‘Being Not Alone in the World’
Exploring Reader Responses to Crossover Books

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August, 2012

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Abstract

When contemporary readers, both young and old, claim "crossover books" such as *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, and *The Hunger Games* as their own (Beckett, 2009; Falconer, 2009), they subvert socially constructed borders that segregate child and adulthood (James & Prout, 1997; Jenks, 1996). Some adults are perplexed and alarmed by this culture-sharing, because it challenges the dominant perception that child and adulthood are, and should remain, distinct states (Danesi, 2003; Postman, 1982). In this dissertation, I identify cross-reading as a critical practice that can encourage intergenerational connections by illuminating a continuum of experience between life stages and facilitating community and conversation between readers of all ages.

The research reflects original, interdisciplinary inquiry into the crossover phenomenon by exploring reader response to crossover books. Through self and case study, I address key questions of engagement such as: Why do readers reach beyond socially prescribed reading boundaries in search of story? How do they identify with crossover literature? What is significant about their individual and shared experiences of cross-reading? I hypothesize that cross-readers may be attracted to themes of continuance in crossover narratives that promote a more holistic understanding of life experience and identity that is not segregated by age. I suggest that readers can gain a greater sense of community and experience "grand conversation" (Peterson & Eeds, 1990), more open, honest and equal dialogue with readers in other age groups, by sharing their responses to crossover books.

Through methodology that combines children's literature criticism , memory work, narrative inquiry and book discussion, I examine the real world applications of this hypothesis by investigating whether themes of continuance, community and conversation echo in readers' experiences with crossover books. I use literary portraiture to construct reading portraits of myself, and the research participants, to illustrate how readers identify through story, and 'perform' their "storied formation" (Strong-Wilson, 2008) for others. These intimate and detailed pictures of cross-readers in conversation reflect new avenues for researching, representing and understanding the complexity of the cross-reading experience.

By focusing on reader response, this dissertation provides critical research on the greater significance of cross-reading, examining not only what crossover literature is, but what it does for readers (Falconer, 2009). In this way, the research complements and extends current crossover studies grounded in children's literature criticism. Because the study illuminates how readers identify through story and bring this understanding to their real world relationships, there are also valuable resonances here for scholars investigating literacy studies, library studies, teacher education, curriculum studies, identity formation, memory work, intergenerational relationships, and the study of young people's texts and cultures.

Keywords: crossover literature, children's literature, childhood, intergenerational relationships, reader response, literary portraiture, storied formation, memory work

Résumé

Lorsque les lecteurs contemporains, jeunes et vieux, s'approprient la "littérature pour tous" comme *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, et *The Hunger Games* (Beckett, 2009; Falconer, 2009), ils franchissent les limites sociales qui séparent l'enfance de l'âge adulte (James & Prout, 1997; Jenks, 1996). Certains adultes sont perplexes et alarmés par ce partage de culture parce que cela remet en question la perception dominante que l'enfance et l'âge adulte sont, et devraient rester, des « mondes » distincts. Dans la présente thèse, je considère la lecture transgénérationnelle comme une pratique critique qui peut encourager la formation de liens d'une génération à l'autre en illuminant un continuum d'expérience entre les étapes de la vie et en facilitant le rapprochement et les échanges entre les lecteurs de tous âges.

Cette recherche représente une enquête originale, interdisciplinaire, qui porte sur le phénomène de la littérature pour tous en explorant la réaction des lecteurs à ce genre littéraire. Par des analyses de mon vécu et des études de cas, j'explore ce qui pousse le lecteur à lire des œuvres écrites pour une autre génération en posant des questions telles que : Pourquoi les lecteurs à la recherche d'histoires inédites sont-ils prêts à franchir les limites de ce qui est vu comme approprié pour leur âge? Comment peuvent-ils s'identifier avec la littérature d'une autre génération? Qu'est-ce qui distingue leurs expériences individuelles et partagées de la lecture transgénérationnelle? La thèse que je soutiens, c'est que le lecteur qui s'intéresse à ce type de littérature est attiré par les thèmes de continuité qu'on y trouve. Ces thèmes favorisent une vue plus globale des expériences de la vie et de l'identité, et tendent à abolir les frontières séparant les groupes d'âge. Je

suggère que le lecteur acquiert ainsi un plus grand sentiment d'appartenance à la communauté et qu'il fait l'expérience d'une « grande conversation » (Peterson & Eeds, 1990), un discours plus ouvert, honnête, et égal, avec les lecteurs d'âges différents.

La méthode employée intègre la critique de la littérature pour enfants, le travail de mémoire, l'enquête narrative et les comptes rendus de lectures. J'examine les applications pratiques de la thèse que j'avance en tentant de déceler les thèmes de continuité, de communauté et de conversation dans les expériences des lecteurs. J'utilise la portraiture littéraire pour construire un portrait de lecture de moi-même et des participants du projet de recherche, pour illustrer comment les lecteurs s'identifient à une histoire et intègrent leurs "histoires identitaires" (*storied formation*, Strong-Wilson, 2008). Ces descriptions intimes et approfondies des lecteurs en conversation ouvrent des pistes de recherche inédites pour mieux représenter et comprendre toute la complexité de la littérature pour tous.

En analysant les réactions des lecteurs, je contribue à faire avancer la recherche sur l'important phénomène de la littérature pour tous, non seulement en éclairant la nature de cette dernière, mais aussi en montrant son effet sur les lecteurs (Falconer, 2009). De cette façon, ma recherche s'inscrit dans la foulée des études sur le sujet, qui s'appuient sur la critique de la littérature pour enfants. Puisque le présent travail met en lumière comment les lecteurs se servent d'histoires pour construire leur identité et comment leurs relations personnelles s'en trouvent informées, il apporte des outils qui peuvent être appliqués dans d'autres domaines tels que l'étude de la littératie, la bibliothéconomie, la

formation des maîtres, l'étude des programmes, le développement de l'identité, le travail de mémoire, les relations entre les générations, et les études sur les écrits et la culture des jeunes.

Mots clés: littérature pour tous, littérature pour enfants, enfance, relations entre les générations, réaction du lecteur, portraiture littéraire, "histoires identitaires" (*storied formation)*, travail de mémoire

Acknowledgements

I greatly appreciate the financial support of *The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, McGill University*, *The Herschel and Christine Victor Fellowship*, and the *Government of Quebec*, who have made my research and continued education possible.

I could not have completed my research without my academic support team: I deeply thank my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Teresa Strong-Wilson, for her encouragement and support through the entirety of my doctoral studies. I am grateful to Dr. Sandra Weber for first extending an invitation to Montreal, and for offering me invaluable friendship and guidance. I also thank Dr. Mary Maguire and Dr. Sandra Beckett for providing such considered comments on my work.

This study would not exist without my research participants. I cannot thank them enough for welcoming me into their home and sharing their love of books so easily with me.

I must acknowledge the 'life supports' who have truly made this work possible: Amber Eckhardt, for caring for my daughter and allowing me time to write, and to the gentlemen at Clyde Henry Productions for giving me a place to scribble in. I thank my parents and family for their encouragement, and my friends, particularly Dawn Rouse and Francesca D'Angelo, for suffering the trials of doctoral work with me. Many thanks, too, to Stephanie Yanow and Michel Boyer, for stepping in to help with translation issues at the eleventh hour.

In the end, however, it all comes down to Chris and Tuulikki Lavis, who are my true source of wonder and joy and who help me, always, to 'be not alone in the world'.

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In the West today, the cultural borders that distinguish child and adulthood are waning as young people and adults increasingly claim the same music, films, television shows, and books as their own. Access to new technologies and social media are also making it easier than ever for young people and adults to share literary culture (Weber & Dixon, 2007). In literary studies, the transgression of reading boundaries that distinguish literature for young people from that of adults is called “cross-reading” (Beckett, 1999, 2009; Falconer, 2004, 2009). Adults ‘cross over’ by reading children’s books for their own pleasure (as opposed to reading them to a child), and young people ‘cross over’ when they claim stories directed at an older readership. Cross-reading is a contentious practice that continues to provoke spirited and emotional debate, both in academia and the public domain, over a perceived need to maintain distinctions between child and adulthood (Beckett, 2009; Falconer, 2009; ML. Harju, 2011).

Who cares if adults want to read *Harry Potter* (Rowling, 1997-2007), *Twilight* (Meyers, 2005-2008), or *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008-2010)? Critics are distinctly alarmed—they decry the infantilization of adult culture (Beckett, 2009; Danesi, 2003; Falconer, 2009), the demise of children’s literature, and the end of childhood itself (Cunningham, 2005; Pinsent, 2004; Postman, 1982/1994). Chris Jenks (1996) insists that these adult moral panics are self-serving and reflect little regard for children’s interests. What the hysterics actually reveal, he admonishes, is a different anxiety at play and a surefire identity crisis in contemporary adulthood (p.8). If young people and adults share culture,

how will adults distinguish themselves? How can they justify their superiority, power and privilege? Other scholars see great potential in the crossover phenomenon, or, culture-sharing between generations, reading it as a unique opportunity to investigate points of *connection* between life stages (Beckett, 2009; Falconer, 2009; ML. Harju, 2011).

I became interested in crossover books when I returned to "children's literature" for an undergraduate course entitled *Early Times: Literature and the Imagination of the Child*. In this class I was asked to revisit stories that had once affected me profoundly (e.g. *Watership Down* [R. Adams, 1972]) and take on new narratives I had never encountered as a child (e.g. *Black Beauty* [Sewell, 1877]). These reading experiences were immersive and metamorphic—they drove me to search out more of my childhood favourites and to devour new children's and young adult books. I gained something familiar and foreign by engaging with 'children's books' as an adult reader, a remembrance of self, a revival of spirit, a chance to re-experience wonders and embark on new adventures. It was surprising, heady, and addictive, this cross-reading. As the *Harry Potter* phenomenon steamrolled, revealing more adult cross-readers in its wake, I began to wonder why the choice to revisit children's literature seemed so subversive.

While the *Harry Potter* books remain king in crossover country for bringing attention to contemporary cross-reading practice and making it more acceptable for adult readers to engage with "children's literature," two other young adult series, the *Twilight Saga* and *The Hunger Games trilogy,* have since solidified their places in the zeitgeist. As I write this dissertation, *Twilight* fever still reigns in some quarters in anticipation of the final film adaptation of the series, and the

first *Hunger Games* film has just been released to tremendous box office success following a complex social media marketing campaign aimed at a diverse audience (Barnes, 2012; Germain, 2012; Taepke, 2012). Today, young people and adults are able to share stories through diverse forms of entertainment (e.g. books, films, promotional games, social media outlets, etc.). While contemporary readers may engage with crossover stories through many mediums and technologies (e.g. iPad applications, e-book readers), in this dissertation I focus mainly on reader response to print texts such as picture books and novels. I highlight, however, that critical attention to the ways that new technologies facilitate culture sharing between generations could greatly inform the study of crossover books.

Though crossover literature is not a new story form, and readers have always been able to find common ground by sharing stories, the prevalence of cross-reading today suggests that intergenerational readers are increasingly engaging in opportunities to share knowledge, experience and culture. In this study, I propose that crossover literature continues to captivate readers because it can build bridges instead of barriers between childhood and adulthood.

Exploring the Cross-Reading Experience

While scholars contributing to the study of crossover literature to date have focused on a wide range of contexts surrounding the phenomenon such as the history of crossover books (Beckett, 1997, 1999, 2009; Falconer, 2009; Pinsent, 2004), the complexities of cross-writing and audience (Galef, 1995; Wall, 1991; Shavit, 1999) and particularity of crossover formats such as picture books (Beckett, 2011; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001; ML. Harju, 2007c, 2009b), they have

neglected a crucial piece of the puzzle. Almost no work has been done on readers, despite the fact that a crossover title's success depends on its adoption by a diverse readership. With this dissertation, I try to address the knowledge gap in crossover studies by focusing on readers' individual and group experiences of cross-reading. By doing this I aim to investigate key questions at the heart of the phenomenon:

- Why do readers reach beyond socially prescribed reading boundaries in search of story?
- How do they identify with crossover books?
- What is significant about both their individual and shared experiences of cross-reading?

In this study, I suggest that readers engage in cross-reading because it provides them with a unique reading experience that links the worlds of child and adulthood. Because crossover books subvert age-based readership distinctions, they invite readers into a unique and ambiguous story space. Here, readers can explore their sense of 'storied self' by experiencing the narrative through multiple reading identities of a child, young adult, adult, or elder (Malu, 2003). Through this process they gain a better understanding of the continuum of experience between life stages and can gain empathy for those in other age groups. When readers of all ages gather to reflect on and share their responses to crossover books in groups, they meet on a level playing field and can experience "grand conversation," or, honest, connected and meaningful talk (Eeds & Wells, 1989; ML. Harju, 2007a, 2007b, 2011).

This inquiry into the crossover phenomenon is unique for a few reasons. Firstly, because I investigate the crossover phenomenon by researching reader response (Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1938/1995) to crossover books, but also because I use "literary portraiture," an exploratory methodology, to represent readers' real world experiences with story. In using this approach, I hope to provide new avenues for researching, representing and understanding the complexity of the cross-reading experience.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1— Theory: Considering the Crossover Phenomenon

The study begins with an examination of the theoretical framework supporting the crossover phenomenon and the practice of cross-reading. This chapter presents an interdisciplinary discussion that draws on ideas from the fields of children's literature criticism, anthropology, sociology, phenomenology and education. Through this literature review, I identify the social and historical contexts for understanding cross-reading and consider the question at the heart of the practice: What draws readers to crossover books?

Chapter 2—Methodology: Reading the Readers

In this chapter, I consider how my research questions evolved during the course of the study, evaluate the best approach for investigating reader responses to the crossover phenomenon, and outline my methodology for investigating reading experiences in this project. In the second part of the chapter, I introduce the participants and study site and address potential ethical and privacy concerns. Lastly, I provide a considered review of the process of data collection and analysis, and detail my strategy for presenting the work.

Chapter 3—Self-portrait: Examining the Storied Self

In this chapter I use 'literary portraiture' to fashion a likeness of myself as a cross-reader. By including self-study as part of the examination of the cross-reading experience, I mean to ground my position as researcher and participant in the dissertation. Using various memory work methods (e.g. literacy autobiography (Strong-Wilson, 2006, 2008), photo essay (Pink, 2004), and object-memory (Mitchell, Strong-Wilson, Pitthouse & Allnutt, 2011), I compile fragments of significant reading experiences and construct a narrative of important moments in my storied formation (Strong-Wilson, 2006, 2008). This self-portrait illuminates the significance to the cross-reading experience of memory, embodied knowledge, literary inheritance, reading relationships and the storied self.

Chapter 4—Group Portrait: Lost in the Enchanted Forest, Resonances of Fantasy and Fairy Tale

Chapter Four paints the first of two portraits of the research reading group (involving myself and two other readers: Molly and Ginny[1]). I reflect on the storied self in community, here, examining how readers 'perform' their storied identities for others through book discussion and other means of play. I point to the significance of fantasy and fairy tales in crossover literature, and discuss how they influence the participants' storied formation and allow them to connect as a reading group.

[1] These pseudonyms were chosen by the research participants for this study and reflect their affiliation with favourite characters from the *Harry Potter* books.

Chapter 5—Group Portrait: Dancing the Danse Macabre: Exploring Grand Conversations about Fear, Death and Anxiety over Crossover Books

In the second portrait of the reading group, I detail the kinds of grand conversation, that occurred in our discussions over crossover books—the open, honest and reciprocal talk prompted by our responses to complex themes such as death, fear and anxiety in crossover books (ML. Harju, 2009b). Additionally, I reflect on the ways we worked through these difficult subjects and made meaning of them together by sharing our responses (Eeds & Wells, 1989; Ingarden, 1973; Sumara, 2002).

Furtherances

The concluding chapter of the dissertation identifies further considerations revealed by the research and writing of the literary portraits, and discusses applications for this investigation into the cross-reading experience.

Chapter 1

Considering the Crossover Phenomenon

In this chapter, I provide a brief introduction to the history of titles that have been identified by scholars as 'crossover literature,' in order to provide social and historical context for understanding the phenomenon of cross-reading in the West. While stories that cross age boundaries exist globally, the study of them, as with much of children's literature, has begun primarily with Western texts (see Beckett and Nikolajeva [2006], and Beckett [2009] for more on international crossover reading). The persistence and prevalence of cross-reading over time prompts critical questions, such as: What compels readers to consistently cross reading boundaries in pursuit of story? What might they gain from this reading practice?

I suggest that crossover books offer readers a unique and compelling story experience because they reflect a holistic understanding of human experience. Traditional reading boundaries exclude, segregating readers into distinct camps (e.g. literature 'for children' vs. literature 'for adults'). Crossover narratives, alternatively, offer an open invitation to story, attracting readers of all ages by reflecting a continuum of experience between child and adulthood. In this way, crossover books act as a passport, permitting readers to travel freely between the 'republics' of child and adulthood (Egoff & Saltman, 1967/1990; Hazard, 1944). Through cross-reading, readers can make important connections between their child and adult selves that may enrich their real world intergenerational relationships when they share books with others.

Crossover Literature: A History of Subversion and Resistance

While readers in academia and the public domain have become more aware of crossover books and cross-reading in recent years, Westerners are actually quite familiar with these stories. Children and adults originally shared a "common cultural pool" (Hannabus, 2004, p.424) of folk and fairytales, animal fables and religious stories until they were divided by age into separate reading groups in the eighteenth century (Nikolajeva, 1996; Nodelman & Reimer, 2003). Readers continue to reach for collective stories today despite a current trend in publishing to further segregate reading groups (e.g. there are now books for infants, early readers, tweens, teens, adults). An intergenerational readership still thrill to classic fantasies such as *Alice in Wonderland* (Carroll, 1865), *The Wizard of Oz* (Baum, 1900), *Peter Pan* (originally *Peter and Wendy* [Barrie, 1911]), *The Chronicles of Narnia* (Lewis, 1950-1956), and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (Tolkien, 1954-1955), and young adults turn to such 'adult' fare as *Animal Farm* (1945), *1984* (Orwell, 1949), *The Catcher in the Rye* (Salinger, 1952) *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1954), *A Clockwork Orange* (Burgess, 1962), and *Slaughterhouse Five* (Vonnegut, 1969) to help them negotiate the transition to adulthood (Beckett, 2009; Falconer, 2004; Nikolajeva, 1996).

Traditionally, crossover titles could be found in both the children's and adult sections of bookstores. Today, new contenders emerge consistently from literature produced for young adult readers. Established crossover titles such as *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* (Haddon, 2002), the *His Dark Materials* (Pullman, 1995-2000) and *Harry Potter* (Rowling, 1997-2007) series, and *How I Live Now* (Rosoff, 2004) are making way for a diverse range of

narratives that fit the crossover criteria (e.g. *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing: Traitor to the Nation* (Anderson, 2006), *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2008*), Tender Morsels* (Lanagan, 2008*),* and *Monstrumologist* series (Yancey, 2009-in press).

Young adults' cross-reading choices are particularly intriguing because they reflect a kind of 'threshold reading,' reading that which occurs as one lingers at the border of child and adulthood (Beckett, 2009; ML. Harju, 2008b). Threshold books may be given to young people by adults (e.g. in school curriculum) or appropriated by young readers, surreptitiously. I note that while to date, most of the research on crossover literature deals with the phenomenon of adults crossing to read young people's literature, threshold reading is a critical research site that requires further consideration by scholars. This kind of cross-reading can reveal much about readers' reasons for engagement with the literature, and demonstrates a continuance in story themes that appeal to readers, young and old. For example, the genre of dystopic fiction appears to consistently draw threshold readers who reach for traditional titles (e.g. *1984* [Orwell, 1949], *Animal Farm* [Orwell, 1945], *A Clockwork Orange* [Burgess, 1962]*, Lord of the Flies* [Golding, 1954]) even as they consume the growing number of dystopias being produced for them (e.g. *The Hunger Games* [Collins, 2008-2010] and *Chaos Walking* [Ness, 2008-2010] series).

Though cross-reading is not a new practice, it may be that young people and adults are being encouraged to share culture to a greater extent today by targeted marketing campaigns related to successful crossover titles. Though recent film versions of the *Harry Potter* (Rowling, 1997-2007)*, The Lord of the Rings*

(Tolkien, 1954-1955), *The Narnia Chronicles* (Lewis, 1950-1956), *The Golden Compass* (Pullman, 1995) and the *Twilight* books (Meyers, 2005-2008) certainly attracted a crossover audience (Beckett, 2009; Falconer, 2009), their advertising campaigns did not specifically seek to include an adult audience. Spike Jonze's recent film adaptation (Hanks, Goetzman, Sendak, Carls, Landay, & Jonze, 2009) of *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), however, reflects a new kind of marketing strategy that deliberately seeks an all ages audience (R. Sanzgiri, personal communication, June 2011). To accompany the film's release, Dave Eggers (2009) published an adult novelization of Maurice Sendak's (1963) picture book called *The Wild Things*, which has been described as a "cross between a children's book and a book for adults" (Molly, 2009). Jonze also produced the *weloveyouso* website (http://weloveyouso.com), a unique space where young people and adults participated together in contests (e.g. to construct the best wolf suit, and the best fort), art projects (creating artifacts: quilts, murals, chalk drawings) and installations (e.g. story-inspired clothing for all ages) to celebrate the cross-cultural appeal of *Where the Wild Things Are*. The release of the film adaptation of *The Hunger Games* (Jacobson, Kilik & Ross, 2012) similarly demonstrates that social media marketing that targets platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, is the next frontier. In these online spaces, publicity departments can successfully ignite interest in consumers of all ages (Barnes, 2012; Germain, 2012; Taepke, 2012).

