation of writers and illustrators. Janet won the Kate Greenaway Medal for Each Peach in 1978, and their work has only become more popular since that time.

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23 For a nice list of some of the most popular Ahlberg books, please see http://www.booksellerworld.com/janetallan-ahlberg.htm.
The Jolly Postman was also an award-winner, bringing the Ahlbergs an Emil/Kurt Maschler Award and another Kate Greenaway Medal in 1986. The Jolly Postman’s successors, The Jolly Christmas Postman and The Jolly Pocket Postman, were also successful. In fact, it was these award winners – Each Peach and the Jolly Postman books – as well as Previously (2007) that were the picture book genre’s first real venture into intertextuality.

In Each Peach Pear Plum, the child reader is asked to identify the fairy tale or nursery rhyme character hidden in each picture. While the Ahlbergs were known for often drawing inspiration from folklore and fairy tales, Each Peach goes one step further and actually suggests to the child audience that fairy tale and nursery rhyme characters can be found in the same physical space: that somehow, their “once upon a time”s and “happily ever after”s are synchronous. The Jolly Postman books, too, suggest that fairy tale characters live near enough one another that one man can deliver their mail to them. In fact, the first book of the Postman series, The Jolly Postman, has been noted for its playful and educational nature: “The jokes in this fascinating book depend not only on a familiarity with traditional stories and characters, but also on appreciation of linguistic form and use” (Stephens 169).

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24 This border-breaking between stories was present in nineteenth-century crossover intertexts but did not appear in picture books until the Ahlbergs. Although the theme was not new, the use of the medium – picture books – to depict the theme was, up to this point, unheard of.

25 In fact, one of the elements that made the Postman books so popular was its layout; the books contained many envelopes addressed to various fairy tale characters, and children could pull the characters’ letters out of the envelopes. This hands-on epistolary form became quite popular and was replicated often in such texts as Little Bo Peep’s Library Book, Pirate Treasure Map, and to a lesser extent, the Dear Peter Rabbit books, discussed below.
Allan Ahlberg’s\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Previously} takes a slightly different stance. Although the text suggests that all of the characters live in the same space, the story also suggests that the characters can affect one another. For example, before his mother asked him to sell his cow, Jack had fallen down the hill with his sister, Jill, because they were arguing over who should carry the bucket. And before that, while eating their cornflakes, Jack and Jill saw a green frog with a crown on his head. The reader is told that, before being a frog, he had been a prince who drove around in a white Mercedes. This particular prince had been in love with Cinderella – and on the story goes, spiraling ever backwards through several different tales, until the narrator closes the tale by saying:

And previously Goldilocks herself and Jack and Jill and all the others, even the little old man and the little old woman, had all been tiny babies...previously. \textit{/} And all the bears were cubs. \textit{/} And all the frogs were tadpoles. \textit{/} And all the buckets and chairs / and ballroom floors / were planks of wood. \textit{/} And all the wood was trees in the dark woods. \textit{/} In the sun and the wind and the rain, \textit{/} under the endless sky, \textit{/} once upon a time...

(Ahlberg n/p)

This cyclical story – while keeping with the \textit{Postman} books and \textit{Each Peach} in its suggestion that fairy tales live in the same space – offers a unique new concept to the child reader: that stories can actually impact one another. I will be discussing several more books that offer the reader this same concept later in this chapter, since this type of text makes up a significant portion of crossover-intertextual picture books.

Alma Flor Ada, like Sendak and the Ahlbergs, became well known for her crossover-intertextual picture books. She is most famous for her \textit{Hidden Forest} series, beginning with \textit{Dear Peter Rabbit}\textsuperscript{27} (1994) quartet. The series also includes \textit{Yours Truly},

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Previously} was not illustrated by Allan’s wife Janet, but rather by Bruce Ingman. Allan Ahlberg often worked with illustrators other than his wife as he produced stories faster than she could illustrate them (“Allan Ahlberg” par. 5).

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Dear Peter Rabbit} won the Parent’s Choice Honor Award in 1994.
Goldilocks (1998), With Love, Little Red Hen (2001), and Extra! Extra! (2007). Born in Cuba, Ada has written over 200 books, many of them bilingual (Parker-Rock 35), and she has authored books for educators about the use of Latino literature in the classroom setting. She suggests that diversity was one of the motivating factors behind her popular series. Her last book in the series, Extra! Extra!, deals directly with this theme when an overly-large and suspicious-looking beanstalk begins to sprout from Jack’s backyard. The citizens debate “the value of its diversity and uniqueness” (40) while other town citizens (other storybook characters) are threatened by its sudden appearance and what it might mean for the town.

It comes as no surprise to those who know Ada’s works that her passion for folklore began at an early age and is displayed in many of her books, even those beyond the Hidden Forest series. Her grandmother told her Spanish fairy tales as a little girl, and Ada often returned to the themes in her works, most specifically in Pío Peep!, Mamá Goose, Tales Our Abuelitas Told, and the Hidden Forest books. The Hidden Forest books, however, were born not from a deep, abiding passion for folklore, nor primarily from her concerns with diversity; instead, the books were the product of a long drive home from Ada’s teaching job at the University of San Francisco (Parker-Rock 38). According to an interview with biographer Michelle Parker-Rock, Ada was driving home one night while dictating notes to her students into her tape recorder. Tiring of work, Ada “amused myself by imitating a pig, a rabbit, and a wolf . . . . With the tape recorder running, I made up imaginary letters that these fairy-tale characters were sending to one another. I always loved letters, and I had a lot of fun with these . . .

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28 See, for example, her book A Magical Encounter: Latino Literature in the Classroom.
29 According to her website, Ada still teaches at USF as a Professor Emerita (“Bio Information”).
When Alma listened to the tape later, I was surprised to find a whole story there” (qtd. in Parker-Rock 38). Thus, Ada’s inspiration for the popular series beginning with *Dear Peter Rabbit* came from a combination of Ada’s ingrained love of fairy tales, her fondness for the epistolary form, and a quiet drive home from work one night.

**Category 1: The Main Character Changes or Acts as a Catalyst for Other Characters’ Stories**

The crossover-intertextual picture books I encountered ostensibly teach child readers about important and well-known characters. At the same time these texts rely on the child’s previous knowledge of the tales in order to function in the first place. In these texts, characters (which are usually fairy tale characters themselves) interact with and change other characters’ stories. These books, such as Tigerman’s *Dorothy in Dreamland* (1991), Oppenheimer’s *Eency Weency Spider* (1991), Anholt’s *Come Back, Jack!* (1994), Dematons’ *Looking for Cinderella* (1996), Child’s *Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Book?* (2003), Stanley’s *The Giant and the Beanstalk* (2004), Hawkins’ *Pirate Treasure Map* (2007), and Ahlberg’s *Previously* (2007) all present their main characters as catalysts for, or instruments of change in, well-known fairy tales and nursery rhymes. Because these eight texts function in roughly the same way, I will be using the most opaque of them, *Pirate Treasure Map* and *Dorothy in Dreamland*, to explore this category of crossover-intertextual picture books.

*Pirate Treasure Map* is a delightful book which I wish I had read as a child; it would certainly have been one of my favorite books. The map itself – which can be found in a pocket in the front cover of the book (made to look like Captain Hubbard’s hat) – is a 12.5x17 double-sided map that on one side documents “fav’rit pirate songs” and
“nuggets of pirate lore” and on the other sports a map of the “Treasure Trail” that will lead the stout-hearted through numerous fairy tales and to a treasure. The map itself includes numerous references to literary places and people, including Sleepy Hollow, the Robin Hood Wood, the Crooked Mile, The Gingerbread Forest, Banbury Cross, Cockleshell Beach, and Ring around the Roses Roundabout. The map is populated by such characters as Little Boy Blue, Robin Hood, the Crooked Man, the Gingerbread Witch, Mary Mary, the Gingerbread Man, and even the Owl and the Pussycat – depicted in a boat in the ocean, of course – among others. Although some of the rhymes portrayed on the map – such as “Seesaw Margery Daw” – may not be familiar to younger audiences, they will certainly delight parents reading the story to their children.

The story follows Jack of the beanstalk persuasion, son of Mother Hubbard. After taking the giant’s gold, he and his mother buy a small inn by the sea. One day, Jack’s uncle, Cap’n Horatio Hubbard of the Goosey Gander, comes to the inn and tells the Hubbards about a treasure map he has found. Jack is invited to be cabin boy and weathers the rough voyage to an island. During a botched mutiny led by Wicked Ed Wolf, as Cap’n Hubbard holds off the rebellious crew, his hat – containing the map – flies overboard. Jack jumps in to retrieve it and is ferried to land by the Owl and the Pussycat. Jack decides to seek the treasure for himself, but stumbles across two well-known tales in the process.

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30 These are generally variations on well-known songs and sayings, such as “Eeny-meeny-miny-mo, / Catch a pirate by his toe” and “Early to hammock and early to rise / Makes pirates healthy, wealthy, and wise” (Hawkins n/p).

31 It is a common occurrence in these picture books that characters such as Jack, the Wolf, and the Wicked Witch from various stories are conflated into one Jack, Wolf, or Witch character. Jack-be-Nimble is often also Jack of the beanstalk variety, the wolf from “The Three Little Pigs” is described as the same wolf who terrorized Little Red Riding Hood, etc.
First, he meets up with Hansel and Gretel in the forest after nibbling on the gingerbread cottage. He sends the two on the cottage because they’re hungry. They are caught by the witch and the story progresses as usual: Gretel scrubs, Hansel eats, the witch can’t see, Hansel sticks out a bone instead of his finger. But when Gretel pushes the witch in the oven, it isn’t on; Gretel simply latches the heavy door shut so the witch cannot escape. She releases her brother, and they follow the Straight and Narrow Path home. Meanwhile, Jack has passed Baby Bunting at Rock-a-Bye Tower, Little Boy Blue asleep on a haystack, the Crooked Man, and the Three Billy Goats Gruff along the path on Rumplestiltskin Mountain. Jack is heading in the same direction as the goats – past Greener Pastures – so he accompanies them. The tale continues when they reach a bridge with a troll under it. The story of the Three Billy Goats Gruff progresses as usual, and Jack follows Big Billy, the eldest goat, across the bridge once it is safe. Jack has no more encounters with any specific characters; he enters the dark and scary forest, makes it out the other side near a castle, continues down into the dungeon, and finds the treasure. According to the bats in the dungeon, if you want to know what happened to his uncle you have to read a different book, because “that’s another fairy tale” (n/p). Interestingly, this book implies that, had Jack not come along, the tales of Hansel and Gretel and the Three Billy Goats Gruff would never have been told. Jack was the one who pointed out the Gingerbread Cottage to the hungry children, although all turned out well without Jack having to offer a rescue. In addition, the goats may never have encountered the bridge in the first place, nor triumphed over the troll, had Jack not come along and aided them.
In a similar vein, in *Dorothy in Dreamland* Dorothy and Toto from Baum’s 1900 *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* encounter her favorite fairy tale characters, and Dorothy helps them each to fix their stories. The tale is told within a dream frame – much like the 1939 MGM adaptation of the book – in that Dorothy closes her eyes one night and, as she opens them, finds herself somewhere new: in a forest looking at a trail of breadcrumbs rather than a yellow brick road. As one would guess, the trail leads Dorothy and Toto to Hansel and Gretel. When they come upon the Gingerbread House, the witch leaps out at them, screaming “I’ll get you my pretties and have you for my supper!” (n/p) with rhetoric that again recalls the MGM movie. Remembering her own adventure, Dorothy runs to the stream to get water. Hansel and Gretel’s father saves the three of them, and they leave. Dorothy is left to walk along further into the woods, and she sees Little Red Riding Hood giving the wolf directions to Grandma’s. Dorothy gets to Grandma’s house before the wolf and tells her what is going on. Between the two of them, they manage to trap the wolf in the closet. Little Red shows up with a ranger who takes the wolf away to a zoo.

After this adventure, Goldilocks runs past. Dorothy goes on to the bears’ house, who all apologize for startling Goldilocks. Dorothy and baby bear walk to find Goldilocks and apologize. As Goldilocks goes back with baby bear to have tea, Dorothy continues along the path to try to get home and eventually comes across the three little pigs. They tell her that the wolf escaped from the zoo and wants to eat them, so they want to build good houses to keep their children safe. She aids them so the straw house cannot be blown down (it’s woven too tight), the stick house can’t either (the sticks interlock), and, of course, the brick house stands anyway. Having tried his usual huff-and-puff routine,
the wolf, exhausted, slinks away. Walking on, Dorothy sees her bed in the road and lies upon it. When she wakes, she’s back in Kansas.

These stories imply an interdependence of fairy tales and popular children’s fantasy. Without Jack, Hansel and Gretel would not have had their adventure, but without Dorothy they would not have survived. Jack acts as a catalyst in *Pirate Treasure Map*, whereas Dorothy acts as an intermediary in *Dorothy in Dreamland*. Though it is implied that Jack has no foreknowledge of the tales, Dorothy does and so is put in a position of responsibility; for example, she knows what will happen to Hansel and Gretel, so she does what she can, using knowledge acquired in a previous adventure to help. Although Jack does think he is helping Hansel and Gretel by pointing them to the Gingerbread House, he is, in fact, beginning a chain of events that can only lead to Hansel and Gretel being captured by the witch.

While these stories address their theme from different angles, their function is essentially the same: they both comment on the strange relationship that intertexts have to cultural literacy. These particular texts teach cultural literacy at the same time that they rely on cultural literacy to be understood in the first place. These stories rely on cultural literacy because the reader must be familiar with the pre-textual protagonist (Jack and Dorothy) in order to understand the story, but they also teach cultural literacy because they do not assume that the reader is that familiar with the pre-textual tales the protagonists encounter. For example, in *Pirate Treasure Map*, the reader must already know the stories “Old Mother Hubbard” and “Jack and the Beanstalk” to understand who the main character is, but readers do not need to know “Hansel & Gretel” or “Three Billy Goats Gruff,” since their stories are played out fully in the book. Similarly, in *Dorothy in*
Dreamland, the reader follows Hansel & Gretel being tempted by the witch but must already know Dorothy's story in order to understand some of her actions – such as fetching a bucket of water when the witch captures Hansel & Gretel. While Dorothy is pro-active and willing to change the stories and Jack is a more passive – though still interesting – addition to these tales, both protagonists require the child reader to be familiar with some aspects of the texts. In other words, children need to be at least slightly culturally literate in order to understand and meaningfully engage with this type of intertextual picture book. The cultural literacy that a child brings to the text acts as a catalyst for teaching the rest of the cultural literacy included in the story that the child might not have known previously and that is included in the text.

More generally, several scholars have noted the role that cultural literacy plays in picture books. Some believe that the cultural literacy children approach these texts with is more important than what the text teaches, while others contend that the cultural literacy transmitted by the texts is more important than what the child already knows. Either way, cultural literacy undeniably plays a large role in picture books, both in the way children approach texts and how they learn from reading them. In both cases, crossover-intertextual picture books concretize images of characters and settings, in some cases requiring the child to draw on previous knowledge to recognize a character. In Prater's Once Upon a Picnic, Little Red Riding Hood is inferred by image only and not mentioned by name in the text. Other cases require the child to revise previous notions

32 For example, Malarte-Feldman notes the importance that a “shared cultural heritage” (210) plays in understanding picture book content.
33 Goldstone lists a number of scholars – including Bader and Darton – who have discussed the picture book as a “socializing agent” (198) able to teach children about societal expectations. Similarly, Stephens has suggested that picture books are “rich sources of data concerning cultural assumptions, conflict, and change” (166). Postmodern picture books, specifically, can “[introduce] a technical vocabulary into the discussion [and] explicitly connects picturebooks with larger social and cultural developments” (Lewis 87).
about characters with which the child is already familiar. The reader’s understanding of Goldilocks is changed when reading the *Dear Peter Rabbit* books by Alda, for instance, since Goldilocks is Farmer McGregor’s daughter and works on a farm. She is depicted as a tomboyish – though kind – character in this setting, whereas in both Fearnley’s *Mr. Wolf and the Three Bears* and Child’s *Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Book?* she is depicted as a spoiled brat. The simultaneous concretization of the character’s image and inclusion of new information about the character’s personality have odd consequences for readers, and this concretization and inclusion of new information are two of the attributes that makes crossover-intertextual picture books so important (and interesting). The flexibility – and, ironically, the rigidity – of this combination make crossover-intertextual picture books’ contribution to and reliance on cultural literacy even more complex than usual.

By “rigidity,” I am referring primarily to the way in which the characters are portrayed. Characterizing a figure such as Goldilocks as a tomboy, for example, removes the potential for readers to imagine her as anything but a tomboy, at least in the current context. The crossover intertext’s flexibility lies in its ability to assimilate whatever characters it wants/needs in whatever way those characters will be best suited to the plot. To establish these familiar characters in new plots, authors are forced to determine specific traits and details about these characters that are not delineated in their original pre-texts. The cultural literacy of a character is called upon – the general knowledge that the common reader has is invoked – but then the author makes artistic decisions to change, adapt, or reconstitute the character for his/her own purposes. The flexibility comes from the character’s ability to be transformed into more or less
whatever type of character the author needs, but once the author makes that choice the character is concretized in text and image and the author must maintain that character’s new traits consistently. For example, in Ada’s series Goldilocks must always be portrayed as a tomboy in all of the series’ sequels. The long-term effects of this concretization can perhaps be seen more clearly in books for older readers in that characters often aggregate connotations beyond their original stories’ themes.34

But picture books don’t just introduce abstract cultural beliefs to their readers; they also teach good reading practices by encouraging children to pay attention to texts’ narrative devices. Sipe and McGuire put it nicely when they write “exposure to these [postmodern picture] books prepares children . . . for the active role they must learn to play in reading all texts on their own” (286). They also cite various other sources that state that children can, in fact, grasp complex postmodern texts and use the information they glean to learn reading practices (286).35 Many scholars have cited postmodern picture books’ ability to teach children reading skills. For example, Pantaleo states that “developing an understanding of metafictive devices can enrich the development of students’ literary competences” (35). Some, such as Nelson, even argue that postmodernist texts are inherently educational because of the tools postmodernism utilizes, such as metafiction: “Adult metafiction . . . is typically viewed as both postmodern and didactic, inasmuch as it seeks to engage its reader with particular philosophical and literary-critical questions” (222). For Nelson, postmodern picture books

34 Please see Chapter 3 for more on texts for older readers.
35 Concern has been expressed over whether or not children can actually grasp the metafictive and intertextual elements of postmodern picture books (and make meaning despite these confusing aspects of the story), but this concern has been proven unfounded. Many picture book scholars point to case studies suggesting that children do understand complex metafictional, intertextual, and postmodern texts. In fact, Coles & Hall mention that in some cases children actually make meaning of these texts better than adults do (114).
books are didactic because they use the same tools as adult postmodernism. Unfortunately, while most scholars like Pantaleo and Nelson recognize the potential these books have to teach “literary competence,” they fail to discuss explicit ways that postmodern picture books can do so.\(^{36}\)

Anstey and Coles & Hall are among the few who offer such information. For instance, Anstey’s article contains a chart that pairs the postmodern elements found in picture books with those aspects of literacy that can be learned from encountering such elements in a text (448). In this chart there are such pairings as “new and unusual design and layout challenge the reader’s perception of how to read a book” and “a pastiche of illustrative styles requires the reader to employ a range of knowledge and grammars to read,” as well as “intertextuality [which] requires the reader to access and use background knowledge in order to access the available meanings” (448). Anstey argues that, while reading postmodern picture books, the child reader actively engages with the text in ways that traditional texts do not necessarily encourage. Readers must discover anew how to read the text in the first place (because of its “unusual layout”) and employ knowledge from other areas of literature/experience that they would not normally need to draw upon in order to understand a text. By stretching their reading skills in this way, students can learn to engage more meaningfully with any other text they may encounter in the future. This active engagement with a text and the subsequent process of learning from a text – precipitated and encouraged by the text’s

\(^{36}\) Pantaleo does mention that “texts with metafictive devices can provide the kinds of reading experiences that develop readers’ abilities to critically examine, deconstruct and construct an array of texts and representational forms that incorporate a range of linguistic, discursive, and semiotic systems” (35); however, Pantaleo does not explore this notion any further.
Category 2: Crossover-Intertextual Picture Books that Focus on Expanding Readers’ Background Knowledge of the Characters and Their Stories

While crossover-intertextual picture books like Dorothy in Dreamland and Pirate Treasure Map function as instructors of cultural literacy, there is a subset of picture books which make no qualms about being blatantly didactic. Aside from teaching children Spanish words (like Elya’s 2005 Fairy Trails) or how to deal with catching chicken pox (Dealey’s 2002 Goldie Locks has Chicken Pox), these specific intertexts also serve to expand readers’ background knowledge of the characters and their stories. The didactic nature of the tales ultimately removes pre-textual characters from the confines of their traditional stories and places them in unique situations, allowing for and, in fact, necessitating authors’ taking creative license with the characters and their temperaments/development. Whereas the stories discussed above – that both rely on and teach cultural literacy – keep characters in more or less familiar contexts and plots, didactic crossover-intertextual picture books always end up revising readers’ perceptions of the characters included. Such books include Scieszka and Smith’s The Frog Prince Continued (1991)\(^37\), Eden’s The Story Cloud (1991)\(^38\), Ada’s Dear Peter

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\(^37\) The Frog Prince Continued offers a very clear moral regarding being happy with oneself as-is. After several failed attempts to get witches from various stories to change him back into a frog, the Frog Prince returns home to find that he was truly happy with himself – and his princess – all along. The fact that the princess then changes into a frog does not seem to belie this moral, as the story focused primarily on the Prince’s happiness rather than the princess’s.

