Intertextuality surrounds us every day. It is in the books we read, the movies we watch and the paintings we view. In fact, it is so ingrained and expected in the world, that some theorists, such as Michail Bakhtin, would argue that without it we would lack the creativity and brilliance that exists today in the world of media, art and text. “Each media text exists in relation to others. In fact, texts owe more to other texts than to their own makers” (Chandler Chapter 13).

Julia Kristeva first introduced the concept of intertextuality in her work of the late-1960s. The fundamental concept of intertextuality is that no text, much as it might like to appear so, is completely original and unique-in-itself; rather it is inevitably a combination of references to and quotations from other texts that, in turn, condition its meaning. In other words, “the text is an intervention in a cultural system” (Allen).

Kristeva’s usage of “intertextuality” represents an attempt to synthesize Ferdinand de Saussure’s structuralist semiotics—his study of how signs derive their meaning within the structure of a text—with Bakhtin’s dialogism—his examination of the multiple meanings, or “heteroglossia,” in each text and word. For Kristeva, “the notion of intertextuality replaces the notion of intersubjectivity” when we realize that meaning is not transferred directly from writer to reader but instead is mediated through, or filtered by, “codes” imparted to the writer and reader by other texts (“Intertextuality”).
Therefore, intertextuality, as defined in Merriam-Webster, is the complex interrelationship between a text and other texts taken as basic to the creation or interpretation of the text (“Intertextuality”). And, it can refer to an author’s borrowing and transformation of a prior text or to a reader’s referencing of one text in reading another.

For example, when we watch fairy tales, such as *Snow White, Cinderella, Peter Pan* or *Sleeping Beauty*, we decode it as an oral manifestation that has been recreated or reinterpreted into a written, visual and/or audio form.

As most people know, fairy tales have existed for thousands of years and are simply noted as “fictional stories;” fictional stories that may feature folkloric characters, such as fairies, gnomes, and talking animals, and often involve a far-fetched sequence of events (“Fairy Tale”). Fairy tales began as an oral medium and, over the years, have expanded into literary form. The reworking of these fictional stories can be seen throughout our history and actually be considered relatively common.

Therefore, the analysis of intertextuality within fairy tales is limitless and can be interestingly analyzed when looking at a tale, such as the *Three Little Pigs*, which has been reinterpreted throughout the last two centuries in various media, using different formats, points of view and story embellishments.

The *Three Little Pigs* is a fairy tale featuring talking animals. Printed versions date back to the 1840s, but the story itself is thought to be much older.
As with most "original" versions of tales, the story of the *Three Little Pigs* is believed to have oral roots, but the first known written version, “Three Little Pigs and the Big Bad Wolf,” was included in *Nursery Rhymes and Nursery Tales* by James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps, first published about 1843, and the story in its arguably best-known form appeared in *English Fairy Tales* by Joseph Jacobs, first published in 1890, which credited Halliwell as the source (“Three Little Pigs”).

Since its inception in written form the story of the *Three Little Pigs* has been reinterpreted a variety of times. For the purpose of this paper, I decided to analyze the intertextuality of *The Three Little Pigs* tale based off of Jacobs’ popular written version through a variety of media, including a movie version produced by Disney in 1933, a unique retelling of the story from the wolf’s point of view, an artistic illustration created for an article in Builder Magazine and a popular heavy metal song released by Green Jelly in 1993.

*Jacobs’ version* of the story begins with the title characters, the three little pigs, being sent out into the world by their mother, to "seek their fortune." The first little pig builds a house of straw, but a wolf blows it down and proceeds to eat the little pig. The second pig builds a house of furze, but encounters the same ultimate result. The third pig builds a house of hard bricks and the wolf cannot “huff and puff” hard enough to blow the house down. He attempts to trick the third pig out of the house repeatedly, but is continually outwitted. Finally,
the wolf resolves to come down the chimney, whereupon the pig boils a pot of water into which the wolf plunges, and is cooked for supper by the third pig.