There are also an increasing number of venues popping up to encourage intergenerational readers to share their story experiences in the real world (Milne, 2003). Young people and adults flock to theme parks (e.g. *Walt Disney World,*

Moomin World, Harry Potter World), turn out for film screenings (e.g. the *Harry Potter, Twilight* and *The Hunger Games* films), attend exhibitions (ComicCon, *Harry Potter in New York, The Chronicles of Narnia: The Exhibition*), participate in online marketing campaigns (e.g. the "Meet Your Daemon" feature on the website for the film release of *The Golden Compass*) and interact in chat rooms, forums, and blogs. Though these developments certainly reflect an awakening to the potential of crossover markets and a growing acceptance of culture sharing between young people and adults in some circles, they do not necessarily reflect a societal desire to return to a common readership (Beckett, 2009). As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the idea of 'one literature for all' does not sit well with many adults. An interest in common culture may reflect a common weariness with the limitations and constraints of segregating experiences between age groups, and certainly provokes deeper questions about the ways in which we conceptualize child and adulthood.

The politics of cross-reading: Constructions of childhood and the invention of a literature for children. While 'crossover' refers to a kind of text, it also identifies a critical reading practice. When young people and adults cross-read, they transgress socially constructed reading boundaries meant to keep them apart. This movement is key; through it, readers actively subvert and resist social classifications (e.g. of child, young adult, adult, elder) that divide them and privilege some groups over others. It is critical to recognize that these distinctions are not biological truths, "neither a natural or universal feature of human groups but . . . a specific structural and cultural component of many societies," that change over time and from culture to culture (Prout, 2005, p. 60; See also

Hendrick, 1990; Jenks, 1996). Distinguishing groups of individuals by age can be useful as a means to highlight unique aspects of different life stages, or focus attention on the particular needs or vulnerabilities of a specific population. Too often, however, contemporary constructions of child and adulthood privilege adult knowledge over young people's values and experiences, and negatively affect the power dynamics between these groups.

In the West, adults have traditionally constructed the child as "different, less developed, and in need of explanation" (Jenks, 1996, p. 4). When they envision the child as dependent, adults identify themselves through difference (Jenks, 1996; Sell, 2002). Nodelman suggests that adults take comfort in making this distinction because it means that *they* are not "less than, powerless, or dependent" anymore (as cited in Sell, 2002, p. 14). Because adults view themselves as mature beings that have obtained valuable knowledge and experience, they claim positions of authority, a status the child is meant to aspire to. By identifying themselves as superior, adults construct the child as "other"(Fine, 1994). As a result, they tend to devalue young people's knowledge and experiences, leaving them voiceless and without agency (Jenks, 1996; Prout, 2005). What is curious about this hierarchy, is how easily we take on and perpetuate false truths (e.g. that young people are immature and therefore inferior) when we reach adulthood. It is as if our memories are wiped clean when we cross that border. Though many adults have, undoubtedly, had the experience of being discounted as 'just a child' at some point in their youth, they tend to consider the authority of adulthood as their due, instead of being empathetic to young peoples' trials.

While power imbalances between young people and adults in the West certainly play out through personal relationships, they are also embedded in social systems (Jenks, 1996). The development and maintenance of separate literatures for children, young adults and adults, for example, can be viewed as one system that supports the construction of young people as inferior, and privileges adult knowledge and culture. Within this system, adult literature, in a parallel fashion, is considered to be more sophisticated, complex and valuable than that produced for children and young people.

Scholars locate the "invention" of children's books in the mid-18th century as a European phenomenon that shaped the literature as we understand it today, and note that the creation of the genre depended on changing social and cultural constructions of child and adulthood (Hunt, 2001; Nodelman & Reimer, 2003; Rose, 1984). Nodelman and Reimer (2003) define children's literature as "works produced ostensibly to give children spontaneous pleasure, and not primarily to teach them," and clarify that the genre could not exist "until adults came to believe that children were different from adults in ways that made them need a literature of their own"(p. 81). A divided readership was born, then, from adult assumptions about what children want (and take) from stories rather than a consideration for the way children actually make meaning from narrative (Applebee, 1978; Crago, 1990; Meek, Warlow & Barton, 1977).

Adult perceptions of what children's literature is, or should be, continue to change as adult understanding of children's needs have developed. In their many incarnations, children's books have transformed from Puritanical tracts meant to teach children, to delightful treasures that must please children (Demers, 2008).

These changes reflect the prevailing assumptions about children (that they are innocent, vulnerable, wild, pliable, gendered) and children's literature (that it should be simple, pleasant, contain good role models, teach valuable lessons, and above all, be "age-appropriate") that adults maintain in a given place and time (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003; Lesnik-Oberstein, 2000; Nikolajeva, 1997).

Within the system of divided readership, two critical practices perpetuate division between young people and adults. The first, the promotion of 'age-appropriate' reading, is a modern obsession. In determining 'age-appropriate' content, adults exploit their roles as literary gatekeepers, deciding where and when young people may access knowledge through story (Weber & Dixon, 2007; J. Stephens, 1997). Age-appropriate reading is promoted by the segregation of books by age in libraries and bookstores and supported by 'age-banding', a term in the UK for the practice of marking book covers with a suggested reading level (e.g. "For ages 9-12") (No to Age Banding, nd.). While age-appropriate reading guidelines may be a useful tool for gift-givers and educators, it can also be a serious detriment to literacy education by pigeonholing readers and discouraging them from exploring narratives outside a prescribed reading list. As Lewis (2002/1966) huffs, "No reader worth his salt trots along in obedience to a time-table" (p. 28). The practice of age-appropriate reading additionally promotes the view that adults and young people cannot share stories, and do not have similar reading interests.

Additionally, adults unfairly equate reading choices with intellectual maturity by emphasizing the practice of "reading up" (Beckett, 2009, p. 22). When children succeed in "reading up" (progressing linearly through the various

levels of reading—e.g. from children's to young adult to adult literature) adults herald their development. While reading up will allow a reader to experience all kinds of books, it is neither proof of maturity, or knowledge (Lewis, 2002/1966). When adults insist that young readers read up, they uphold a construction of the young reader as unformed and in need of guidance and promote a determined shift away from particular kinds of stories (ex. fairy tales, fantasy) and story formats (e.g. illustrated stories) that may be important to one's storied formation (Strong-Wilson, 2006).

Though young readers certainly lose out when these practices are enforced, adults do, too. In Western culture, one is rarely encouraged to 'read down' or return to children's literature; adults that do are often regarded with suspicion. In a recent article examining adult engagement with *The Hunger Games* books, one journalist joked, "it's exhausting to figure out how to calibrate the shame levels associated with consuming a mass-media phenomenon originally meant for children " (Lisanti, 2012). It is this attitude, however, that is truly juvenile, as Lewis (2002/1966) suggests:

> When I was ten, I read fairy tales in secret and would have been ashamed if I had been found doing so. Now that I am fifty I read them openly. When I became a man I put away childish things, including the fear of childishness and the desire to be very grown up. (p. 25)

Lewis insists that all kinds of stories speak to us as we age and are intricately tied to our sense of identity. Attempts to regulate and control reading practices severely limit the imagination, and impede our ability to discover ourselves through books.

Maintaining distinctions between people of different age groups through the economy of a divided readership and the practices (e.g. age banding, censorship, and reading up) that support it, have only served to reinforce differences between adults and young people. However, because adult conceptions about child and young adulthood have changed throughout time, there is hope that they will evolve again. While I do not mean to argue with this paper that a system of separate literatures is inherently wrong, I do draw attention to its limitations. I suggest that the persistence and prevalence of the crossover phenomenon demonstrates dissatisfaction with (and challenges the necessity for) a divided readership.

Finding a Way to Talk About Crossover Books

Negotiating terms. K. Jones (2006) identifies a pressing need to reconsider the use of the term 'children's literature' in criticism, because it fails to address the complexity of the genre. Following earlier scholars (e.g. Hunt, 2001), she argues that it does not signify a body of literature created by children, but one that is produced for children and that reflects adult constructions of childhood. Also, the term does not adequately encompass the literature's diverse readership, considering that 'children's literature' is, in turn, read by adults to children, read by children to adults, and by each independently for their own pleasure (K. Jones, 2006, p. 288).

Crossover terminology is similarly complex, full of "slippery" descriptors (Falconer, 2004) that do not adequately reflect the intricacies of the phenomenon. As Falconer explains:

> crossover is generally meant to refer to a crossing between age boundaries, the boundaries (for example, young child, nine to fourteen, young adult, adult) themselves being subject to constant redefinition. Even in this field, 'crossover' can refer to different aspects of the narrative communication act: the relation between authors and texts, the internal attributes of texts, or the relation between texts and readers. (pp. 557-58)

Many different players may instigate the crossing of readership boundaries: authors (by intentionally gearing a story at a diverse readership), publishers (by targeting wider markets) and readers, as they reach for stories outside of their prescribed age range (Beckett, 1997, 1999, 2006; Falconer, 2004; 2009; Galef, 1995; Hannabus, 2004). There are other important factors which motivate the deliberate production of crossover books, for example, authors have cross-written to gain legitimacy in the adult sphere (Allsobrook, 2004; Beckett, 1997, 1999; Falconer, 2004; Knoepflmacher & Myers, 1997) and publishers have deliberately tried to open stories up to broader audiences through translations and by marketing texts differently to international markets (Bertilis, 2002; Nikolajeva, 2006; O'Sullivan, 1993).

Because the crossover phenomenon is confusing and complex, researchers must work towards a specificity of language in their study. The terminologies that scholars have used to this point have made discussions about cross-reading very difficult. Indeed, it seems almost impossible to get a handle on the phenomenon using the English language. For example, some critics have introduced the Norwegian term *allaldersllitteratur* (all ages literature) to solve the problem of adequately encompassing crossover literature's diverse audience (De

Vries, 1997). However, these proponents similarly fail to clarify what "all ages literature" might encompass, nor are they, themselves, sufficiently satisfied with the term (Beckett, 2006; Falconer, 2004). Beckett (2006) concedes that "all-ages literature" has not caught on with publishers, as most crossover books are still generally "marketed only as children's books in spite of their appeal to young and old alike" (p. 1). Falconer (2004) rejects replacing 'crossover' with 'all-ages', because the term discounts the critical "shifts and slides of temporal perspective [crossover books] induce in their readers" (p. 571).

K. Jones' (2006) notion of *generational literature* (p. 305) may provide the best definition of what crossover literature actually is, thus far. Although K. Jones proposes that this descriptor be used to replace the term "children's literature", I see it relating more clearly to what is occurring in the crossover arena. Though this term is neither wholly sufficient nor inspiring, I am drawn to an expression that:

> emphasizes individuals over a life course and seeks to resist age polarized terms, such as the adult versus the child [and] gives prominence to issues of being and time, identity and age, and related concepts of history, tradition, and memory. (p. 305)

I recognize K. Jones' attempt to find a positive term outside of children's literature criticism as a necessary one. Traditional referents such as "adolescent, childish, childlike, infantile, and juvenile," carry negative connotations and tend to devalue the genre (p. 305). K. Jones' definition encompasses the range in audience and experience that crossover texts reflect, and could be useful as

scholars search for ways to clearly articulate the peculiarities of the crossover sphere.

Establishing Criteria

Crossover books are almost impossible to classify (Beckett, 2009; Falconer 2009) because they can be found in multiple genres: animal stories (e.g. *The Jungle Book* [Kipling, 1894]; *Watership Down* [R. Adams, 1972]), mystery and horror (e.g. authors Edgar Allen Poe and Stephen King), science fiction (e.g. *Dune* [Herbert, 1965]; *Ender's Game* [Card, 1985]), fantasy (e.g. the *Harry Potter series* [Rowling, 1997-2007]*, The Narnia Chronicles* [Lewis, 1950-1956]*, The Lord of the Rings* trilogy [Tolkien, 1954-1955]), gothic romance (*Jane Eyre* [C. Bronte, 1847]; *Wuthering Heights* [E. Bronte, 1847]; *The Twilight series* [Meyers, 2005-2008]), and adventure novels (e.g. *Robinson Crusoe* [Defoe, 1719]; *Treasure Island* [Stevenson,1883]). Writers have also used a wide variety of formats to explore crossover narratives: fiction, non-fiction (*The Diary of Anne Frank* [Frank, 1952]), memoir (*Night* [Wiesel, 1982]), and through illustrated work, such as picture books (e.g. *The Red Tree* [Tan, 2003] *The Sad Book* [Rosen, 2005]), graphic novels (*Maus* [Spiegelman, 1986], *Persepolis* [Satrapi, 2003]) and illustrated novels (*Un Lun Dun* [Mieville, 2008]).

Although Falconer (2009) suggests a pragmatic definition of crossover literature is "immediately problematic," because she sees "no stable traits, no themes or motifs or modes of address or narrative dynamics, which are common to all [crossover books]," (p. 27) it is very difficult to properly consider or discuss texts as works of crossover without establishing a static criteria. To facilitate study, I have collated crossover characteristics from scholarship in the field to

help distinguish a work of crossover literature: diverse address, complexity (in form and/or theme, and evidence of diverse readership (Beckett, 1997, 2009; Falconer, 2004). I use these in my own research and undergraduate teaching to better understand books that have already been classified as crossover literature, and to consider whether new titles can be identified this way. Both my students and other scholars suggest that they have found these markers useful in their analysis of crossover stories (Beckett, 2009; Bergsdorf, 2011).

Diverse address. In early discussions of crossover literature scholars identified texts by their 'dual address' (O'Sullivan, 1993, Shavit, 1986, 1999), suggesting that authors appeared to equally address an audience of children and adults simultaneously (Beckett, 1999, 2006; Nikolajeva, 1997; Wall, 1991). Nikolajeva (1997) clarifies initial interpretations of dual address by noting that the child and adult are addressed on "different levels, but on equal terms [meaning] a child and adult reader will probably read and understand the novel differently, but enjoy it equally; that neither the child nor the adult has priority to a 'correct' interpretation" (p. 64).

'Dual address' is a problematic term, however, because it presumes that the crossover path originates solely with the author, and ignores the active role of the reader. The use of 'dual addressee' also implies, as O'Sullivan (1993) points out, that there are only two kinds of cross-readers (adults and children), when "there can be several inscribed readers in children's books, and that there is more than one way in which an adult can read a children's book" (p. 110). It may be apt to define crossover literature then, as a work of 'diverse address' and reception (ML. Harju, 2007a). Although this expression also fails to account for all the

complexities inherent in a crossover audience, it *does* attempt to recognize a wider range of cross-readers (children, young adults, adults, elderly) who bring multiple approaches to their reading of crossover books. Through diverse address, crossover books make stories reflecting "the most fundamental and consistent experiences of life: love, aloneness, belonging, alienation, hopelessness, hope" (Peterson & Eeds, 1990, p. 15) accessible to readers of any age.

Diverse address may result from an author's direct intention to reach a broad readership, or from their attempt to simply write good stories that appeal to everyone (Falconer, 2004; Lewis, 1966/2002). Many authors who are cross-read have suggested that they create stories from an authentic point of interest, rather than an attempt to write for a particular audience. The Finnish cross-writer, Tove Jansson, for example, once said of her work:

> My stories are not intended for any special audience and they contain no conscious attempt to educate, no direction and least of all any philosophy of any kind. I write about what fascinates and frightens me, what I see and what I remember. (as cited in Commire, 1972, p. 89)

Additionally, Lewis (2002/1966) claimed, "I put in what I would have liked to read when I was a child and what I still like reading now that I am in my fifties" (p. 22), and Ransome revealed: "That, it seems to me, is the secret. You just indulge the pleasure of your heart. You write not *for* [emphasis in the original] children but for yourself" (as cited in Hunt, 2005, p.556).

While diverse address *can* be intentional, it may also be achieved without the authors' direct knowledge. Though more research needs to be done on common aspects of crossover books that appeal to cross-readers, scholars do point

to narrative elements (e.g. universal themes, intertextual references) that may attract a diverse readership (Beckett, 2009; Falconer, 2009; ML. Harju, 2009a). Regardless of how it comes about, diverse address is a key aspect of crossover literature because it reflects an open invitation for readers of all ages to engage in story.

Complex forms and themes. Scholars have additionally distinguished crossover books for their complexity in both form (Dresang, 1999) and theme. In relation to form, for example, Falconer (2004) highlights the experimentalism, hybridity (mixed genre) and postmodernism of contemporary crossover fiction as evidence of its sophisticated structure, while other scholars have investigated the multiple and many-layered readings hidden in crossover picture books (Beckett, 2011; ML. Harju, 2007a, 2009b; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001).

Crossover narratives are also thematically challenging. They tackle what are often considered 'adult themes', or those deemed inappropriate for young audiences, such as racism, class struggle, mental illness, drug abuse, sexuality, violence and crime (Falconer 2004; Kooistra, 1997; Nodelman & Reimer, 2003). Crossover stories may also appeal to a diverse readership because they build on epic motifs: myth, heroic quests, battles between good and evil, survival, existential query, tragedy, death, loss, and identity development (Beckett, 2009; Falconer, 2004; 2009; ML. Harju, 2009a). These themes appeal to a wide audience because they are universal; they preoccupy us throughout our lives and have "the ageless resonance of myth" (Said, 2003, para 4). Falconer (2009) additionally notes crossover literature's ability to make challenging themes accessible:

> critics and educationalists have all argued that adults began paying attention to contemporary children's fiction when they discovered that these novels were addressing some of the major issues of our time: the war of religions, the relativity of good and evil, the fragility of the natural world, and so on. And in contrast to serious 'literary' novelists, they were doing so in straightforward, well-crafted but accessible prose. (pp. 4-5)

The complexity of crossover books have caused many critics to protest that they are merely adult literature in disguise (DeVries, 1999; Eccleshare, 2004). Again, this carries an implicit value judgement about the superiority and sophistication of adult literature and reflects common adult assumptions about what children's literature is, or ought to be (Nikolajeva, 1997; Nodelman and Reimer, 2003).

Evidence of diverse readership. Lastly, to fit the criteria proposed at this stage for distinguishing crossover literature, a work must be supported by a diverse readership. Evidence for a text's broad appeal is often demonstrated by its notoriety and acceptance in the adult sphere. Crossover books receive greater recognition, distribution and reach broader audiences when they receive literary prizes and are included on prestigious booklists. Some crossover titles have gained their audiences through directed publishing and marketing campaigns (e.g. whereby classics, and or newer titles are reissued in separate editions for children and adults (Falconer, 2009). Other works gain crossover status when adults recognize them as 'serious art' (Falconer, 2009). Signs that adults have incorporated crossover stories into their culture include adult attendance and participation in special events such as crossover book readings and releases (Malu, 2003), comic book conventions (ex. Comicon) and academic conferences

related to the crossover phenomenon (e.g. http://www.potterwatchconference.com; see also Beckett, 1999; Pinsent, 2004).

Reader response is the strongest indication of crossover success. Though Falconer (2009) provides some insight into student responses to the rereading of childhood books as a form of cross-reading, scholars still know very little about readers' motivations to cross-read. While there is not much formal research into reader's personal engagements with crossover books, responses from readers of all ages can be found in qualitative research on book group studies (Chandler, 1999; DiPardo & Schnack, 2004; Kenward, 2005), in university classrooms (Falconer, 2009) and in online forums such as blogs, personal websites, book review sites (e.g. Amazon), book and film chat rooms, and fan sites (e.g. for Stephanie Meyers's *Twilight* series: http://www.twilightmoms.com, and http://www.twilightteens.com). More studies that include intimate, ethnographic response (e.g. Malu, 2003) will provide greater detail about readers' own reasons for engaging with crossover books.

While any one of the three crossover criteria I have outlined here can (and should) be studied in depth, I discuss them briefly to outline how one might better identify a crossover book. The first two parts of this chapter reflect a very cursory introduction to the social, historical, and political contexts that surround the reading of crossover books and the intricacies of language that surround discussions of the literature. For more on the crossover phenomenon, I direct readers to both Beckett (2009) and Falconer's (2009) inaugural and insightful forays into crossover studies.

I turn now to address the gap in crossover literature research by returning to

consideration of the cross-reader. For here, again, the question needles: *Why* are readers compelled to reach beyond borders for books? To deduce this, I follow Falconer's (2009) appeal to shift the shift the focus of the conversation, to move beyond considerations of what crossover literature *is*, to what it *does* (p. 27):

> [How] It prompts a reader to interrogate everything that happens in these in-between territories [of children's and adult fiction], invites us to measure our difference from the recent past and the speed with which we are hurtling towards new concepts of self. *(*p. 27*)*.