\(^38\) Eden’s text could arguably be more an adult picture book than one meant for children. The text’s last few lines imply that the Story Cloud is, in fact, death, much as “the back of the North Wind” is for Diamond in McDonald’s At the Back of the North Wind. Unlike McDonald’s tale, which teaches children to be pious and good, Eden’s moral seems to be focused more on living a satisfying life: a message that may not make sense to younger readers. The second-to-last paragraph reads: “You see, once we’ve found our heart and imagined ourselves…then the whole story plays like a big symphony, with everyone imagining everyone else…one great dream in which all the dream characters dream too” (n/p). While this paragraph invites Jungian analysis for its fairly overt reference to the collective unconscious, its sentiments will
Rabbit (1994), Yours Truly, Goldilocks (1998), and With Love, Little Red Hen (2001); Cowell’s Little Bo Peep’s Library Book (1999); Pawagi’s The Girl Who Hated Books (1999); Fearnley’s Mr. Wolf’s Pancakes (1999); Dealey’s Goldie Locks has Chicken Pox (2002) and Little Bo Peep Can’t Get to Sleep (2005); Elya’s Fairy Trails: A Story Told in English and Spanish (2005); Hennessy’s Claire and the Unicorn Happy Ever After (2006); and Sierra’s Mind Your Manners, B.B. Wolf (2007).

*Little Bo Peep’s Library Book* is one of the more delightful of the didactic picture books. It is a beautiful primer for using libraries, and its reliance on fairy tale characters enhances the fun this text offers. The story goes that Bo Peep lost her sheep and, while looking for them, finds Little Boy Blue reading in the field. He tells her to go to the library, as his book won’t help her find her sheep (he was reading, appropriately enough, about “Popular Horn Concertos”). Bo Peep goes to the library and encounters

probably not resonate with children. It is, however, a crossover-intertextual picture book, and so I have mentioned it in this chapter and included it in the appendix at the end of this work.

These texts introduce children to the epistolary form of literature while simultaneously teaching them about the value of friendship and, occasionally, about manners (characters’ mothers insist they write thank-you letters, for example).

*The Girl Who Hated Books* focuses on Meena, a girl who dislikes reading. When a stack of her parents’ books falls, all of the characters are thrown out of their stories. They all bother her until she reads them their stories. As each character recognizes his/her own story, the character hops back into the book. Although Meena feels a bit lonely when they’re all gone, she realizes that she can be with her new friends any time by reading their stories. This book is an obvious attempt to show children how much fun reading can be and how they can learn about the new characters if they read.

*Mr. Wolf’s Pancakes* is a retelling of “The Little Red Hen.” Mr. Wolf wants to make pancakes, but his neighbors won’t help. Of course, when they’re ready, his neighbors all want some. The ending, however, is not simply about hard work: “and when they were all in, Mr. Wolf gobbled them up, snippedly-smackety. That was the end of his unhelpful neighbors. And then with his bulging tummy not quite full, Mr. Wolf sat down to eat his pile of pancakes. And he did it all by himself. Well, there was nobody else around!” (n/p).

Dealey’s books deal alternately with surviving chicken pox and telling the truth, respectively.

This text approaches language-learning in a unique way: by inserting Spanish words in fairy tales, such as *via* for the path to Grandma’s house and mentioning that Grandma will then serve the children quesadillas.

*Claire & Unicorn* is a tale about a girl trying to determine what makes a tale end “happily ever after” after her father reads her some fairy tales. By asking several popular and archetypal characters what make a “happily ever after,” Claire and her unicorn decide that a “happily ever after” is relative to who you are and what you need in life. This lesson – essentially that everyone is different – is made fairly obvious throughout the tale.

See below for a summary.
the Big Bad Wolf in the cooking section reading Monsieur Loup’s\textsuperscript{46} book “Basic Little Girl Cookery,” which is a mini-book that you can ‘pull off the shelf’ – you can physically pull this mini-book out of a pouch in the text and read separately. It includes recipes for Riding Hood Sandwich, Mary Mary à la Mer, Muffet & Blackbird Pie – you need 4 & 20 blackbirds, of course – Petite Fille avec Curl, and Vegetarian Hotpot for when you can’t catch a little girl.

Bo Peep then finds the Queen of Hearts in the Crime section reading “Who Stole the Tarts?” by Mrs. A. Summer’s Day. This title is another self-contained mini-book about “Ace” O’Heart, detective, who tracks tart-prints to Jack Horner; then to Tom, Tom, the Piper’s Son; then to the knave of hearts, who isn’t feeling very well on his overindulgence. Bo Peep eventually finds “How to Find Sheep” in the Natural History section of the library. This mini-book simply contains a version of the original Bo Peep rhyme: “Leave them alone… / And they will come home… / Wagging their tails… / Behind them” (n/p). The text is, according to the back cover, a sequel to “How to Find Cows” by A. Shepherd. Bo Peep checks out the book from the librarian, goes home, reads it, and her sheep return safe and sound.

One of the many interesting things about this book is its use of mini-books that readers can literally pull off the illustrated shelves and read. These mini-books all require background knowledge of various rhymes and stories in order to be enjoyed, and it is likely that several of the allusions may be a bit above child readers’ heads, such as the author of “Basic Little Girl Cookery” being “Monsieur Loup.” Even though such tidbits may not be obvious to child readers, the message of the story is clear; using a library can be both fun and helpful.

\textsuperscript{46} The author’s name is a lovely allusion to the wolf, of course.
Like *Little Bo Peep’s Library Book*, the relatively recent publication *Mind Your Manners*, *B.B. Wolf* teaches children lesson about manners and social etiquette wrapped in stories that they have already mastered, making new information less threatening and boring lessons more interesting. In fact, the front cover is very candid about the book’s instructional potential: “*Mind Your Manners, B.B. Wolf* might just be a subliminal way to encourage good behavior in very young children.” The Big Bad Wolf (now going by B.B. Wolf), is retired and living in the Villain Villa Senior Citizens Center (along with Frankenstein and the Loch Ness monster). One day he receives an invitation to the local library’s annual “storybook tea.” His friend the crocodile reminds him of good manners (“Sip your tea and never slurp, say ‘excuse me’ if you burp. Smile and have a lot of fun, but don’t go biting anyone!” [n/p]) Although the other characters invited to the tea are nervous when he arrives, BB Wolf proves that his manners are much improved. The librarian remarks that “You are so kind and sensitive. Storybooks don’t do you justice” (n/p) after BB refuses to eat gingerbread cookies for fear it will upset the Gingerbread Man. BB Wolf promises the librarian that he will come back soon and tell her the true versions of the Gingerbread Man, Little Red Riding Hood, and the Three Little Pigs, who were the other characters at the tea.

The book obviously has an unabashedly didactic agenda regarding manners, but the pictures are well done and the story is cute. The characters all react as though their stories have already happened, and they are merely worried that history may repeat itself. They need not be concerned though, as B.B. interestingly points out on the last page, “Even in a house of brick, big bad wolves can learn new tricks” (n/p). Although what the “house of brick” stands for is somewhat vague (the retirement center? the
library? the jail?), the latent message is clear: past behavioral patterns do not preclude learning new behaviors, and one must be polite while one is out and about in society.

While Little Bo Peep’s Library Book and Mind Your Manners, B.B. Wolf offer children a comfortable way of learning something new, both stories also rely on removing classic characters from their original environments. By placing familiar characters into an unfamiliar context, the stories invite readers to explore potentially scary47 situations with safe, comfortable, and familiar characters. As Malarte-Feldman has noted, “when young readers recognize the pattern of the old familiar tale beneath the surface of a new story, they gain a feeling of mastery over their reading” (215). In the case of didactic literature, child readers can also gain a mastery over the material the text is introducing. Beyond learning about libraries or manners, the child reader is also learning a little bit more about his/her favorite character. The fact that the pre-textual character has been removed from the context most readers are familiar with forces the character into new behaviors and reactions outside – though often related to – those actions from the original story. For example, Little Bo Peep does not utilize a library in the original nursery rhyme, but in the intertext she is still searching for her sheep. Her actions are familiar enough for us to be comfortable with her identity, and thus with her actions in the story, yet different enough to support a new tale about using subject guides and reference librarians. Even if a child reader doesn’t recognize all of the funny references to familiar stories, enough pre-textual material is invoked in these stories that at least some of the characters ought to be familiar to most readers. In

47 For a child, such events as entering a large, dark, silent building full of books they may not understand, or perhaps being in a new social situation without anyone being around to tell them how to behave, would be construed as scary situations.
short, readers’ perceptions of the pre-textual characters are expanded because they are in new contexts, and we see them learning and growing in this new environment.

**Category 3: Tales that Expose Trends in the Canon by the Way They ‘Test’ Children’s Knowledge of Literary Characters and Plots**

The third subset of crossover-intertextual picture books that merits closer inspection is made up of tales that expose the canon by letting children know which books they need to have read in order to be culturally literate. This subset does overlap the first subset of texts I discussed – those stories that focus on one fairy tale or nursery rhyme character as the catalyst for other characters’ stories and that both rely on and teach cultural literacy. However, it differs from the first subset because these books offer adult readers a very obvious map of which stories are still in vogue for young readers and which stories have gone the way of the dodo.\(^{48}\) Texts such as *Pirate Treasure Map* allude to tales with which children may or may not be familiar, such as Seesaw Margery Daw or the Crooked Man. It really doesn’t matter if children don’t recognize all of the allusions on the map, as these tales don’t play a large role in the intertext; they only appear on the map, not in the story. Stories that reflect the canon focus on a smaller number of tales that children definitely ought to know. These tales are often presented in playful structures, such as detective stories,\(^ {49}\) newspapers,\(^ {50}\) or texts that invoke pictorially – but never mention by name – those pre-textual characters.

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\(^{48}\) A Dodo was last seen in children’s culture in the animated series *Tiny Toon Adventures*, which featured Gogo Dodo, a dodo bird from “Wackyland” who, popular rumor has it, was a direct descendant of the dodo in the 1939 Looney Tunes episode *Porky in Wackyland*. Gogo Dodo commented in one episode (“Sawdust and Toonsil”) that Wackyland characters fade away if they stay out of Wackyland for too long. *Tiny Toon Adventures* has been off the air since 1993, and so saying that something has “gone the way of the Dodo” in children’s culture carries interesting connotations of a literal character – Gogo Dodo – fading from cultural memory.

\(^{49}\) Such as Hennessy’s 1986 *Missing Tarts*, Gosling’s 2004 *The Top Secret Files of Mother Goose!*, and Ransom/Humpty’s 2009 *What Really Happened to Humpty?*.

\(^{50}\) Like Griffin’s 2000 *The Mother Goose News*, Hawkins’ 2004 *Fairytale News*, or Ada’s 2007 *Extra! Extra!*. 
involved in the tale. In this section: The Top Secret Files of Mother Goose! (2004), The Mother Goose News (2000), and Seven Stories (2005), respectively.

In Gabby Gosling’s The Top Secret Files of Mother Goose!, the Queen of Hearts has lost her tarts. She calls in the “Chief Detective of Nursery Rhyme Crime,” Mother Goose, who find crumbs, a dish and spoon, and an embroidered handkerchief at the scene of the crime. Knowing her rhymes well, Mother Goose approaches the Knave of Hearts, who was missing from the castle. But the Knave was in Hawaii on vacation at the time; he suggests calling Mary Contrary. Mother Goose follows clues dropped in interviews by Mary Contrary, Miss Muffet, Bo Diddle, Little Boy Blue, Bo Peep, Patty Cake the baker man, Peter Peter Pumpkin Eater, and Humpty Dumpty. Finally, Mother Goose approaches the king. The king confessed: “The queen has delicious strawberry tarts, while my pies are all full of four and twenty blackbirds. They taste terrible! I just couldn’t take it anymore!”

With every other page looking like a case file and Mother Goose following clues appropriate to each suspect, The Top Secret Files of Mother Goose! is a charming way to discover which texts children need to know. Without having a solid understanding of who each of the characters are in this story, a child would not be able to understand much of the humor. The book does not offer enough background on each character to

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52 Bo Diddle is the cat who plays the fiddle and who, of course, recognizes the dish and spoon. The cat’s name may serve as a Kristevan intertextual reference for adults familiar with the music stylings of Bo Diddley.
53 For example, when she finds her tarts are missing, the Queen says “I smell a rat.” The text continues, “Of course, that was impossible. Pied Piper skipped town last year with the entire rat population and
successfully teach the child about the character; the context out of which each character comes must be known prior to reading the text. Thus, the book does not teach cultural literacy so much as it tests the reader’s knowledge about the pre-textual characters invoked throughout the story.

In the copy of the book that I was able to procure, there is a curious message left in the front matter by the previous owner, a public library system in Florida. A stamp on the inside front cover reads “Discarded: Outdated, redundant material.” It surprised me that this text would be considered outdated already when the book was only published in 2004; I’m not sure if the library simply replaced their copy (although the book is in good condition; no rips, marginalia, etc) or if they consider the subject matter – the characters discussed in the story – to be outdated. This second possibility is interesting given the ease with which crossover-intertextual stories track the canon and the rapid rate at which such stories do become outdated.54

In addition to detective stories, newspaper-replica or epistolary stories also plot the canon in a relatively obvious way. For example, in The Mother Goose News readers are only given short snippets of the stories. In the case of Little Red Riding Hood, readers are told only that: “Little Red got a hug, / And the wolf is a rug” (16). Each nursery rhyme or fairy tale incorporated in the book is given one couplet and one corresponding picture from which the audience can make meaning. In the example above, Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother are shown standing in a cabin that is furnished with a

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54 Many of the ‘Golden Age’ texts I discussed in the previous chapter, for instance, invoke the Woman who Sweeps Cobwebs from the Sky. This story is not as common today as it was in the late 1800s, as evinced by the fact that none of the crossover intertextual picture books I discovered mentioned this character.
wolf-skin rug. The sparse text and the uninformative images assume that the reader has more than just a passing acquaintance with the stories mentioned and, as the series is designed for children who are just learning to read, one can assume that these are the stories with which the majority of pre-literate children would be familiar, suggesting that these are the tales most likely told to the children by their parents. According to the book jacket, *The Mother Goose News* – part of the “Rollicking Rhymes” series – is specifically written to aid with literacy: “the familiar fairy-tale characters also will help your child feel more comfortable with the text” (“A Note to Parents and Teachers,” *Mother Goose News*). Therefore, authors’ intentional use of familiar pre-textual characters helps to ensure that the new information – reading skills – come more easily to the child.

Tales such as *Seven Stories* present the reader with reading environments that differ from both the detective stories and newspaper-replica picture books. Whereas detective stories and newspaper picture books often mention the characters’ names but do not divulge much more information, crossover-intertexts like *Seven Stories* present the reader with what ought to be a familiar situation, and the reader is left to infer the characters’ identities. For example, *Seven Stories* is about a young girl living in a seven-story apartment who is suffering from insomnia. She wakes up roughly once every hour. When she wakes at midnight, she witnesses the following:

> Just before midnight I heard loud music coming from apartment one. The most beautiful girl I had ever seen was racing out of the building. [The image shows Cinderella as she dropped her shoe on the front steps and began running toward the street. The prince is standing on the porch calling after her.] I heard someone call “Please wait.” Then I turned over once, turned over twice, and tried to go to sleep. The clock struck one. (n/p)
Although Cinderella is never mentioned by name anywhere in the story, the reader has no doubt whom the character must represent, due to her actions and timing. This pattern recurs with Rapunzel and her prince. Then come Hansel and Gretel, Jack and the Beanstalk, Goldilocks, and the Three Pigs. The last time her neighbors wake her, she discovers a pea under her mattress. She removes it and is able to go to sleep. She herself is the princess from “The Princess and the Pea” and is the seventh story alluded to in Seven Stories. The protagonist, though she occasionally betrays frustration at not being able to sleep, is never angry or surprised. Furthermore, she seems to know exactly who or what is making the noises in her apartment complex. The story reads like a game show: guess the fairytale character. Although the book is fun to read and is well written, there is no mistaking the fact that the author assumes his readers will be familiar with the canonical texts he invokes. In fact, the only character that might be difficult for younger readers to identify is the protagonist, since “The Princess and the Pea” has not circulated in recent popular culture as much as her counterparts.

Concluding Thoughts

Regardless of the method, many if not all crossover-intertextual picture books betray the authors’ own understanding of the current canon. Several pre-textual characters always find their way into these tales, while others float in and out as the canon changes and varies. Authors’ inclusion (and exclusion) of certain pre-textual characters make an assumption about which works the child will already be familiar and comfortable. The use of intertextual characters is a conscious choice in crossover

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55 “At eleven I woke to find a handsome young man at my window. ‘Lovely evening,’ he said. ‘What's wrong with the stairs?’ I asked him. ‘I need the exercise,’ he replied” (n/p). The reader can assume from the illustration that the prince belongs to Rapunzel, as he’s climbing the wall with the aid of a long length of hair.
intertexts, and this choice informs us about which texts the author believes children will be knowledgeable. Many of the newspaper-like stories include the same characters – Jack, Humpty Dumpty, Hansel & Gretel, and Cinderella. Some characters – like the Three Billy Goats Gruff\(^{56}\) and Pinocchio – appear only once or twice.

It is therefore easy to see that children's crossover-intertextual picture books serve as a fairly straightforward map of the canon and assumptions about cultural literacy in our society. They are able to accurately describe the canon at one specific moment in time, and they are simultaneously contributing to the canon by promoting some characters' canonicity by including these characters in their stories. That Jack, Cinderella, Hansel & Gretel, and Little Red Riding Hood appear often in contemporary picture books, while characters like the Three Billy Goats Gruff do not, both reinforces the contemporary canon and builds the foundation for the canon in the future. As discussed in the first chapter, a fairy tale or nursery rhyme that children's literature leaves behind – such as the woman who sweeps cobwebs from the sky, for example – will not likely be revisited in the future. This specific character, though popular in Golden Age crossover intertexts, was dropped from the canon as fewer and fewer tales and anthologies referred back to her, and she eventually disappeared from the canon.

Similar processes are currently taking place in children's literature. By the very act of including or excluding a specific character in a crossover intertext, an author takes part – whether intentionally or not – in the process of canon-making. After all, those

\(^{56}\) The Three Billy Goats Gruff appear in both of Hawkins' texts (\textit{Pirate Treasure Map} and \textit{Fairytale News}), and in their own book, \textit{The Three Silly Billies} by Palatini (2005), but they do not appear as main characters beyond these three texts.
characters who are cited again and again will retain cultural currency, and so are more likely to be included in future works.\footnote{Disney provides an excellent example of this point. Many people are familiar with the story of “Snow White” primarily because they saw the 1937 Disney classic, “Cinderella” because of the 1950 adaptation, “Sleeping Beauty” because of the 1959 film, “The Little Mermaid” because of the 1989 adaptation, et cetera. In fact, once during a course I was teaching on children’s literature I had a student tell me she had no idea that most Disney cartoons such as those listed above weren’t Walt Disney’s own original inventions. More on Disney will follow in a later chapter.}

As I hope this chapter made obvious, crossover-intertextual picture books should not be lumped under the general definition of “postmodern picture books” because they are, quite simply, not postmodern by scholars’ definitions. Although most crossover-intertexts do not contain the majority of elements that make postmodern picture books what they are, these texts still teach the same lessons. The combined functions of cultural literacy instruction, simultaneous reliance on the same cultural literacy, encouragement of critical thinking, and instruction of reading skills make crossover-intertextual literature particularly potent educational tools, every bit as educational as postmodern picture books. While scholars concerned with postmodernism in picture books stress the texts’ metafictive elements, more traditional narratives such as \textit{Missing Tarts} and \textit{Seven Stories} are making similar – and arguably more nuanced – meta-arguments.\footnote{I maintain that crossover intertexts make more nuanced arguments because, for example, they both rely on the reader’s knowledge and expand or challenge that knowledge. The foundation of the story, however, is an unassuming façade of familiar tales. Conversely, postmodern picture books such as \textit{The Stinky Cheese Man} are overtly subverting the texts they parody. While they, like crossover intertexts, presuppose a working knowledge on the reader’s part, postmodern texts tend more to consciously undermine the pre-texts rather than to gently and subtly work with, expand, or augment a reader’s prior knowledge. In short, postmodern picture books are more overt and call for less imagination and critical thinking on the readers’ part than crossover intertexts usually do.} Postmodern picture book scholars most often cite one or two key texts – most often Wiesner’s \textit{Three Pigs}, Macaulay’s \textit{Black and White}, and/or Scieszka and Smith’s \textit{The Stinky Cheese Man} – and they are apprehensive about generalizing these
books’ functions to other postmodern texts. Yet a study of crossover-intertextual picture books is more likely to produce generalizable results and inform many different aspects of metafictive concerns, such as the shape of the canon, cultural literacy, and assumptions about pre-textual characters.

Whereas postmodern picture books seem to focus on challenging canonicity, or at least pre-textual authority, crossover-intertextual picture books recognize this pre-existing authority and use it to their advantage. Pre-textual characters included in these texts tend to remain in circulation, and each time the character is used (s)he gains new attributes or personality traits: Little Bo Peep becomes a conscientious library user, the Big Bad Wolf learns to get along with his fellow fairy tale characters, and the princess who sleeps on a pea removes the pea on her own and manages to get a few hours of sleep in her New York apartment. While traditional characters and plot devices are being relied upon and reinforced, they are simultaneously being added to and commented upon.

This process of relying on pre-textual materials, and its consequences on the canon, are not contained to the picture book genre. This same phenomenon appears in an even more complex formulation in young adult texts, which I will explore in my next chapter. These texts don’t simply add to and comment upon the cultural literacy shrouding popular characters, but they offer meta-commentary upon the cultural and academic issues surrounding these characters as well.

59 A key feature of a postmodern picture book, mentioned above, is a use of any kind of unique style and/or layout that calls the artificiality of the book to the reader’s attention. (Anstey is the scholar most concerned with this feature.) an example is Wiesner’s The Three Pigs, in which the pigs break out of their storybook and break into others. It follows that studies of postmodern picture books are difficult to generalize and remain isolated because the postmodern picture books themselves are all so vastly different.
CHAPTER 3
PERILS OF THE PROFESSION: RED CAPES, GLASS COFFINS, AND THE DEBATE ABOUT CHILDREN’S STORIES IN LITERATURE FOR OLDER READERS

Epigraph

“Maybe your motha should / turn off her soaps, take a peek at a newspaper, / turn on some cartoons, for Pete’s sake: . . . The noyve a'that broad / sendin you out here lookin like a ripe tomata. / Why don’t she just hang a sign around your neck: / Get over here and bite my legs off! / Cover me wit mustid – call me a hotedawg!”