Unlike Jacobs’ version, which leaves the pigs nameless, another well-known version of the story is an award-winning 1933 *Silly Symphony* cartoon, produced by Walt Disney, which cast the title characters as Fifer Pig, Fiddler Pig, and Practical Pig. The first two are depicted as both frivolous and arrogant and the plot is slightly altered by stating that the first pig ran to the second pig’s house, then both of them ran to the third brother’s house of bricks and, additionally, the end of the story has been slightly changed as well because the wolf is not cooked but instead burns his behind and runs away howling. It is presumed that the lack of death is all in an attempt to write out violence in the story.

A parody of The Three Little Pigs, *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, is a children’s book by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith, which famously presents the story as a first-person narrative by the wolf, known in the book as A. Wolf, who portrays the entire incident as a misunderstanding. The book, as indicated at the beginning, basically tries to show that the wolf from the *Three Little Pigs* does not necessarily have to be "Big" and "Bad." The wolf justifies his journeys to the little pigs’ houses as needing to ask for some sugar to bake a cake.
for his dear Granny’s birthday, his "huffing and puffing" as him having a cold and "sneeze[ing] a great sneeze,” and his eating of the pigs as not letting good meat go to waste, since the pigs die in the sneeze anyway. At the very end of the book, it is revealed that the wolf has been sharing the whole story from prison telling the reader that "he's been framed.”

"Three Little Pigs” is a song by the comedy heavy metal band Green Jelly, from the album Cereal Killer. The song is a re-telling of the classic fairy tale, Three Little Pigs, with modern twists, such as big-city living pigs, an appearance by Rambo (who ultimately kills the wolf) and a Harley-Davidson-riding wolf. As heard in the lyrics and further depicted through the song’s claymation music video, the first pig is a musician residing in New York City, the second is a stoner in Venice Beach and the third is a nerdy Harvard architecture graduate, living in a mansion in Hollywood Hills. The three pigs are unrelated but, as determined by the classic tale, are being craved by a wolf. The wolf destroys the first two pigs’ houses, but cannot blow down the third brick mansion. Rambo is called in to kill the wolf and everyone lives happily ever after. The video ends with a message stating: “And the moral of the story is that bands with no talent can easily amuse idiots with a stupid puppet show…” This is a very different ending from the common “The End,” often used at the end of Disney movies and fairy tale books.
Robert Meganck’s illustration of the *Three Little Pigs* was used to accompany an article for Builder Magazine entitled “The Importance of Quality,” on the worth of obtaining quality building materials, and the problems associated with trying to get by with sub-standard supplies. A visual reference to the story of the *Three Little Pigs* provided an appropriate analogy and depicts two of the pigs walking in one direction with straw and twigs, and the third smirking pig walking in the other direction with bricks.

Although each of these texts utilizes a different media form, they all reinterpret the well-known story of the *Three Little Pigs* and personify Kristeva’s analysis of texts as utilizing two axes: a horizontal axis connecting the author and reader of a text, and a vertical axis which connects the text to other texts; therefore concluding that uniting these two axes are shared codes and that every text and every reading depends on prior codes. “Every text is from the outset under the jurisdiction of other discourses which impose a universe on it (Chandler Chapter 13).”

Looking at the various reinterpreted versions of the tale in chronological order, each expands and rejects various themes and principles of earlier versions. The intricate compilation of variations incorporates both old and new elements, as well as modified/modernized themes of the “original” version, while still using the same basic characters and plot.
Jacobs’ version had three unnamed pigs, two of which are killed by the wolf before he is killed himself. The cartoon version created by Disney named the pigs and personified each of them with personality traits – frivolous, arrogant and hardworking – and not only omitted the killing of the first two pigs, but also the wolf. In the satirical version created in 1989, the tale, for the first time, was told by the Big Bad Wolf, altering not only the point of view but also the underlying theme of “good pig, bad wolf.” Green Jelly’s song entitled “Three Little Pigs” modernizes the story by giving the pigs jobs and hobbies. And, finally, the illustration for Builder Magazine used the well-known tale as a way to reach consumers through a visual reference point without the use of any actual copy common to the written and oral versions of the tale.

This intertextual view of literature, as stated by Michel Foucault, proves that “the frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network... The book is not simply the object that one holds in one’s hands... Its unity is variable and relative” (Foucault 23).