Cross-Reading as a Transformative Event

> Literature contributes to the enlargement of experience. Through the medium of literature we participate in imaginary situations, we look on at characters living through crises, we explore ourselves and the world about us. (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995, p. 37)

Stories matter, not only because we take great pleasure in and learn from them, but because through them we actively define and re-define who we are. Though reading is often a quiet activity, it is also a dynamic event that allows readers to broaden their understanding of self in the world by participating in a lived experience through text (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995).

According to Rosenblatt's (1938/1995) conception of reader response theory, readers make meaning from texts by interacting with stories through the reading "event," interpreting and understanding narrative in individual and particular ways based on their own life experiences. Reading is an extremely complex and personal process, because readers bring a multitude of perspectives and individual experiences to a text:

> We construct our story through echoes in other stories, through the illusion of self-reflection, through technical and historical knowledge, through gossip, reverie, prejudice, illumination, scruples, ingenuity, compassion, wit. (Manguel, 2000, p. 13)

We create layers of meaning each time we return to a book, too. Because readers experience texts differently as they approach them over time, "readers and texts and contexts of reading collaborate in the *continued* [emphasis added] inventing and interpreting of knowledge" (Sumara, 2002, p. 238; see also Falconer, 2009; Malu, 2003).

If we examine the crossover phenomenon using reader response theory, what can we surmise? Why *do* readers cross-read? There are as many reasons as there are readers. Falconer suggests that adults may return to their favourite childhood books (as one form of cross-reading) to gain comfort from them (2009). Others may aim to recapture the wonder of discovery in early reading experiences. Alternatively, some cross-readers hope to encounter *new* experiences when they go looking for stories outside their designated reading group, for in reading, Rosenblatt suggests, "[a] reader seeks to participate in another's vision—to reap knowledge of the world, to fathom the resources of the human spirit, to gain insights that will make his own life more comprehensible'" (1938/1995, p.7). This desire certainly transcends age boundaries, and because any reader can enter a fictional world and know life through the journey of characters unlike themselves, "[t]hus it is that the youth may identify with the aged, one sex with the other, a reader of a particular limited social background with members of a different class or different period" (p. 40). It follows then, that

by returning to children's literature, or engaging with crossover texts, adults do not merely experience a romantic nostalgia for their youth, their reading reflects an event in which they "reorganiz[e] past experiences to attain new understanding" (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995, p.25; A. Chambers, 1996).

The ability to relate through the reading event to those in other age groups is facilitated by a reader's experience of "multiple reading identities" (Malu, 2003, p. 78). Sumara (2002) identifies how one's sense of age-based identity is troubled as, "[i]n important ways, during and following their active involvement with the literary text, the reader reflects upon past, present and future experiences" (p. 239). Malu (2003) similarly argues:

> Readers bring multiple identities to their reading experiences and these identities are in a constant state of flux . . . shaped by a reader's gender, age, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, language use and religious, personal and academic experiences. (p. 78)

Crossover literature is a particular medium "through which child and adult readers (re-)fashion a sense of subjectivity" (Falconer, 2009, p.8). Falconer further explains,

> readers are hybridising different readerly identities when they 'cross over' to reading a book that was intended, at least ostensibly, for someone other and elsewhere. Cross-reading is another of the ways in which we become, in Kristeva's phrase, 'strangers to ourselves'. (p. 9)

Following Falconer, I suggest that readers' experience of multiple reading identities is heightened by cross-reading. As they read, adults spiral between temporal planes—at the same time remembering their own childhoods *and*

relating to the text from an adult perspective through their response to story. In this way adult readers can identify with younger characters in the text, not through commonality of age, but by connecting over similar experiences (ML. Harju, 2011). It is the experience of accessing past selves, and imagining future selves that can transform. This process can make readers vulnerable to, and perhaps more empathetic of, the experiences of others.

Developing identity through story: Multiple reading identities and storied formation. In "Ways of Reading Harry Potter: Multiple Stories for Multiple Reader Identities," Malu (2003) explores the different ways she identified with *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (1997) when she first encountered the crossover novel as an adult reader. She relates, "The text became, for me, a living memory, transporting me . . . into my childhood world that I linked into Harry's world" (p. 84-85). Additionally she reflects, "the loss [of Harry's parents] resonates today each time I read Dumbledore's words (p. 84-85). In these responses Malu occupies two subject positions at once: she reads as the child she was (by linking the story with her past) and as the adult she is now (in understanding Harry's loss from her current sympathetic response as a parent).

Malu's experience of flux between age-based identities here is significant because it allows her to be flexible in her responses to the narrative. By experiencing the story from multiple perspectives, she is able to leave some of her 'adult' baggage (assumptions, responsibilities, judgments) at the door and relate to Harry's trials. In this way, Malu uses memory 'productively' in her response to literature to better connect with the experiences of young people (ML. Harju, 2011). She applies the "task of exploring childhood memories, the younger self,

to better understand and care for the elder self" (C. Chambers, 1998, p. 17). Adult readers can then bring such awareness and sensitivity to their real-world relationships with those in other age groups (Lohman, Griffiths, Coppard & Cota, 2003). Experiencing multiple reading identities, or "composite identities" (Falconer, 2009, p. 169) can occur as it did for Malu, when one reads a crossover book for the first time, *and* when one returns to children's books they read in childhood. In *Crossover Fiction* (2009), Falconer shares student responses to C.S. Lewis' chronicle of Narnia, *The Silver Chair* (1953) that illustrate how adult readers may experience multiple reading identities when they revisit significant childhood books.

When they returned to Lewis' novel, Falconer's (2009) students reported a doubled experience, "a heightened consciousness both of the text, and of the reading process"; they relived the wonder of the story while being able to apply a "sharpened critical appreciation of the text" (2009, p.163; see also Knoepflmacher & Myers, 1997). Some readers felt that their adult perspective imposed upon their memory of story: one student, for example, "found the religious allegory [in C.S. Lewis' work] more obvious as an adult reader, and for her, this detracted from the richness and 'innocence' of her childhood reading" (Falconer, 2009, p. 163). In this way, Falconer contends, rereading crossover books is dialogic, "not only in the sense that it is often shared with another reader, often a child, but also in that the re-reader's response to the text is always split between a former and present reading" (p. 163). This dialogue between multiple reading identities in reader response to crossover literature is also meaningful because it illustrates the process of "storied formation" in action (Strong-Wilson, 2008). By examining the

way readers shift between a remembered response to childhood reading (or current response from a 'childish' perspective) and their adult perspective on story, we can clearly see how readers construct the "architecture of the inner self" through response to literature (Falconer, 2009, p. 164).

Tatar (2009) suggests that the "real feeling of the fictional world makes it just as critical to the formation of identity as what is encountered in life" (p. 22). Strong-Wilson (2006) calls the process of building a storied identity, "storied formation" and suggests it comes about "through deposits of stories heard, read and experienced, and memories of those stories, which become a ground, a phenomenological landscape" (p. 3). One can easily recognize storied formation when adults remember childhood tales that affected their adult identities (Greenway, 2005; Lewis, 2002/1966; Spufford, 2002). Einstein, for example, declared that he might never have developed the theory of relativity had he not read an extremely influential children's science book which "exerted a very great influence on my whole development" (Howard & Stachel, 2000). Likewise, Lewis (2002/1966) contended that his classic novel, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), and subsequent *Narnia* series, was born from a story image that had haunted him since childhood, that of "a faun carrying an umbrella and parcels in a snowy wood"(p. 42).

Developing a storied self is a lifelong practice. Readers can be similarly impacted by children's stories they first encounter as adults. Strong-Wilson's (2006) research into teachers' storied formation demonstrates that adults' first readings of children's books resonate personally and professionally, informing the book choices they integrate into their practice; this, in turn, impacts the storied

formation of their students. The experience of identifying through reading is not merely individual, then, it is communal (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003). Readers personally inherit significant stories when they are passed down to them through many kinds of reading relationships (e.g. between teachers and students, colleagues, or grandparents to parents and their children). Storied formation is additionally impacted by a cultural literary inheritance, or, the dominant texts that come to shape the knowledge, culture and identity of communities (Sale, 1984; Strong-Wilson, 2007). In the final section of this chapter, I further consider the ways an individual's experience of the crossover phenomenon extends into the social sphere.

Implications: Continuance, Community, Grand Conversation

Continuance. I return to the lingering question that surrounds the crossover phenomenon—one that has not been as yet adequately addressed in the research: Why do readers engage in cross-reading? I propose that readers may be attracted by the notion of *continuance* that crossover narratives and the practice of cross-reading foster. By continuance, I don't mean to suggest that we experience sameness in identity throughout our lives, but that our experiences in different life stages (e.g. managing love, fear, anxiety, intimidation, achievement) are relatable and equally valuable. Being bullied in childhood, for example, is not so far removed from being bullied in adulthood since these events are comparably traumatic.

In his essay *On Three Ways of Writing for Children,* Lewis (2002/1966) provides an evocative tree-ring analogy that can help us better understand the concept of continuance: "A tree grows," he reminds us, "because it adds rings"(p.

26). Because human growth reflects a similar process of enrichment, Lewis suggests, we should recognize transitions between life stages as a *succession* rather than a demarcation of rings. This philosophy values the progression of knowledge that occurs between distinct phases (infancy, childhood, young adulthood, adulthood, seniority), recognizing them as unique but interdependent; equal parts of the whole. A worldview of continuance adds value to all of our life experiences and illuminates identity construction as an atemporal, circuitous, and ongoing process. If one adopts this perspective, they cannot privilege one life stage over another, and must apply an open and equal approach to their intergenerational relationships.

Other scholars have briefly identified the prevalence of continuance in the crossover phenomenon. Falconer (2004), for example, criticizes Rose's (1984) influential text, *The Case of Peter Pan or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction,* for failing to "account for the continuum between children's and adults' experience" (p. 572). Scott similarly speaks to "the child-adult reader distinction [not as] a schismatic division, but a continuum of understanding" in her study of crossover picture books (as cited in Beckett, 1999, p. xviii). Thacker insists that literary theory and philosophy "adopt a perspective that includes a continuum of experience that begins in childhood" (as cited in K. Jones, 2006, p. 300). In recent work, Falconer (2009) specifically locates continuance in the "overlap between children's and adults' motives for rereading" when they engage with crossover fiction (p. 168). Additional research needs to be done, however, to flesh out the importance of the continuum in crossover and address how one might identify it in crossover books.

In a recent publication (ML. Harju, 2009a), I pinpoint the "crossover continuum" as a critical draw for readers, suggesting that crossover literature reflects an attractive, alternative life philosophy that recognizes and explores continuity between human experience in various life stages. This worldview counters dominant and divisive constructions that privilege adult knowledge and experience, reinforce unequal power dynamics between groups, and inhibit intergenerational communication and understanding (James & Prout, 1997; Jenks, 1996). The crossover continuum can, alternatively, help us envision an "intellectual space in which the young and old can meet each other, so that the youth-age distinction will gradually be eroded" (Sell, 2002, p. 8).

Because crossover narratives address a diverse audience, I argue, they invite readers into a uniquely age-neutral story space, the 'crossover sphere'. In this conceptual, liminal space (Turner, 1969/1995; Soto, 2000, pp. 7-9) betwixt and between child and adulthood, socially constructed identities are muddled as the reader experiences the narrative from multiple reading identities (Malu, 2003). In this process, readers must acknowledge and ascribe value to their pasts and are encouraged to consider the experiences of those in other age groups with greater empathy (Lohman et al., 2003). The practice of cross-reading can, therefore, be metamorphic because readers gain a holistic understanding of self that challenges their assumptions about those in other age groups. This change can also have social consequences, as readers carry a new respect for generational experience into their real world relationships (ML. Harju, 2008b).

Community. Because the crossover continuum encourages readers of all ages to connect, it can engender a unique sense of community; fellowships

develop when members recognize each other as being united in the story experience regardless of their age and level of experience (Lohman et al., 2003, p. 108). Cross-readers can experience community both metaphysically (with the awareness of being part of a diverse, conceptual readership) and actually, when they gather in the real world to share their response to crossover books (e.g. in literature circles; book clubs; online forums). A. Chambers (1996) insists that readers are compelled to make their personal readings public: "We want other people, especially our friends, to experience it too. We want to explore what has happened to us and sort out what the book has meant and why it is important to us" (p.7).

Sharing stories with others allows us to extend our participation in story worlds, 'perform' stories (Sipe, 2002, p. 477) and greatly impacts the way we understand literature. The "interpretive community," or greater readership a reader belongs to provides important cultural and historical contexts that shape our meaning making (Fish, 1980; Iser, 1978). As Sumara (2002) relates, "individual responses to literature are inextricable from the interpersonal, intertextual experiences of reading" (p. 240). When we create meaning from stories, it is a personal *and* collective dissemination of information; we share our individual responses and gain, through critical discussion of multiple story interpretations, an enhanced knowledge of human experience through story (Golden, 1986; Ingarden, 1973; Spiegel, 1998).

Critical dialogue does not spontaneously occur when one throws an intergenerational readership together over any old books, however (Dipardo & Schnack, 2004). Because crossover books promote continuance and foster a

unique sense of community, they present a greater potential for opening up new kinds of conversation between readers.

Conversation.

> Crossover fiction thus invites us to . . . ask: What is it that adults and children, through literature, want and demand of each other?
>
> (Falconer, 2009, p. 9)

Falconer's question points us towards the real significance of sharing story: What *can* an intergenerational readership gain by coming together over crossover books? Rosenblatt (1938/1995) insists that better conversations between generations are possible, that "[w]e *can* [emphasis added] communicate because of a common core of experience, even though there may be infinite personal variations" (p. 28). Intergenerational dialogue may also be increasingly necessary as the boundaries between young people and adults continue to shift and change (Buckingham, 2000; Danesi, 2003). Crossover books have the unique ability to encourage a new kind of talk between young people and adults over books, "grand conversations" that are open, honest, and reciprocal (ML. Harju, 2009b). Peterson and Eeds (1990) identify "grand conversation" in a particular kind of discussion where readers collaborate on making meaning by:

> recounting . . . personal stories inspired by the reading or the discussion. Being able to talk about the text in oblique and personal ways seem[s] to help [readers] develop the personal significance the text ha[s] for them. (Eeds & Wells, 1989, p. 18)

This kind of knowledge sharing can be risky, because readers must sometimes admit to not having the knowledge others do, or may be prompted to offer up

difficult memories brought out by their reading experiences (p. 16). However, the revelations that result from these shared responses to books can lead to "richer, more honest conversations" (Eeds & Wells, 1989, p. 26) between generations of readers, generating a "a more dialogic understanding of children's and adults' cultures, their interdependence, and their inter-illumination" (Falconer, 2004, p. 572). Crossover books further facilitate intergenerational connections by enabling readers to:

> distance themselves from their own immediate context; to empathize with somebody whose context is different; and to weigh the two contexts and their life-worlds against each other, with a change to the status quo as one possible outcome. (Sell, 2002, p. 6)

Crossover, as both a literature and a reading practice is significant, then, because it can help to connect a diverse readership and engender grand conversations between young people and adults in the real world. Readers of all ages can gain a great deal from sharing their cross-reading experiences: Young people see their knowledge recognized and valued by adults, while adults, in turn, gain a new perspective from their encounters with young readers (Lohman et al., 2003). By promoting grand conversation through cross-reading, adults can tackle new and challenging conflicts between age groups with empathy and greater understanding.

Resonances

Discussion of the crossover phenomenon, both academically and in the public sphere, will continue to stir controversy because it challenges longstanding constructions of child and adulthood that mean to keep generational groups

separated. For Falconer (2009), these storms reflect the "major cultural anxiety at the heart of the phenomenon," a "discomfort over the way child and adult cultures are clashing, intersecting and hybridising in our own time" (pp. 2-3). The success of crossover literature, she suggests, makes people

> acutely aware of the lack of consensus about what constitute[s] appropriate reading for children as opposed to adults, and by extension, about the difficulty of maintaining traditional distinctions between childhood and adulthood. (p. 3)

I agree that the persistence of the crossover phenomenon signals a positive shift in social attitudes—a desire to conceptualize and understand human experience beyond traditional distinctions. By sharing culture, readers of all ages reflect a weariness with the segregation of human experience and are demonstrating a desire for change. It may not mean different generations will (or should) share all the ways they make meaning of their experiences, but at the very least, this change in perspective would validate and engender a greater respect for each other's culture.

The study of crossover literature, cross-reading, and inquiry into the many other mediums through which young people and adults share culture (e.g. through film, music, theatre, and in online spaces) is increasingly relevant as a means of examining bridges between youth and adult culture and articulating how these connections resonate in real world relationships. As Prout (2005) reflects: "In the face of the changing nature of contemporary childhood, new ways of representing, seeing and understanding children and childhood are needed" (p. 3). In the following chapters, I try to address this call by investigating new ways scholars

may recognize, represent, and understand child *and* adulthood through readers' engagement with crossover books.

Chapter 2

Reading the Readers of Crossover Books

> *I am curled up on a ragtag couch in a chilly recording studio somewhere in Griffintown, the old portlands of Montreal. Hours pass. I drink cups and cups of tea, oblivious to the people working around me. I am completely lost, again, in the world of Harry Potter. For a moment I surface from the story, distracted by the awareness of a phantom company. I think of all the possible readers (child, teen, adult, grandparent) in their own places—on the train, in the bath, with book hidden under their desk—who are, at that very moment, occupying the same story space as me…*
>
> (Research Journal, May 2009)

This story experience occurred as I read the final book in the *Harry Potter* series (Rowling, 1997-2007) in the early stages of my doctoral degree. Up until this point, my interest in cross-reading stemmed from a personal passion for children's and young adult fiction. I had wondered, for example, if my attraction to crossover books was purely academic or if it signaled a midlife crisis—an attempt to recapture the wonder of new experiences by returning to children's books. As I became aware of the intergenerational community of readers I was part of, I began to consider a much broader series of questions around the readership of crossover literature. If other adults were as involved as I was in these stories and were, perhaps, reading them at the same time as their children, their grandchildren, their students and their peers, what kinds of story experiences might they be sharing? How might their responses differ, given the variety of life

experience they brought to the story? What kinds of things would readers of all ages have to talk about together if they sat down to chat about their favourite crossover books?

In the first part of this chapter, I outline the avenues I followed to tackle these questions, and chart the development of my methodology for the research of readers in this study. I then turn my focus to the fieldwork specifics, by addressing the study participants and research site, the process of data collection and analysis, particular ethical and privacy concerns, and my strategy for presenting the research.

Exploring the Phenomenology of Reading

Because my research questions address readers' intimate and detailed relationships with books, they reflect phenomenological inquiry into lived experience. Through phenomenological research, practitioners investigate the "life-world," or "the world of objects around us as we perceive them and our experience of our self, body and relationships" (Finlay, 2008, p. 1; See also Husserl, 1913/1931). A researcher works to draw out particular dimensions of phenomena, " a person's sense of selfhood, embodiment, sociality, spatiality, temporality [and] discourse" (Finlay, 2008, p. 2), to show how they experience an event in individual and communal ways. Reading, for example, can be both an intensely personal *and* public phenomenon (Meek, Warlow & Barton, 1977).

When readers engage with story they may be "carried off, made to feel intensely," an individual response that can engender a lifelong feeling for books (Radway, 1997, p. 117). Becoming "lost in a book" (Nell, 1988) is not necessarily a private act, however, because readers often read in public spaces,

and seek out others to share their story experiences with. Talking about books allows readers to extend their engagement with story worlds and deepen their understanding of the narrative by making meaning together (A. Chambers, 1996; Eeds and Wells, 1989; Meek, Warlow & Barton, 1977). Kooy (2003) notes that "participating in talk around texts offers readers identity and membership in a community. It is a shared adventure" (p. 141). In order to fully understand the reading event, scholars must consider both individual and communal experiences of the phenomenon.

Though Poulet (1969) has previously used the term "phenomenology of reading" to theorize that readers and authors experience a common consciousness through the act of reading, I adopt it here to instead articulate the reader's "lived through experience" of text (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995). A phenomenological approach to reading research is grounded in response theories (e.g. Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1938/1995; Spiegel, 1998) that recognize it is the reader that produces meaning from story, and not the text that implicitly holds one truth to be discovered. Reader response theorists suggest that we come to understand stories by responding to them through a "mixture of sensations, feelings, images and ideas" experienced both "during and after the reading event" (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995, p. 33) and that we use these "personal models of reality to construct meaning and interpretation" (Petrosky, 1982, pp. 22-23). By examining reader's individual, real-world experience of stories and considering how they make meaning of them with other readers, response scholars gain a broader picture of the reading experience.

To address personal and communal experiences of cross-reading for my own research, I needed to find an approach that would explore the phenomenology of reading in both response contexts. Additionally, the research plan must allow me to explore theories of continuance, community and conversation that I suggest may attract readers to crossover books. In order to develop a methodology for my work, I turned first to a review of the literature on crossover books to see if there were existing studies on reading research there.

Researching Readers in the Crossover Context

When looking for research on reader response, I found little help from the crossover quarter as most of the scholarship in the field is based on literary analyses of crossover texts within the context of children's literature studies. In the studies to date, scholars refer to cross-readers quite broadly as an "all ages" readership, and do not distinguish them by gender, age, class or ethnicity (Beckett, 1999, 2009; Falconer 2004, 2009; Pinsent, 2004). The research also does not provide much information on individual accounts, or group reading experiences. We know next to nothing about those who cross-read, despite the fact that a book's success as a crossover title relies on its ability to attract a diverse group of readers. As yet, there are no personal portraits of cross-readers available to help scholars understand *why* readers engage with crossover books.