Crossover Intertexts for Older Readers

So far, my discussion in Chapters 1 and 2 has demonstrated that one major function of a crossover intertext is to comment on cultural literacy. Specifically, crossover intertexts teach, expand, and comment on knowledge of specific “canonical” characters and their plots. This chapter deals with matters of cultural literacy as well, but contemporary crossover intertexts for older readers tend to revolve around issues of criticism surrounding pre-textual characters rather than on the characters themselves. The texts in this chapter share goals similar to those in Chapters 1 and 2, but with a slightly different focus. Golden Age books often promote meta-commentary regarding proper use of fairy tales (transmission and didacticism), while picture books focus on expanding and testing readers’ knowledge of the pre-textual fairy tale characters. However, contemporary intertexts for older readers offer meta-commentary on the critical discussions surrounding the pre-texts they invoke rather than on the use of the pre-texts or the pre-texts, themselves. Rather than commenting on the “proper” methods of transmitting or teaching “Snow White,” for example, Michael Buckley uses Snow White throughout The Sisters Grimm series as a cipher through which to
comment on the ambiguity of and difficulties with feminist stances/theories found in recent retellings for younger readers and in recent scholarship on children’s literature.

This chapter will discuss how crossover intertexts for older readers criticize, support, or comment on current popular trends in/attitudes towards children’s literature and children’s literature scholarship. More often than not the divide between “popular” and “scholarly” texts is blurred – and sometimes even erased entirely – by these crossover intertexts. Scholarly theories and jargon often leak into popular culture, and the accepted ideologies and axioms become enmeshed in the very literature about which scholars are theorizing. Relying on the authority of pre-established storylines and characters, the authors of such crossover intertexts are not commenting on the pre-textual stories. Rather, they are using this borrowed authority to comment on popular scholarly responses to those texts, including didactic applications of children’s literature, psychological theories of fairy tales and children’s literature, and feminist perspectives of fairy tales and children’s literature. Crossover intertexts suture academic and popular discourses of children’s literature by reflecting, revealing, refusing, and/or relying upon the scholarly discussions surrounding the literature to various degrees.

As already mentioned, the divide between text and scholarship may be a false – or at least a weak – dichotomy. A concise summary of the major issues that scholars often have will give this study a sample of tropes of which to be mindful while examining crossover intertexts. According to scholars, some of the most important issues affecting children’s literature are:

- Moral messages/didactic themes (Trimmer, Locke, Chesterton)
- Examples of how to mature (Bettelheim, psychoanalytic schools of thought)

1 While I will focus this discussion around the materials in this chapter, I believe the argument is applicable to most, if not all, of the other intertexts contained in this project.
Socializing Messages (Zipes, Tatar, sociological and feminist paradigms)

Referring back to Buckley's contemporary series, *The Sisters Grimm*, Snow White is portrayed as a martial arts expert; she states that she never again wanted to feel as helpless as she did after the run-in with her mother and the poisoned apple. Buckley apparently positions Snow White as a contemporary princess defined by feminist ideologies in his popular books. But in the sixth book, Snow White is abducted by Bluebeard and must be saved by the same man who woke her from her poisoned slumber hundreds of years before (*Tales from the Hood* and *The Everafter War*). Rather than suggesting that plotlines and tropes can be adapted for current readers, which would be a comment on transmission, this event causes readers to question whether these stories – fairy tales and famous characters that have been updated for modern readers – actually do have anything to say to contemporary audiences. Does Snow White, the poster-princess for passive women, have anything to say to today's generation of empowered women, even when she is portrayed as ostensibly empowered? Buckley seems to think so, at least later in his series, as I will discuss in more depth below. Other books, such as Sarah Beth Durst's *Out of the Wild*, suggest that such ideological changes are possible if readers transform the text and promote it as a shared experience. On the other hand, many texts that examine these biases actually support the biases they intend to deconstruct. These texts either willingly play on pre-existing biases towards specific characters or fail to comment in any significant way on the state of such biases.

Crossover intertexts attempt to draw out, play on, or change our preconceived notions about common schools of thought associated with and applied to children's and
young adult literature via the elements in fairy tales that are considered to be common knowledge. Fairy tales, specifically, are both popular and pervasive, making them ideal subject matter for authors to use when commenting upon the contemporary academic establishment within an intertext. As feminist scholar Cathy Lynne Preston notes of postmodern fairy tales: “the ‘stuff’ of fairy tales exists as fragments (princess, frog, slipper, commodity relations in a marriage market) in the nebulous realm that we might most simply identify as cultural knowledge” (210). The tropes that we usually take for granted – the “stuff” of fairy tales – are twisted, made strange, so that they can be easily brought to conscious attention. Almost without fail, these commentaries address the “useful” (read: didactic, psychologically beneficial, or gender-encoding) potential – or lack thereof (read: subversion) – of children’s literature as a genre and of the usefulness (or lack thereof) of the criticism and scholarship surrounding this body of literature.

While authors assume that readers have knowledge of the “stuff” of fairy tales, the goal of these intertexts is not to teach or test this knowledge as we saw picture books do in chapter two, but rather to question the assumptions, biases, stereotypes, tropes, and subsequent scholarship that arise from these texts. For example, they encourage scrutiny of the ‘knowledge’ that a red cloak means you will be victimized by a wolf, as the poem of the epigraph suggests, or that all princesses are passive powder-puffs who need a prince to save them. My title for this chapter, “Perils of the Profession,” then, serves as a double entendre referring first to the perils princesses find in their profession: the “stuff” like red cloaks that make them stand out like a beacon and scream “Hey wolf! ‘Get over here and bite my legs off’!” as suggested in the epigraph. The title also addresses the perils that arise in the profession of children’s literature
Didacticism and the Reader’s Practical Education

The roots of scholarship on the merits of children’s and young adult literature are well known – including writings by Locke, Trimmer, and Chesterton – and generally concern themselves with the “silly” (Locke 117) nature of most children’s literature, depicting it as, at best, “perfectly useless trumpery” or, at worst, a foundation on which to “lay the principles of vice and folly” (Locke 117). By the late 1700s, critics of children’s literature endorsed moral messages but warned against “fearful” and “silly” (Locke 103 and 117, respectively) content. Fantastic elements were not necessarily deemed inappropriate – such as Sarah Trimmer’s talking robins in her famous Fabulous Histories (1786) or the fantasy inherent to Aesop’s Fables— but these tales needed to contain some didactic function in order to be considered appropriate for child audiences. Several contemporary authors of crossover intertexts still maintain this belief; Eric Scott’s The Great Fairytale Robbery (1994) and Bill Brittain’s Mystery of the Several Sevens (1994), for example, are both unashamedly didactic texts with only a thin veil of plot to hide the educational messages. The Great Fairytale Robbery is a shameless plug for education: in this case, the importance of reading. While these crossover

2 Aesop’s Fables were acceptable reading materials according to Locke because “being stories apt to delight and entertain a child, [these tales] may yet afford useful reflections to a grown man” (116-17).
intertexts are not contemporary with Locke and Trimmer’s writings, they still betray a
deep-seated cultural impulse to produce children’s literature that necessarily reflects
corns about the didactic potential of children’s literature: concerns that, for some,
haven’t changed significantly since Locke and Trimmer.

First produced as a stage play in 1993⁴ and subsequently published as a
children’s chapter book in 1994, The Great Fairytale Robbery tells the story of two
young female protagonists who must overcome the evil, witch-like Studio Head in order
to save their favorite storybook characters from literally fading away. Studio Head
transported all of the literary fairy tale and nursery rhyme characters from their
storybooks to the world of television, and the two girls must walk through their television
screen – much like Alice Through the Looking Glass – to save them. Vaguely
reminiscent of Neil Gaiman’s goddess of television from American Gods, the Studio
Head wants to captivate children by her shows: “’When my plan is complete,’ said
Studio Head, ‘never again will boys and girls be able to read and watch television at the
same time. They’ll be my captives’” (emphasis in original; 17). The book treats “viewers"
and “readers” as two mutually exclusive categories of children (45) and suggests that
children who only watch television are less intelligent than those who read. Because the
message in Scott’s text is so straightforward, I will focus my discussion of didactic texts
on Brittain’s Mystery of the Several Sevens, as it is not merely didactic, but it offers a
perfect example of the types of didactic authorship – an author using a children’s book
to promote a specific moral or didactic lesson – that sprang from Lockean views of child
readers.

⁴ The play debuted in Brisbane, Australia at the Arts Theater (1993).
In *The Mystery of the Several Sevens*, Merlin the wizard appears to fifth-graders Simon and Becky as their substitute teacher. In a previous text (*The Wizards and the Monster*, 1994), Merlin transported Simon and Becky to medieval Europe to deal with characters sporting such names as “Sir Prize” and “Sir Render,” so it comes as only a small shock when the children realize “Mr. Merlin” has transported them to Fairyland. Simon and Becky had complained in the first few pages that both math and fairy tales are “dumb” (7), so Merlin transports the two protagonists to fairyland to save the seven dwarves’ treasure. In order to help the dwarves, the children must first deal with the witch from “Hansel and Gretel,” here named Walpurgia. The witch gives Simon a clue as to the thief’s identity in the form of a mathematical riddle: “Put Emma’s figures sevenfold / The seven seas come next, be told. / Then seven times to end this rhyme. / All turned about will solve this crime” (Brittain 60). Becky realizes that “Emma” is actually “M,” “seas” is “Cs,” and that both M and C refer to roman numerals (71). The word problem’s solution is 7714, and when Simon and Becky flip her calculator upside down, the screen reads “hILL” (76). The identity of the criminal – James Hill – is discovered by means of Becky spending sixteen pages (60-76) to solve the word puzzle.

The crossover intertext of this book is gratuitous; Simon is the only character to even leave the dwarves’ cottage, and then only to visit Walpurgia. The rest of the book describes how Becky solves the puzzle as Simon looks on, scratching his head. Brittain

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4 The witch’s name may be a reference to *Walpurgisnacht*, the eve of April 30/morning of May 1 celebrated in Germany as the day that witches gather on the Brocken Mountains. This celebration of witches is the explanation given for the Brocken Spectre phenomenon, which was supposedly first recorded in Brocken. Goethe’s *Faust* Parts I and II (1808, 1832) include references to *Walpurgisnacht*. Whether or not readers will catch this reference is questionable, but it is unlikely that fifth-grade readers would have working knowledge of *Faust.*
employs pre-textual characters only as shortcut for the book’s plot, so that he does not need to spend much time developing the setting, Merlin, Walpurgia, or the dwarves’ characters, as they come pre-packaged, so to speak. In other words, he relies on the pre-textual establishment of the dwarves’ rough nature, Merlin’s quick but dry wit, and the witch’s nastiness in prior contexts: the characters’ original stories. The majority of the intertextual exchange occurs between pages 17-21, as Merlin, Becky, and Simon are walking to the dwarves’ cottage. They pass the Old Woman Who Lives in a Shoe’s shoe (17), hear London Bridge falling down (17), pass Rapunzel’s tower (18), and see an eerie cave from which they hear someone yelling “Straw into gold! And her firstborn shall be mine!” (21). None of these characters or places appears again, however. The pre-textual characters’ interactions are not the driving force behind the novel. Instead, the contrived math problem takes center stage.

In addition, neither original character – Becky nor Simon – is well developed. Becky is the brains, as she figures out the word problem, transcribes it to roman numerals, and uses her calculator to solve it. Simon is the brawn, as he braved Walpurgia to get the word problem in the first place, and even Merlin simply serves to transport the two children with no dynamic growth from any of the characters. In other words, the characters are flat, the use of intertextual exchange is minimal and superfluous to the plot, and the only thing that could conceivably keep readers’ attention is the overly and overtly didactic word problem. Brittain is making a poorly-concealed argument for the importance of both reading and math skills, and no child I know would

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5 It could be argued that Brittain is relying on the characters’ best-known appearances rather than their original stories. Merlin’s dry wit may very well be based more on Disney’s rendering of his character than on Sir Thomas Mallory’s, for example. Regardless of which specific version of the story Brittain is relying on, he spends minimal time developing the characters, instead relying on readers’ previous experience with the characters.
be convinced by his lesson masquerading behind intertextuality. This text obviously falls prey to the stereotype that all children’s literature must be explicitly didactic, and Brittain makes no qualms about making his text as math-oriented as possible, even at the expense of character development and plot, both of which rely on his acceptance of and complacence with the pre-established roles of the seven dwarves, witches, and the character of Merlin.

‘Enchantment’ and the Reader’s Psychological Education

While many scholars still focus on the didactic potential of texts, many others claim that there are already important messages inherent to the fairy tales, if only one knows how to find them. These latter scholars therefore believe that authors do not need to insert morals artificially or forcefully. This same sentiment – that fairy tales can aid a child in his/her understanding of the world his/her own self – would be famously expanded upon by Bruno Bettelheim in his 1976 *The Uses of Enchantment*. Bettelheim states in his introduction that fairy tales are meant to “be attuned to [the child’s] anxieties and aspirations […] and suggest] solutions to the problems which perturb him” (5). Bettelheim’s work, while often criticized by folklorists for analyzing and interpreting the fairy tales out of their cultural context, has gained much support over the years. In fact, some relatively recent scholarship – such as Cashdan’s *The Witch Must Die* (1999) – takes cues directly from Bettelheim and Freudian psychoanalysis.

Several authors, too, have recently taken their cues from such scholars. Susan Cooper’s *The Magician’s Boy* (2005) and Patricia Baehr’s *The Search for Happily Ever After* (1995), for example, both deal with psychological maturation. Cooper’s text deals with matters of coming-of-age (signified by the Boy earning his name at the end of the
story) and learning about decision-making via the talking signpost and the pre-textual characters. Baehr’s crossover intertext, on the other hand, deals with psychological maturation, but instead of focusing on coming-of-age, The Search for Happily Ever After is concerned with family interactions. Baehr’s book provides, specifically, a cookie-cutter story that almost exactly follows Bettelheim’s recipe for a ‘useful’ fairy tale reading experience.

The Search for Happily Ever After is the tale of a young girl – a middle child – who must learn to fit in with her siblings. Feeling much like a modern-day Cinderella, Ketti Watson suffers at the hands of her older and baby sisters. She sees her older sister as “a mathematical genius” (14), and her parents “think everything [her little sister] does is wonderful” (14). Bettelheim, being a staunch Freudian, had much to say on the topic of sibling rivalry in fairy tales. He notes that “Cinderella” is one of the fairy tales most focused on the motif of sibling rivalry (103, 239), and he discusses the tale’s lasting attractiveness to children:

Exaggerated though Cinderella’s tribulations and degradations may seem to the adult, the child carried away by sibling rivalry feels, ‘That’s me; that’s how they mistreat me, or would want to; that’s how little they think of me.’ And there are moments – often long time periods – when for inner reasons a child feels this way even when his position among his siblings may seem to give him no cause for it. (237)

This quote describes perfectly what Ketti deals with throughout the first portion of the text, and it should come as no surprise to savvy readers that Cinderella features prominently in later sections of the story. Her parents know that Ketti’s competition with her sisters is a source of distress for her, and her father asks her outright “why must you

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6 In Freudian terms, decision-making is important because the child must learn to repress id-driven impulses and allow the super-ego to mediate the id and the ego, resulting in more socially-acceptable actions.
always compare yourself with your sisters?’ . . . ‘And aren’t there good things about being Ketti?’ her mother asked. Ketti was silenced. She could not think of one good thing about being Ketti” (24-25).

Although her parents have given her no cause to feel neglected or mistreated, Ketti perceives herself as inferior to her sisters. She sees her older sister being invited to Florida as a sign that the family does not value her, and her mother’s reassurances that perhaps the following year Ketti will be invited and able to go falls on deaf ears:

“‘We didn’t think you were ready to go off on your own. Maybe next year –’ ‘Next year?’ Ketti interrupted. ‘You don’t know that Grandma will offer again. Or that she’ll want me’” (19). Ketti’s response to her mother betrays a fear that her family doesn’t “want” her.

Bettelheim notes that perceived rejection by parental figures is a strong motivator for sibling rivalry: “another child being given special attention becomes an insult only if the child feels that, in contrast, he is thought little of by his parents, or feels rejected by them” (238). Bettelheim’s quote here describes exactly what Ketti perceives her situation to be in the beginning of the book.

The story follows Ketti as she meets a magic rat – one of Cinderella’s original coachmen – who needs assistance finding the “happily-ever-after” Cinderella’s fairy godmother promised him. He claims he was “cheated” (13) out of it when, at the stroke of midnight, he turned back into a rat instead of finding his fortune as a human. But when he sought out the fairy godmother to complain, she was dying and asked him to complete her last spell (30), which requires Ketti and the rat to make sure a prince is available the moment Sleeping Beauty awakes (33). This turn of events also echoes Bettelheim’s description of a fairy tale’s devices for dealing with sibling rivalry. He notes
that fairy tales cannot and do not tell the child reader that her parents aren’t smarter than her; doing so would “rob the child of the needed security” (135) that comes from this knowledge. But “in respect to excelling the parent, the fairy story frequently uses the device of splitting him into two figures: the parent who thinks little of the child, and another figure – a wise old man, or an animal the youngster encounters, who gives him sound advice on how to win out, not over the parent, which would be too scary, but over a preferred sibling” (135). In Ketti’s case, the rat acts as the agent by which Ketti learns to deal with her position as middle child in a family of three sisters. He teaches her that she is unique, and this lesson ultimately allows Ketti to find her place in her family.

Throughout the story, the rat is impressed by Ketti’s knowledge of his land – that an evil fairy cursed Sleeping Beauty to prick her finger (33), that everything sticks to the golden goose (37), the secret of the twelve dancing princesses (69), and who the frog prince is (136). But many things about the tales surprise Ketti. For example, she can’t understand Gretel’s kind treatment of Hansel (40-41). She doesn’t understand why Gretel allows Hansel to think that it was his doing that freed them from the witch nor why she spends all of her time taking care of him. She is also surprised at the ending of “The Twelve Dancing Princesses,” which she helps to bring about. The prince’s cloak of invisibility – lent to him by Ketti – is stolen, and he suspects his bride-to-be is the culprit. Ketti begins to understand that the story may reflect her own poor treatment of her sisters: “When she had read the princesses’ story, she’d thought only of their beauty.

. . . Now, vaguely ashamed, Ketti saw that the sisters cared only for their own happiness, even at the expense of others” (82). At first, she has trouble understanding that not everyone gets a “happily ever after.” As the prince puts it, “some find [their
heart’s desire], others find something else” (82). Ketti slowly transforms throughout the story from a spoiled child into a more socially-aware girl. She also realizes that, in order to be happy, people must make their own happiness: it will not fall into her lap, but she must actively treat her sisters well in order for them to treat her well in return. This lesson is supported by the rat’s final transformation; he turns out to be the prince destined to wake Sleeping Beauty. He couldn’t simply be transformed into a human by a wave of a magic wand, but instead must seek out and claim his “happily ever after” (132).

Ketti also realizes at last, when it seems she has no hope of travelling home, that her parents love her: “They loved her because she was Ketti. And maybe, just maybe, if she stopped acting like one of the twelve dancing princesses, thinking only about her own happiness, she could get along better with Miranda and Ellen” (138). As Bettelheim noted, “one of the greatest merits of ‘Cinderella’ is that, irrespective of the magic help Cinderella receives, the child understands that essentially it is through her own efforts, and because of the person she is, that Cinderella is able to transcend magnificently her degraded state, despite what appear as insurmountable obstacles” (243). Ketti learns that she is capable of handling herself, and that she will be able, through her own efforts, to make peace with her sisters and be happy in her family (and be happy with herself as a unique individual). This same sentiment is repeated in the story as, when the rat-turned-human-prince gets stuck to the golden goose, her laugh releases him. She thinks it couldn’t have been her, as it takes a princess’s laugh to make the goose lose its magic. The rat-prince explains: “don’t you understand, Ketti? It was you. You are a princess. . . . It’s who you are inside. All this time you’ve been wishing to be special,
and you already were” (139). Ketti finally understands that she is special, and she is able to see that she has a place with her sisters. In fact, when she returns home, her older sister praises her imagination and Ketti finally feels comfortable as the middle child.

I am not arguing that Bettelheim’s analysis of “Cinderella” or his discussions of the sibling rivalry motif are absolute or beyond reproach. Rather, I am pointing out that, whether you agree with them or not, Bettelheim’s theories are reiterated almost verbatim in Baehr’s story. Ketti’s problem is entirely internal, and by the end of the story she has psychologically matured enough to get along with her family. The crossover intertextuality in the story serves to support Ketti’s growth; she meets characters who are notorious for getting along, namely Hansel and Gretel, those who she only thinks are happy, like the prince and eldest princess from “The Twelve Dancing Princesses,” and she even meets the queen of sibling rivalry herself, Cinderella. The intertextuality places Ketti in a position to show off her knowledge, and it also positions her as a fairy tale princess of sorts. In addition, the pre-textual characters are taken out of their original context – though not necessarily out of their prescribed roles – as a way of entertaining readers during what could be an otherwise tedious lesson about getting along with your sisters. As one reviewer notes, “While many of the fairy tale characters’ philosophical musings about sibling rivalry are less than subtle . . . , children who have enjoyed fairy tales in the past might possibly enjoy seeing favorite characters in expanded roles” (Bradburn). Much like The Mystery of the Several Sevens, the intertext serves simply as a backdrop for the book’s main theme, although in this case the characters are a bit more thoroughly developed. This text maintains the tropes
established by the original fairy tales (Hansel and Gretel get along, Cinderella is sweet and passive, etc), and it also maintains the stereotype that all children’s literature help the child reader deal with some psychological issue or other.