Sometimes these intertextual interpretations are blatant, as in the case of converting a book to film or in the Jacobs’ version of the Three Little Pigs and Jon Scieszka’s The True Story of the Three Little Pigs; however, at other times there is no direct reference, as in the case of Robert Meganck’s illustration. But, regardless, the concept of intertextuality is still visible and relevant to the creation of each work. As
determined by theorists and grounded in Roland Barthes’ work on the status of ‘authorship,’ intertextuality confuses the concept of authorial control by considering the writer an orchestrator of what has already been written, rather than an originator. “A text is... a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations... The writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them” (Barthes, “Image-Music-Text” 146). In his fifth proposition in “From Work to Text,” Barthes discusses this concept further by asserting that a text can be broken and read without the guarantee of its father because the restoring of the intertext surprisingly abolishes any legacy. In other words, a text has no source and each translation of a text is a re-authoring. “The author is a mere guest at the reading of the Text” (Barthes, “From Work to Text”). An intertextual piece is a compellation of interactions with other works; therefore, no neutral translation – whether from the writer or reader – is possible. An intertextual work has no exact start or beginning, only a frame, or prior knowledge, with which to begin the process of creation.

Therefore, the framing of texts by other texts has implications for both writers and readers. Nobody today “can read a famous novel or poem, look at a famous painting, drawing or sculpture, listen to a famous piece of music or watch a famous play or film without being conscious of the contexts in which the text had been reproduced, drawn upon, alluded to, parodied and so on. Such contexts constitute a primary
frame which the reader cannot avoid drawing upon in interpreting the text” (Chandler Chapter 13).

And although there is a frame, Daniel Chandler notes in “Semiotics for Beginners” that “the boundaries of texts are permeable. Each text exists within a vast ’society of texts’ in various genres and media: no text is an island entire of itself” (Chapter 13). Therefore, comparing the varying treatments of the repeated *Three Little Pigs* theme between different media lends itself to being an interesting technique that further problematizes the idea of a text having boundaries.

The *Three Little Pigs* is a common tale, known by most of society, which lends the frame necessary for reinterpretations; however, once within the boundary created from prior knowledge, the recreations are endless. A written story, such as the one created by Jacobs, can easily be reworked into a film, song or illustration while still exemplifying the same basic premise that was originally generated.

Consequently, intertextuality – the borrowing and transformation of another text; an interpretation of other versions of the story – is a dominant idea within literary and cultural studies leaving none of the traditional ideas about reading, writing, listening or viewing undisturbed. And, as is the case with the tale of the *Three Little Pigs*, it is a borderless phenomenon that is woven so deeply that the fabric of a text is impossible to unravel. There is no beginning and no end; it is all one grand “quotation-less quotation.”
Evaluation

As far as my research goes, there were a plethora of *Three Little Pigs* works and it was hard to narrow it down to just a few, but overall I enjoyed viewing the different pieces and figuring out how they all connected, yet at the same time, strayed from one another. To do a complete analysis one would have to look at far more reinterpretations of the story, which would have just been too much for this project. However, I felt that I chose a wide-range of works from varying media forms, in order to conduct as complete of an analysis as possible, and it was surprising to find how many people have reworked the historic tale (primarily the song, which was a huge surprise to me).

For a future analysis, I think it would be interesting to look deeper into the concept of genre theory raised by Chandler and/or conduct further research on the varying levels of intertextuality, particularly in relation to works that have no direct reference to the “original” work. In other words, when looking at the *Three Little Pigs* specifically, if one was to change the pigs to rabbits and the wolf to a fox, would the story still be recognizable if the plotline was the same? I believe it would, but think it would be an interesting study on the depths of intertextuality and how ingrained it is in our culture. I also think it would be interesting to look at the same varying levels of intertextuality, but in regards to advertising – a topic raised by Chandler in his discussion of the Absolut Vodka advertisements – since this is where a lot of my past research falls.
Overall, however, I found the analysis to be intriguing and enjoyable and the concept of intertextuality to be not only of extreme importance but also very interesting.
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