Falconer (2004) points to a pressing need for reader response research in studies of crossover literature and has begun to explore young peoples' and undergraduate students' responses in her own work, although this data is as yet unpublished (personal communication, March 3, 2008). In *Crossover Fiction* (2009), Falconer does provide insightful student responses to the re-reading of

childhood texts in her discussion of this form of cross-reading. Generally, reader response research in the field appears to be hampered by illusive attempts to determine a concise definition of crossover literature, and the fact that the cross-reading phenomenon is still often misunderstood by scholars, educators, librarians, and readers themselves (Kenward, 2005). Following Falconer, I suggest that inquiry into reader response is the critical next step in crossover studies because this data can best support academic theories about the crossover phenomenon by providing real-world evidence of it.

It was a challenge to determine how to investigate reader response in the crossover context, without having the benefit of previous reader research to draw on. I decided, however, that qualitative research would best facilitate a connection with cross-readers. By meeting, engaging with, and listening to readers in a comfortable and familiar setting that would engender conversation, such as their home, I could get at the heart of the cross-reading experience. By participating in the study and sharing my own reading responses, I could engage in and make meaning of the phenomenon *with* other readers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Examples of qualitative research related to the crossover phenomenon are fairly scarce. In 2001, Nelson Wood and Quackenbush (1997*)* undertook a general survey of readers after the American publication of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. Their findings demonstrated the widespread appeal of the books and promoted their inclusion in classroom curriculum, but provided very limited data on readers' actual responses to the story. Kenward's (2005) Master's dissertation reflects the first identifiable example of qualitative inquiry into

crossover books and cross-reading that I have found. In this study, the author used interviews and focus group research to examine how readers and librarians understand the term 'crossover literature' and investigated how their perceptions influence the acquisition of crossover books. While Kenward's research provided necessary inquiry into a librarian's role in creating awareness of crossover literature, and some generational reader responses to crossover books, it didn't provide much insight into reasons for readers' engagement with these texts. Both Kenward, and Nelson Wood and Quackenbush's (1997) studies were particularly useful, however, for demonstrating the limits of focus group study as a method for my own research.

Determining Research Strategies

While existing focus group (e.g. Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2004; Lohman, Griffiths & Coppard, 2005; Lohman et al, 2003) and book club research (e.g. Bean & Rigoni, 2001; DiPardo & Schnack, 2004; Zaleski, 1999) supports the claim that intergenerational connections can occur through book sharing, these models offer a generalized knowledge of reader response. The studies are not able to provide in-depth detail of individual reading experiences, or the development of participant relationships in the book groups, because they involve too many people.

I found, too, that I often got lost in reading the focus group research—it was the smaller case studies of readers and their reading relationships that resonated most with me (e.g. Chandler, 1999; Malu, 2003; Newbold, 1993). I realized that in order to explore the intimate aspects of my questions concerning cross-reading, such as those concerning memory and age-based conceptions of identity, I would

have to conduct a smaller study of cross-readers. Both the literature review, and a critical conference experience, led me to formulate a better strategy to suit my research questions:

> *I found focus for my research recently, following the presentation of a conference paper. In the talk, I tried to articulate how crossover literature could promote greater possibilities for connection between young and older readers, but was left feeling as if my roundabout, theory-laden discussion had not quite gotten the ideas across. It wasn't until the moderator shared his understanding of my paper by reflecting on his own experience as an adult reader of Harry Potter that the ideas were made clear. He told the story of a recent family road trip across the country, in which he, his wife and his children all got lost in Harry Potter's world together as they sat packed into the car, listening to the books on audiotape. By connecting my theoretical discussion with a tangible experience of cross- reading, the moderator made my abstract ideas more immediate and prompted other conference participants to share their experience with the crossover phenomenon. I realized that in order to really understand cross-readers, I needed to hear more of these intimate encounters with crossover books.*
>
> (Research Journal, May 2009)

Following this conference presentation, I began to research self-study and case study as strategies to help me address my queries.

Reading the researcher: Self-study. I decided to conduct self-study because much of my research and teaching up to this point has been greatly informed by my own cross-reading experiences. In the course of my doctoral

work, I had already begun to investigate the significance of "storied formation" (Strong-Wilson, 2008) to the crossover phenomenon (ML. Harju, 2011). A self-study would allow me to further explore how my sense of storied identity has influenced my reading choices and illustrate how I, as one example of a cross-reader, make meaning of stories by connecting them to personal experience.

My approach to self-study was built on methodology developed in the field of educational research (e.g. Connelly & Clandenin, 1990; Mitchell, Weber, & O'Reilly Scanlon, 2005; Tidwell, Heston & Fitzgerald, 2009). There is no particular way to go about self-inquiry, as both the methods and means of analysis one chooses are specific to the contexts of the study. Scholars in self-study research do, however, identify the importance of making self-study 'trustworthy' so that others might find the research meaningful. Self-study practitioners strive for accuracy by clarifying their methods for data collection, detailing the links they make between the research and their interpretation of it, and situating the research within its particular theoretical contexts (LaBoskey, 2007; Mishler, 1990; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009).

To construct my self-study as a cross-reader, I used memory work (Haug, 1987; Kuhn, 1995) and narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) to recall my storied formation (Strong-Wilson, 2008). I sketched a sense of storied self from memories of significant reading experiences and created a picture of myself as a reader through a process of literary portraiture. I shaped the portrait using analysis that contextualizes the self-study in consideration of the crossover phenomenon, illustrating the particular ways my reading history has informed my cross-reading practice. In this way, I used storytelling as a "tool for

understanding the meaning of lived experiences and for the construction of knowledge" (Tidwell, Heston & Fitzgerald, 2009, p. xv).

I included my history as a cross-reader in this dissertation because my personal experiences provided a rich source for interrogation, and because I was able to make my stance as a researcher clear through this kind of inquiry (LaBoskey, 2007). I wanted to acknowledge in the research that my reconstructions and analysis of data stemmed from a perspective that was highly influenced by my personal biography and experience (Stake, 1994). By including self-study in my exploration of cross-reading, I illuminate my handprints by situating myself in the phenomena and acknowledging my perspective, biases and insight into the data by writing myself in as part of the story (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009).

Conducting self-study allowed me to consider one reader's personal motivation for cross-reading and explore notions of continuance (between child and adulthood) in reading practice that I believe may attract readers to crossover books. To answer other critical questions concerning the communal contexts of cross-reading, such as the way relationships develop between readers through shared reading and response, I needed a different methodological approach. In order to investigate the storied formation of other readers, and to hear conversations about crossover books, I realized that I would also need to study a case of a small reading group.

Reading intergenerational reading experiences with crossover books: Case study. Case study research investigates the "study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important

circumstances" (Stake, 1995, xi). A case may reflect the study of a person, a group, or a phenomenon and is valuable for allowing researchers to refine their theories because they must weigh them against actual human experiences. In my review of book club research I found examples of both a single case study (Newbold, 1993) and collective case study (Stake, 1994) of readers (Malu, 2003) that helped me shape a research plan. Both articles reflect an *instrumental* interest in their cases, meaning they are not just focused on the particularity of a single case, but instead provide "insight into an issue or refinement of theory" (Stake, 1994, p. 237): Newbold (1993) for example, examines a father-son book club in the context of intergenerational reading relationships, while Malu (2003) considers diverse reader responses to the *Harry Potter* books. Both studies provided a model of intergenerational book sharing between a child and their parent and highlight the complex contexts that surround their reading experiences such as: specificity of place (at-home vs. in-school reading), individual reading histories, and the ways readers make meaning from texts using individual memories (Beach & Hynds, 1996; Gilles, 1993). As Malu (2003) relates, these contexts critically shape reading experiences and response (p. 78).

Studying a particular case instead of conducting a large-scale study of readerss can provide important insight into the crossover phenomenon by providing rich and immediate details of readers' experiences. In the research reflection I shared earlier, I suggested that a moderator's experience of reading *Harry Potter* with his family clarified my theories about the potential for intergenerational readers to connect through literature. This example illustrates the value of hearing the specifics of a particular case, because researchers can

come to understand phenomena through naturalistic generalization, a process whereby "we come to know what has happened partly in terms of what others reveal as their experience" (Stake, 1994, p. 240). Case studies are valuable *because* they provide specific portraits of, rather than generalizations about, phenomena. Stake (1995) suggests:

> the case, the activity, the event, are seen as unique but common. Understanding each one requires an understanding of other cases, activities, and events, but also an understanding of each one's uniqueness [its] critical uniqueness. (p. 44)

Through case study, researchers engender a greater knowledge of an event by prompting us to consider our own unique experiences in relation to a case.

In choosing both self and case study methodologies for my research, I felt I could gain a deeper understanding of the complex ways readers engage in cross-reading activities by examining their individual and communal responses to crossover books. To represent their lived experience, I aimed to construct detailed portraits of both the readers and the group reading event. Identifying reading research as a process of 'portraiture' proved another key moment in my research process, as it greatly shaped the way I planned, conducted and compiled the data for the dissertation.

Finding a framework: Literary portraiture. In qualitative research, portraiture is both a method of inquiry and means of documentation that strives to paint a narrative picture of a subject. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis' (1997) conceive of portraiture following a cubist model, in that they attempt to capture a subject's complexity in greater context by investigating them from a

multitude of viewpoints, revealing their angles and shadows (p.xvii). This kind of study is not produced to flatter participants, but instead means to provide "a deeper, more authentic reflection of who [they are]"(p. xvii).

A portraitist seeks to capture the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human experience. They then record and interpret the perspectives of the people they are studying, documenting their voices and their knowledge. A portraitist situates their subject in their specific social and cultural contexts and takes care to shape the portrait through dialogue *with* the subject so that both contribute to portrait as it evolves (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997, p. xv). The involvement of both researcher and participant as co-constructors of the narrative is a critical aspect of the process. Their collaboration enriches the portrait by providing multiple perspectives rather than reflecting that of a "paralyzed Cyclops" (Hockney as cited in Weschler, 2008, p. 25), or, a single, fixed view of a subject.

While Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis' (1997) work provided a critical framework for the study, I had to discover my own methods for actually producing a literary portrait. To do this, I devised a methodology for portraiture that used narrative inquiry, memory work and book discussion to uncover details about participants' reading histories, reading relationships, and the conversation generated by their shared response to cross-reading.

Portraiture Methods: Narrative Inquiry, Memory Work and Book Discussion

I elicited, compiled and analyzed stories of the study participants' experiences with crossover books through narrative inquiry. Qualitative

researchers use this method of data collection and analysis to compile and interpret participants' personal stories. Narratives of experience may be revealed through interview, general conversation, or by sharing documents and artifacts (Chase, 2005; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In this study, the participants revealed their reading experiences through book discussion, reading artifacts of crafting and costume, and in reflective writing documents.

Reflective writing is a critical tool that can illuminate the significance of story by revealing how readers connect narrative to their real world experiences. In this research, I used participants' existing reflective writing documents (e.g. journal entries, blog writing and memoir writing) and solicited new reading responses from them (e.g. literacy autobiography, photo essay, a 'story trunk') using memory work. Memory work can help researchers get at the heart of literary response because it demonstrates how readers remember significant story experiences and tie them to an understanding of self that may be situated in a specific time and place.

Engaging in memory work with participants in this study helped me to better understand the crossover phenomenon in two ways: First, memory work helped to clarify the individual experience of cross-reading by illustrating how readers may develop a sense of identity through story, and highlighting continuities in reading experiences between child and adulthood. This result helped to support my hypothesis of continuance as a key aspect for readers' continued engagement with crossover books. Additionally, memory work revealed the significance of cross-reading in a group context. In our group book talk, I observed how shared response to crossover books prompted participants to

share memories and that this memory work seemed to engender deep and reflective talk, or "grand conversations" between them (Eeds & Wells, 1989, p. 5; See also ML. Harju, 2011). In this way, memory work helped me to see the kind of community and conversation that could result from book group discussion (Beach & Hynds, 1996; Eeds & Wells, 1989; Spiegel, 1998) and reinforced the notion that cross-reading could help readers bridge their intergenerational differences.

Narrative inquiry, memory work and book discussion were key methods that I employed in the research that allowed me to make greater meaning of both individual and group experiences of cross-reading. I continue to illustrate how I used these methods in the self and group study in the next section, which details the fieldwork particulars. I begin the conclusion to this chapter by briefly introducing the participants and highlighting specific considerations for the research.

Reading the Readers of Crossover Books: A Study in Two Portraits

Self-portrait: Researcher. I undertook the self-study research in July, 2011, following my data collection for the group study, the birth of my first child and a subsequent parental leave. I began by collecting and reviewing memory work that I had already produced in the course of my doctoral work such as a literacy autobiography (Strong-Wilson, 2006; 2008), photo essay (Pink, 2004) and research journal entries. I also revisited memoir writing I had done in the past related to formative reading experiences. In the process of reviewing these narratives I generated new reflective writing pieces that delved into memories of

significant books and the relationships that I had developed with other readers in my child, young adult and adulthood. I used this data to shape the self-portrait.

Group portrait: Three readers in conversation.

Setting the scene—Participants. The case study was comprised of a small reading group that included myself and two other readers, a mother (Molly) and her daughter (Ginny). I chose to speak with one pair of intergenerational readers, as opposed to a large book group, so that I might produce personal and particular cross-reading portraits. I felt that keeping the study small would allow me to focus on the details of Molly and Ginny's individual reading histories and engender a closer connection between us in our book talk. I knew the participants, but not very well: Molly was a colleague of mine and I had met Ginny only once before we sat down to talk. They both seemed quite keen to share their stories about stories with me.

Molly was a PhD candidate, ECE specialist and fierce blogger; an American expat who had come with her husband to Montreal to do her doctoral research in the field of Education. Ginny was a bright and engaging 11 year-old, trying to survive the drama of high school. In general, I would describe their mother-daughter relationship as a close one. In our discussions they spoke frankly about their daily experiences at school and work, and shared many of the same interests in literary and film culture. I was not aware before we held our book discussions of how *much* they cross-read, nor that reading and discussing stories was such an important aspect of their relationship. On this note I take care to emphasis for readers of this study, that while Molly and Ginny's portraits may appear idealistic, their unique and valuable reading relationship does not stand as representative for

the experience of all readers who engage with crossover books, or mothers and pre-teen daughters.

Privacy and consent. Participation in the research project was voluntary. At the first meeting I reviewed the invitation/letter of consent with both Molly (adult) and Ginny (child) and invited them to ask questions. I took care to communicate the research aims and methods in clear language to both parties (Maguire, 2005), gaining parental approval at the initial meeting for Ginny's participation and following up with both Molly and Ginny throughout the study to ensure their ongoing consent. I stressed the voluntary nature of participation on the part of parent and child as *individual* readers; making clear that the research was not dependent on their dual participation. I ensured Ginny's continued informed consent (e.g. that she was not being pressured by her parent to remain in the study against her will) by reviewing her responses with her separately, asking for her thoughts on the study process, and reminding her of her right to opt out of participation at any time as outlined in the letter of consent (Hill, 2006).

Throughout the research and writing of the dissertation I respected and maintained each participants' privacy. Though Molly and Ginny generally shared their responses with each other by participating in the discussion sessions together, I kept their individual responses confidential. I asked them to chose their own pseudonyms and have used these in the audiotape transcriptions and the dissertation, and will continue to use them for other oral or written publications of this research. Though some of Molly's data (e.g. blog entries, photographs) exists in the public sphere, I have not included web addresses or complete reference information in order to maintain her privacy. I continue to store and protect all

other research data we generated such as audiotapes, visual artifacts (photographs of objects; drawings/collage), textual responses and any email correspondence with participants (Stake, 1995). In these ways I recognize that my responsibility to maintain their privacy is long term and extends beyond the writing of this dissertation as our "lives continue to unfold into the future" (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 440).

Ethical considerations. The risk of harm for this project was low, though there is always the possibility, when conducting memory or response work, that participants might offer up difficult memories prompted by their reading experiences (Eeds & Wells, 1989; Haug, 1987; Kuhn, 1995). To acknowledge this, I reminded the participants throughout the research period that they could refrain from engaging in any discussion or activity at any time if they were uncomfortable. I explained that we were partners in the research, and that we all had valuable expertise to contribute from our reading experiences (Cole & Knowles, 1993, p. 478). As part of the research process, I also asked them to read the dissertation chapters that reflected their participation so that they might voice concerns about any aspects of their portrait, or add details they wanted to include (Cole & Knowles, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

While there are always challenges negotiating inherent power inequalities between child and adult participants in a research setting (Hill, 2006; Morgan, Gibbs, Maxwell & Britten, 2002; Maguire, 2005), I made every effort to encourage Ginny's authentic responses and maintain a safe, welcoming and reciprocal research environment for her. I did this by easing into the research relationship with her, listening and taking discussion cues from her, allowing her

to choose response activities (Hill, 2006), requesting her input in the research process, and validating her concerns, experiences and perspectives throughout the study. In this way, I meant to address the particular challenges of working with young research participants by acknowledging Ginny as an agent in the process, striving always to research *with* her, understand her participation, respect her rights and hear her voice (Maguire, 2005).

Field site. I collected data for the group reading portraits over a period of four months in the Fall of 2009, 'talking books' with Molly and Ginny through the must and damp of Hallowe'en, and up to the chill before Christmas. Our conversations were casual and spontaneous despite the presence of a digital voice recorder, and generally took shape over tea and assorted sweets as we lounged in their living room in West Montreal, Quebec, Canada. As we talked, we often wandered the house, through bedrooms and down into the basement, to search out places where particular books that we were discussing might be hiding. We met approximately six times for book discussion during the primary research period, and followed up occasionally after that, through email. Molly and Ginny also conducted a few reading response activities on their own time for me, which were discussed during our book talk.

Group data collection. To compile data for the reading profiles, I auto-recorded and transcribed our 'book talk' sessions. These digital recordings captured the group's reflections on reading, and our unscripted conversations about books. The participants also produced data outside of our discussions through response activities meant to elicit examples of storied formation. Molly wrote a literacy autobiography (Crowhurst & Kooy, 1985; Strong-Wilson, 2006,

2008), while Ginny chose to construct a visual image of herself as a reader through a collage. She called this decorated, cardboard box her "story trunk". The story trunk was covered with drawings and writing and filled with objects related to her reading (e.g. a magic whistle, wand, ink). To construct their individual reading profiles and the reading group portrait I also used Molly's public blog writing, and my follow-up email correspondences with the participants as data. Following their consent, I took field photographs of Molly and Ginny's book collections, or reading "mantelpieces" (Riggins, 1994) and reading artifacts such as costumes, dolls, rugs, quilts. These visual methodologies (Pink, 2004; Weber & Mitchell, 2004; Weber, 2007) helped to enhance their portraits by providing me with a sense of their reading contexts. Though I do not include all of this data in their final portraits, it does inform Molly and Ginny's contribution to the group.

Data analysis: Self and group study. In my analysis of the data for both the self-portrait and group portrait, I considered complex sets that include transcribed discussions, written and visual reader responses, and visual artifacts. Collecting a myriad of data was a critical part of the process in order to generate literary portraits that explored multiple perspectives of experience. Molly and Ginny also added their comments and clarification to my analysis by reading the portraiture chapters. In this way, they helped me tell their stories, reflecting the collaborative nature of literary portraiture.

For my analysis of autobiographical writing and memory work in the self-study, I "burrowed" into and "restoried" the narrative data to create multiple layers of meaning from them (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p.8). As I burrowed into my reflective writing pieces, I focused on the emotional and sensory details

of the reading event to consider how I connected a story with my lived experience of that particular time and space. I then re-worked these reading memories to clarify details and explore their significance to my sense of storied self through a process of writing and revision. I kept the contexts of the research in mind throughout my analysis by highlighting instances of continuance between my reading experiences in child and adulthood, and reflecting on my own reasons for engaging in cross-reading. The self-portrait reflects the complexity of the cross-reading experience by revealing a lived experience of reading layered with memory, sense experience, literary inheritance, reading relationships and story embodiment.

My analysis of the group data required a different strategy because it involved the consideration of more than one participant's experience. I examined the group discussion transcripts, and the participants' reflective writing using thematic analysis to highlight reoccurring themes. I read through the data actively and repeatedly, identifying resonances relating to fantasy, myth, play, death, and fear that reappeared throughout our book talk sessions. My approach to identifying themes was both inductive and theoretical in that I first tried to read the discussions openly looking for themes that did not fit into my preconceptions of cross-reading (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Finlay 2008). However, when commonalities emerged in our talk that reflected my understanding of grand conversation between an intergenerational readership, I did revisit the data from a theoretical perspective to seek out evidence of this kind of discussion between us. Because the process of analyzing the group data was so intuitive, I find it hard to distinguish between the two approaches when I reflect upon my interpretation of

the analysis. I do, however, want to acknowledge the assumptions I brought to my interpretation of the research (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Holloway & Todres, 2003).