**Feminism and the Reader’s Social Education**

While psychoanalysis is still a favored method of negotiating fairy tales and performing analyses,7 other paradigms, such as feminism8 and anthropological/sociological paradigms,9 have become equally invested in fairy tale studies, if not more so. Because many sources offer comprehensive bibliographies of critical scholarship on fairy tales,10 I will not endeavor to offer a full bibliography of such works here. Suffice it to say that, while many critics still apply psychoanalysis to children’s literature, just as many contemporary critics have abandoned the psychoanalytic perspective in favor of social issues. For example, Jack Zipes notes that good children’s books are “highly important for the socialization of children” (209). Zipes disagrees not only with Bettelheim’s preferred method of analysis, but he also counters

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9 Much of Zipes’s work is based on sociological or socio-historic foundations. Sir James Frazier’s cornerstone text *The Golden Bough* (1907) is also sociological, and the idea of ritual in fairy tales served as a strong inspiration for Victor Turner’s *The Ritual Process* (1977). In addition, scholars such as David Hart discuss the religious implication of fairy tales in his *The Water of Life: Spiritual Renewal in the Fairy Tale* (2001). Religion is becoming an increasingly popular paradigm by which to explore children’s literature, more generally, as evinced by the proliferation of religious studies concerning the *Harry Potter* series.

10 See, for example, the “Bibliographic Essay” in Swann Jones’s *The Fairy Tale*.
the Lockean way of thinking about morals: the tales are not necessarily good for dealing with abstract psychological problems, nor are they overtly didactic, but they are, instead, socializing agents.

Of course, one cannot address crossover intertexts’ use of fairy tales without also addressing movements in feminist criticism. Feminist critiques have often taken as their subject the socializing power of gender tropes in children’s literature and, more specifically, fairy tales. As Haase posits, “in the catalytic exchange between [Alison] Lurie and [Marcia] Lieberman during the early 1970s, we witness simultaneously the inchoate discourse of early feminist fairy-tale research and the advent of modern fairy-tale studies, with its emphasis on the genre’s sociopolitical and sociohistorical contexts” (2).

Feminist approaches to fairy tale tropes have varied greatly. As Preston notes, “feminist critique has ranged from Rosemary Minard’s description of fairy-tale heroines as ‘insipid beauties waiting passively for Prince Charming,’ . . . through the catalog of various traits requisite for being chosen for such connubial bliss: gentility, grace, selflessness; beautiful, sweet, patient submissive, an excellent housekeeper . . .; and patience, sacrifice, dependency . . . . The catalog is by now well rehearsed” (203). But while many feminists disapprove of fairy tales for the submissive (or dismissive) portrait they paint of women, other scholars – such as Alison Lurie, Heather Lyons, Karen Rowe, and Colette Dowling, to name a few – celebrate the potential fairy tales have to

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“project alternative ways of constructing lives” (Haase 7) and the strong, positive heroines that many – though generally lesser-known – tales offer readers.

In the introductory chapter to his edited collection *Fairy Tales & Feminism: New Approaches*, Donald Haase offers an overview of the back-and-forth debate in feminist scholarship surrounding fairy tales and the use of fairy tales in contemporary writing. He traces the discussion from the 1970s in articles by Lurie and Lieberman to other 1970s and 1980s scholars Andrea Dworkin, Susan Brownmiller, Mary Daly, Karen Rowe, Carolyn Heilbrun, Madonna Kolbenschlag, Linda Chervin and Mary Neill, through more contemporary writers like Marian Woodman, Marina Warner, Maria Tatar, Jack Zipes, and U.C. Knoepflmacher (to name just a few). Throughout this quick – but very informative – summary, Haase notes that feminist scholarship shifted from “concern[s] with the genre’s representation of females and the effects of those representations on the gender identity and behavior of children in particular” (3) to how female authors, in particular, mediate negative stereotypes of women by incorporating and rewriting fairy tales:

> In the wake of Gilbert and Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), other feminist scholars continued to investigate the intertextual role of classic tales in the works of nineteenth-century English women novelists. In general, such studies confirmed that these novelists used fairy-tale intertexts – in particular the well-known story of Cinderella – as subversive strategies to contest the idealized outcomes of fairy tales and their representations of gender and female identity. (20)

As Chapter 1 has demonstrated and this quote supports, even as early as the nineteenth century intertexts were being used in children’s literature – fairy tale intertexts.

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12 Haase does acknowledge that this is not always the case by citing Huang Mei. Huang’s *Transforming the Cinderella Dream* notes that intertextual dialogue is complex and we cannot assume to know how a woman will react to a story that is, itself, ambiguous (20).
re-tellings, more specifically – to debunk or deconstruct negative tropes. Similarly,
Preston discusses how fairy tale revisions/retellings/adaptations “break or blur genre
frame and, in doing so, variously work to maintain, reproduce, transgress, or shift the
boundaries of gender associated with the older fairy-tale textual tradition” (199).
According to her, the boundaries include authority derived from tradition\(^\text{13}\) and genre
slippage. And while some fairy tale crossover intertexts – like Buckley’s \textit{The Sisters
Grimm} series and Durst’s \textit{Into} and \textit{Out of the Wild}, discussed below – do move beyond
these boundaries, as recently as 2004 some intertexts have been unable to break out of
the constraints of certain genre frames and fairy tale tropes.

The \textit{Princess School} series by Jane Mason – the first book of which was published
in 2004 – is a nice example of a crossover-intertextual series that does not move
beyond the “genre frame” or traditional stereotypes associated with the “stuff” of fairy
tales. The series traces princesses Rose (Sleeping Beauty), Snow (Snow White), Ella
(Cinderella), and Rapunzel as they progress through Princess School, wherein they
take classes such as Frog Identification (so they can distinguish between frogs simply
trying to get free kisses and enchanted princes who will transform into humans and
marry them), Looking Glass class (where the girls learn to “weave fancy braids and twist
curls and place hair clips just so” \cite{47}), stitchery class (which gives Rose trouble when
she pricks her finger), and Self-defense (defense techniques for when they find
themselves alone and skipping through the woods to grandma’s house).

Although the four pre-textual princesses never meet in their own stories, the
intertextual environment they find themselves in within \textit{Princess School} does not serve
as a “subversive strategy.” Rather, the crossover intertextuality simply reinforces the
\(^{13}\text{She relies on Amy Shuman’s work to make this point.}\)
gender stereotypes so many early feminists like Lieberman\textsuperscript{14} accused fairy tales of promoting. For instance, although Rose is determined to prove she is more than just a pretty face and can hold her own, when she pricks her finger in stitchery class she dozes off and is not awakened fully until a prince kisses her at the Coronation Ball (135). In another example, during Looking Glass class a princess accidentally sits on a pea: “Peas had sent several princesses into tailspins – robbing them of sleep, making it impossible for them to sit or lie down for days – some pea victims had even needed medical attention. Needless to say, most princesses were terrified of them” (51). As the examples demonstrate, the princesses are portrayed as passive characters, victims of the tropes that surround and plague them.

Although the princesses can and do learn from each other – as demonstrated when, for example, Rose decides to quit feeling sorry for herself because of overprotective parents once she sees how Snow White’s sisters treat her (83) – and thus demonstrate the ability to grow, this potential is not developed. They girls simply aren’t able to break away from the most important controlling aspects of their stories: the fairy tale elements that typify the genre like glass slippers, frog princes, poisoned spinning wheels, etc. Ella’s stepsisters still torment her, and she refuses to take a stand against them, promoting the traditional passivity of Cinderella’s character; a pea still dooms a young girl to a life of sleeping disorders, again suggesting and reinforcing the notion that princesses are fragile, always in danger, and must be saved from these

\textsuperscript{14} Lieberman notes; “a close examination of the treatment of girls and women in fairy tales reveals certain patterns which are keenly interesting not only in themselves, but also as material which has undoubtedly played a major contribution in forming the sexual role concept of children, and in suggesting to them the limitations that are imposed by sex upon a person's chances of success in various endeavors” (384). One of many examples is the trope of the beautiful girl: “The beauty-contest is a constant and primary device in many of the stories. Where there are several daughters in a family, or several unrelated girls in a story, the prettiest is invariably singled out and designated for reward, or first for punishment and later for reward” (385).
fates/tropes; and despite the series’ ostensibly feminist stance, the prince still has to wake and thereby rescue the sleeping princess at the ball.\textsuperscript{15}

While the characters might be slightly more complex and interact more than in their original stories, they’re still stuck in a world where fairy tale “stuff” and tropes – such as the passivity inherent to all female fairy tale characters – are more important in determining their future than their own actions or behaviors. The “fairy tale stuff” simply happens to surround them all in a single narrative multiverse rather than being limited to one or two narrative worlds. In an intertextual environment these princesses are even more prone to danger and situations from which they need to be rescued, as a pea can apparently affect any princess rather than just the princess from “The Princess and the Pea,” the wolf can get to any girl and not just Little Red Riding Hood, etc. Therefore, in this particular text the crossover intertextuality of the tale serves, unfortunately, to enhance and draw attention to those fairy tale elements that feminists find so disdainful and harmful to young readers. Mason’s \textit{Princess School} books claim to offer a feminist perspective of several well-known fairy tale princesses, but they fall short of their goal. In fact, the stories reinforce and add to the miasma of negative stereotypes surrounding the original fairy tales rather than dismantling them.

Most contemporary feminism demands that female readers move away from passive stances, but this series supports that notion that women cannot move away from passivity. This crossover intertext thus seems to function as a very fatalistic view of modern feminism, suggesting that feminism is a nice idea (the characters believe they are strong and can learn from each other) but not practically implementable (as “stuff,”

\textsuperscript{15} Prince Val, Rapunzel’s playmate, is smitten with the beautiful girl and kisses her hand at the ball, releasing her from the needle’s magic spell.
traditional fairy tale elements, still ultimately rule their lives). For a modern reader, this text appears to suggest that women should 
consider
themselves to be liberated but not necessarily be liberated; one can go to school, one can even stand up to bullies, but having a boy kiss you at a dance is the only way you can truly be alive.

On the other hand, Jon Scieszka’s *Summer Reading Is Killing Me!* (1998) subtly suggests an anti-feminist sentiment in order to attempt to dismantle it, however awkwardly, by the end of the tale. Part seven of the books-turned-television series *The Time Warp Trio*,16 Scieszka’s *Summer Reading Is Killing Me!* is the tale of three young men who own a rare and magical book that transports them into different time periods, geographical locations, and even fictional stories, in order to teach them something about each. The first several books contain lessons about King Arthur’s court, pirates, the Old West, prehistoric history, space and technology, and ancient Egypt. By the seventh book, characters Joe, Sam, and Fred find themselves accidentally sucked into their summer reading list, which one of the boys unwittingly tucks into the magical book that acts as their transportation to each escapade. The book also transports each of the characters from the stories on the reading list into the same fictional space, providing a crossover-intertextual adventure that is at times as overloaded with pre-textual characters as Austin’s *Moonfolk*.17 While the story is sometimes overwhelming in its invocation of many and disparate pre-textual characters, unlike Austin’s text, the reader can always flip to the back of the book, where, in the paratext, Scieszka provides the

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16 The *Time Warp Trio* series was recently adapted into an animated television series that “is produced by WGBH in association with Soup2Nuts for Discovery Kids” (*Time Warp Trio* homepage). Although *Summer Reading Is Killing Me!* has not been made into an episode, an episode titled “Nightmare on Joe’s Street” requires the kids to put Frankenstein back into Mary Shelley’s novel. Visit http://www.timewarptrio.com/show/ for more information.

17 See Chapter 1.
summer reading list the three boys put into the magic book (70-73). The boys actually read over some of the list on pages 9-10, effectively preparing readers for the intertextuality to come.

The text opens with an unusual blurb on the dedication page: “The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real characters or real events is very interesting.” (n/p). By beginning the book in such a manner, Scieszka sets up his intertextual adventure by subtly telling the reader to keep in mind that (s)he ought to be able to recognize the characters and events that follow. Throughout the text, Scieszka also often employs hints at the pre-textual characters’ origins. For example, the boys are at first disoriented when they are transported into this world of stories, but they see both a sign and a large chicken. “I saw a sign out of the corner of my eye. And I knew where we were. The chicken thundered toward us, its deadly sharp beak pointed directly at us. I stepped in front of Sam and Fred with my chest out. ‘Hoboken,’ I said. ‘Chicken,’ said Fred. ‘Emergency!’ screamed Sam. ‘Exactly’” (5). In this way, the author gives the reader the clues (s)he needs to figure out what book is being referenced: in this case, *The Hoboken Chicken Emergency* by Daniel Manus Pinkwater. To make identification of such pre-textual materials easier, the title is also listed on page 71 on the reproduction of the boys’ reading list. *Summer Reading Is Killing Me!* is thus peppered with clues to help the reader navigate the volume and frequency of pre-textual characters.

Interestingly, this crossover intertext has a negative view of intertextuality: “We are in huge trouble. If this means what I think it means, all of the characters from every book on the summer reading list are mixed up here in Hoboken. And none of them are
where they’re supposed to be.’ . . . ‘You’ve got to admit it would make [Little House on the Prairie] a lot more exciting.’ ‘We’ve got to get everyone back in the right book,’ said Sam. ‘Otherwise it will just. just. . . . be wrong’” (20-21). Although the protagonists aren’t very articulate about what the problem is, they describe several scenarios in which books are destroyed: the Red Queen from Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland might try to chop off Ramona’s (from Ramona the Pest) head, Dahl’s Twits might take over Wayside School, or the Horned King (from The Book of Three) might try to eat Peter Rabbit (21). According to this book, then, intertextuality can be dangerous. Its consequences would be antithetical to the books’ original intentions and would retard or completely ruin the stories by making them impossible. Peter Rabbit can’t hop over to McGregor’s garden if he was eaten by the Horned King, for example.

In order to try to stop the dangerous mixing of stories, the boys head to the town library, where all of the storybook villains seem to be congregating (27-28) so they can take over the good characters’ stories (39). A very funny metatextual moment occurs when they try to get in the library door. They lie to the guards, telling them that they are actually heroes from a series of books call Time Warp Trio (32) – which, of course, they actually are. They even describe their stories as “action adventure fiction” (32). After this playfully self-conscious moment in the text, the boys enter the library to see villains from stories ranging from first to eighth-grade reading levels, including a few dubious choices such as the Wild Things from Sendak’s Where the Wild Things Are (37). They are taken to see “The Boss,” a huge teddy bear who is sick of being thought of as a “soft and huggable and stupid [sic]” (44) character. His goal is to have the villains from numerous

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18 Scieszka’s choice of archenemy is faintly reminiscent of Jasper Fforde’s villain from the Nursery Crime series, the Gingerbread Man.
stories take over all of the ‘good’ characters’ roles. Books would be rewritten with such titles as “Frankenstein in Wonderland” and “Headless-Horseman-the-Pooh” (50). As the boys determined earlier in the story, such a mixing of characters and abolishment of ‘good’ characters would completely ruin the narratives, but in an attempt to persuade the Teddy Bear to stop, the boys are captured.

The truly interesting crossover intertextuality occurs at this point in the novella. The boys are saved when all of the characters are put to sleep by a female character. She begins to tell the villains about the time she and her family crossed the river, cleared the land, and cut the trees (52), the time she “accidentally poured the currant wine at tea,” (53) about the Christmas spent without her father but with Meg, Jo, and Amy (53), the time she learned to ride because “it might come in handy when I have a mystery to solve” (54), about babysitting and the club meeting at her house (54), and several more scenarios. The boys try to guess at her identity with each new story – guessing “that girl who lived on a prairie” (53), Anne of Green Gables, one of the Little Women, Nancy Drew, a member of the Babysitters’ Club, a Sweet Valley High girl, a character from American Girls – before they realize who she really is in a moment of insight: “‘She’s all of those girls,’ said Sam. ‘We never read any of those books. So we couldn’t tell one character from another if we had to. She’s all those girl characters rolled into one!’” (55). Sam’s statement suggests that the characters are determined by the boys’ perception of them, or the cultural literacy they brought with them, rather than suggesting that all characters are real. Otherwise, the female characters would be separate entities.
Unfortunately, the boys don’t get much of a chance to talk to the Every-Girl-In-Every-Book-Ever-Written character, as they are transported home shortly after she rescues them. The books are un-mixed (de-intertextualized?) and life returns to normal. This truncated encounter with the girl and the storybook villains offers more questions than answers: why are all the villains separate characters, even when the boys can’t put a specific name to them, but the girl is every female character rolled into one? Is their experience with the characters determined by their own interpretation and understanding of those characters, or do the characters exist independently of the readers’ views of them?\(^{19}\) The moral here seems to be that even ‘boring’ girl books/characters have a place and a use, even if the reader can’t appreciate that immediately.

As far as the reader of *Summer Reading Is Killing Me!* is concerned, then, the stereotype that all girls’ books and characters are boring is reinforced and even used as a means by which to save all other storybook characters. Whether or not Scieszka intentionally meant to denigrate such literature, the fact remains that his emphasis on the boring and interchangeable nature of female character supports a decidedly chauvinistic and anti-feminist stance, despite the fact that the female character(s) saves the boys’ lives. Readers approaching the text with a prior disdain for female characters and books – those readers who identify with Sam, Joe, and Fred – will find their bias supported and played upon as a plot device. The female character(s) are not explored in any greater depth, nor are they even given the benefit of being portrayed individually. Still, the Every-Girl-In-Every-Book-Ever-Written character does save the day; the boys

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\(^{19}\) On page 16, the boys suggest that the characters exist outside their own knowledge of the characters and, by proxy, their books, but the arrival of the Every-Girl-In-Every-Book-Ever-Written character suggests otherwise.
would not have escaped if not for her intervention. It is, strangely, her boring dialogue that allows escape. Perhaps Scieszka is here acknowledging the necessity of such characters and dialogue, but this admission is very back-handed and borders on being too subtle or ironic to be effective.

Whereas The _Princess School_ books engage readers’ understanding of the characters, at least in some small way, _Summer Reading Is Killing Me!_ does not engage with female characters at all. Both books rely on pre-existing tropes regarding female characters, and the _Princess School_ books at least try to develop the characters beyond their original context. Although often the characters remain tethered to traditional, passive roles and weaknesses, they are at least able to interact and grow. The female character(s) in _Summer Reading Is Killing Me!_ , however, merely serves as a cipher for all negative stereotypes associated with “boring” girls’ books, subtly suggesting that perhaps the feminist theories have it all wrong; if you perceive a character to be boring and interchangeable, she will be. She may serve a very important role – and even save your life – but she is still a bland, dull character.

**Mixed Messages: the Reader’s Anti-Education**

Most of the contemporary crossover-intertextual literature takes as its subject one of these tropes: _Mystery of the Several Sevens_ is explicitly didactic, the _Princess School_ books reinforce societal and gender roles, to cite a few specific examples. But the truly interesting texts are those that don’t fully commit to any of the prescribed functions nor deal with them in as direct and committed a way. These books, the _Sisters Grimm_ series and _Into the Wild_ and _Out of the Wild_ by Sarah Beth Durst, are more instructive to study because they do not address one specific trope, nor do they completely endorse nor fully oppose the tropes that they do include. Instead, they offer more
nuanced discussions of the aforementioned common fairy tale tropes and demonstrate how scholarship has seeped into and influenced how we think about and construct stories for young readers. Durst’s *Wild* books deal primarily with matters of community and identity (sociological and psychological issues) as they’re impacted by fairy tale tropes, while Buckley’s *Sisters Grimm* books offer a unique perspective about sexism (feminist criticism of fairy tales).

Michael Buckley’s *The Sisters Grimm* series follows the lives of two descendents of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, Sabrina and Daphne, as they learn what it means to belong to the Grimm family. As protectors and chroniclers of Everafter\(^{20}\) history, the Grimm girls learn to negotiate the internal politics of the Everafter community who are magically trapped in the small town of Ferryport (originally “Fairyport”) Landing, New York. They live with their grandmother and the unusual Mr. Canis as they try to save their parents from the evil organization known as the Red Hand. While Buckley’s books deal with many issues, including fitting into a family, coming of age, and liking boys, these issues tend to center around Sabrina Grimm, one of the few non-pre-textual characters in the series. Although these issues are important to the overall narrative arch, for the purposes of this study I will be focusing on the pre-textual characters and how their interactions suggest commentary about feminist critiques, primarily through the character of Snow White.

The *Sisters Grimm* books posit that fairy tales are a series of historical events chronicled by Andrew Lang, Lewis Carroll, Hans Christian Anderson, Jonathan Swift, the Grimms, and other famous (canonical) authors of children’s literature (*The Fairy-

\(^{20}\)“Everafter” is the polite term used to describe those of fairy tale, nursery rhyme, literary, or legendary origin.
In this text, the fairy tale attributes should not be able to hold power over particular characters simply because they engaged with them once upon a time. Motivations like Prince Charming’s desire to regain his old status by taking over Ferryport Landing and turning it into his own kingdom as he reveals in *The Fairy-Tale Detectives*, and subsequent abandonment of such motives, suggests that characters are merely conditioned by these elements and their old roles, not controlled by them, as they are in Durst’s books. Differences that appear in the various versions of the tales are explained as memory problems or are attributed to items that are difficult to describe. For example, the ruby slippers are silver with “hints of a warm, rosy color” (206-7). This description satisfies both the original book—where the shoes are silver—and the MGM movie—wherein the shoes are bright, Technicolor red.

One of the most interesting subplots throughout the series concerns Snow White and her love affair with Prince Charming. Buckley’s treatment, and subsequent criticism, of feminist thoughts are clearest in this subplot, and it is one of the more engaging subplots that is intertwined with the main plot points in the overall narrative arch. In the first book, readers learn that Snow White left Charming at the altar 400 years ago but that Charming rebounded by then marrying “at least half a dozen times since” to princesses including Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, and Rapunzel (The Fairy-Tale Detectives 224).\(^\text{21}\) It’s not until *The Everafter War*, the seventh in the series, that

\(^{21}\) Stephen Sondheim offers an interesting alternative explanation for the prince’s behavior. In Into the Woods, the two charming princes express that they are creatures of tropes, stuck in repetitive patterns reminiscent of those in Durst’s *Wild* books, though in *Into the Woods* the princes freely choose to repeat these patterns. They chase fair maidens—such as Snow White and Sleeping Beauty, who appear onstage at the end of the play—because that’s what princes do, and when Cinderella questions her prince about his actions, he replies, “I was raised to be charming, not sincere” (127). That, coupled with the finale’s lesson (“Children Will Listen”), suggests that Sondheim’s musical has a similar goal to that of the intertexts in this chapter; it questions the common tropes present in the texts and seeks to expose them by allowing pre-textual characters to journey into the woods together (literally, in this case).
readers learn why Snow White left him in the first place and why she refuses his most recent proposal in *The Everafter War*. As she herself admits to Sabrina Grimm:

“You see, there was a time when I was – well, I was pretty naïve. . . . In a nutshell, I was dumb. In my defense, they didn’t exactly educate women back in my time. . . . Anyway, I lived on my family’s lands. I coasted on my looks, didn’t worry about my brain, and assumed that eventually I’d find some handsome prince to come and take care of me. And then there was the whole situation with the apple and my mother. I don’t know if I had an epiphany while I was sleeping, but when I woke up I was mad. Not only had I let myself get into a bad situation, my own mother had a hand in it! And then there’s this guy who the mystical world decides is the man I’m supposed to marry. Who’s to tell me whom I’m supposed to love? But even that’s not what really, truly bothered me. It was the realization that I couldn’t take care of myself.” (177-178)

Here, Snow White is describing the very stereotypes that critics like Rosemary Minard reject: the image of the princess as “insipid beauties waiting passively for Prince Charming” (Preston 203). Snow White questions the legitimacy of tradition fairy tale princess roles, specifically the issue of passivity.