Once I identified the themes that best represented the data and helped me to illustrate my hypothesis of continuance, community and conversation as a draw for readers to the crossover phenomenon, I organized the transcript excerpts and individual narrative writing to re-story a portrait of our conversations that would reflect both the individual and group experience of cross-reading. Ultimately, much like in the self-study, my analysis of the group data involved a process of reflective writing and re-writing that sought to expose the multiple layers of meaning revealed through communal reader response to crossover books.

Presenting the research. Designing the dissertation narrative was a challenge. I decided to illustrate my storied formation and reading response in a linear fashion, detailing reading memories and reading reflections on story from child, through young adult and into adulthood. I included a variety of narrative data in the self-portrait (e.g. literacy autobiography, photo essay, memoir writing) that illustrated continuances between my child and adulthood connected to my cross-reading. I included book illustrations that were particularly evocative of my reading memories. I found that my portrait didn't end with the conclusion of the chapter, however. In Chapters 4 and 5, I continued to reveal aspects of my storied history through conversation with members of the reading group. Through my participation in book talk with Molly and Ginny, I demonstrate how individual storied formation shapes response and discussion when a reader shares their story experiences with others.

For Chapters 4 and 5, I took a different approach to literary portraiture because they involved creating a portrait of conversation; a picture of reading experiences and relationships in a group context. I organized the chapters by theme, each addressing critical crossover motifs that reoccurred in our book discussions: Chapter 4 highlights the significance of fairy tales and fantasy in our reading histories and examines the way we 'perform' our storied identities for others, while Chapter 5 details the grand conversations generated by our discussions about death, fear and mortality in response to books. In these chapters, I detail aspects of our individual reading histories that shape Molly, Ginny and my group responses, shuttling between our experiences in my narration. I illustrate the collaborative and dialogic nature of story-sharing here, and reveal the complex ways that readers make meaning through conversation with others by weaving our stories together (A. Chambers, 1996; Eeds & Wells, 1989; Meek, Warlow & Barton, 1977).

In this dissertation, I explore both a new approach to the study of crossover literature by focusing on reader response, and an alternate means of presenting the research through literary portraiture. This strategy allows me to best demonstrate how storied formation and reader response inform a reader's engagement with crossover books, and illustrates how qualitative research can be used to support and refine theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Stake, 1994). Though the methodology has felt intuitive, exploratory, and certainly proved to be more challenging, perhaps, than traditional approaches to this kind of research, I believe it reveals a more complex picture of the cross-reading experience than is currently available in academic literature. Ultimately, my hope is that I have produced an authentic,

evocative, and invitational narrative (Tannen, 1988) that can draw readers in and encourage them to reflect on their own memories of reading, development of storied self and connections to the crossover phenomenon. It is this kind of knowledge sharing that can lead to a greater understanding of the cross-reading experience.

Chapter 3

Examining the Storied Self

> It is nothing short of astonishing that we reflect so little on the stories read to our children—stories that so many of us acknowledge as having a profoundly formative influence on our childhood selves.
>
> (Tatar, 1993, p. xxvii)

The more I talk about early reading experiences with others, the more this statement resounds; I can't help but echo Tatar's incredulity. Readers are not born they are made, shaped by the contexts of reading that they inherit and grow into. What we choose to read (and when, and where) is greatly informed throughout our lives by our early reading relationships and the reading practices we cultivate in childhood. In order to understand how readers make meaning of narrative, scholars must recognize the significance of individual reading histories. In this study of cross-reading, I ground my inquiry in acknowledgement of the importance of individual storied formation, and the early relationships readers build by sharing books with others.

My interest in storied formation (Strong-Wilson, 2008), or the ways readers construct an understanding of self in response to stories (Falconer, 2009, p. 164), was first piqued when I read Spufford's (2003) memoir of reading, *The Child that Books Built*. Spufford's book is just one of many in a wave of popular 'reading memoirs' produced in the last decade that illuminate the importance of formative reading experiences (see also Fadiman 2000; Manguel, 2010; Nafisi, 2008). As my research progressed, I became intrigued by the idea of examining the notion of

a storied self in the context of cross-reading. No one has, as yet, investigated how personal literary inheritance (stories passed down from grandparents and parents) or the identification of 'self' through reading, may motivate a reader to reach for crossover books. Because I have a long history of cross-reading and had already begun to examine my own experiences of cross-reading as part of my doctoral research, I decided to pursue these questions through self-study for the dissertation.

Self-Study Through Literary Portraiture

In this chapter I use literary portraiture to create a picture of myself as a cross-reader. Through various memory work methods such as literacy autobiography (Strong-Wilson, 2006; 2008), photo essay (Pink, 2004) and object-memory (Mitchell et al., 2011), I construct a narrative of significant moments in my storied formation. I use these means to unearth reading memories and then burrow into the event by examining emotional and sensory resonances from that memory. In this way, I try to reconstruct my understanding of the experience at the time it occurred *and* consider the meaning of the event from my current perspective to gain a greater understanding of the reading experience. I then piece together and "re-story" a narrative of self from these moments through a process of writing and re-writing that reflects a greater perspective on the significance of these formative reading experiences in the context of the cross-reading phenomenon. Through this approach, I aim to provide a deep and authentic reflection of the researcher as a cross-reader.

My literary portrait is, necessarily, a composite of select experiences that give shape to the kind of reader I was, am now, and am becoming (Clandinin &

Huber, 2010, p. 436). In remembering past story experiences I don't seek to uncover the actuality of past events because I recognize that I have selected and embellished particular details as I have reconstructed these memories (C. Chambers, 1998; Gadamer, 1998/1975). What *is* meaningful about my recollections is the way I choose to narrate identity, highlighting particular story moments in the same way I might select one colour over another to create a painted portrait. My reading portrait is a reconstruction, then, a "secondary revisio[n] of the source material of memory" (Kuhn, 1995, pp. 4-5), and reflects a cursory and controlled exploration into the complexities of understanding a sense of self through engagement with story. I also clarify that my analysis of these story moments is fixed in amber, and particular to this time, place and way of knowing (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 439).

In Parts I and II of the self-portrait, I illuminate early storied formation by addressing my personal literary inheritance and detailing significant reading memories from child and young adulthood. In Part III, I use the work of Jansson (a Finnish cross-writer) to demonstrate how I continue to develop a sense of storied identity by cross-reading children's literature in adulthood. I begin this inquiry, however, by preparing a canvas, identifying as its base the most prevalent and persistent way I return to story memories—through the practice of sense reading and an embodied knowledge of narrative.

Ways of Knowing and Remembering Story: Sense Reading, Embodiment and the Contact Zone

I first revisited early story memories by completing a reflective writing exercise that detailed significant childhood reading for Teresa Strong-Wilson as part of her *Changing Literacies, Changing Formations* (2006-2009) project. When I re-read this literacy autobiography for the self-study, I realized that I tended to ground my childhood recollections of reading in 'sense memories' of reading events.

In the following excerpt, Sendak (1970) demonstrates how a reader may tie evocative details of sense experience to a reading memory:

> My sister bought me my first book, *The Prince and the Pauper*. A ritual began with that book which I recall very clearly. The first thing was to set it up on the table and stare at it for a long time. Not because I was impressed with Mark Twain; it was just such a beautiful object. Then came the smelling of it. I think the smelling of books began with *The Prince and the Pauper*, because it was printed on particularly fine paper, unlike the Disney books I had gotten previous to that, which were printed on very poor paper and smelled poor. *The Prince and the Pauper*– smelled good and it also had a shiny cover, a laminated cover. I flipped over that. And it was very solid. I mean, it was bound very tightly. I remember trying to bite into it, which I don't imagine is what my sister intended when she bought the book for me. But the last thing I did with the book was to read it. (as cited in Graham, 2009)

In his recollection, Sendak describes vivid sensations of sight, smell, touch and taste in response to the book as an object in the physical world. His physical engagement with the text shapes this memory of the reading event.

A reader can, however, also create 'sense memories' of story by using their knowledge of sense experience in the real world to evoke the sights, smell, touch and taste of imagined worlds. Tatar (2009) suggests that this practice awakens a reader's "mimetic imagination," or, their ability to fully engage with story worlds. As Tatar (2009) relates:

> Stories can at times make a kinesthetic claim on readers, enlisting something that can be called mimetic imagination, the capacity to enter into a fictional world and make it *feel* [emphasis added] real . . . Mimetic imagination is less about copying and representing than about making contact and participating. It provides the child with an opportunity to experience the world of fiction in both intellectual and somatic terms. It allows children to cross thresholds and to breathe the air of story worlds. (p. 13)

While these kinds of sensory response are not identical, they both inform a reader's "embodied knowledge" of the reading experience because they link stories and bodies (Derry, 2005; Stoller, 1997; Weber & Mitchell, 2004). Rathunde (2009) clarifies embodiment in this way:

> Embodiment suggests that it is through our bodily perceptions, movements, emotions, and feelings that meaning becomes possible. In other words, anything that is meaningful to us is shaped in some fashion by our incarnation as creatures of flesh. (p. 71)

I suggest that 'sense reading', a way of interacting with a text, making meaning and memory from the reading event through "lived experiences of smells, tastes, textures, sounds or feelings" (Strong-Wilson, 2006, p. 70) shapes a reader's embodied knowledge of narrative, and may be one of the earliest and most powerful ways that readers make meaning from books.

While an embodied knowledge of experience may be strongest in childhood (Rathunde, 2009), understanding and remembering story through the practice of sense reading does continue into adulthood. As Mackey (2011) reminds:

> Our bodies do now what they used to do then with each of these [books], and even if the scale of our bodies has altered, the relationship with the object remains kinaesthetic as well as visual and oral. (p. 94)

Adults can foster their embodied knowledge of narrative by recalling the intensity of early story experiences, couching reading in contexts of bodily comforts, and by reading with others.

Cultivating contact. Readers establish their first reading relationships with parents, grandparents, or older siblings, and come to appreciate the "emotional significance of literacy encounters" through the reading rituals they create with them (Mackey, 2011, p. 73). Mackey (2011) grounds this sense of intimacy, in particular, in bedtime reading:

> The bathed and pyjamaed children, the renewal of bodily contact with a parent at the end of a busy day, the imminence of sleep, all combine to reinforce the significance of the occasion, to render it more memorable. And we know that many young children find a book that particularly speaks

> to them and insist on having it read over and over again, thus reinforcing even further the mnemonic power of the event. (p. 93)

In *Enchanted Hunters,* Maria Tatar (2009) calls the sphere of intimacy that readers create together by sharing books the "contact zone" (pp. 3-4). She critically observes, however, that this space is both comforting *and* contentious, simmering with tensions of "coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict" (pp. 3-4). These struggles are evident in the repetitive and exhausting nighttime battles of trying to get young children to bed, but also surface, for example, when children do not share their parent's delight in the ritual of bedtime reading (Malu, 2003).

The contact zone is significant to considerations of the crossover phenomenon because it reflects a space where readers of all ages come together over story. Despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that this shared story space troubles intergenerational relationships, it has great potential for producing grand conversations when they come together over crossover books. Though contemporary bedtime tales generally aim to swaddle a child in comfort and safety, classic crossover stories such as fairytales, have always contained much to stimulate and terrify young readers. How many adults and children have hunkered down to face the shifting phantasm of Voldemort or the icy fingers of Dementors reading the *Harry Potter* books together? Crossover stories may, in fact, more readily act as light against the encroaching darkness because they can foster important discussions about night fears between readers of all ages (ML. Harju, 2007c, 2009b; Tatar, 2009).

The contact zone is also critical to consider in the context of cross-reading because it speaks to a continuum in reading practice between child and adulthood. When children burrow under bedcovers with their books (Strong-Wilson, 2006, p. 73) they recreate the safety and comfort of this story sphere in secret reading spaces (Goodenough 2003; Rose, 1984). Adults similarly seek out this way of engaging with story by submerging in hot baths with new novels, or creating cozy nooks to read in with their children (Tatar, 2009). Older readers may also return to reading childhood books for their own pleasure, to take solace in sense reading. I often reach for my picture book collection, for example, when I am feeling particularly world-weary. The colours and collage of Keats' city spaces elevate: I delight in Peter's red snowsuit against the white in *A Snowy Day* (1962), and the dreamy oil-paper skies of *Dreams* (1974).

Ultimately, the contact zone is the original story space, an intimate place where readers are introduced to narrative by parents, grandparents, and other early caregivers who first bring books to them.

Sharing a Love of Books

A reader's sense of storied self begins with their personal literary inheritance, a gift of significant stories passed down through generations in families. In the literacy autobiographies they provided for my self-study research, both my mother and father refer back to stories they inherited from their parents and insist that their "early and diverse" exposure to literature greatly shaped their adult interests and aspirations (H. Harju, 2011, p. 1, J. Harju, 2011, p. 3). My parent's history with, and appreciation of, books then informed their children's early reading interests, and created an atmosphere in our house that promoted

reading on all kinds of subjects. I know that my mother and father read to me often, and certainly passed on a blinding passion for reading. This fact is crystallized in memory: I surface from my book to a kitchen full of smoke. I had been asked to watch the pork chops cooking in the oven and got lost in story—dinner, ruined.

Parents share significant tales of childhood with their own children because it is immensely satisfying to pass on a love of story. As Falconer (2009) relates, "One parent I spoke to declared that the opportunity to read her favourite books to her children was 'one of the major pay-offs of motherhood'" (p. 155). My mother lists *Winnie the Pooh* (Milne, 1926), assorted fairy tales, Aesop fables, Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1905/2008), *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (*Carroll, 1865), *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Baum, 1900), *Little Women* (Alcott, 1868/1869) and the *Little House on the Prairie* books (Wilder, 1932-1943) as treasures she felt compelled to share (2011b, p. 8). I identify many of these titles as formative to my own storied history, and am now passing them on to my child.

A child cannot easily escape their personal literary inheritance; it is their sole guide until they are able to discover books for themselves. My daughter's storied self is already being shaped by her parents' favourite books. At bedtime, her father reads her *Winnie the Pooh* (Milne, 1926;1928) as he sits beside her crib. He couldn't wait to share the *Peanuts* comics (Schultz, 1950-2000) because Charlie Brown's philosophical musings had such a profound effect on him as a boy. For my part, I carried her, pre-birth, into 'Moominvalley' because Jansson's stories have so deeply affected me as an adult reader. She experienced her first

cold winter night both in Jansson's story world and the real one, almost simultaneously:

> *…they said come in for a check. So I did and they wanted to watch you for two hours, so I listened to the sound of your heartbeat on the machine (for the first time) and counted your movements and read 'Moominland Midwinter'. All was quiet and sleepy, and there was a blue moon outside the window. I made it to the part where Squirrel is frozen by the Lady of the Frost:*
>
> The Lady of the Cold was standing by the reeds. Her back was turned, and she was bending down over the snow.
> 'It's the squirrel,' said Too-ticky. 'He's forgotten to stay at home.'
> The Lady of the Cold turned her beautiful face towards the squirrel and casually scratched him behind one ear. Bewitched, he stared back at her, straight into her cold blue eyes. The Lady of the Cold smiled and continued on her way.
> . . . 'He's quite dead', said Little My matter-of-factly. (Jansson, 1992/1957, p. 49-50).
> *… then they said I should stick around and call your Papa, because you seemed ready to go soon enough…*
>
> (Personal Journal, December 29, 2009)

When a reader enters the world, they are baptized in the ''common cultural pool" (Hannabus, 2004, p. 419) of inherited narratives that have been passed down through generations. This storied history, in tandem with the close reading

relationships we build by sharing books, deeply shapes both our sense of self and the reading practices we carry with us into adulthood. In the literary self-portrait that follows, formative family stories echo.

Self-Portrait of a Cross-Reader

"Let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start"

(Hammerstein & Rodgers, 1959/1965a)

Early formations: Sound and image. My literary history begins in a darkened room with hushed song. I am cosseted in my bedroom rocking chair, looking at the low light of a small white lamp with a wooden duck on its base. My mother sings lullabies: 'All the Pretty Horses', "Hush Little Baby', 'Bye Baby Bunting' and 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star'. I recall a rare occasion too, when my Mummu (my Finnish grandmother) was visiting. She sang a Finnish lullaby, that I have always thought was about a cuckoo bird because I can only remember the words 'Kukka Kukka' from it (though Kukka is actually a flower in Finnish). From a literacy autobiography my father provided for this study (H. Harju, 2011), I learn that this was also one of his childhood favourites, a song that summons memories of his mother and moments of connection he wanted to pass on to his children. It is through lullaby and nursery rhymes that a child first experiences "the charms of tradition" (Opie, 1996, p. 173).

This is how my daughter's storied formation also begins, with songs I sing in *her* rocking chair to send her off to sleep. In this contact zone, I pass on the lullabies that echoed through my infancy and add new ones from favourite childhood musicals when the 'going to bed' ritual grows long, such as *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* (Arlen & Harburg, 1939), *Stay Awake* (Sherman & Sherman,

1964), and *Edelweiss* (Hammerstein & Rodgers, 1959/1965b). Lyrics spring suddenly with remembered melody. Once again, I sit at the piano with my mother, who plays from a songbook illustrated with silhouettes (Burke, 1933). Most of my very early memories of story are accompanied by my mother's singing voice. I can *only* recall my favourite poem, Stevenson's *The Swing,* through melody: "How do you like to go up in a swing, up in the air so blue? Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing, Ever a child can do" (1905/2008), p. 40). My early knowledge of narrative is embedded in these sounds, and through them I can connect to those I first shared story experiences with (Strong-Wilson, 2006).

In recalling story memories readers may also return to the past through sudden flashes of story image. I identify 'Wynken, Blynken and Nod', for example, as my first significant story companions because this relief of their journey through the starry seas hung on the wall beside my crib:

Figure 1. Wynken, Blynken and Nod wall-hanging

Wynken, Blynken, and Nod one night
Sailed off in a wooden shoe
Sailed off on a river of crystal light,
Into a sea of dew.
"Where are you going, and what do you wish?
The old moon asked the three.
"We have come to fish for the herring fish that live in the beautiful sea;
Nets of silver and gold have we!"
Cried Wynken,
Blynken,
And Nod.

(Field, 1956)

I found a replica (see Figure 1) of this wall hanging on a website selling vintage childhood artifacts (http://ny-image2.etsy.com/il_fullxfull. 131042430.jpg). The availability of such memorabilia suggests that there are many adults who long for, and can now purchase, tangible connections to their past. Such childhood souvenirs can be powerful triggers for "object memory" work, a method where readers use their stuffed toys, themed sheets, and child-size dish sets (e.g. The Royal Doulton 'Bunnykins' series) to help recall their nursery days (Mackey, 1999; 2011; Mitchell et al., 2011, p. 9). One of the most potent ways to access story images from childhood, however, is to return to childhood picture books.

The importance of picture book reading.

Summer fading, winter comes—
Frosty mornings, tingling thumbs,
Window robins, winter rooks,
And the picture story-books.

(Stevenson, 1905/2008, p. 63)

Though picture book reading is often devalued in the West, by being relegated to the realm of 'children's literature, it reflects an intensely complex way of engaging with story that attracts readers of all ages (Beckett, 2011; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001). In part, adult cross-reading has been identified through adult's increasing engagement with illustrated text in graphic novels, manga and crossover picture books (Beckett, 2009; 2011; Falconer, 2009). Tan, a cross-writing picture book author, addresses our continued desire to engage with the verbal and the visual (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001):

> [I]t's clear that older readers, including you and me, remain interested in the imaginative play of drawings and paintings, telling stories, and learning how to look at things in new ways. There is no reason why a 32-page illustrated story can't have equal appeal for teenagers or adults as they do for children. After all, other visual media such as film, television, painting or sculpture do not suffer from narrow preconceptions of audience. (Tan, n.d., para 5)

Illustrated texts also warrant special mention in the context of understanding the crossover phenomenon, because they can engender a special kind of book sharing between young people and adults (Beckett, 2011; ML.Harju, 2007; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001). As Nikolajeva (2002) notes, one of the best ways to facilitate conversation between generations is to put a picture book between them (p. 105).

Picture books are evocative touchstones (Strong-Wilson, 2006, p. 71) that conjure immediate associations to the past. When I read favourite poems from Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1905/2008) to my daughter, I realize it is not just the verse of "Bed in Summer", "The Land of Nod" and " My Bed is a Boat " that transports, it is Smith's accompanying pictures that return me to my childhood nursery. The black and white illustrations are whimsical and dynamic promising adventure, and hours of play in shadows, gardens, and fantasy worlds. The book's condition speaks to our long relationship, the wine-coloured cover peels, the glue is old, the pages are stiff and yellow and split easily from the spine. Mackey (2011) similarly details how her copy of a treasured picture book reflected intense engagement with story, "The book is ruinously dilapidated . . . Yet to me, this relic is possibly my most evocative possession, a deliberately codified mnemonic for a childhood long past" (p. 81). Tatar (2009) suggests that

young readers come to fetishize story through such use and abuse of childhood books, making talismans of them.

As Sendak demonstrates (in his own story memory), our early reading experiences with picture books are intensely tactile. Mackey (2011) suggests this is because "the sensory network is activated by small particularities, and picture books abound with them" (p. 92). Picture books engender an embodied knowledge of story by offering sensory affordances that are particular to the ways that children make meaning. As Rathunde (2009) relates:

> Infants and children learn about the meaning of objects through "affordances," that is, the possibilities for interaction with the object (Gibson, 1966). The meaning of an object is relative to the functional makeup of an organism (i.e., its sensorimotor capacities), and perception and action are locked in a continuous cycle—one provides information for the other. (p. 74)

Children not only make meaning of story from the affordances of picture book reading, they make memories of these reading experiences through them. Mackey (2011) uses Gelernter's (1994) concept of "affect linking" to explain how readers "tag . . . stored memories by their affective qualities (so that our first inkling of a memory is the *feeling* [sic] of it)" (p. 86).

In the reading memories that follow, I demonstrate "affect linking" in the way that I tie memories of significant stories to the feelings of loneliness and uncertainty that I experienced during bouts of childhood illness. Through sense reading, I came to "understand the abstract marks on the page through the prism of [my] own emotional resonances" (Mackey, 2011, p. 86).

Part I. Identifying Through Sense Reading in Childhood

The "Land of Counterpane": Stories and childhood illness.

When I was sick and lay a-bed.

I had two pillows at my head,

And all my toys beside me lay

To keep me happy all the day.

(Stevenson, 1905/2008, p. 18)

In the course of collecting data for this thesis, a discussion with research participants about *Winnie the Pooh* prompted this sense memory: An image of Kanga and Tigger coaxing Roo into taking his medicine (see Figure 1-2; Milne, 1928) popped into my head, accompanied by the bitter taste of crushed aspirin, sugar and water delivered on a spoon:

Figure 1-1. Kanga and Tigger give Roo his medicine (Milne, 1928)

This recollection made me aware that I often connect story memories with the experience of childhood illness in my past. I vividly recall the *ValueTales* volume about Louis Pasteur (Johnson & Pileggi, 1977), for example, through a memory of suffering asthmatic bronchitis as a child. When I think of that book, I see the sunflower yellow walls of my nursery, the glow of the nightlight, the sound of the humidifier, and recall the shifting and discomfort in trying to sleep upright,

propped on pillows so that I could breathe better. I recall a rousing illustration of soldiers marching through the tube of a needle and into a child's body to provide him with medicine (the vaccine for rabies, in this case) to make him well again. It was a comfort to read that story when I was kept up at night by my constricted breathing; I remember how frightening it was to be the only person awake in a sleeping house. Dahl's *James and the Giant Peach* (1961) similarly served as a source of consolation when I was unwell. My mother read it to me as I lay on a bed in the allergist's office having scratch tests done on my arms and back. Though the experience was uncomfortable and invasive, it helped to focus on my mother's voice as she read of James' adventures and detailed the taste of the giant peach.

Though I realize, in retrospect, that I really was fairly healthy, I often defined myself as a sickly child, particularly when I couldn't participate in sports activities at school, or when I felt that I was having to endure more little things going wrong with me than my brothers and sisters, or peers. The story associations I made to these bouts of illness helped me combat the fear and discomfort, however. They reminded me that I was not alone in being sick, that I would eventually get better, and that I was being cared for. Rapport and Wainwright (2006) suggest that it is quite common, in the tradition of autobiographical health and illness narratives, for people to identify with such experiences of ill health, but also see themselves as "reparable" through the "telling and retelling of story" (p. 5).

While these remembrances of reading reflect one way I gained a sense of storied self through sense experience in childhood (e.g. by identifying through the

discomforts of the body), my memories of food descriptions in children's literature reflect quite another. As the next series of sense readings suggest, I also grew to associate story with culinary comforts, by devouring chicken and cider, pickle and peach in favourite story worlds.

Reveling in the picnic basket: Food experiences in children's literature. Keeling and Pollard (2009) propose that it is quite common for readers to connect with the highly detailed food experiences of children's literature (see also Katz, 1980) because "Food experiences form part of the daily texture of every child's life from birth onwards [and] food is a constantly recurring motif in literature written for children" (p. 10). Katz identifies a sociology of childhood in these food descriptions, recognizing "a portrait of children's manners, problems, and preoccupations" in the "examination of what's eaten, by whom, when, and where" (p. 192).

Memoirs of reading are also often rife with gastronomical metaphors. Food is often embedded in the way we think about and describe our engagement with books: a reader may describe a 'hunger' for books, or recall 'devouring' stories (Strong-Wilson, 2007; Tatar, 2009). I learned to *form* reading memories as a child by sitting at table alongside characters in the text, and still connect a delight in reading with the pleasures of eating. I wallow, as an adult reader, in the feasts awaiting students upon their return to Hogwarts in the *Harry Potter* books, because it reminds me of the pleasure I gained from similar reading experiences of food in my childhood. This way of reading *Harry Potter* references a cornucopia of intense early food memories from childhood books: consuming the contents of the lunchboxes on the lunchbox tree (see Figure 1-2; Baum, 1907);

taking tea with Bilbo (Tolkien, 1937) and with Mr. Tumnus (Lewis, 1950), and reveling in the picnic basket as *The Famous Five* took a break from their sleuthing (Blyton, 1942).

Figure 1-2. The lunch-box tree (Baum, 1907)

One of the most memorable sense reading experiences I recognize in childhood is related to *Little House in the Big Woods (*Wilder, 1932/1960*)*. I recall a glorious "sparks list" of story moments that flash and resonate (Tatar, 2009, p. 26) in relation to this book: the smell of the green hickory chips Pa uses to fill the smoke house (p. 7); the sound of Laura and Mary batting the pig bladder (blown as a balloon) about (p. 15); the taste of the roasted pig tail and crackling (pp. 16-17), fresh buttermilk (p. 33), molasses candy on snow (p.63), and the sugaring off feast (pp. 151-152). It is not just the food that tantalizes, however, it is the understanding of home embedded in these details. In this story, perhaps more so than in any of the other 'Little House' books, "The worlds of the young

Laura and Mary are centered on the rich emblems of semiotic existence, the scents tastes, seasonal time, and ritualistic repetitions of the mother's body engaged in domestic ritual" (Blackford, 2009, p. 51). Additionally, Wilder's description of the attic stands as one of the most inviting and secret childhood play spaces (Goodenough, 2003) connected with food that I ever encountered:

> The attic was a lovely place to play. The large, round, colored pumpkins made beautiful chairs and tables. The red peppers and the onions dangled overhead. The hams and venison hung in their paper wrappings, and all the bunches of dried herbs, the spicy herbs for cooking and the bitter herbs for medicine gave the place a dusty-spicy smell.
>
> Often the wind howled outside with a cold and lonesome sound. But in the attic Laura and Mary played house with the squashes and pumpkins, and everything was snug and cosy. (Wilder, 1932/1960, p. 19)

Fisher (1943) suggests that readers automatically connect narratives of food with feelings of love and security because they are so:

> mixed and mingled and entwined that we cannot straightly think of one without the others. So it happens that when I write of hunger, I am really writing about love and the hunger for it, and warmth and the love of it and the hunger for it . . . and then the warmth and richness and fine reality of hunger satisfied . . . and it is all one. (p. vii)

I find that my knowledge of this book as an adult is enriched by all the ways I now connect the story with past experiences of enjoying food in life and literature. *Little House in the Big Woods* is a particularly formative early book in my literary history, not only because it helped me identify a sense of self through the delight

and comfort I took in story food experiences, but also because these details greatly shaped the way I create my own stories. As I demonstrate in Chapter 4, Wilder's (1932/1960) tales of food, family and warmth against the darkness of the Big Woods greatly influenced my own storytelling.

Furtherances on Storied Formation in Childhood

Scholars suggest that our ability to make meaning of, and memory from stories through an embodied knowledge of story is most prevalent in childhood (Rathunde, 2009; Stoller, 1997; Singer & Singer, 1992). Singer and Singer (1992) insist that our ability to be imaginative depends on the development of embodied knowledge in our early years, and stress the importance of fostering children's connections between story, sense experience and play. From my exploration into early storied formation, I identify sense reading as a powerful childhood practice that continues to shape how I engage with, identify through, and create stories today.

Though my early sense of storied self is grounded in experiences of the body, my reflections on storied formation in young adulthood appear to be preoccupied with intellectual concerns. In the next series of responses, I detail a growing awareness of the self in relation to culture, philosophy and society as I attempt to move beyond the comfort of the contact zone to form an independent adolescent identity.

Part II. The Outsider—A Teen Reader

After the lullabies and verse of infancy, my literacy autobiography (ML. Harju, 2006a) reflects a typical progression from picture books (e.g. the family fairy tale collection; *Little Golden Books* series (1942-2012) and titles by Dr.

Seuss) to transitional books with fewer pictures (e.g. *Jacob Two-Two meets the Hooded Fang* (Richler, 1975), *Encyclopedia Brown Tracks them Down* (Sobol, 1963), and books by Louisa May Alcott, Beverley Cleary, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Roald Dahl and Jean Little) to young adult novels (e.g. books by Judy Blume, Gordon Korman, S.E. Hinton and Monica Hughes) to "threshold reading", books given to young people by adults (e.g. by J.R.R. Tolkien, George Orwell, Anthony Burgess, Kurt Vonnegut) or adult books appropriated by young readers that serve as an introduction to the world of adulthood and adult reading.

In the following section, I discuss two particular books that reflect important threshold reading in my storied formation. In a memory work assignment that I produced as a model for my undergraduate class (ML. Harju, 2008a) I identified both *The Last Temptation of Christ* (Kazantzakis, 1960) and *A Clockwork Orange* (Burgess, 1962) as books that most influenced my adolescent identity (see Figure 1-3, Figure 1-4, Figure 1-5). For the assignment, I asked students to compile a 'photo essay' (Pink, 2004) in order to create a picture of their adolescent reading and its impact on their developing sense of self. The projects that they produced in PowerPoint or paper collage formats, combined reflective writing in diverse styles of prose (e.g. poetry, song lyrics) with found or generated images specifically related to reading. In their work, students used a wealth of images from book readings, film openings, of slogan t-shirts (e.g. related to the *Twilight* books), and album covers to represent their adolescent reading identities.

When I read my own photo essay now, I find that these reading memories reveal a developing awareness of the 'adult' issues I was struggling with as a teen. As a child, books allowed me to inhabit and explore fantastical worlds, work

through issues with school friends, and manage early anxieties. Significant reading in my adolescence, alternatively, helped me negotiate an identity quite distanced from the social, political, and religious culture I had been raised in.

Recognizing the subversive self.

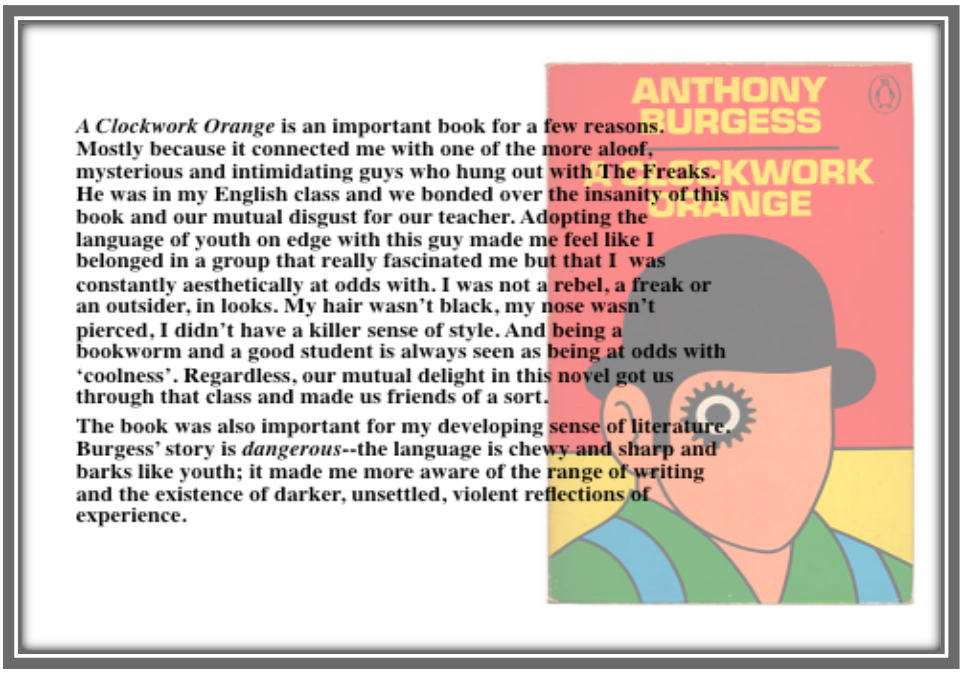

Figure 1-3. Photo essay excerpt on adolescent reading #1

My friends and I found Burgess' language so infectious, that we began to incorporate it into our own talk, as evidenced in this yearbook inscription:

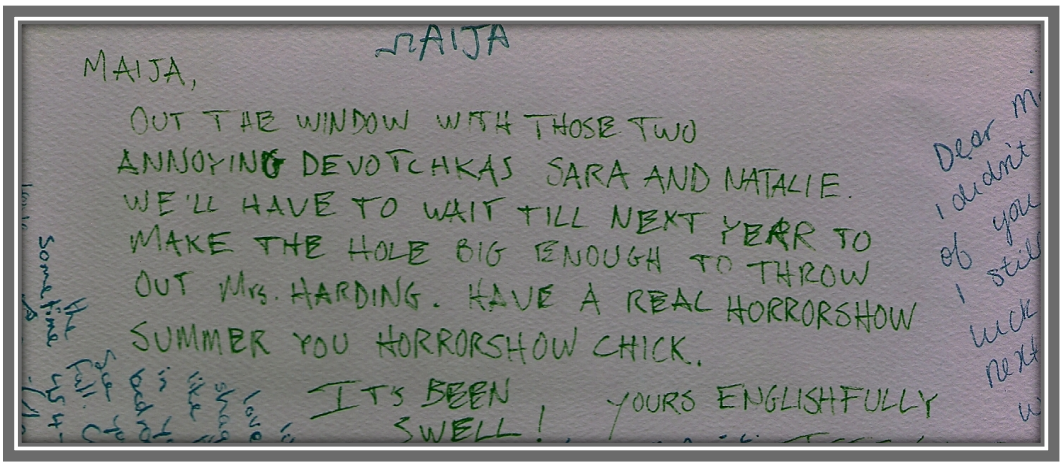

Figure 1-4. High school yearbook inscription

By adopting the discourse of this story world in our day-to-day speech (e.g. "devotchkas","horrorshow"), my friends and I demonstrate how we deeply we identified with Burgess' book, and how we shared this sense of storied self together. Using story language to communicate is only one way that readers evoke story worlds in their real world experience and 'perform' their storied selves for others.

A Clockwork Orange was important to me because it allowed me to better understand and relate to a new and diverse group of friends in high school who came from very different backgrounds and shared a more subversive youth culture than my own. These friendships were some of the most impressionable and lasting relationships I have experienced. In sharing the culture of this group, I became exposed to liberal and tolerant ideas concerning sexuality, religion, politics and artistic expression, and these experiences pushed me to envision a broader sense of myself in the world. This threshold novel stands, then, as a critical touchstone (Strong-Wilson, 2006, p. 71) in my storied formation to a time, place and group of people who greatly changed my understanding of self as an adolescent.

In my photo essay, I pinpoint another book from young adulthood that changed my worldview as an adolescent (see Figure 1-5). Kazantzakis' *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1960) challenged the foundations of my religious education and helped me think past a belief system I had inherited to fashion one that was distinctly my own.

Illumination.

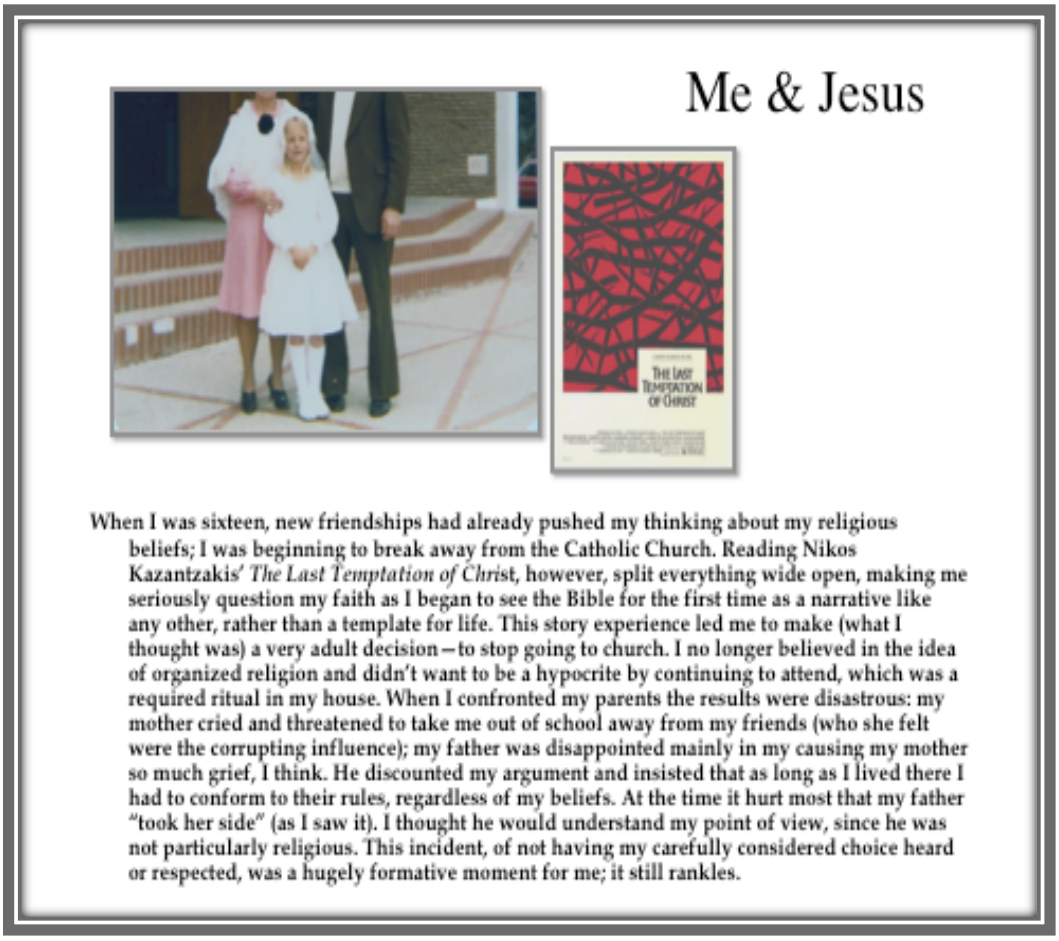

Figure 1-5. Photo essay excerpt on adolescent reading #2

I'm not sure I even remember what it was now, specifically, about the novel that led to my epiphany. I believe it lay in Kazantzakis' attempt to sympathize with Christ as a human being, rather than a deity one cannot begin to relate to—a notion completely beyond my understanding as a young Catholic (schooled in the tradition of the Church in the 1970's and 1980's). The novel provoked questions I was not meant to ask, which intrigued me. And, as I mention in the excerpt, it was in reading *The Last Temptation of Christ* that I first allowed myself to think of the stories of the Bible as merely that—stories that could be reworked, reinterpreted for meaning. Instead of losing heart from this revelation I felt quite

liberated by this new way of thinking about story. This metamorphic change in thinking did not come without consequences, however. After this conflict, my relationship with my parents was not quite the same, as I had taken my first step beyond the security of their worldview to test my own.

Furtherances on Storied Formation in Adolescence

Both of these remembrances of significant books in the storied formation of my young adulthood reflect the complex responses that threshold reading can prompt. My memory work reflects a very cursory investigation into the ways a reader may shape a storied self as they transition between child and adulthood, and I highlight here, that more work needs to be done to investigate this critical site in the context of cross-reading. Additional reader response into individual reading histories can reveal much, for example, about a continuum of themes that attract cross-readers as they stand at the threshold of adulthood.

It is important to note, too, in reflecting on the development of a storied self, that formation does not necessarily occur in a linear fashion as one moves through children's, then young adult, then adult books. When considering readers' storied formation, researchers must recognize that the process of storying self is cyclical. Adult readers can just as easily gain self-knowledge from reading children's books as they can by reading stories prescribed for their own age group (Falconer, 2009; Malu, 2003, Strong-Wilson, 2006). I experienced this myself by discovering the Finnish author Jansson's books as an adult reader. In the final section of this portrait, I detail the ways that I continue to be shaped, in adulthood, by her work.

Part III. Finding the Fillyjonk: Adult Formation

I was first introduced to Jansson's books during a research fellowship at that International Jugendbibliothek in Munich in 2005. I was at the library to research a paper on anthropomorphism in children's literature, and to think about a direction in the field for my PhD application. Encountering Jansson's stories were what inspired me to pursue the study of crossover literature. I have since investigated Jansson as a cross-writer, detailing in particular, notions of continuance between child and adulthood in her work (ML. Harju, 2009a).

One of the first stories I read by Jansson was *Comet over Moominvalley* (1946), which introduced me to the Moomin family and their friends. While the Moomin books are about Moomins (anthropomorphized animals of a kind) they really address the peculiarities of *human* nature because the characters deal with hominal foibles and fears. Though Moominvalley is an idyllic setting, a pervading sense of menace underlies the family's adventures there. In these books, Jansson explores both the enchantment of the natural world and the storms of human anxiety, provoking important and perplexing existential questions—rare qualities in children's books.