Snow White tries to counter her history by starting a self-defense class, the Bad Apples (see *The Unusual Suspects* 253-254 for the first mention of the Bad Apples). Snow admits to Sabrina in the quote above that what bothered her most about her assigned role as a passive princess was “the realization that I couldn’t take care of myself” (*The Everafter War* 177). Snow decided that she would not marry until she no longer felt “victimized” (*The Everafter War* 178). She concludes this monologue by declaring “I won’t marry someone who has to take care of me” (*The Everafter War* 179).

Snow White’s concern centers around the anti-feminist stereotype that women cannot take care of themselves and need a proverbial “Prince Charming” save them.

Interestingly, in the “Junior” version of the musical (titled Into the Woods Junior and suitable for elementary school performances), the second act – and the questioning of common tropes associated with children’s literature – is completely excised. The sexual innuendos present in the first act, particularly those in the wolf’s song “Hello Little Girl,” are also absent in this version.
Readers don’t have to look far to trace at least part of the source of Snow White’s self doubt. Throughout the series, Prince Charming constantly refers to Snow White as someone who needs to be saved, even when she proves over and over that she can fend for herself. She begins her own self-defense class, she voluntarily goes with Charming to help build the Everafter’s fort in the forest, and she even acts as the fort’s army training instructor. In fact, even when Snow White is cornered by Bluebeard, the author insinuates that the episode is not her fault. Buckley foregrounds the scene by noting that “In the chaos [following Robin Hood’s freeing the Big Bad Wolf] it was obvious that even a trained self-defense teacher like Snow White could be seriously injured” (Tales from the Hood 259). Therefore, while Buckley couches Snow White in terms traditionally accepted for princesses/women – she’s an elementary school teacher, she babysits the Grimm children in The Unusual Suspects, and according to Charming she has a knack for getting into trouble (The Unusual Suspects 88) – she is able to question her perceived proper role. She reacts against the “mystical world” of fairy tale tropes by seeking to redeem herself and rectify previous character flaws, such as passivity. Buckley offers readers the chance to decide if Snow White has anything to say to contemporary audiences. Her ambiguous position throughout most of the series – empowered and yet prone to getting in harm’s way – reflects the characteristics common of fairy tale princesses, while her later behavior suggests that she – and contemporary readers – may have the opportunity to break out of traditional princess roles, even if they fall back into these roles on occasion.

Whereas Snow White is able to learn from her past and to learn to defend herself, and therefore ultimately potentially break out of the stereotypes that surround her even
after setbacks, the characters in Durst’s novels have a different problem to face. In *Into the Wild* and most of *Out of the Wild*, the fairy tale characters who escaped the “Wild” – short for the “Wild Wood,” that place wherein all fairy tales exist – all seek to stay free of the bonds that kept them in the Wild. When the Wild escapes, readers see firsthand what happens in fairy tales: “‘The Wild’ [Dame Gothel, the wicked witch] explained, ‘takes your free will. Every fairy-tale event must be completed’” (38). Julie, Rapunzel’s daughter, must venture into the Wild when it escapes and grows in order to rescue her mother and the other fairy tale characters the Wild has recaptured.

En route, Julie faces a woman who has taken the place of Little Red Riding Hood. The woman is described as having a “weird blankness” (92); she insists that she must pick flowers and go to grandma’s house. When Julie tries to remind the woman what happens to Red Riding Hood at grandma’s house, the woman begins to go into hysteric. Leaving the unlucky woman to her fate, Julie finally manages to find her grandmother, Dame Gothel, who is the original wicked witch from “Hansel and Gretel,” the stepmother from “Cinderella,” and the witch from “Rapunzel.” When Julie forces her to remember who she is, Gothel explains the Wild’s strange power: that you forget who you are once the story ends and begins again: “That beginning is all you know, until and unless someone or something makes you remember [… you are] locked deep down inside yourself” (117). Unlike the characters from *Sisters Grimm*, the fairy tale characters from the Wild are denied all free will. The Wild finds a role that “suits you” (119) and traps its victims within a never-ending cycle of repetitions. Slight variations in the repetitions produced by the Wild account for variations of fairy tales in different cultures. The horror of the Wild is, then, permanence. Characters are locked into
preconceived roles and actions that they are unable to alter. In fact, altering the unalterable is what the second book, *Out of the Wild*, is all about.

Whereas *Into the Wild* focuses on introducing the characters and the concept of the Wild, the second book explores Julie’s quest to put an end to the Wild’s power once and for all. Her quest to defeat the Wild culminates, ironically, in Disneyland, California.

By this point in the novel, the entire world is being consumed by the Wild and turned into mindless characters forced into eternal servitude and repetition. As people begin to panic, residents of California head to Disneyland to fight the only manifestation of the Wild they can control: the falsified images they themselves created. Julie steps up to a microphone at the base of Cinderella’s Castle in Disneyland and tells the crowd her story: that she is Rapunzel’s daughter and that the Wild had tried to spread several months before. She tells them the story of *Into the Wild*, how she changed the Wild by using its own rules against it – rules that she barely began to understand in the first book. She then announces, “this is how we defeat the Wild: we change it. Tell this story to each other. Tell it to everyone you meet” (emphasis in original; 187). The story – and specifically, Julie’s speech – demonstrates the power of transmission, reminiscent of the nineteenth-century texts examined in chapter one. But whereas the nineteenth-century books dealt solely with matters of proper transmission, Durst’s books hint at the power repetition has on an audience. Rather than expressing the importance of transmitting a story “properly,” the *Wild* books stress the importance of transmission, itself. Julie’s adventures teach her that, in essence, Little Red Riding Hood continually gets eaten by the wolf because generations of readers and storytellers complete the story that way.

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22 This novel obviously also offers some interesting meta-commentary on Disney and the commodification of fairy tales. Unfortunately, this discussion falls beyond the scope of this project.
Her message – and the message of the *Wild* books – is that of personal responsibility. We cannot blame the stories for their outdated treatment of princesses and their violence. We’re the ones perpetuating those fairytale elements, after all, every time we retell the story.

Durst seems to be stressing here that it doesn’t matter what versions of fairy tales exist now, as they can always be changed later: to make a fairy tale “real” it simply has to be repeated or known. The implications for scholarship here are quite interesting: even if a fairy tale doesn’t fit contemporary standards or paradigms of education, feminism, etc, the stories are not hopeless, they simply need to be adjusted for the times. This point complements Buckley’s message. Where his series argues that readers need to determine whether or not a story can speak to them, Durst’s books posit that the possibility is quite strong, granted that audiences are willing to shape and transmit their new values/stories themselves. Each author thus places the onus of responsibility on the reader in one way or another, either as an individual or as a member of a society with shared values.

**By Way of Conclusion**

While some crossover intertexts simply act as mirrors reflecting theories of and movements in children’s literature (didactic, psychological, feminist), simultaneously serving to reinforce the pre-established tropes, biases, and stereotypes present in those stories, others move beyond the traditional boundaries of the story’s ideological structures to offer criticism or comment on the current ways readers approach the field of children’s literature. The books that rely most heavily on their intertextuality accomplish this commentary most effectively, while the texts that involve crossover intertextuality for convenience do not alter pre-existing theories but simply reflect them...
or, in worst-case scenarios, support them. Other, more complex texts, like Buckley’s and Durst’s books, rely on the pre-textual characters to their advantage. Instead of simply relying on pre-established characterizations and plotlines, these authors play upon the cultural literacy readers bring to the text and question basic assumptions associated with contemporary children’s literature, such as the viability of remaking previously passive princesses into warrior-women.

These authors rely on readers’ prior knowledge of the “stuff” of fairy tales in order to comment on the cultural literacy that is expected of savvy contemporary readers. In other words, the authors’ uses of fairy tales demonstrate an awareness of and response to specific cultural/literary movements, a cultural literacy of the issues surrounding the study of literature in popular contexts. Even if the authors are not aware of specific scholars, they are still able to say something general about the current popularity, practicality, and usefulness of, for example, making Snow White a fighter. The authors do not need to be scholars themselves in order to comment on the popular trends surrounding the literature they’re invoking. They are instead relying upon general a duality of cultural literacies, both of the “stuff” of fairy tales and the common issues surrounding these elements and the characters associated with them. These crossover intertexts are therefore relying on the audience’s cultural literacy about the cultural literacy, so to speak. They rely on the audience’s awareness of the issues surrounding the literature they’re invoking, a more complex and tricky reliance on the reader’s knowledge than we’ve seen in previous chapters.

This more complex type of cultural literacy assumes that the reader is already familiar with both the pre-textual characters and their plots, as well as the major
ideological approaches to children’s literature on which the author is commenting. As Preston reminds us, “the audience’s fragmented cultural knowledge may have been acquired through any or all . . . forms of cultural production” including cartoons, bedtime stories, scholarly articles, commercials, news, etc. (210). This statement is reminiscent of John Stephens’s point that a scholar cannot always know which version of a fairy tale (original, adaptation, or crossover intertext) a child encountered first and to what version the child is comparing to the current version. But even if scholars cannot be sure which version(s) of a pre-textual character a reader has come in contact with before, or even what medium the story was in, we can make an educated guess regarding what the author was trying to impart to the reader, regardless of his/her prior experience with the pre-textual characters.

It would be impractical to try to determine which versions of a character a child reader is more/most/first familiar with. In these texts, many different versions are invoked, thereby removing the necessity for a reader to be familiar with one version over another. These crossover intertexts assume some level of prior familiarity, but they generally do not champion one version over another. Instead, they use the various versions to their advantage, allowing the characters a range of motion otherwise unavailable to them. In this way, the texts are able to focus on critiquing cultural literacy surrounding the tales rather than on cultural literacy readers are expected to have about the tales, themselves. For example, Buckley’s commentary on Snow White is developed by his ability to rely both on various versions of the “Snow White” story, both traditional

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23 For example, as mentioned above, The Sisters Grimm series explains fairy tale variations by suggesting that the characters either didn’t remember the details of their histories correctly or that the details were difficult to describe accurately in the first place.
(Snow White as gentle and passive) and more contemporary (Snow White as angry at her perceived passiveness and a willingness to train as a martial artist). The changes in these versions represent a slightly ambiguous or problematic representation of her. The focus is not on cultural literacy of who Snow White is and what she does in the various versions of her story; rather, the focus of Buckley’s intertextual use of the character is to deconstruct and examine the usefulness, or lack thereof, of what we think we know about her as a feminist figure. Buckley’s Snow White allows readers to critically examine their preconceived notions – their cultural literacy – of issues surrounding her story, including feminist ideologies and feminist retellings of such fairy tales.

While some crossover intertexts function as sutures between academic and popular discourses and examine the ensuing cultural literacy arising from the union, other intertexts attempt to rescind established cultural literacy entirely and replace it with new knowledge. Digital crossover intertexts, often featuring remediations of pre-textual characters as well as intertextuality, often seek to completely overwrite the cultural literacy associated with a particular iconic character. In my next and final chapter, I will examine various types of crossover intertextual video games and offer a brief overview of several landmark games. I also explore how Disney’s cartoons and video games – specifically the cartoon series House of Mouse, the Kingdom Hearts series and the newly released Epic Mickey for Wii – alter audiences’ perceptions of the cultural literacy associated with “Disneyana.” The video games, in particular, require players to rely on, and yet simultaneously ignore, cultural literacy of the Disney company as they expunge Disney’s past and reinscribe a new one – effectively rewriting cultural memories of
Disney – by playing through scenes remediated from old Mickey Mouse’s and other various characters’ cartoons.
CHAPTER 4
“IT’S A SMALL WORLD AFTER ALL”: REWRITING HISTORY WITH DIGITAL INTERTEXTS

Crossover-Intertextual Video Games, Disney, and Cultural Literacy

Crossover intertexts abound in literature, but they are every bit as numerous – if not more so – in new media. Since the release of King’s Quest I in 1984, video games that rely on pre-textual characters, what I call “crossover-intertextual games,” have exploded on the market in every genre and for every console. There are two types of crossover video games. First-party crossover games feature characters from one game in another when both games are owned by the same company. For example, Final Fantasy Dissidia features popular characters from many of Square-Enix’s Final Fantasy games (the characters are pre-textual, but they are all owned by the same company).

Conversely, third-party crossover games incorporate characters from various companies, such as the games in the Kingdom Hearts (KH) series, which pairs and pits Disney characters with and against Final Fantasy characters. Because of their often complex plots and intertwined histories, crossover-intertextual third-party RPGs have some very interesting ramifications for cultural literacy. The Disney company has used both first- and third-party crossover intertextuality to their advantage, particularly in their cartoons and recent video games.

Crossover intertextuality in video games has developed since the early 1980s, and much of what has come before informs current video game intertexts. Game designers used to spend large amounts of time and effort to make their characters and plots engaging for audiences, and the context of the world within the video game had to be developed slowly in order for the player to become familiar with it. But once game designers started relying on pre-textual characters, once they began relying on players’
pre-existing cultural literacy, the games became more about the development of the plot and interactions between the characters rather than on setting the stage, so to speak. Game plots became more complex and exchanges between the characters became more important. These interactions, while informed by players’ previous experiences with the characters, are new and thus offer a potential space for companies to interject their own understanding of the characters based on contemporary ideologies held by that company. The contrast between the characterization of pre-textual characters in their original environments and in new stories afforded by crossover intertextuality highlights the ideological changes the Disney company has gone through since the 1930s. Implications for cultural memory of these famous characters are profound. Crossover intertextuality in contemporary video games expunges and overwrites the very cultural literacy required to understand the game in the first place.

Disney’s games make an excellent case study of this phenomenon, as Disney’s characters are relatively young, and thus tracing their changes is a relatively easy – if not always an entirely linear¹ – task. In essence, Disney rewrites their own history (their own “world” or Walt Disney’s parcosm²) by having the players effectively revise it for them as video game avatars. The game series *Kingdom Hearts* and the recent *Epic Mickey* are particularly good examples of this, as the Disney company is currently

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¹ As will be noted shortly, Disney has produced a wide variety of cartoons, comics, games, and other types of media (including the Disney theme parks). While many of the characters changed over a period a time, their changes took place throughout – and in some cases, arguably because of – the various media they were remediated into. Thus, while characters did not change entirely linearly through one specific form of media, the characters did change chronologically.

² Disney biographer Neal Gabler uses the psychological term “parcosm” to discuss Disney’s invocation of wish-fulfilling archetypes that would make his parks and films such wild successes: “His life would become an ongoing effort to devise what psychologists call a ‘parcosm,’ an invented universe, that he could control as he could not control reality. From Mickey Mouse through *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* through Disneyland through EPCOT, he kept attempting to remake the world in the image of his own imagination, […] to recapture a sense of childhood power that he either had never felt or had lost” (xvi).
seeking to reinscribe Mickey’s history and image using video games (*Epic Mickey*, more specifically). The changes the company has made to Mickey’s character (which rely on his interaction with other pre-textual characters) in this game and, as I will argue, the *House of the Mouse* cartoon series and the *KH* games, demonstrate the profound impact that intertextuality can have on cultural memory. Such intertexts are best understood in light of the history and development of other such texts, and so I will begin my discussion with several important crossover-intertextual video games.

**Landmark Crossover-Intertextual Video Games: A Brief History**

Many crossover-intertextual games preceded the release of *Epic Mickey* and *KH*, but it would not be practical to offer a complete history here.\(^3\) Instead, I would like to point out some landmark games that helped to influence and shape contemporary crossover-intertextual video games. Of course, any such discussion will begin with Sierra’s *King’s Quest* series, the first games to incorporate pre-existing characters: in this case, fairytale and mythological characters. In 1984, eager gamers around the country inserted large floppy disks into “Drive A” on their brand-new IBM PC-juniors. What appeared on the screen was like nothing that had ever come before. Sierra On-Line’s *King’s Quest I: Quest for the Crown* featured a text parser interface that understood more complex commands than previous games, and the avatar – an animated figure rather than a static image – was able to walk *behind* objects like trees and houses in a pseudo-3D setting. Besides the advances in gaming technology, the plot of *King’s Quest I* did what no video game had ever done before: it interlaced fairy

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\(^3\) A thorough study of crossover-intertextual games could easily become a dissertation in its own right. While a full history is outside the scope of this project, Wikipedia offers a fairly comprehensive list (see the article “Fictional Crossovers in Video Games”).
tale characters into a master narrative that the player had to work through and complete in order to finish the game.

In most of the King’s Quest games, players must use their familiarity with fairy tales and mythology to help them solve puzzles. These puzzles generally relate to another fairy tale or myth, which players must then solve to move on. For example, when the player encounters a little man with a spinning wheel in King’s Quest I who asks to be named before he will give up a key item, the player needs to know that some incarnation of the name “Rumplestiltskin” will earn her the necessary game item. Those players who are unfamiliar with a broad assortment of fairy tales will feel at a loss, even with game guides, as these games – particularly the first several in the series – require at least a passing knowledge of fairy tales in order to make progress. King’s Quest includes seven titles and boasts a number of book spin-offs and has even inspired a theatrical parody titled Adventure Quest, which premiered at the 2009 “Antidepressant Festival” in Brooklyn.

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4 This comes from personal experience; in a media course that I once taught, I asked all of my students to play through a free, online, VGA version of King’s Quest I to help us discuss the use of cultural literacy in video games. Many of them got stuck within the first few minutes, and two failed to complete the game at all, even with the assistance of game hints and walk-throughs. The two students who had the most trouble were so unfamiliar with European fairy tales that they couldn’t understand the logic behind, for example, leading a goat up to a troll guarding a bridge that the player needs to cross, even when the walk-through suggested they do just that.

5 King’s Quest has spawned both non-fiction and fiction. The non-fiction works include guidebooks like Guidebook to the Green Isles by Jane Jenson for King’s Quest XI and Roberta Williams’ hintbooks to King’s Quest V, VI, and VII. Several editions of a book chronicling the development of the series were written Donald B Tivette and all begin with the title The Official Book of King’s Quest. Peter Spear also published two player’s guides, The King’s Quest Companion and Authorized King’s Quest VII Players Guide. Fictional books include The Floating Castle by Craig Mills (1995) and The Kingdom of Sorrow and See No Weevil by Kenyon Morr (pseudonym for authors Mark Sumner and Marella Sands, both published in 1996).

6 The Brick Theater (where the show debuted) offers a humorous synopsis of the plot: “Shift uncomfortably in your seat as the narrative gradually implodes! Glance around nervously as characters are brutally murdered for no particular reason! Despair as your faith in a meaningful, ordered universe is shaken! Evoking the Golden Age of home computer gaming, Adventure Quest is both a nostalgic treat and a glimpse into the yawning Void” (“The Antidepressant Festival”).
The next landmark in crossover games would arguably⁷ be Nintendo’s *Super Smash Bros.*, released in 1999 for the *Nintendo 64*. This game is a first-party crossover that includes Nintendo characters from the *Mario*, *Kirby*, and *Legend of Zelda* series. The idea was originally conceived by game designer Masahiro Sakurai, who “wanted to offer an alternative to the two-dimensional fighting games that were crowding out the market. [He] also wanted to see if it was possible to make an interesting 4-player game that offered a new experience every time you play” (Iwata par. 6). At this point in the development of the game, Sakurai didn’t know that Nintendo characters would be available to him. He asked the president of Nintendo Co., Ltd, Satoru Iwata, if he could incorporate pre-textual game characters in order to help make the game – and the characters – stand out. He reasoned that “you have to have some main characters in a fighting game, and when you line up character 1, character 2, character 3 and so on, the main characters end up blurring together. . . . With a fighting game for the home console, . . . you have to set up the general image or the atmosphere of the gaming world right from the start or else the game suffers. That’s why I asked to use Nintendo characters” (Iwata par. 10).

Thus, *Super Smash Bros.*’s intertextual nature was a conscious decision on the part of the designer to rapidly involve and engage players in the “atmosphere of the gaming world,” a strategy that would be duplicated many times by many companies in the future. Adding to Sakuri’s comment, President Iwata notes:

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⁷ While Capcom and Marvel’s crossover *X-Men vs. Street Fighter* may have beaten Nintendo to the punch (literally) by three years, scant information is available about the making of Capcom’s game. Presumably, the same general assumptions that Nintendo had about crossovers and their usefulness were behind Capcom and Marvel’s game, as well.
Nowadays, we take it for granted, but at the time, people had reservations about mobilizing an all-star cast of characters. I guess fans were upset by the prospect of pitting characters like Mario, Link and Pikachu against one another. We had a hard time convincing them the fun and depth that were so obviously present in the Smash Bros. trademark fighting style would offer. (par. 11-12)

Fans’ initial reservations proved unfounded, as Super Smash Bros. became a huge commercial success. In fact, the game was only slated to be released in Japan, but its enormous success prompted releases in Europe and the U.S. As of 2007, Super Smash Bros. and Super Smash Bros. Melee had sold 7.5 million copies in the U.S. alone (“U.S. Platinum Videogame Chart”). In addition, according to Nintendo, Super Smash Bros. Brawl was “the fastest-selling video game in . . . America’s history” (“What’s New” par. 1), having sold 1.4 million copies in America during merely the first week of its release. The unquestionable success of the Super Smash Bros series makes it noteworthy among cross-intertextual games. Also noteworthy is Sakurai’s heavy reliance on players’ prior experience with the characters used in the game; a player without any cultural literacy of the Nintendo characters would not be satisfied with this game. This strategy for establishing characters quickly and effectively makes an implicit assumption about a players’ knowledge of the characters’ abilities. As Nintendo president Iwata predicted, part of what makes the game so enticing is its depth: its invocation of cultural literacy about the characters involved.