Reading *Comet over Moominvalley* (1946) was a transformative experience because I felt an immediate affinity with Jansson's world. This feeling grew as I went on to read *Tales from Moominvalley* (1962) and met the Fillyjonk, a terribly nervous creature who is afflicted by uncontrollable anxiety about impending disaster. To see this secret side of myself embodied in the figure of the Fillyjonk was terribly alarming:

Figure 1-6. The Fillyjonk faces the storm (Jansson, 1962)

From: "The Fillyjonk Who Believed in Disasters":

> I must make Gaffsie understand,' she thought. 'I have to tell somebody that I'm frightened, someone who can answer me: But of course, I quite understand you must be. Or: Really, what on earth is there to be afraid of? A splendid summer day like today. Anything, but something'
>
> 'The cakes are my grandmother's recipe,' said the Fillyjonk. And then she leaned forward over the table and whispered: 'This calm is unnatural. It means something terrible is going to happen. Dear Gaffsie, believe me, we are so very small and insignificant, and so are our tea cakes and carpets and all those things, you know, and still

> they're so important, but always they're threatened by mercilessness…'
>
> 'Oh,' said Gaffsie, feeling ill at ease.
>
> 'Yes, by mercilessness,' the Fillyjonk continued rather breathlessly. 'By something one can't ask anything of, or argue with, or understand, and that never tells one anything. Something that one can see drawing near, through a black window-pane, far away on the road, far away to sea, growing and growing but not really showing itself until too late. Mrs. Gaffsie, have you felt it? Tell me that you know what I'm talking about! Please!
>
> (Jansson, 1962, pp. 42-46)

I detail the significance of this story for me in the following reading response:

> *The story, "The Fillyjonk who Believed in Disasters" speaks to irrational fears that have followed me from child to adulthood; anxieties that actually impact my day to day habits. I have mild OCD I think; it doesn't debilitate me, but it is certainly an annoyance and something I feel I can't control. For example, I have an irrational fear of electricity and fire resulting from some kind of electrical incident. This makes me check appliances (the stove, most frequently) to ensure they are off before I leave the house. I don't leave the kettle or toaster plugged in, partly because an empty toaster that had been left with the handle depressed almost set fire to my childhood*

home—it did burn a sizable black patch in the wall before we returned from church and realized it.

My anxiety has extended from fear of fire to flooding in the past few years, making me check bathrooms taps to ensure they are closed and not leaking before I leave the house. These compulsions are frustrating, embarrassing and time consuming, and yet I can't help but go through the motions. I realize it is some kind of attempt to control uncontrollable things, impending doom, as the Fillyjonk might say. I'm trying to train myself not to check so many times (it is not just once, for I go through the motions distractedly, and then don't trust my memory that I have checked them) because I am well aware that I won't have time for this nonsense once my child arrives and I need to worry about getting her out of the house with me.

I have always been an anxious person, and recall having many childhood fears—from those of spiders and spirits to a real world concern about my parents dying. These feelings were not always obvious, but would underlie moments of anxiety that occurred on playground swings, and roller coasters--the disorientation and whirl would heighten my panic.

There is something comforting in being able to put a name to this feeling. My husband can say, 'you're just a fillyjonk', which is much better than calling me a 'worry wart', or 'paranoid' or 'crazy'. A fillyjonk encompasses the complexity of these feelings, and reminds me that I am not in control of them (they just take me over) and I am not alone in having them. (Research Journal, 2009)

Finding the Fillyjonk as an adult has given me a name for a secret part of self that has been with me since childhood but has been difficult to explain to others. Seeing myself in this figure, who is constantly battling real and metaphysical storms is deeply reassuring. Through the Fillyjonk, Jansson reminds readers that our fears are valuable because they help to define who we are: "Those storms of her own were the worst ones. And deep down in her heart the Fillyjonk was just a little proud of her disasters that belonged to no one else" (1962, p. 50).

While the Fillyjonk is an important figure in the Moomin books for me, she isn't the only reason I identify with the stories as an adult reader. It was in reading *The Summer Book*, one of Jansson's 'adult' novels, that I gained a real sense of how a reader shifts between multiple identities when they engage with crossover books (Malu, 2003, see also ML. Harju, 2009a). While both Malu (2003) and Falconer (2009) have discussed the ways a reader may shuttle between past and present identities while reading, *The Summer Book* (1974) pushed me to imagine myself into the future. By identifying with the figure of Grandmother in the novel, I played with notions of who I may or may not become. I identify this as an "aspirational reading" experience, though my use of the term is not meant to denote aspirations to class (e.g. BBC News, 2005). Instead, I use the phrase to articulate the way readers can envision a future identity through their response to story. The following piece of response writing clarifies this reading experience:

Reflective Writing: Reading Response

> *In reading Tove Jansson's* The Summer Book*, I find myself connecting not only to Sophia's wonder at the world, desire to be grown, and hunger for answers to difficult questions, but also with the figure of her grandmother.*

> *I think it is because she reminds me of my own Mummu (grandmother), and my Aunt, who were, and are, strong-willed, creative, and pragmatic Finnish women who I link strongly with the natural landscape. When I read this book, I experience Sophia and her grandmother's relationship nostalgically, remembering play with my own Mummu: stringing necklaces from the treasures in her button jar; playing with the cardboard furniture pieces and people she fashioned out of mini Fruit Loop and Corn Pops cereal boxes; trying to teach myself Finnish from her ancient pocket Finn/English dictionary so that I, like my Father, could speak to her in that secret language. At the same time, I also project myself into a future, unknown space when I read, envisioning myself as an older woman, a Mummu myself, perhaps, who lives near water, in quieter spaces, and who is slowly getting too old to climb in and out of boats. Because I connect this book, these memories and this imagined future self so strongly with these particular women and the sense of Finnish identity I foster, I have often wanted to send a copy of it to my Aunt, to share it with her and see if there is anything for her in there that rings as true.* (Research Journal, 2009)

This narrative reflects the rich and complex ways I explore a sense of self through my reading of Jansson's novel: by relating to characters in different age groups; identifying with the familiar landscape of a summer house, water and woods; and by remembering times spent playing with own grandmother. The reading response also demonstrates how I continue to practice sense reading as an adult,

by highlighting my identification with tactile story details in the text and my use of similar tools of evocation to shape my own narrative of experience.

Furtherances on a Storied Self

Though my reading responses to Jansson certainly highlight the joy I take in recalling important story experiences and their connection to reading relationships, they also point to some of the shadows that shape my storied sense of self. As with much memory work, the process of recollecting the past through literary portraiture is not always a safe or comforting task (Haug, 1987). It is essential, however, when examining identity, to confront unpleasant memories because they "mustn't be left undisturbed, they are an important part of life and need also to be dragged out into the light and studied" (Kuhn, 1995, pg. 6; see also Mills, 2004). Mackey (2011) suggests that twin associations of comfort and apprehension accompany our memories of childhood reading. In referring to her favourite childhood picture book, for example, she identifies the recollection as:

> a memory of utter security—yet I cannot recall a single moment when I didn't not have a powerful repertoire of the terror of being lost that vivified my comprehension of Margaret's misery, trapped away from home. (p. 87)

While I am aware that most of the story associations I use for this portrait paint a fairly idyllic picture of my early reading history, I assure the reader that there are dark corners there, too.

Some of my earliest cross-reading memories, for example, are associated with feelings of shame. In one instance, I was scolded by an eighth grade teacher who found me (a fifth grader) in the library reading a picture book. Though I can't recall what the title was, I do remember that I would occasionally seek it out

because I found the illustrations comforting. I was too old for 'baby books', he chided, which mortified me. I scuttled off to find more appropriate reading, because I respected him and didn't want to look like a child (even though that's what I was). In another instance, I distinctly recall being marched back to the library by my mother to return a book when she realized it was about a teenage boy spying on his female neighbour. Some Judy Blume books (e.g. *Blubber* [1974], *Are You There God it's Me Margaret* [1970] were permitted in my house, but other titles (e.g. *Then Again, Maybe I Won't* [1971], *Forever* [1975]) were not because (I presume) they honestly discussed teen sexuality. Both of these vignettes illustrate how well I fit the cross-reading bill, demonstrating how I was shamed in youth for reading adult books and shamed when old for reading children's books (Lewis, 2002/1966).

Postman (1994) argues, "without a well-developed idea of shame, childhood cannot exist"(p. 9). He claims that adults use shame as a mechanism of control to uphold divisions between child and adulthood:

> Children . . . are immersed in a world of secrets, surrounded by mystery and awe; a world that will be made intelligible to them by adults who will teach them, in stages, how shame is transformed into a set of moral directives. From the child's point of view, shame gives power and authority to adulthood. (p. 86)

In these recollections, and my reflection on reading Kazantzakis' novel as a teen, I recognize that the feelings of shame I connect with early cross-reading are often related to my reach for 'secret' adult knowledge. Though the adults who used shame to assert their power and authority may have been momentarily successful

in keeping me from these books, they also spurred on my cross-reading practice. For me, cross-reading became an act of resistance, a way to defy boundaries and access knowledge beyond the borders of childhood.

Recalling the shadows in my storied formation informs my sense of self in many ways. Remembering that although I generally felt loved and protected in child and young adulthood, I also experienced feelings of loss, frustration and anger helps me to be empathetic in my relationships with young people today. Recognizing that childhood is not a romantic, pastoral past (Natov, 2003; Nodelman & Reimer, 2003) entirely protected by the comforts of the contact zone encourages me to continuously challenge idealized notions of child and young adulthood in my research and teaching.

As I reflect on the process of narrating a storied self, I reiterate that this self-portrait reflects the time, place and understanding I have now (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). It is additionally shaped by the particular memory work methods I have used, the reading memories I have chosen and the analyses I have applied. A literary portrait is entirely individual and stands on its own—that of another reader would be shaped quite differently by the methods a researcher employs and the themes that they choose. In Chapters 4 and 5, for example, I demonstrate a different method of portraiture by representing the experience of readers in conversation. Though I certainly sketch out aspects of each participant's individual storied formation in these portraits, I do not try to provide a complete picture of each reader. Instead, I aim to reveal the ways readers 'perform' their storied selves for others and share this sense of self in response to reading through discussion with other readers. I introduce each chapter with an image (see Figure

2.1 [Dore, 1897] and Figure 3 [Holbein, 1538]) to stand as a pictorial representation of our book talk.

Chapter 4

Lost in the Enchanted Forest: Resonances of Fantasy and Fairy Tale

Figure 2. Prince in the dark wood*, La Belle au Bois Dormant* (Dore, 1897)

> The literature of fantastika can take us not just to new places, or acquaint us with new ideas, but it can give our capacity for wonder as many marvels as we can bear and, if we are lucky, just a bit more than we can bear.
>
> (J.H. Stephens, 2011, para 9)

In the literary autobiographies of the reading group participants (Molly, Ginny and myself) fantasy and fairy tales resonate—they are, perhaps, the most formative stories in our reading histories. Some readers, it seems, never completely emerge from the enchanted woods of their childhood, keeping one foot ever in the land of faerie. Molly and I, for example, have not put away our interest in wondrous worlds, monstrous beasts, and magic simply because we have aged (Lewis, 2002/1966). Ginny, like many other young readers today, has literally 'grown up' with the *Harry Potter* books. She lingered at Hogwart's School of Witchcraft and Wizardry for more than a decade, listening to the stories nightly (as audiobooks) before bed and extending the narrative through her play (Book talk: October 24, 2009; November 8, 2009; December 13, 2009) and by making a real life journey to this story world through the newly opened *Harry Potter World* theme park (http://www.universalorlando.com/harrypotter/). In our literary histories we all reflect a continuum of interest in imaginative worlds that extends throughout our life stages.

In this chapter, I discuss the significance of fairy tale and fantasy stories for the reading group participants' individual storied formation. Additionally, I explore the ways Molly, Ginny and I smuggle enchantment back into the real world by 'performing' stories, or sharing our sense of storied self with others. I

begin, however, by considering why fantasy and fairy tales continue to enchant readers of all ages.

The Crossover Appeal of Fairy Tale and Fantasy

Reflecting on the immense success of both *The Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter* franchises in the 20th century, Beckett (2009) pinpoints a renewed interest in fantasy reading among adults as the "driving force behind the current crossover phenomenon" (p. 161). While fantastic tales have always been read by a diverse audience of readers, she notes, "all ages fantasy is now a widespread, global trend" (p. 135). Tales of faerie and fantasy lands may be the ultimate crossover stories because they speak to us at all stages of our lives, they shape many of our ideas in childhood and continue to inform our adult conceptions of the world (Bettelheim, 1975/1989; Tatar, 1993; Zipes, 1999).

For the child reader, Zipes (1999) posits, stories of faerie, fantasy and myth appeal "mainly because the stories nurture their great desire for change and independence" (p. 1). Bettelheim (1975/1989) specifically identifies 'hope' as a powerful draw for the child's engagement in fairy tale:

> Every parent responsive to his child's feeling down and out tells the child that things will turn out for the better. But the child's despair is all-encompassing—because he does not know gradations, he feels either in darkest hell or gloriously happy—and therefore nothing but the most perfect everlasting bliss can combat his fear of total devastation at the moment […] by telling his child fairy tales, the parent can encourage him to borrow for his private use fantastic hopes for the future, without misleading him by suggesting that there is reality to such imaginings. (p. 126)

It may be, however, that adults are also attracted to messages of hope in fairy tales. In the past, adults traded fairy tales to create "communal bonds in the face of inexplicable forces of nature" but today these stories can additionally provide "hope in a world seemingly on the brink of [man made] catastrophe" (Zipes, 1999, p. 1; see also Falconer, 2009, p. 173). I suspect that fairy tales are particularly potent because they provide readers of all ages tools of light against the darkness (Tatar, 2009).

Fantasy and fairy tale also offer the tantalizing prospect of refuge from the constraints and burdens of reality, since they

> provide a prisoner (or anyone trapped in negative circumstances) with a temporary 'escape from intractable problems' by projecting images of a better world somewhere else, but these images can 'have power and meaning' for him [in the real world] as they give him the strength to resist his present circumstances. (Falconer, 2009, p. 166)

I highlight Falconer's second assertion, that while reading fantasy may provide a temporary escape for the reader, it is not about 'escapism'. When they engage with fantasy stories, children *and* adults can gain confidence to address their real world troubles (Bettelheim, 1975/1989; G. Jones, 2002; Tatar, 2009). In several of my book discussions with Ginny, for example, she suggested that certain fantastical story elements in *Harry Potter, Percy Jackson and the Olympian*s (Riordan, 2005) and *The Graveyard Book* (2008) helped her manage her day to day struggles with bullying.

While fantasy and fairy tales may provide readers with a safe, imaginary space where they can work out solutions to real world problems, I suspect that readers of all ages are also powerfully drawn to the experience of wonder that these kinds of story engender. J.H. Stephens (2011) notes "how essential [wonder] is to deeply interacting with fantastic literature, to writing it, reading it, talking about it" (para 2). He describes the complexity of wonderment this way:

> To wonder is to merge strong feelings with an attempt to make sense of something that persists in being difficult and impossible, impenetrable in some respects but viscerally porous and enticing in others. . . . When we wonder. . . we think, we feel, we dream, we fantastize [sic]. We do something complicated and remarkable and rather eccentric: we establish a connection with something we do not understand not to understand it better, but to experience the misunderstanding that it transfers to us. (para 7)

Falconer similarly identifies a cross-reader's desire for enchantment as a draw to the fantastic, and echoes C.S. Lewis' attribution "to fairy tales and fantasy the power to re-enchant the disenchanted world by instilling a longing in the reader for a better world" (2009, p. 172). An adult's desire for wonder may differ from a child's in that it may stem from a longing to reinvigorate a feeling for the world that has been dulled by familiarity, time and age. But for readers of all ages, "Wonder causes astonishment . . . It gives rise to admiration, fear, awe and reverence" (Zipes, 1999, p. 5), and can be a numinous experience.

In our conversations about significant fantasy and fairy tales, Molly, Ginny and I all reflect a remembrance of, and longing for, experiences of hope, enchantment and wonder that persist beyond age and reading boundaries. We

revealed that we often return to favourite fantasy worlds to re-experience these narrative qualities. It is easy to do this, Tatar (2009) explains, because we keep the keys to these enchanted places. For readers never return from their book journeys empty-handed, but bring "souvenirs" back—images, words, and memories of story that have the power to return them to story worlds (p. 90).

Through the Wardrobe: Returning to Story Worlds

Tatar (2009) contends that sometimes a simple word, such as 'castle', can transport us back to childhood reading (p. 15). Story souvenirs "brid[ge] the realm of fantasy with the ordinary world, providing something to hold onto when readers return to sober reality after the thrill of adventures in story worlds" (p. 91). Adults use these mementos as "portkeys" (Rowling, 2000) to travel between real and fantasy worlds, much as they used to use 'transitional objects' such as dolls, teddy bears, and blankets as children to help them journey from wakefulness to sleep:

> Just as our hands once needed those concrete physical objects in childhood, so too do our minds seize on images and words from stories to help us make our way in the world. (Winnicott, 1984, p. 186)

Reading souvenirs facilitate easy travel, between real and imaginary worlds and between the borders of child and adulthood.

In my literary history, the word "lamp post" is the most significant souvenir of early reading because it immediately recalls me to Narnia. While the wardrobe stands as the entrance to this seminal story world, the lamp post signifies a reader's arrival there. This mnemonic immediately conjures Bayne's illustration from *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* (Lewis, 1950):

Figure 2-1. The lamp post of Narnia (Lewis, 1950)

With this flash of image I experience an intense sense memory of story: I feel the deep scruff of furs in the wardrobe as Lucy brushes past, the hush and cold of the snow falling around the lamp post where she meets Mr. Tumnus, and savor the taste of Turkish Delight, the delicacy that drives Edmund to betray Aslan and his brothers and sisters. Even though I didn't know what Turkish Delight tasted like as a child, I imagined it had to be a most fantastic indulgence if it was something one could act so badly for. As Mackey notes, "We need not have had the exact experiences we read about, but we do need to bring them to life with our own feelings, or the reading is inert" (2011, p. 87). In order to fully experience fantastical worlds in particular, readers must bring their own experiences and imagination to bear on their reading. I finally *did* try Turkish Delight as an adult,

and was surprised by its actual texture. I often buy a box of it at Christmas, now, as a way of reconnecting with that childhood reading experience.

The lamp post is not just a significant story souvenir for me, it is an iconic, communal memento that cross-readers have subconsciously appropriated and internalized as part of their storied identities; a talisman they "memoriz[e], burnis[h] and preserv[e]" (Tatar, 2009, p. 90). Some adult readers identify so strongly with this image they have had it tattooed onto their bodies, reflecting a literal embodiment of story. By marking themselves with this significant story souvenir, readers reflect a desire to extend the narrative 'perform' their sense of storied identity for others.

As memory tools, story souvenirs are valuable because they link readers with their reading pasts. They can also serve as critical points of connection in conversation when readers get together to share response to stories. In the following section, for example, I discuss how another critical Narnian souvenir got Molly, Ginny and I talking about favourite fantasy and fairy tale creatures.

Story souvenirs and fantasy formation.

One of the most vivid reading memories I have from childhood is sparked by the word "dragon". It immediately conjures the scene in *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (Lewis, 1979/1952) detailing Eustace's transformation from boy to beast ("Sleeping on a dragon's hoard with greedy, dragonish thoughts in his heart, he had become a dragon himself," p. 81) and Aslan's subsequent removal of the enchantment:

The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off. You know—if you've ever picked a scab of a sore place. It hurts like billy-oh but it is such fun to see it coming away.

(Lewis, 1979/1952, p. 96)

Figure 2-2. Eustace the Dragon (Lewis, 1979/1952)

The power of this story memory lies, again, in the intense sense experience I associate with Lewis' scab analogy. Every time I re-read this excerpt, I can *feel* Eustace's shame and misery, and share his torment and relief as Aslan tears the dragon skin, in huge chunks, from his back. I suspect this description is particularly potent for the child reader whose experience of scab removal is more immediate than an adult's. Still, this talisman resonates for me because it binds the experience of the fantastical with the everyday, thereby thinning the threshold of real and story worlds.

In our book talk I found that Molly also shared this favourite story souvenir with me:

Maija: Which of the Narnia books is your favourite?

Ginny: I don't know, I think I like them all.

Maija: I think *The Lion The Witch And the Wardrobe* is my favourite, it's the one that sticks in my head the most.

Molly: *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* is mine.

Maija: Is it? Why?

Molly: It's the islands, I like the voyage towards, and I was always fond of Reepicheep and I also liked Eustace. I liked his character and the way he changed. I never forgot how he fell asleep on the pile of dragon gold with evil greedy dragon thoughts that he turned into the dragon.

Maija: [excitedly] That is my *favourite* part of that book, I remember that part, that defining part with the bracelet and Aslan having to rip off his skin…. Ugh.