Although Super Smash Bros. was the first intertextual battle royale game, it was not Nintendo’s first venture into crossover intertextuality. The Nintendo cartoon series Captain N: The Game Master predated the first Super Smash Bros. game by a full
decade, airing from 1989-1991. Based on the adventures of a young man who gets sucked into his television by the “Ultimate Warp Zone,” Captain N was a show made to feature all of the most popular Nintendo games and characters of the late 1980s (minus Mario). But Captain N isn’t only a crossover intertext; it is a remediation, as well.

“Remediation” is defined by Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin as the reworking or representation of one medium within or by another: for example, making a cartoon series of popular video game characters would be remediation, as elements from one medium – the video game characters – are represented by/in another – cartoons, in this case. Remediation functions on the principles of immediacy and hypermediacy: “immediacy is transparency . . . . It is the notion that a medium could erase itself and leave the viewer in the presence of the objects represented, so that he could know the objects directly” (Bolter and Grusin 70), while hypermediacy is the creation of a space in which there is an “interplay of forms that have been detached from their original context and then recombined” (Bolter and Grusin 39). Immediacy – forgetting a medium is between the viewer/player and what it represents – and hypermediacy – the interplay of forms recombined in a new context – come together to support remediation.

Remediations do not acknowledge that they are adaptations, but rather consider themselves acts of media in their own right: “the content has been borrowed, but the medium has not been appropriated or quoted” (Bolter and Grusin 44). Remediations do rely on the authority of the medium they’re representing; after all, “the very act of

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8 A new parodic comic series has been released recently on the GameSpy website, titled The New Adventures of Captain N. Although it is a satire of the original (and of some recent Nintendo games and accessories), it takes place 20 years after the final episode of the cartoon series and features an entirely different cast, including original and remediated, intertextual characters.

9 Because Captain N aired at the same time as the Super Mario Bros. Super Show, there was little to no crossover with the Mario series other than the use of “warp zones” and several of the sound effects.
remediation . . . ensures that the older medium cannot be entirely effaced; the new medium remains dependent on the older one in acknowledged or unacknowledged ways” (Bolter and Grusin 47). But remediations also undermine that authority by trying to overwrite or outdo the previous medium being represented, much as crossover intertexts do with pre-textual characters and plotlines. An intertext borrows authority from its pre-text as much as it lends authority back to the pre-text. As Stephens and McCallum assert, retellings such as intertexts “affirm the status of such classic texts, while at the same time entering into a dialogue and calling into question the ideologies informing both the texts and, by implication, the ideological basis of the canonical enterprise” (8). While the crossover intertexts examined up to this chapter have all been borrowed from the same medium, remediations call for an examination not only of how the pre-textual characters are treated in the new plotline, but also to how the characters are portrayed in the new medium. Authors now not only have to deal with an audience’s pre-existing cultural literacy of pre-textual characters, but also must be aware of media tropes and expectations.

Initially a short story in Nintendo’s official magazine, *Nintendo Power*,10 the Capt. N series was a marketing ploy that pitted Kevin Keene (an original character, the eponymous “Captain Nintendo” of the series), Simon Belmont (from the *Castlevania* series, beginning in 1986), Megaman (from the *Megaman* series, beginning a year later in 1987), and Kid Icarus (from *Kid Icarus*, also from 1987) against Mother Brain (from the original *Metroid* game, 1986), King Hippo (from *Mike Tyson’s Punchout*, 1987),

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10 The short story, titled “Captain Nintendo,” featured in the November/December 1988 and January/February 1989 issues of *Nintendo Power*. The story was six pages long and offered an origin story for the cartoon series, but the story is, unfortunately and somewhat confusingly, completely different from that offered in the actual series.
Eggplant Wizard (from *Kid Icarus*, 1987), and Dr. Wily (from *Megaman*, 1987). The characters frequent familiar places, like Donkey Kong’s kingdom\(^{11}\) and Final Fantasy,\(^{12}\) and are visited by other familiar characters, like Link and Zelda,\(^{13}\) as well. While production was often not top-notch – an early episode was aired with several scenes missing backgrounds, for example\(^{14}\) – the series still functioned as a showcase for nearly all the company’s big-sellers. Already the Nintendo company was relying on its audience’s cultural literacy of their characters, a literacy they would continue to rely on (quite successfully, as demonstrated above) in future projects. Eventually, Nintendo would branch out and begin entertaining the notion of utilizing a third-party crossover intertext, but it would not be for nearly two decades after their initial foray into intertextuality in *Captain N*.

Nintendo’s first third-party crossover would take the shape of a sports game and be dubbed *Mario and Sonic at the Olympic Games*, released in 2007. Although not a fighting game, it still incorporates Masahiro Sakurai’s premise that players can more quickly and easily engage with pre-existing characters. This game isn’t notable *for* its inclusion of pre-textual characters so much as for *who* those included characters are: the game is the first third-party crossover containing characters from both Sega and Nintendo series. Although the companies merged before the game was released, making this game technically a first-party crossover, it involves characters that evolved

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\(^{11}\) Season 1, episode 1: “Kevin in Videoland”

\(^{12}\) Season 3, episode 7: “The Fractured Fantasy of Captain N”

\(^{13}\) Season 2, episode 16: “Quest for the Potion of Power”; episode 20: “Once Upon a Time Machine”; and episode 22: “Having a Ball.”

\(^{14}\) According to the episode guide available on Wikipedia, “The original airing of [the second] episode was of an unfinished version which included some shots missing their backgrounds. This was corrected in reruns, but oddly, the unfinished version is the version featured on the DVD releases and Hulu.com” (par. 3). In fact, the missing background is one of the elements of the series at which the Nostalgia Critic pokes the most fun in his review of the *Captain N* series (see the Nostalgia Critic’s August 4, 2009 episode at http://thatguywiththeglasses.com).
in their own microcosms and on parallel tracts by rival companies. The characters were
pre-established and belonged to different companies before they were intertextually
joined, so I contend that this game counts as the first major third-party crossover
intertextual game.

Six years after Sega “began working with Nintendo as a third-party publisher” (Fitch
par. 1), fans were rewarded with the 24-event, 4-player game featuring characters
from Mario and Sonic games. Interestingly, the game received mixed reviews from
players. While many gamers were happy to finally see Sonic and Mario together in a
game, others were frustrated that the characters were placed in a game that departed
from the platform genre, which made both characters famous, instead featuring them in
a sports game (Gibson par. 14). Although some fans have reservations about the game,
it was awarded the “Best Wii Game” at the 2007 Leipzig Game Convention (Magrino)
and sold over 5 million units as of 2008, exceeding Sega’s pre-release estimate by over
a million (Sinclair par. 2-3).

Disney: Remediating and Repainting the Past

The Disney company is, of course, not new to the notions of remediation and
crossover intertextuality. Indeed, Walt Disney was ahead of his time, imagining
remediated texts and spaces long before anyone else. One of his earliest ideas for a
feature-length film included an animated version of Herbert’s Babes in Toyland
(Robinson par. 8), demonstrating his early tendencies towards intertextuality. Bolter and
Grusin also point to Disneyland and Disney World as examples of Disney’s intertextual,
remediation-oriented prowess:

[Disney] understood better than anyone else how to make the theme park
remEDIATE other media. Disney had already pioneered another form of
remediation, when he refashioned live-action film in the animated cartoon.
Snow White (1937) was the first full-length cartoon with a sustained narrative and therefore constituted a significant remediation of the Hollywood film. . . . Although he continued to make animated and eventually live-action films, he came up with his most ingenious and elaborate scheme for remediation in the 1950s, when he conceived of a theme park that would simultaneously refashion and be refashioned by television as well as film. (171)

Walt Disney went so far as to claim that “Disneyland the place and Disneyland the show are all the same” (Anderson qtd in Bolter & Grusin 171). This quote suggests that he was very aware of the fact that he was experimenting with a new media form, a hybrid, with making the parcosm of his imagination a reality both for himself and consumers of his products. His 1933 short “Old King Cole,” featuring several nursery rhyme and fairy tale characters jumping out of their respective books for a party at Cole’s palace, further suggests that Disney was particularly invested in intertextual settings and stories.

The Disney company continues in Walt’s footsteps today, making bigger and better remediations that seek to top whatever came before. It is arguably true that much – if not all – of Disney’s multiverse is remediated (Donald, Goofy, and Mickey often show up in each other’s cartoons, comics, video games, and alongside each other – and characters from all the other animated films – in the theme parks). But the Disney company has created several cartoons and games that feature crossover intertextuality as a key component that audiences are meant to recognize and respond to rather than simply accepting the intertextuality and/or remediated nature of the characters, as when guests meet both Cinderella and Goofy walking side by side in the parks. The first of

15 While Disney is definitely targeting more and more specific audiences with their films (though not in their games –Warren Spector intimates that his game Epic Mickey is attempting to make Mickey relevant to older audiences; see below), their use of intertextuality has become more frequent, more pre-textual characters are being invoked, and the texts themselves are sustained for longer durations, including longer video games, longer intertextual encounters in films, etc.
Disney’s ventures into crossover intertextuality\textsuperscript{16} took place within a multi-franchise campaign against substance abuse, produced by then-vice chairman Roy Disney and funded in large part by the Ronald McDonald Children’s Charities (Bernstein par. 7). The final product, “Cartoon All-Stars to the Rescue,” aired on ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, the Disney Channel, USA Network, Black Entertainment Network, and Nickelodeon in April of 1990 (Bernstein par. 3) and featured characters from ten different franchises ranging from \textit{Alvin and the Chipmunks} to \textit{Winnie the Pooh}. The show’s premise was straightforward: to discourage children from using drugs by invoking all of their favorite Saturday-morning cartoon characters. In this case, the function of the intertextuality was apparent; the characters – and the companies – united in a common goal to promote an anti-drug campaign.

\textit{Cartoon All-Stars} would be Disney’s first tentative venture into crossover intertextuality, but it would definitely not be the company’s last. Shortly thereafter, Disney began a bold new program titled \textit{Disney’s House of Mouse} (2001-2003). Unlike \textit{Cartoon All-Stars}, this intertext draws entirely from Disney films, shorts, and characters, making it the first of a string of popular Disney first-party crossover intertexts. The \textit{House of Mouse} series took up the concept started by Walt Disney himself: instead of walking around Disneyland or Disney World to see all of your favorite characters in one place, you could simply turn on \textit{House of Mouse}.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Mickey’s Christmas Carol}, originally aired in 1983, may arguably be viewed as Disney’s first major attempt at crossover intertext, as several of the characters make guest appearances beyond just the usual crossover cast of Mickey, Donald, and Goofy. However, this is not so much an \textit{intertext} as an \textit{adaptation}; the characters are included to perform a pre-existing text (Dickens’ \textit{A Christmas Carol}), so we do not get to explore their characters in a new, original context, making this an adaptation first and an intertext second. For example, Mr. Toad from Disney’s \textit{The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad} [1949] plays the role of Mr. Fezziwig, several characters from \textit{Robin Hood} [1973] are featured as extras, Jiminy Cricket from \textit{Pinocchio} [1940] acts as the Ghost of Christmas Past, Willie the Giant from “Mickey and the Beanstalk” [from \textit{Fun and Fancy Free}, 1947] is the Ghost of Christmas Present, etc.
Each episode is structured as a frame story lending context to several classical and/or *Mickey Mouse Works* Disney cartoons per episode. The frame stories contain the intertextuality. Mickey and his friends run a dinner theater (or “cartoon club,” as Pete dubs it in the first episode), *House of Mouse*, and they serve both popular and lesser-known Disney characters alike. The patrons often interact with each other and always do so in ways appropriate to their pre-textual contexts. For example, in the introductory sequence, the Mad Hatter and March Hare (*Alice in Wonderland*, 1951) pour tea out of Mrs. Potts (*Beauty and the Beast*, 1991) on the next table over from Pooh and Tigger (*The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh*, 1977). Throughout the episodes, characters meet and interact in humorous – and always character-appropriate – ways. In the pilot episode, “The Stolen Cartoons,” Mickey announces that one of the house rules includes guests not eating other guests. After hearing this, Timon (*The Lion King*, 1994) spits out what he was chewing, and a very wet Jiminy Cricket (*Pinocchio*, 1940) rolls across the table.

Similar sight gags, one-liners, and character-appropriate behavior abound, and frequent panoramas of the animated audience practically beg viewers to play “spot the character.” As Pete is being thrown out of the club in the first episode, for example, he moves from table to table trying to hide in the crowd. He tries to hide in Belle’s closet (*Beauty and the Beast*) and then Kanga’s pouch (*Winnie the Pooh*), tries to masquerade as Doc at the seven dwarves’ table (*Snow White*, 1937), he dresses up as one of the 101 Dalmatians until Cruella spies him and decides that this enormous pup would make a great coat (*101 Dalmatians*, 1961), and as he gets thrown out on a curb Pepper Ann’s (*Pepper Ann*, 1997-2000) mother says “don’t touch the villain, dear.” Even some lesser-
known characters, such as Clarabelle Cow and Horace Horsecollar, were given a
glimpse of the limelight before being shunted back into obscurity until 2010.17

Such a narrative strategy also allowed the show to seamlessly incorporate a
number of special cameo appearances. Indeed, most of the character cameos are
accompanied by their original voice actors, such as Tony Jay as Jafar (pilot) and Gilbert
Gottfried as Iago (House of Villains, 2002). Herbie the Love Bug makes a cameo in
“Max’s New Car” (2001), and Roy Disney even made an animated cameo appearance
in “The Mouse Who Came to Dinner” (2001 episode), voiced by none other than Roy
Disney himself. As Suggs suggests, House of Mouse “gives the animators a chance to
use an enormous range of characters in all kinds of hilarious situations” (par. 1). The
characters all interact as viewers/Disney fans would expect them to, often resulting in
humorous situations (such as Timon, the bug-eating meercat, trying to eat Jiminy, a
cricket). The intertext of the series – even though these interactions are often brief –
allow audiences a glimpse of how the characters would interact if they truly did all exist
in the same multiverse. House of Mouse was popular enough with audience to generate
two feature-length cartoons: Mickey’s Magical Christmas: Snowed in at the House of
Mouse (2001) and Disney’s House of Villains (2002) before its final season in 2003,
suggesting that audiences appreciated the crossover intertextuality the Disney company
experimented with in this series.

While Suggs applauds the extensive crossover intertextuality of the show, he
notes that House of Mouse and its inclusive cartoons “have put some unpredictability
back in Mickey’s character. I think this has made him more interesting than he has been

17 Horace and Clarabelle have roles in Disney’s Epic Mickey game for the Wii console. For more on Epic
Mickey, please see below.
in years. I hope we continue to see the animators take the Mouse in this direction” (Suggs par. 1-2). Fortunately, Suggs was correct; this more nuanced Mickey has a little more personality in these cartoons, stamping Pete on the foot (pilot episode), getting flustered with Jiminy Cricket (“Jiminy Cricket,” 2001), even stealing Minnie’s purse so she won’t see the note inside, and writing Mortimer Mouse a nasty fax (“The Mouse Who Came to Dinner,” 2001). This trend – giving Mickey back some of the spunk he had when he first went into show business – may not have been on House of Mouse’s agenda at the time, but the show did nevertheless promote a mild refashioning of the famous Mouse. More than just a trend now, the Mouse’s makeover has become a key concern for the Disney company in recent years, and they’ve been using digital intertexts and remediations to accomplish their goal: to take Mickey off the shelf as a “corporate icon,” dust him off, and “tweak one of the most durable characters in pop culture history to induce new generations of texting, tech-savvy children to embrace him” (Barnes par. 8).

Very few people would disagree that Mickey Mouse is a veteran of video games. He was first featured in a “Game and Stop” game in 1981, and since then he has been featured in multiple games for every platform available.18 Arguably, the most interesting of Mickey’s games have been those released recently. Kingdom Hearts and Epic Mickey have reinvented and reinvigorated Mickey’s image, taking the mouse back to his roots as a slightly naughty – and definitely more lively – character; this is accomplished by remediating Mickey and his co-characters and placing them in crossover-intertextual

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18 Lists can be found online. Disney Interactive Studios’ site focuses on new releases (http://disney.go.com/disneyinteractivestudios/), Wikipedia’s list is quite extensive and lists original, as well as contemporary, games (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Disney_video_games_by_genre), and a selected bibliography of games (along with brief reviews) is also available in the Epic Mickey issue of GameInformer Magazine (Nov 2009), pages 118-119.
environments. Perhaps partially inspired by the success of Nintendo’s *Super Smash Bros* and the third-party *Mario and Sonic at the Olympic Games* games, *Kingdom Hearts* is a sequence of seven games that places Disney and Square Enix (*Final Fantasy*) characters in the same multiverse. The games follow the adventures of Sora (a Square Enix character created specifically for the series), Donald, and Goofy, as they try to save the multiverse\(^\text{19}\) from the mysterious Organization XIII, as well as to locate their friends, including King Mickey, who is off fighting the darkness threatening the multiverse.

In the first game, Sora has to lock the “keyholes” of the individual worlds, thereby protecting them from the encroaching darkness and simultaneously cutting them off from one another and removing the possibility of future intertextuality. In the second game, he is required to perform various tasks in the many worlds in order to clean up after the darkness that again threaten the multiverse, often by unlocking the same keyholes he locked in the first game. In both games, the characters must try to help the inhabitants of each world by following the actions of the films fairly closely and as unobtrusively as they can. As Goofy mentions in the dialogue of *KH1*, “While we’re in the other worlds, we can’t let on where we’re from. We’ve gotta’ protect the world [order]” (*KH1*). In addition, when the team arrives in “Halloween Town” (from *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, 1993), Goofy remarks “This sure is a spooky place. I’ll bet the people here are scary-lookin’ too,” and Donald responds sagely, “Don’t worry. We look spooky, too. If they scare us, we’ll scare them right back!” (*KH1*). The characters’

\(^{19}\) The *KH* multiverse consists of many different Disney worlds, including locations from popular animated films, including the Coliseum and Hades from *Hercules*, Agrabah from *Aladdin*, Atlantica from *The Little Mermaid*, and Hollow Bastian, where most of the *Final Fantasy* characters can be found, along with many other familiar worlds.
need to preserve the borders between the fictional universes and to blend in offers some unique ideological implications about the necessity of the separation of these worlds, and thus about intertexts, themselves reminiscent of those offered by Scieszka’s *Summer Reading is Killing Me!*.

In the second *KH* game, one particular world that Sora must again save from the darkness is Disney Castle, which is somehow being consumed from the past. Merlin (from *The Sword in the Stone*, 1963) sends the party back in time to the level titled “Timeless River,” a remediation of Mickey’s first sound cartoon, *Steamboat Willie* (1928). This level is unique in the *Kingdom Hearts* series as it is the only world that draws on animated shorts and on pre-color cartoons; the next oldest material drawn upon is the “Monstro” level in *KHI*, the inside of the whale from Disney’s 1940 release of *Pinocchio* which, of course, was a feature-length film in full color. In “Timeless River,” players must succeed in four mini-worlds: “Building Site” (from the 1933 cartoon “Building a Building”), “Lilliput” (from “Gulliver Mickey,” 1934), “Scene of the Fire” (possibly from “The Fire Fighters,” 1930 or “The Fire Brigade,” 1935), and “Mickey’s House,” all of which were remediated from animated shorts.

Each *Kingdom Hearts* game features over a hundred Disney characters (Yamashita & Bouldin-Nurha par. 2), but “Timeless River” focuses specifically on Pete

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20 As noted in chapter 3, Scieszka and Smith’s *Summer Reading is Killing Me!* posits that crossover intertextuality can be dangerous, as the Horned King (from *The Book of Three*) would try to eat Peter Rabbit, thus destroying the story of *Peter Rabbit* children have come to know and love. Similarly, in the *KH* series the characters must be particularly careful who they inform about their world-hopping. No repercussions are discussed; it is simply made clear in the dialogue that they characters must, as quoted above, “protect the world order.”

21 Chronologically, it would make more sense if this level were to be based on “The Fire Brigade,” as in that case each mini-level in “Timeless River” would be one year later than the previous: 1933, 1934, and 1935. However, “The Fire Brigade” was a color cartoon, and in the game it is portrayed in black and white (as “The Fire Fighters” was).

22 I couldn’t locate a specific cartoon that may have inspired the Mickey’s House mini-level. It is quite possible that the level was inspired by the replica of Mickey’s House in either Disneyland or Disney World.
and Mickey and their now-famous battle on the steamboat. The focus tends to be mostly on Pete: the Pete from the present tries to steal past Pete’s steamboat in order to abscond with a talisman that will keep Disney Castle from being swallowed by darkness. What this means for the player is that she must use her knowledge of the original “Steamboat Willie” cartoon in order to save past Pete’s steamboat, restore the “Steamboat Willie” story, and save the entire future of this particular fictional microcosm. The game therefore remediates previous Disney cartoons and characters, who were already remediated into comic books and video games prior to the KH series, in order to create a level that imposes a feeling of nostalgia (or at least vague familiarity) on the player. The invocation of famous shorts in “Timeless River,” the soft *whirring* of a film projector juxtaposed seamlessly into the background music, as well as the characters’ adopted visage of 1930s cartoon characters effectively position the player in an already-nostalgic\(^{23}\) relationship to the action in the game, regardless of how familiar players were with the original “Steamboat Willie” prior to playing the game. These elements contribute to a vague sense that the player ought to, like Donald and Goofy, be experiencing a sense of déjà vu\(^ {24}\) while playing through the level.

While the player is put in a position to feel as though she ought to have some cultural literacy about the scene, storyline discrepancies – or “ruptures” by Bolter & Grusin’s terminology – abound throughout the level, more so than in any other level in the game series. In every other level, players must try to complete the level by following

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\(^{23}\) Or already-knowledgeable: the game in this instance precludes a player’s familiarity – and thus, a player’s cultural literacy – of the characters and plot utilized throughout the level.

\(^{24}\) For more on déjà v, see my discussion below of Donald and Goofy’s reaction to the level.
the story’s original storyline as closely as possible.\textsuperscript{25} But in “Timeless River,” the storyline deviates drastically from the original. The first obvious rupture is Goofy and Donald’s presence in this time. Although Sora doesn’t belong in this particular time or place either, this rupture shouldn’t be dismissed out of hand; Donald and Goofy agree that “this is kinda’ like . . . déjà vu” (\textit{KH2}). If the player happens to know Disney history, she will realize that it would be impossible for either Donald or Goofy to be experiencing déjà vu; in fact, Goofy did not appear until the 1932 short “Mickey’s Revue,” and then he was merely a grizzled old man, an “extra” character in the animated audience, several years after “Steamboat Willie” originally aired.\textsuperscript{26} He could not be having déjà vu in the “Timeless River” stage because, for all intents and purposes, he did not exist in the Disney multiverse at this time in Disney’s history. Donald, too, did not appear until well after “Steamboat Mickey” first aired; Donald’s debut was in a 1934 \textit{Silly Symphony} cartoon titled “The Wise Little Hen” (“Donald”). Sora admits to never having seen this particular world before, but Donald’s and Goofy’s responses to the setting indicate that players are expected to either not recognize – or to consciously overlook – the rupture. This is odd considering that the designers included the scene to be recognizable, as all the worlds are. Consequently, the player is to recognize the level while at the same time ignoring what she knows about the original cartoon upon which the level is explicitly based.

\textsuperscript{25} To offer a few brief examples, Sora, Donald, and Goofy must help Ariel defeat Ursula in “Atlantica” (\textit{KH1}) and they help Mulan complete her training as “Ping” and then, once her captain discovers her gender, defeat Shan-Yu in the “Land of the Dragons” level (\textit{KH2}), etc. In every world, players must closely follow the script of the original movie, helping the main character of each respective world to achieve the goal he/she achieved in the original film, in order to complete the world and move on.

\textsuperscript{26} He did not even achieve his now-universally recognized name “Goofy” until the 1939 short “Goofy and Wilbur” (“Goofy”).
Even if one does ignore the obvious anachronism of having Donald and Goofy admit feelings of déjà vu as simply an excusable side-effect from the crossover intertext, more difficult to dismiss is the level’s total disavowal of the acts of animal cruelty and Mickey’s impetuous streak, so clear in the original cartoon. In the original, Mickey plays “Turkey in the Straw” by “utilizing an animal menagerie as his instruments. However, the tyrannical Captain Pete is not amused” (“Steamboat Willie”). Although the Disney Archives website judiciously describes the scene as rather innocuous, in truth “Steamboat Willie” raised concerns about animal cruelty, and many releases of the cartoon – including the one shown in Disneyland’s Main Street Cinema – contain the censored version (FoxxFur). The censoring was instituted by the Hays office firm censorship board in 1935, and many believe that Disney was not even aware of the cuts initially (FoxxFur). These cuts have been reinstated in several collections, including the DVD set *Walt Disney Treasures: Mickey Mouse in Black and White*, but many viewers may not even realize that the version of Steamboat Willie they grew up with on Disney Channel was the shortened, censored version. The animal cruelty is conveniently and entirely expunged from the “Timeless River” level in *KHII*. They rewrite the script by having the player – as Sora, Donald, and Goofy – play through and effectively revise the scene as the player works to complete the level.

Animal cruelty is completely excised from the “Timeless River” world, but so too are many of Mickey’s playful antics; Mickey only appears at the end of each mini-level to shake Sora’s hand. He smiles, waves, and runs off, presumably to the next level. True to the original cartoon Mickey doesn’t speak, but nor does he blow a raspberry at

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27 It’s interesting to note that the cow is the only animal who seems happy – or even merely content – to allow Mickey to play them as instruments during the cartoon. Interesting, too, is that the cow is the only animal portrayed on the Disney Archive website.
Pete, throw a potato at Pete’s parrot, play a goose like a deranged bagpipe, or even steer the steamboat. Players see surprisingly little of Mickey in this level; the only time players get a hint of Mickey’s former rambunctious nature is as he saves Sora from an ambush in the first mini-level, “Construction Site.” After this event, Goofy remarks that Mickey “seems kinda different somehow” (KH2), but no further analysis of Mickey’s behavior or retro rendering is offered. Throughout the KH games, Mickey often helps Sora, Donald, and Goofy, and even wields a Keyblade28 of his own. Even though players see little of him, Mickey does appear to be a bit more active and engaging than he has been in the recent past in cartoons and other video games.

Mickey’s transformation in KH, while subtle, may inadvertently have been paving the way for Disney’s reinvention of his character. Disney’s invocation of the original, more hands-on Mickey in the “Timeless River” level and throughout the KH series, however fleetingly, subtly set the stage for one of the Disney company’s largest gambles: remaking Mickey Mouse.

Concerned that Mickey has become more of a corporate symbol than a beloved character for recent generations of young people, Disney is taking the risky step of re-imagining him for the future. The first glimmer of this will be the introduction . . . of a new video game, Epic Mickey, in which the formerly squeaky clean character can be cantankerous and cunning, as well as heroic, as he traverses a forbidding wasteland. And at the same time, in a parallel but separate effort, Disney has quietly embarked on an even larger project to rethink the character’s personality, from the way Mickey walks and talks to the way he appears on the Disney Channel and how children interact with him on the Web – even what he looks like at Disney World” (Barnes par 4).

28 The Keyblade is Sora’s weapon through the KH games.
Although other sources suggest that this effort is not, in fact, separate from the \textit{Epic Mickey} game, the goal is the same. Mickey has become an artifact, an icon, rather than a sympathetic character. As Warren Spector, head of Junction Point Studios, boldly stated, Disney had “done an incredibly good job of making Mickey lame and irrelevant to anybody over the age of eight over the last 30 years” (Miller 60). Spector, an internationally-renowned video game designer, was approached by Disney representatives asking him to make a new Mickey game. Spector initially declined, citing Mickey’s lack of engaging qualities. But this lack of engaging qualities was precisely what Disney wants to change, and, given the go-ahead to “reinvigorate” and “reinvent” (Miller 60) Mickey, Spector accepted the challenge. The game may have been in the works as early as 2004 (Barnes par. 11), but it was not officially announced until early October 2009. It was released for the Nintendo Wii platform on November 30, 2010. As Miller eloquently put it, “as Mickey begins his epic journey seeking redemption, Warren Spector hopes he and his team can do the same for the character in real life” (66). But Mickey’s journey in \textit{Epic Mickey} isn’t just a nod to the future of the mouse’s image, it is also a strange and wonderful exploration of his very real past.

In the game, Sorcerer Yen Sid, a stand-in for Walt Disney (read “Yen Sid” backwards), couldn’t bear to part with characters who were past their prime, much like Disney himself, who was notorious for not being able to throw away anything that

\footnote{Specifically, Miller’s article in \textit{GameInformer} suggests that these efforts are one and the same. Miller introduces the game as the first step in a series of events designed to change Mickey’s appearance and how audiences interact with or respond to him.}

\footnote{Spector cites Mickey’s (literally) split personality as the source of his recent detachment from fan sentiments: “They took his mischievousness and his anger and his need for revenge and gave it to Donald. They took his naïve simplicity and gave it to Goofy. They took his loyalty and infinite affection and gave it to Pluto, of all things. They took his characters and just shattered it, and all of a sudden he’s a kind of straight man for the gang” (Miller 60).}
crossed his drawing desk.\textsuperscript{31} Thus, he created a world for these forgotten characters\textsuperscript{32} – such as once-popular Horace Horsecollar and Clarabelle Cow – to live and thrive in, and based on the world they once knew (Disneyland). But Mickey, in a scene directly appropriated from “Thru the Mirror”\textsuperscript{33} (1936), journeys from his bedroom into Yen Sid’s workshop and accidentally spills paint thinner on the model world, causing terrible damage. Years later, Mickey has gained world-wide popularity while Oswald the Lucky Rabbit – Disney’s first popular creation – has been slowly forgotten.\textsuperscript{34} Mickey is sleeping contently one night when a mysterious force pulls him back through the mirror and into the world on which he spilled thinner. Once inside this world, Mickey has the power to save or entirely destroy the Wasteland, and using this premise, Disney repaints their own history by having players literally repaint it for them in the game. Armed with a paintbrush and barrels of paint and thinner, Mickey must rediscover old friends, old enemies, old cartoon sequences: everything that the contemporary, un-empathetic Mickey has lost in a Wasteland of old, forgotten characters and Mickey paraphernalia.

This world, the Wasteland, is ruled magnanimously by none other than Mickey’s half-brother, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit. The true story of the Disney company again sets

\textsuperscript{31} Spector notes, “‘The archives as Disney are an incredible resource and reveal a lot about a guy who couldn’t bear to part with scripts and storyboards and concept art. It’s an easy next step to say he couldn’t bear to see one of his creative children … [sic] forgotten and lost forever and so the power of that idea, the power of Walt’s imagination called into being this place, the Cartoon Wasteland’” (qtd in Allen par. 11).

\textsuperscript{32} In the game, Gus Gremlin tells Mickey the world was created for “characters the world stopped watching, and stopped loving. Rough drafts, extras, anyone who didn’t work out right. Characters left on the drawing board.” When Mickey notes that a lot of the characters look alike, Gus explains, “They’re different versions from different stories.”

\textsuperscript{33} “Thru the Mirror” begins with Mickey reading Alice in Wonderland in bed. When he falls asleep, he dreams that he travels through his bedroom mirror into an alternate world where his furniture is alive, eating a walnut causes him to grow, and he experiences several events reminiscent of and inspired by Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland.

\textsuperscript{34} The characters are very aware of their own fame and popularity, and they are also aware of their existence as cartoon characters. This is demonstrated in the game as Gus explain how to travel between levels via projectors (“Seems natural for cartoons” to travel this way, he assures Mickey), and also in the digicomic, wherein Horace notes that Pete is “pretty one-dimensional for someone who’s 2-D” (David 7).
the stage for the game: many Disney fans don’t realize that Mickey was not Walt Disney’s first creation. His first character, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, had his own day in the spotlight before Mickey’s inception. Before he had his own studio, Disney had a contract with Universal Studios. By 1928 Oswald had starred in 26 cartoons, drawn by Disney, and was already popular with theater-going crowds. Disney asked producer Charles Mintz for a bigger budget for the series, but Mintz refused, instead stating that Disney would accept a budget cut or be taken off the project. Disney walked away from both Universal and Oswald, choosing instead to begin his own studio from scratch with Ub Iwerks. Mickey was born in this new studio, and he would quickly eclipse Oswald’s fame. By the early 1940s, Oswald was out of cartoons and relegated to appearing in comics alongside Chilly Willy and Andy Panda (P.A.S.). Mickey, meanwhile, was becoming a star. The two never met in the 1930s at the height of their respective heydays, so they come face-to-face for literally the first time in *Epic Mickey.*

The plot of *Epic Mickey* revolves around this sibling rivalry. Oswald is jealous of Mickey, and when Mickey falls into Oswald’s world, the once-lucky rabbit is loathe to accept Mickey’s help. Oswald is jealous of Mickey’s fame, which he believes is rightfully his, and a statue in the middle of downtown Wasteland betrays his deepest longing: to be loved by Walt Disney as Mickey was. The statue is a recreation of the famous statue on Main Street in the Disney parks of Mickey and Walt Disney holding hands and

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35 There is a unique sketch housed in the Disney Archives containing both Mickey and Oswald. It is a mere slip of paper, a note dated Oct 6, 1935, from Disney to the head of Universal Studios. Mickey is walking up to Oswald, smiling and waving, while Oswald glares at him with hands on his hips. The note reads “To Carl Laemmle – In memory of the days when I produced Oswald for Universal – Best wishes always. Sincerely Walt Disney.” This rare work has been reprinted in the Epic Mickey issue of the GameInformer magazine on page 62. As Miller notes in the image’s caption, “it may be the only existing artwork from the period that shows Mickey and Oswald together” (62).
looking to the future, but in the statue in Wasteland, Oswald has inserted himself in Mickey’s place.

Of course, there was one major problem with this storyline as Spector and his team were developing it: Universal still held the rights to Oswald. Fans were utterly confused when, in 2006, Disney traded sportscaster Al Michaels to Universal for an Olympic highlights spot, four Ryder Cup golf tournaments, and a rabbit nobody recognized (Siemaszko). In fact, NBC/Universal Sports and Olympics chairman Dick Ebersol stated that the Oswald series was “something I had no idea about” (qtd in Dempsey par. 6), and he went on to declare that “Oswald has had no value in the U.S. We’re earning nothing from it” (qtd in Dempsey par. 8). Fans and reporters seemed equally in the dark about Oswald as Ebersol; Dempsey called the character’s inclusion in the negotiation for Michaels a “weird concession” (par. 4) in the Daily Variety, while Daily News’ Siemaszko stated that cable rights were the main event and that Universal “threw in” Oswald (par. 10). Disney’s motives for pursuing Oswald may have been unclear in 2006, but time told the tale, and the release of Epic Mickey makes it clear why Disney needed Oswald once more; Disney’s history started with Oswald, and so must Epic Mickey.

Oswald isn’t the only character to resurface because of the verisimilitude of Epic Mickey’s storyline. Mickey’s journey to his historical roots involves other famous characters from his past, including the Phantom Blot, who features as Epic Mickey’s

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36 Siemaszko also quoted Disney spokeswoman Michelle Bergman, who stated that Oswald may be re-released as a Disney DVD (in fact, several Oswald cartoons were released on DVD as a Walt Disney Treasures volume in 2007), and that “Disney is looking into a variety of opportunities for Oswald” (par. 7). The first opportunity was obviously Epic Mickey and the second a release on DVD, but whether Oswald will begin to surface in the Disney theme parks or in cartoons (or perhaps even other video games) has yet to be determined.
primary antagonist. The Phantom Blot, otherwise known simply as the Blot, was created as a black-cloaked character in 1939 for the comic *Mickey Mouse Outwits the Phantom Blot* by Floyd Gottfredson. The Blott was popular in the Italian Disney comic *Topolino*, drawn by Romano Scarpa, during the 1950s and then again in America in the mid-1960s, this time drawn by Paul Murry. But it wasn’t until the mid-1970s in Mark Evanier’s and Robert Armstrong’s *Super Goof* comics that he would be drawn with a mouth, suggesting more of a phantom or shadowy figure than a man in a dark cloak. Convenction held that, while he was almost always caught, the Blot was never, ever unmasked. The only exception to this rule came in the Blot’s very first appearance, well before any conventions about his character had been established. Fascinatingly, particularly in *Epic Mickey*’s context, the one and only time the Blot was unmasked, he was drawn as an eerily accurate depiction of Walt Disney (Pestalozza and Markstein).³⁷

This coincidence is so important to *Epic Mickey* because of the history underlying and being painted over by the entire project. Players are offered a kaleidoscopic account (colorful, sometimes confusing, and definitely jumbled) of the history behind the story. Players must play through this kaleidoscope of fact and fiction, blurring the boundaries between the truth recorded in history and the truth as the player must accept and work within the world of the Wasteland. Walt Disney was historically a man who couldn’t part with his characters, and his alter-ego Yen Sid represents this aspect of him quite clearly in the game. A less often considered version of Disney, however, is that of a creator who willingly abandoned his creation, a person who wanted to see his

³⁷ According to Pestalozza, “Sotto il lenzuolo che cela l’identità del criminale in realtà si nasconde un volto curiosamente ispirato a quello di Walt Disney” (par. 12) (Translation: Under the sheet that hides the identity of the criminal actually hides a face curiously inspired by that of Walt Disney.) This translation was performed on www.freetranslation.com and powered by the Google search engine. Also, per Markstein, “Except for his funny-animal dog nose, [the Blot] looks just like Walt Disney” (par. 9).
competition (Universal) struggle because of his doing by creating a character better than his competitors, even when he, himself, had created the very character he must now outdo. This aspect of Walt Disney appears in the game in the form of the Blot: an uncaring creator who would destroy that which Oswald had worked so hard for. In this story, then, Disney is both the benevolent creator and malicious destroyer. The story has been rewritten in the context of the game to suggest that the tale isn’t as straightforward as it’s usually told; Disney is both loving and devouring mother, both creator and destroyer.\(^{38}\) In this game, Disney is represented both in his historically accepted role and as the Blot, a manifestation of Oswald’s feelings of betrayal, insecurity, and loss.\(^{39}\) Disney himself becomes a remediated character,\(^{40}\) and the game offers players a chance to choose which Disney they feel is the correct representation. By using paint more heavily in the game and behaving in a beneficial way towards non-player characters, players accept the portrayal of Disney as a man who couldn’t bear to part with his creations. If a player strives to play using thinner, however, the characters – including Oswald – react in a much more negative manner, and the player accepts the burden of casting Disney as a fame-hungry, fickle creator willing to destroy whatever he

\(^{38}\) This duality is reminiscent of Austin’s Fairy Godmother character (see chapter 1).

\(^{39}\) Although many fair-weather Disney fans may not know the explicit connection that exists between Disney and the Phantom Blot, it is likely that game designer Warren Spector is aware of the connection. Spector has been cited as a world-class Disney fan in several interviews, and between his pre-existing knowledge of the Disney company and the research he and his team did for the game, it is unlikely that he did not come across this information.

\(^{40}\) Disney has been conceived of as a fictional character – or at least a corporate symbol – before now. One of the first major works to crystallize Disney as a corporate icon was Richard Schickel’s unflattering study of Disney, *The Disney Version* (1968). Recent scholars such as Sammond (in his book *Babes in Tomorrowland*, particularly in the section titled “Disney makes Disney”) perpetuate such projections of Disney as a split figure: on one hand a cultural icon, on the other a real man. Disney biographer Neal Gabler believes that Disney himself realized that he had become an icon: he was “as much a commodity as a man – the very sort of diffident, genial, plainspoken, unprepossessing, and childishly enthusiastic character who would have produced Walt Disney movies. Essentially, he had become his own parcosm. . . . To [an] associate he commented, ‘I’m not Walt Disney anymore. Walt Disney is a thing. It’s grown to become a whole different meaning than just one man’” (Gabler xix).
creates that doesn’t bring him popularity. In this way, players can rewrite the history of Oswald’s abandonment and Mickey’s subsequent rise to stardom.

Rewriting Disney/Oswald’s history is only part of the project; it is one of the symptoms, not the goal. The primary objective of this video game revision and remediation is a remake of Mickey Mouse. Unlike the linear storylines in the KH games, *Epic Mickey* is a non-linear game set up so that the player can decide what actions Mickey should take. For example, several gremlins have been captured, and you can choose to free them, which takes a little extra time and effort, or to ignore them. You can also choose to utilize paint or thinner throughout the game; relying on paint more often is part of the “hero” path, while thinning out the world makes Mickey a “scrapper,” and choosing which way to play slightly alters the ending of the game.

Being able to control Mickey’s behaviors gives players the opportunity to choose which history they believe. This choice simultaneously functions as a way for players to express how they see the main Mouse himself. Mickey has returned to his roots in looks, deeds, and setting. He is not only surrounded by characters who knew him when he was just getting his start (such as Horace Horsecollar and Clarabelle Cow, whom Mickey professes to not remember) but also rendered in a retro fashion. In addition to connecting Mickey to his roots, “Disney has revived the ‘rubber hose Mickey’ with rounded arms and legs and hopes that will tap into an existing fashion for vintage Disney” (Allen par 12). Mickey has been remediated once again, this time as a 3-D

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41 The gremlins originated in 1943 in *The Gremlins: A Royal Airforce Story*, a picture book written by none other than Roald Dahl. In fact, this was Dahl’s first published book, making first editions collector’s items, especially for those with an interest in Dahl’s work. The book was republished in 2006 by Dark Horse Comics (it was originally published by Random House).

42 He does, however, remember Big Bad Pete, and exclaims “I thought these folks were forgotten! I’d never forget YOU, BIG BAD PETE!” (emphasis in original; *Epic Mickey*).
vintage version of his former self. But it’s not just his visage that is reminiscent of his younger (1930s) self; Mickey is also behaving more like he did back in the days of *Steamboat Willie*. As Spector notes, Mickey has recently become untouchable, a veritable straight man. Now, however, all that has changed: “Mickey is never going to be evil or go around killing people,’ Mr. Spector said. But Mickey won’t be bland anymore, either. ‘I wanted him to be able to be naughty – when you’re playing as Mickey you can misbehave and even be a little selfish,’ Mr. Spector said” (Barnes par 11-12). Players “create the Mickey Mouse they imagine in their heads. Is he an ill-behaved rascal, or a selfless hero who sacrifices all for his friends? *Epic Mickey* includes a metasystem that monitors your activity in the game world and responds in kind” (Miller 65).

The importance of this metasystem and the choice that players have in making Mickey a “hero” or a “scrapper” lies in the intertextual nature of the game. Mickey doesn’t remember his former friends, even when they tell him and show him pictures of cartoon episodes they were in together. Mickey has returned to his roots, but he does not remember them. He does not seem to remember how to be a hero: unless, of course, the player helps him to remember by guiding his actions. Conversely, players can help Mickey reconstruct the “naughty” side of himself that was lost, or players can choose a neutral path, using thinner when necessary and paint when beneficial. “Ultimately,’ Mr. Spector said, ‘players must ask themselves, What kind of hero am I?’ when it comes to Mickey, Disney is asking it, too” (Barnes par. 24-25). Disney and

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43 When Mickey first encounters Horace Horsecollar in the Wasteland, for example, Horace remembers Mickey and is thrilled to see him. He reminds Mickey that they were both in “The Fire Fighters” (1930), “The Barnyard Broadcast” (1931), and “The Band Concert” (1935) together, but Mickey sadly shakes his head, unable to remember his old friend and colleague.
Spector may be the ones asking the question, but it is players who must ultimately answer. Thus, the importance of the intertext in this case is that Mickey himself is once again remediated, and the characters remediated alongside him represent parts of himself that were lost as he evolved throughout the years. How Mickey responds to these memories – whether he pursues his naughty side or his heroic side – is up to the player and is played out by how the player makes Mickey interact with the world of the Wasteland and its inhabitants.

This ideal plasticity – making Mickey a character to whom different generations can relate – is engendered in the game not only in Mickey’s appearance (“rubbery” limbs, monotone round eyes, etc), but also in the environment. The Wasteland is “a Disneyland gone horribly wrong through the dark machinations of the Phantom Blot, but still grounded in the humor and charm of Disney cartoons. . . . ‘I want [players] to have this feeling of recognition and familiarity, and then I want to yank the rug out from under them,’ Spector says.” (Miller 65). For example, when wandering around under the inner-workings of the “It’s a Small World” ride that has been recreated in the Wasteland, viewers are treated to an unusual soundtrack – the iconic tune playing backwards. The worlds are more than faintly reminiscent of Disney’s most popular rides – “It’s a Small World,” “Pirates of the Caribbean,” “Haunted Mansion,” etc – and players’ previous knowledge of these rides can come in handy. For example, the “Stretching Room” in the Haunted-Mansion-based level contains the same portraits as those contained in the Disney parks. But the world is off just enough to keep players guessing. The Wasteland is a perfect incarnation of Freud’s *unheimlich*, familiar and yet strange.44

44 “‘We’re kind of looking at this as the bastard love child of Tim Burton and Walt Disney,’ Spector says with a smile” (Miller 65).
More than just being familiar, the setting of the game is not static – players must paint, thin, and re-paint their way through the world. The game is both literally and metaphorically a palimpsest, a layered papyrus of gameplay and history. Allowing players to interact with the environment and other characters using both paint and thinner will:

offer incredible flexibility, letting gamers play through levels in a different way every time, shaping the game geometry and environment as they progress. ‘It’s basically drawing and erasing,’ Spector explains. ‘I’ve been feeling really constrained by the fact that game designers – we build sets. We build things where if you scratch an inch below the surface, there’s nothing there . . . I wanted to create a world that was more than a movie set, where you could scratch beneath the surface and there was more going on there. This whole paint and thinner mechanic really plays into that because you can dynamically change the world to suit your needs.’ (Miller 62)

Spector’s use of an interactive environment allows players to venture beyond the Disneyland they thought they knew. Mickey travels to the gremlin’s village (located in the heart of the inner workings of the “It’s a Small World Ride”), behind Skull Island (from the “Peter Pan” ride), and to many of the “backstage” areas behind rides. What Mickey does in these places influences how the characters and the player perceives Mickey, and in turn Mickey’s interaction with his environment shapes his personality.

**Conclusion: It’s a Small World After All**

In its debut appearance in the King’s Quest series, intertextuality served to set up the groundwork for the game’s puzzles. Players cannot logically work through the game without some pre-existing cultural literacy about the fairy tale characters and creatures invoked throughout the games, particularly in the first few games in the series. Intertextuality also ensures that audiences will engage more quickly, and arguably more
meaningfully, with characters with which they are already familiar and comfortable, such as in Nintendo’s hit *Super Smash Bros*.

These characters also bring a measure of authority to their texts. Disney’s *Kingdom Hearts II* and *Epic Mickey* offer excellent examples of this type of palimpsestuous cultural literacy. The game layers cultural literacy of characters that exist prior to the game in both animated and digitized media (in the original Disney cartoons and in the previous *KH* game). The invocation of players’ prior knowledge of these characters in an intertextual environment acts as a double-edged sword, as stated in my introduction. Gamers are required to draw upon certain elements of cultural literacy in order to engage with the game and its characters in the first place. But the games simultaneously require players to revise or completely abandon some of this cultural literacy – via ruptures, storyline departures, and gameplay choices – in order to progress through the game, which usually does not follow the original story to the letter, even when the goal of the game is to follow the worlds’ pre-existing storylines in order to
complete the various levels. Interestingly, these changes in the characters and storylines reflect ideological stances taken by the company producing the game. The companies invoke pre-textual characters and their narratives in order to engage players, but the companies often alter the characters’ behaviors, storyline, or both in an effort to declare or rewrite their own principles as a company. Companies are therefore able to overwrite the cultural literacy required to play their game with a new literacy – a literacy that reflects the values of their company. When these values are different from those the company promoted in previous games or in other products, the intertextuality allows companies to rewrite – or reprogram – their own histories. Thus, intertextuality in contemporary crossover video games functions as a way to expunge and overwrite the very cultural literacy required to understand the game in the first place, particularly when the cultural literacy involved revolves around a narrative or ideology a company previously produced.

In *Epic Mickey*, specifically, the masterful amalgamation of history and fantasy lends itself well to a re-inscription of Disney history. The game is a re-imagining of Mickey’s invention, ascension, and connection with other characters in his and parallel cartoon universes (Oswald’s, primarily). The remediation of the characters allows players to determine the specific shape this reinvention takes. Oswald and the Blot, as well as Disney himself, are important pre-textually because of their embodiment of the historical tale underlying the plot. Mickey must rediscover old friends, old enemies, old cartoon sequences: everything that the contemporary, un-empathetic Mickey has lost. But this discovery is necessarily colored (no pun intended) by changes in ideology. Although players can return Mickey to his former, “naughty” self, they do not have the
option of abusing animals in Epic Mickey, even though Mickey was guilty of this crime in Steamboat Willie.

The picture that Disney paints of Mickey in *Epic Mickey* can be altered based on players’ actions, but only within certain limits. While Disney wants to reconstitute the Mickey whose personality was split between his co-stars, and while they want to return Mickey to his roots as a more human character – subject to passion, fear, playfulness, etc. – they do not necessarily want to realign him entirely with his former jejune self. Doing so would mean a return to a character who would be just as unsympathetic as a cold, iconic symbol. Audiences would be every bit as inclined to reject a character who abuses animals and forces Minnie into amorous situations as they would a character who is distant and difficult to relate to. Disney walks a fine line in *Epic Mickey*; players are allowed to reinscribe, or more literally repaint, history, but only within the boundaries within which the company is comfortable. Naughtiness and heroics are one thing, evilness and saccharine-sweetness are quite another. Disney wants their players to remember the Mickey of old – playful and mischievous – but they (wisely) do not wish to invoke old controversies. The plot of *Epic Mickey* offers players a revised version of Mickey’s history and Mickey, himself – which players get to choose based on how they play – but these choices are surprisingly limited by the boundaries within which Disney wants Mickey to be perceived. The game therefore alters cultural literacy of Mickey by offering several alternative choices, none of which include elements that Disney would rather keep in the famed “Disney Vaults.”

Disney biographer Neil Gabler notes, “as [Disney] reinvented animation and amusement, he changed Americans’ views of their own history and values” by
“exploiting a lode of nostalgia that become identifiable enough to be called ‘Disneyesque’” and “fashion[ing] an American past of rugged heroes and bold accomplishment that for generations turned history into boyhood adventure” (Gabler xiii). The Disney company continues to do the same today, but their focus has turned to their own history. The world of Disney that players, audiences, and fans get to see – the history that Disney wants us to remember – is a very small world, indeed. It is a world driven by the remediation and intertextual employment of characters we have come to know and love, and it is this cultural literacy upon which the company builds. Intertextuality has become a tool by which Disney can repaint their own past. Ironically, the tool was handed down to them by Walt Disney himself, who has become yet another pre-textual and remediated character.
CHAPTER 5
MINDING THE FUTURE: A CODA

Epigraph

“Into the woods you go again, / You have to every now and then. / Into the woods, no telling when, / Be ready for the journey. / . . . Into the woods, but mind the past. / Into the woods, but mind the future.”

--Sondheim, Into the Woods

Conclusion

As my project has demonstrated, crossover intertextuality pervades children’s and young adult culture, relying on, changing the shape of, and overwriting previous versions of pre-established characters, storylines, and tropes. This process is recursive, impacting past, present, and future literary landscapes by its constant appropriation and abridgement of pre-textual characters. Crossover intertextuality both influences how readers respond to these pre-textual elements as they read and determines how readers perceive and interact with such characters and texts in the future. Sondheim’s quote in my epigraph points to crossover intertextuality’s inherent mindfulness of both past and present, and it also captures the pervasive nature of intertextuality. As Kristeva noted, you cannot read a text in isolation, and so you “have to [acknowledge, or at least experience, intertextuality] every now and then.”

In the nineteenth century, authors relied on this recursive power in order to enter into the discourses they were hoping to influence, including debates about didacticism in children’s stories and the transmission of the texts children were reading. A similar phenomenon can be found in contemporary young adult novels, but now that the theories and studies surrounding the literature have matured and become more complex, so too have the metadiscourses contained within the intertexts. A comparable
movement can be seen in picture books, wherein authors rely on pre-textual characters to test and expand upon readers’ knowledge of specific canonical characters. Digital intertexts, too, rely on crossover intertextuality’s relationships with past and present texts, appropriating – and often remediating – characters in order to de- and re-construct audience’s perception of these characters.

While intertextuality draws on the past, the process has implications for future audiences. Crossover intertextuality both promotes and subverts the discourses from which it borrows and in which it resides. This dichotomous function renders it a potent but double-edged tool, one that is often unpredictable. For example, as demonstrated in chapter two, picture books that test readers’ knowledge of certain pre-textual characters also play the dual function of re-inscribing and supporting those characters’ place in the canon of popular children’s literature. Even when the characters are significantly altered or even maligned/represented in a way completely antithetical to their original role (such as Gothel, the witch from Rapunzel, being portrayed in Durst’s books as a loving mother and grandmother when she’s out of the Wild), the texts still serve as a way for the characters to enjoy renewed, repeated attention. For readers, crossover intertextuality’s many – and sometimes seemingly contradicting – functions beg questions about these texts’ influence on the canon and how they alter expectations of cultural literacy, how they critique contemporary culture, how they revise our understanding of past texts, as well as how they challenge our understanding of the way narratives work on the most fundamental level. These four topics, which I raised in my introduction, can be answered by an examination of the case studies I offered in this dissertation.
First, these texts influence the body of knowledge necessary for cultural literacy by re-inscribing, re-circulating, and sometimes updating the characters and using the characters to comment on contemporary issues. Throughout this project, I have been referring to readers’ cultural literacy; indeed, any discussion of intertextuality is inextricably linked to the cultural literacy of the reader/viewer/gamer. As defined by E.D. Hirsch, cultural literacy is the “information that isn’t set down on the page” (*Cultural Literacy* 3), the “network of information that all competent readers possess” (*Cultural Literacy* 2). For Hirsch, this background knowledge ought to be a universal pool, containing information that all literate American adults can decode and understand.¹ Cultural literacy, then, is a term that identifies the broad, yet necessarily shallow, body of knowledge necessary for consumers of texts to make meaning from the words on the page, the dialogue being spoken, the costumes being worn, the setting and props, etc. As Hirsch asserts, “the explicit words are just surface pointers to textual meaning in reading and writing. The comprehending reader must bring to the text appropriate background information that includes knowledge not only about the topic but also the shared attitudes and conventions that color a piece of writing [or any text]” (*Cultural Literacy* 13-14). Rather than being limited to a description of cultural literacy, this quotation also brings to mind the definition of intertextuality. Intertextuality, as defined in my introduction, refers to every possible semiotic connection a work has within a synchronic system of language and/or culture. Theories of intertextuality are dependent

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¹ As Hirsch himself identifies it, one of the primary problems with his *Cultural Literacy* project is that the book has been identified by critics as “a reactionary tract aimed at preserving the intellectual domination of white Anglo-Saxon males” (*Deficit* 6). Although I do not wish to enter the debate about whether or not this universal body of literature is or ought to be multicultural, I do acknowledge the importance of this aspect in the academic dialogue about cultural literacy.
upon cultural literacy because the semiotic connections readers make are determined
by their cultural literacy.

This universal pool of knowledge that readers must rely on to make meaning from
any given text is, as stated above, necessarily shallow. But this isn’t a drawback; as
Hirsch notes, “what counts is our ability to grasp the general shape of what we are
reading and to tie it to what we already know” (Cultural Literacy 14-15). Cultural literacy
suggests an overarching understanding of the context a text relies upon, but it is up to
the individual to make that text relevant by his or her own particular knowledge and
cultural context. For example, one can read about the history of fairy tales without
knowing “Le Conte de la Mere-Grand,” but one must know generally what a “fairy tale”
is. As Hirsch describes it, “cultural literacy lies above the everyday levels of knowledge
that everyone possesses and below the expert level known only to specialists” (Cultural
Literacy 19). Cultural literacy therefore resides in a gray area, comprising a body of
common knowledge that is neither too specific nor too concrete to change. Cultural
literacy’s nebulous location lends itself quite well to crossover intertexts. While
crossover intertexts are explicit about what pre-textual material is being relied upon,
readers must draw upon their cultural literacy of the characters invoked in order to
understand the story. They must also then have the capacity to adjust their
understanding of the character as (s)he is being used in the new intertextual context,
and cultural literacy’s vagueness allows for this flexibility. Crossover intertexts often
reflect cultural literacy and then critique it, and it is, at least partially, the flexibility
provided by the cultural literacy invoked in the tales that allow them this critical distance.

2 He refers back to this definition of cultural literacy being somewhere between daily knowledge and field-
specific knowledge in The Knowledge Deficit (71, 73).
For example, nineteenth century authors of crossover intertexts used pre-textual fairy tale characters to question and discuss the characters’ employment for didactic purposes, and more contemporary authors of young adult books have used crossover intertextuality to blur the boundaries between “critical” and “primary” works of children’s literature. In both cases, the authors engaged with popular content in order to comment upon contemporary issues surrounding that content. Readers are either indoctrinated into these meta-issues by reading the text or are already engaging with the text on a meta-level. Either way, the texts represent and reflect changes in the body of culturally shared knowledge about these texts. For example, Snow White as a character has evolved, and readers are now expected to know her not only as passive princess, but as a passive princess who has developed into a vehicle for feminist retellings and reversions of princess fairy tales. Buckley’s successful use of Snow White in this role, and his implicit assumption that readers will respond to this character as a reflection of a contemporary trend, suggest that the cultural literacy surrounding Snow White is changing. Of course, Buckley’s use of her in this way promotes such a change.

Crossover intertexts don’t just borrow from and add to past texts; they sometimes alter the existing body of cultural knowledge about the pre-texts altogether. Readers’ perceptions of the original texts can be influenced by the way authors layer characters with multiple meanings. In some cases, authors seek not to rely upon previous versions of a character but to completely overwrite them. While Hirsch admits that cultural literacy is about breadth over depth, he does not seem to recognize the dynamic nature of this body of knowledge. He is specifically concerned with teenagers’ lack of universal knowledge; he states that “what they know is ephemeral and narrowly confined to their
own generation” (*Cultural Literacy* 7). But cultural literacy is necessary not a static body. Hirsch overlooks the importance of popular culture and generation-specific information.

The shape of cultural literacy is always in flux; a reference to a popular sitcom may not resonate with an older audience but may be profound for a younger one. Because new texts are always being written, designed, and/or aired, the body of knowledge that is cultural literacy is constantly changing. Crossover intertexts rely on the authority of previous texts to make their points; they rely on the cultural literacy that readers bring to the texts. However, the texts then necessarily alter the shape of the reader’s knowledge by introducing new character traits, scenarios, and tropes. These changes are then incorporated into the contemporary discourse of cultural knowledge, what counts as cultural literacy in any given moment. Sometimes the changes are added to the body of cultural literacy, other times they may reinscribe or overwrite tidbits of information.

Disney offers an excellent illustration of the changing shape of cultural literacy, as the company expects their audiences to respond to Mickey’s new (and yet old/original) look and personality as discussed in chapter four. This example also offers ramifications for the artificiality of cultural literacy. Disney creates their own canon, then offers their own adaptations of this canon. They create their own history, expect their fans to accept it, then alter that history and expect their audiences to go along with the change. Once again, the vagueness of cultural literacy aids the crossover intertext’s goal. Die-hard fans or scholars of Disney may catch discrepancies in Mickey’s character, but those who are culturally literate – those who know enough but not too much – will respond favorably to the intertext.

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3 For instance, fans and scholars of the original Mickey cartoons, including “Steamboat Willie,” will note the obvious changes and omissions in Mickey’s personality in the “Timeless River” stage in *KHII*. 
All of these issues add up to one larger issue: crossover intertexts pose questions about the very nature of narrative. They suggest, of course, that reading is a recursive process. Beyond that, however, crossover intertexts consciously use the authority of their pre-textual elements in a recursive way. The cultural literacy associated with the characters lends them credibility, but the cultural literacy associated with the characters necessarily changes when the characters are used in new contexts and storylines to promote or rewrite contemporary ideologies. The crystallized authority and linear nature of narrative are cracked and thwarted within these texts, which simultaneously rely on and revise the story tropes and character traits they draw upon and from which they borrow authority. The cultural literacy associated with the characters and tropes is changed or overwritten, and so the expectations with which readers approach other texts is necessarily changed, as well.

Many studies of intertextuality focus on a) adult works, b) postmodernist works (relegating intertextuality as a symptom of postmodernism), or c) picture books. This study clearly demonstrates, however, that crossover intertextuality does occur regularly in children’s and young adult works; that it is a movement independent from postmodernism; and that while intertextuality does, indeed, occur in picture books, it is also prevalent in other genres and media for young readers. These intertexts are more subtle and subversive than has been suggested previously. The texts rely on authority even as they question it, and they borrow from the past and from cultural literacy even as they change and overwrite them. They reveal the recursive and strange temporal properties of literary history, and often call into question the legitimacy of this history, even as they teach beginning readers how to read. Rather than suggesting that texts
exist in isolation, they encourage readers to develop, draw upon, then even change and question the cultural literacy that the reader is bringing to the text in the first place.

Although Stephens and McCallum are right to point out that an author cannot be sure what level of cultural literacy a child will bring to a text, I contend that with crossover intertexts this is a moot point. Crossover intertexts suture the past with the future: they teach child readers what the canon is, then suggest to old readers that they question this same canon. They rely on cultural literacy even as they revise it, and so no matter where a child reader begins, he or she will ultimately end up in the right “neck of the woods,” so to speak, or in other words with a working knowledge – a cultural literacy – of the stories, which is itself a constantly changing body of knowledge. Sondheim declares, “Into the woods, but mind the past. / Into the woods, but mind the future”: sound advice for reading texts which ultimately already do, and have always done, both.
APPENDIX
LIST OF CROSSOVER INTERTEXTS

This appendix lists the various crossover intertexts that I discovered while researching this project. Though this is not an exhaustive list, I hope it at least demonstrates the pervasiveness and popularity of such texts. The works have been divided by genre, but some may arguably belong in more than one category. In such cases, I tried to place the work under the category which best describes it. Within categories, works are listed by publication date, beginning with the oldest. The only exception is series, which are listed together.

Nineteenth-Century Crossover Intertexts

The “Golden Age” of children’s literature is generally held to be a period of time within and just following the nineteenth century. While the “Golden Age” of children’s literature is often considered to have begun with the publication of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll (1865) and to end either before the first World War (1914) or with the publication of Winnie-the-Pooh by A.A. Milne (1926), the exact end date is often contested. I have chosen to fix the cut-off point for this category as 1926 in order to include in this category several books published just before the end date.


Corkran, Alice. The Adventures of Mrs. Wishing-To-Be. Glasgow: Blackie and Son, c1883.


Browne, Maggie. Wanted, a King, or How Merle Set the Nursery Rhymes to Rights. London, 1890.


**Picture Book Crossover Intertexts**


**Young Adult Crossover Intertexts**


**Theatrical / Filmic Crossover Intertexts**

Where possible, I have cited recorded performances (videos/DVDs); however, for those theatrical performances that have not been recorded, I have listed print copies of librettos.
Dibdin, Thomas. *Harlequin and Mother Goose; or, the Golden Egg.* London: T.H. Tracy, 1805.


The Superhero Squad Show. Perf. Tom Kenny, David Boat and Steve Blum. Film Roman Productions / Marvel Animation, 2009-current. DVD, TV.


Video Game Crossover Intertexts

King’s Quest Collection. Roanoke: Vivendi Jeux PC, 1984/2006. PC.


Nicktoons Unite!. Agoura Hills: THQ, 2005. GameCube, PlayStation 2, Gameboy Advance, Nintendo DS.


*Cartoon Network Universe: FusionFall*. Atlanta: Cartoon Network, 2009. MMORPG.


Adult Crossover Intertexts

Perhaps the largest and most popular adult crossover universe is encapsulated by the “Wold Newton Family,” a litany of connections among literary characters created by author José Phillip Farmer. Farmer’s connections were greatly expanded by Win Scott Eckert, a Farmer fan and scholar. Eckert’s two books, *Crossovers: A Secret Chronology of the World* (volumes 1 and 2) offer a comprehensive history of the connections in the Wold Newton Universe, as the expanded version is called, tracing connections throughout various media. While not a crossover itself, Eckert’s book has been listed with Farmer’s series; it is a unique and interesting reference tool for those pursuing Farmer’s unique crossover universe.


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<http://www.penguin.co.uk/nf/Author/AuthorPage/0,,1000000334,00.html>.


Corkran, Alice. The Adventures of Mrs. Wishing-To-Be. Glasgow: Blackie and Son, c1883. Print.


*Shrek.* Dir. Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson. Perf. Mike Myers, Cameron Diaz, Eddie Murphy, and John Lithgow. DreamsWorks Animation, 2001. DVD.


“What’s New: Super Smash Bros. Brawl Smashes Nintendo Sales Records”
 <http://www.nintendo.com/whatsnew/detail/AU8xLess7wISKbSMpYCj_HThii8UiBzG.>


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Cari Keebaugh (maiden name Crumrine) was born and grew up in Martinsburg, Pennsylvania, a small town in the central part of the state. Her parents often read to her growing up, so much so that she used to recite the text to her favorite picture books long before she could actually read. She graduated from a high school that was bordered by corn fields on three sides and a cow pasture on the fourth before moving to Florida to pursue a bachelor’s of science degree in psychology with an English minor. It was during this time that she came to acknowledge her abiding love of children’s and young adult literature, and so she earned her master’s degree in the University of Florida’s English Department in 2005. In May 2006, she married musicologist Aaron Keebaugh. Upon completing her PhD, Cari has put her love of “kidlit” to practical use, teaching the subject at the college level.