(Book talk transcript, December 13, 2009)

At that point in the conversation Ginny ran to get her dragon gear, her *Dragonology* book (Drake & Steer, 1991) and toy dragon, to show me:

Figure 2-3 and 2-4. Ginny with her dragon book and toy

These artifacts prompted conversation about other dragons we favoured (e.g. Tolkien's 'Smaug' (1937), Paolino's 'Eragon' (2002) and the dragons of *Harry Potter*) and revealed our persisting fascination with mythical beasts (Book talk

transcript, December 13, 2009). Molly and I both reflected on how our early fascination with story monsters caused us to seek them out in our adult reading. This 'dragon' talk revealed a critical attraction to, and continuum of interest in, the modes of fantasy between our child and adult reading interests. Our delight in the tools of the fantastic points to one reason, I suggest, that cross-readers continue to reach for fantasy stories as they age. Our joy in being able to share memories of enchantment with Ginny through our book talk reflects another.

Chambers (1996) contends that readers heighten the pleasure they gain in reading by talking about our story experiences with others, that they are driven to do so and make greater meaning from stories this way. I see this when I share another story souvenir from Narnia with students in my undergraduate classes. When talking about my own storied formation, I often read this passage from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* detailing the death of Aslan:

> The Witch bared her arms . . . Then she began to whet her knife. It looked to the children, when the gleam of the torchlight fell on it, as if the knife were made of stone, not of steel, and it was of a strange and evil shape . . . Then, just before she gave the blow, she stooped down and said in a quivering voice, "And now who has won? . . . Understand that you have given me Narnia forever, you have lost your own life and you have not saved his. In that knowledge, despair and die. (Lewis 1979/1950, p. 141)

With the White Witch's apparent triumph I *do* despair and die a little, every time I revisit "the stone table" where Aslan is sacrificed. I share this souvenir with students because it is strongly tied to my sense of storied self as a child. I relate this story memory with a first conscious awareness of the nature of evil and the

possibility of greater, metaphysical powers at work in the world. I realize too, that although the scene is terrible to revisit, returning to this story memory with students today helps me better manage the feelings that troubling issues (e.g. death, evil, mortality) still inspire.

Story souvenirs are critical devices to consider in the cross-reading experience because they connect readers with a sense of storied self and facilitate story-sharing. When readers reveal their reading mementos they 'perform' story, demonstrating the individual ways that they identify through reading experiences. 'Story performance' can be both a private (e.g. through personal reflective writing) and public act (e.g. through book discussion). In the following section I discuss the particular ways Molly, Ginny and I 'perform' a sense of storied self through fantasy and fairy tales in public and private ways in our creative play.

Ways of Performing Storied Identities

> Of all the props of childhood, none are more compelling or conducive to make-believe and fantasy than the books children read or hear read to them by a warm and loving adult (Singer & Singer, 1992, p. 15)

In many ways, both children and adults proclaim their affinity with story worlds through some form of play. In their discussion of play in child and adulthood, Singer and Singer (1992) contend that an "attraction to make-believe games persists throughout the life span" (p. 33). When Goodenough (2003) details an "immense satisfaction" in spending the afternoon constructing a fairy tale woodcutter's lodge with her son in the woods she reveals her own desire to return to the secret spaces of childhood play (p. 1). In this section I discuss the different

ways that children and adults seek to extend their story experiences, and consider how they 'perform' a sense of storied identity through their play.

Child's play.

Young people perform stories when they situate their imaginative play in favourite story worlds (Singer & Singer, 1992, p. 4), as Ginny does when she plays "princesses and fairies" (Book talk, October 24, 2009) or acts out scenes from *Harry Potter* with her friends (Book talk: October 24, 2009; November 8, 2009; December 13, 2009). In our book talk, Ginny often describes how she and her friend, who she refers to as her "sister" (Ginny is an only child) incorporate elements of the *Harry Potter* narrative into their play. In this excerpt, Ginny is detailing some of the contents of her story trunk aloud to me (Book talk, December 13, 2009). This trunk, a box covered with drawings and writing that held objects and images of books that she felt were important to her,details Ginny's literacy autobiography. She chose to represent her storied history in this way, rather than provide a written reflection:

Ginny: And this is my wand, it's a baton, but my sister turned it to a wand.

Maija: Your sister?

Ginny: Yeah. Jasmine. She's kind of like my sister, because she's Jasmine Potter and I'm Ginny Potter.

…

Maija: And this is your 'Quidditch Through the Ages'

Ginny: Yes.

Maija: And why was your French book in your trunk?

Ginny: Because my sister speaks French, and she bought me it, and I have writing on the back.

"Dormitory room 6, Bed 4".

Maija: Is this your place in Hogwart's?

Ginny: Yeah. Dormitory 6- but I have a special dormitory room because me and J are like sisters but she's in Griffindor but we have a combined room, because Dumbledore let us have a combined room, and since we have a special wand… and it says 6 because this is our sixth year, and I have bed four and she has bed 5.

Maija: And you're the only ones who get to share a room.

Ginny: Yep. And um, half of the room is green and yellow, and half of the room is something and yellow- I can't remember Griffindor's thing.

. . .

Maija: So why do you think…why is HP such an important story for you.

Ginny: It's so magical.

Maija: It's the magic?

Ginny: Yeah. It feels like I am in a different place.

Maija: Do you still listen to it every night? So, if you're listening to it every night, do you think about the stories in the day time, when you're at school?

Ginny: Yeah. I think my teacher is Dolores Umbridge[2].

Maija: I see. I believe that one… So is there anything else that—I didn't have a book that occupied me for six years… so is it the magic, the relationships in Harry Potter that are important to you? The friendships?

Ginny: I like the friendships.

Maija: And do you always pick Ginny as your…

Ginny: Ginny and Hermione.

Maija: Why those two ladies?

Ginny: I like Ginny, because she's really cool, and I like Harry Potter…

[2] Dolores Umbridge is a particularly cruel and abusive witch (and member of the Ministry of Magic) who teaches for a time at Hogwarts School in the *Harry Potter* books (Rowling, 2003, 2005, 2007)

> Maija: Yeah. And so does she…
>
> Ginny: And they get married at the end of The Deathly Hollows…. 19 years later… and I like Hermione because she's smart. She reads a lot of books, like me. But, this wasn't in the story but I imagined Hagrid would have one (referring to her whistle) and he would do like this… (blows whistle).
>
> Maija: To call Buckbeak, of course.
>
> (Book talk transcript, December 13, 2009)

Ginny and her friend also 'play' *Harry Potter* by producing "HogRadio" (a podcast that reports "gossip and news" from Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry) and using 'Harry Potter speak' to communicate (e.g. calling each other by character's names) (Book talk: November 22, 2009; December 13, 2009).

Both children and adults evoke favourite story worlds when they use this kind of story language to describe 'real world' objects, situations or feelings. For example, in a recent email Molly used 'Harry Potter speak' to describe a reoccurring academic job posting. By calling the post "the defence against the dark arts position," she was suggesting that the job was impossible to fill (personal communication, September 26, 2011). Another friend constantly refers to his colleague as an "Eeyore" (Milne, 1926). In Chapter 3 of this dissertation, I similarly recall the way my high school friends and I incorporated language from Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* into our conversation to describe our own life experiences. When we use these story souvenirs in our speech to connect with someone, we make important connections with them over a shared identification with text. Readers share this sense of storied self in other ways too, for example, when they actively 'dress the part'.

Sporting story 'skins'.

Readers of all ages share their sense of storied identity with others when they wear particular articles of clothing, both in their daily dress (e.g. such as when fans of the *Twilight* books series sport t-shirts proclaiming their affiliation with either the vampire (Team Cullen) or werewolf (Team Jacob) clans (e.g. as advertised on http://www.fanpire.co.uk/products/Team-Cullen-T-shirt.html), and as costume. For example, Molly made Ginny a Harry Potter 'sorting hat' that she sports primarily for play:

Figure 2-5. Ginny wearing her 'sorting hat'

However, Ginny also has a *Harry Potter* track jacket that she has worn to school (Book talk, November 8, 2009). Weber (2011) suggests that:

> Clothes walk that invisible and ambiguous line between body and not body, mediating our sense of embodiment and helping us enact or perform our embodied identities both to our own eyes and to others. (p. 244)

Weber (2011) clarifies that while getting dressed is an every day presentation of self, dressing in costume is an expression of fantasy, "wishfulfillments,

expressions of hope or defiance" (p. 243). For quite a few years, for example, Ginny has chosen to dress as characters from the stories she has read for Hallowe'en: the 'elf princess' from *Eragon*; Lyra in her 'Gyptian' costume from *The Golden Compass,* and Queen Nefertiti from her reading on Ancient Egypt (Book talk, October 24, 2009). Many of Ginny's costumes reference specific story moments that reflect the kinds of wish fulfillment Weber describes:

Maija: Oh, is this Lyra's Gyptian outfit?

Molly: Well, this would be Lyra after… so she's with theGyptians at this point.

Maija: Yes, which is one of the coolest parts…

Molly: So, she's on her way to the North, and she may even be… Ginny wore her boots, her thick boots, and the hat, that she rejected… so this essentially, so this is Gyptian inspired…

. . .

And, this is the cape we had her grandmother make for her costume…

Maija: Oooh. Look at that LINING! It's like a baby seal

Ginny: It's soft.

Molly: So, I sent her the wool and the lining, I chose the colours,…

Maija: So, have you worn this only for Hallowe'en or did you wear this as something…

Ginny: I can wear this around town. But I can't get it dirty.

Maija: Well, that's the problem with really nice things, too. So you were the elf princess of Eragon…

Ginny: I had a bow and arrow…

Molly: So essentially she was able to be the elf princess with the cape… she was a warrior…

Ginny: Princess. My mom got elf ears… they had special glue, but you could still hear…because they cut out the ear piece, but you could still stick them on, and I had long hair back then, so we braided it.

Maija: Those are pretty involved costumes…

Molly: Well, she and I had a long discussion about that one, because they made a point in the Golden Compass, one of the things about Lyra was that she looked so very different from the rest of the Gyptians that is was important to dress her like them, and keep her hair covered, because she was blonde…

(Book talk transcript, October 24, 2009)

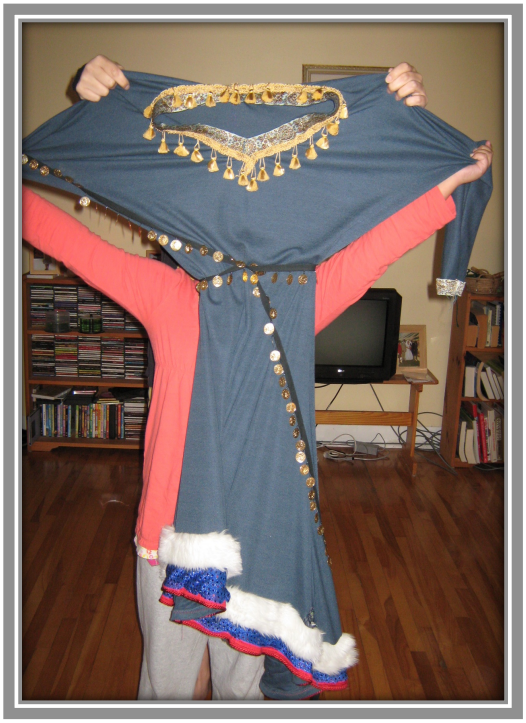

Figure 2-6. Molly and Ginny hold up the 'Gyptian' costume

In our conversation about Hallowe'en costumes, Ginny suggests that the elf princess, Lyra, and Queen Nefertiti are all strong female characters with intelligence, courage and power—characteristics that she identifies with (Book talk, October 24, 2009). This book talk excerpt also reflects both Molly and

Ginny's investment of time and energy in sharing a story world: Discussing, planning and making Ginny's costumes is a kind of play that both mother and daughter anticipate and take great pleasure in (Book talk, October 24, 2009). Molly is a critical play figure in Ginny's storied history, someone who models, fosters, and inspires an imaginative means of exploring the world (Singer & Singer, 1992). This is not something that seems to have diminished with time, as Molly continues to help Ginny extend her story experiences into the real world, even as she moves beyond childhood.

Visiting the Magic Kingdom.

Molly and Ginny also participate in story worlds together, making regular pilgrimages to story-based theme parks. In one of our discussions, I suggested that when parents took their children to places like *Walt Disney World, Moomin World* or *Harry Potter World* (http://www.universalorlando.com/harrypotter/) they might actually be doing so for their own pleasure (November 22, 2009). Molly admitted as much, revealing a very deep, adult, attachment to Walt Disney World. At one point, she planned to get married there, and did spend part of her honeymoon with her husband at the theme park (November 22, 2009). There are specific sites online, in fact, that encourage adults to plan weddings or romantic holidays without their children at Disney world (e.g. http://www.wdwforgrownups.com/category/column/romance-world)

Molly credits her adult attraction to fantasy and fairy tale to a childhood steeped in faerie stories, particularly the Lang Fairy Books (e.g. Lang, 1889) [Blog post, August 19, 2011]. She developed a particular love for Disney fairy tale versions by engaging with the storybooks, records and films in her early

years. She didn't go to Disney World until she was an adult (Book talk, November 22, 2009). It is not surprising that she passed on her love of Disney stories to Ginny. The passion for Disney is a family affair. Molly, Ginny and her father plan trips to Disney World and take part in various activities together (e.g. having a birthday breakfast with the "Disney Princesses": Snow White, Cinderella, Ariel and Mulan). Ginny has even been 'written into' the Disney story; her parents had her name engraved on a brick at the entrance to "The Magic Kingdom" (Book talk, November 22, 2009).

Though their love for Disney is unwavering, Molly and Ginny were greatly anticipating the opening of *Harry Potter World* in the summer of 2010 (a virtual tour exists at http://www.wizardingworldharrypotter.com/). In our discussion of their impending visit, Molly and I got excited about the possibilities of being able to wander Diagon Alley and drink butter beer, while Ginny said she was planning to get a magic wand at Ollivander's Wand Shop, visit Sugar Plum's Sweets Shop, and go on the 'Flight of the Hippogriff' ride so she could know what it was like to fly with Buckbeak, one of the magical creatures in the books. Molly doesn't try to pretend that she is visiting these constructed story spaces for Ginny's sake; she is quite honest about taking equal pleasure at getting a chance to inhabit story worlds.

Aside from playing out favourite story moments in theme parks, cross-readers of all ages can similarly extend their experience of imagined worlds by: participating in literary academic or pop culture conferences (e.g. Comic-Con, the increasingly popular adult fan convention for comic narratives: http://www.comic-con.org/cci), dressing as story characters for Hallowe'en;

playing videogames; attending crossover film releases (e.g. *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, *The Narnia Chronicles, The Golden Compass)* and engaging in film-related events for all ages (e.g. attending *Harry Potter* readings or using the "Meet Your Daemon" feature on the *The Golden Compass* film website [http://www.aintitcool.com/node/324180]); viewing museum exhibits that display props and artifacts from crossover film adaptations (e.g. http://harrypotterexhibition.com; http://www.narniaexhibition.com); and discussing crossover books in online forums (e.g. http://www.twiforums.com; http://harrypotterforum.com). In these modes of playing out storied identities, readers of all ages reflect a:

> deep rooted demand for participation . . . the desire to enter into the game, identifying with the characters' joys and sufferings, worrying about their fate, espousing their hopes and ideals, living their life. (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 33)

In the next section, I detail the specific ways that Molly and I, as adults, continue to participate in story worlds and perform our storied identities through narrative writing, and crafting. I begin by examining the ways fantasy and fairy tale have resonated in my autobiographical writing from childhood into adulthood.

Fantasy & Fairy Tale Formation and Performance: Two Portraits

Into the Woods: Maija

> [F]airy land arouses a longing for [the child] knows not what. It stirs and troubles him (to his life-long enrichment) with the dim sense of something beyond his reach an, far from dulling or emptying the actual world, gives it a new dimension of depth. He does not despise real woods because he has

> read of enchanted woods: the reading makes all woods a little enchanted. This is a special kind of longing. (Lewis, 2002, p. 29)

Stories of fairy tale and fantastical forests have always had a great influence on my own dreaming, experience and sense of storied identity. I maintain a 'special kind of longing' for enchanted woods that informs both my reading interests and my narrative writing.

I suspect this is because I intrinsically tie the knowledge of enchanted woods of myth and fairy tale in my childhood reading to my real world experiences in the woodlands of Northern Ontario. When I was a child, my parents would pack the six of us into the car, in summer and winter, to make the long car trip north to see our Finnish relatives who lived in the woods. Today, my husband, daughter and I also make the journey to a small cabin located on the lake where my cousins live. Each year we take a borrowed boat out to our "little house in the big woods" to sauna, swim and be at ease for a week or so. Because our camp is rustic, without running water, electricity, wood and propane fueled and accessible only by boat, we city folk play for a while at frontier life. In this hidden summer house, just back from the lake, I revisit the forested "secret spaces" of my childhood" in a place that allows me to 'put things together' to better understand who I am (Goodenough, 2003, p. 2).

In many ways, day to day experiences there are imbued with the green, enchanted with the romance of the 'light' pastoral tradition of children's literature (Natov, 2003, p. 91): I am Jansson's 'Moominmamma' when I sweep out the camp, heat the woodstove and haul wash water; I echo the wanderer 'Snufkin' when I stamp in search of adventure through the sunlit brush (Jansson, 1946). At

the same time, however, the gloom of the 'dark pastoral' from early childhood reading of fairy tale and fantastical forests is always a threat (Natov, 2003, p. 119):

> The dark pastoral depicts the nightmare world of childhood. It is, essentially, the other side of the green world, and as natural in its shadows as is the light and sun of the pastoral . . . In the literature of childhood, we find the dark pastoral most frequently imagined as a primeval forest. In Grimm's "Hansel and Gretel, " for example, the forest is marked by its density; there are no paths and there are wild beasts. (p. 119)

As a child, I had to travel a dark forest path from the 'Little House' where we stayed when visiting my relatives in Northern Ontario to get to my Aunt and Uncle's 'Hansel and Gretel' (Grimm & Grimm, 2009/1884a) house, a typical Scandinavian cottage built deep in the woods. I never could manage to cover the distance without running, my head was so full of witches, goblins and ghouls. This preoccupation with fantastic woodland inhabitants was also fuelled by the Scandinavian story traditions my relatives were steeped in: Posters of fairies, trolls and goblins decorated the walls of their bedrooms and influenced their artwork, and images from these used to reverberate in my nightmares. All of my older cousins were particularly enamoured with the Tolkien books (1937, 1954-1955), and their reading, illustration and film-making reflected a fascination with fairy, fantasy and horror.

Even today, I manage a mild panic each time I make my way through the trees, because story memories of the dark pastoral loom: Talk of cougars in the north this summer brought to mind the tale of Pa's father being chased by a

screaming panther in the big woods (Wilder, 1932/1960, p. 40), and waking to find a bear in the meadow in front of our camp one early morning prompted the story of Ma Ingalls mistakenly slapping a bear on the rump one night when she went out to milk the cow (p. 105). The thrill of the dark pastoral terrifies and tantalizes me. I deliberately chase it when I am not in nature by indulging my obsession with Scandinavian crime fiction. As I wander the woods in search of clues with Henning Mankell's stalwart detective Kurt Wallendar, my own experience of the Northern Ontario woodlands heightens his description of lonely and desolate Scandinavian landscapes (e.g. Mankell, 2011).

My identification with enchanted woods also runs consistently through my autobiographical writing. In a high school English writing anthology, for example, I included many narrative pieces that detailed my affiliation with the woods where my cousins and I would wander, dream and play together:

Initiation
I set out in the strange moonlight
In the year when I was small
With the gait of Christopher Robin
To conquer the inky night
And declare myself to the deep dark forest
That framed the dusty road.

The sounds came wild and wicked
But wandering down the narrow path
I'd summon my own witchcraft

With hand held firm in the grip of my father

So solid and strong beside me.

Then shadows shifted among the trees

Stepping out on the path before us.

My small heart beat frantically, failing,

As negotiation with my father began.

So the older ones came to pull at my hand,

Steal me away from my charm in the dark.

Clumsy hands, dirty and smelling of earth

Patted my head, pulled me along

With whispers in soft, boys' voices.

To the trees we turned

To be swallowed by night

Enveloped by branches

In that odd moonlight

As we set out to claim the deep jungle

In an ancient rite of hide and seek.

(ML. Harju, 1991)

I root two specific memories in this piece: A night walk along a dark country road between relative's houses, without adult protection, and a recollection of the kinds of outdoor games we would play in and out of the woods together, such as hide and seek and "sardines" (where one person hides and the rest must find them,

packing themselves into the hiding place tight until only one player is left). In the reconstruction of these memories, I claim a deep familiarity with the natural landscape (black lake, white birch, red rock) and relay both the sense of trepidation and freedom I experienced in this space.

In a later memoir, written as part of my Master's Degree in English and entitled "Kissan Paivat (Cat's Days)" (ML. Harju, 2003), I similarly situate a sense of self in the light and darkness of this pastoral landscape of my childhood. In these pieces, however, I also explore the cultural identity (as a Canadian Finn) that I foster through this landscape, and from my early memories of time spent with Finnish relatives there (Jurva, 2008).

Memoir Excerpt 1: *Joulupukki*

I had just about given up on Santa. Really, I'd had it. For ages my friends at school had been telling me it was all a ruse, but I wouldn't quite give in. When I demanded, "Is Santa Claus a real person?" My mother tried to explain him a different way. She said, "He's more like the Holy Spirit, he sweeps into the house with goodwill and cheer". I was on the edge of belief.

This particular year, we were spending Christmas in Beaver Lake. We were staying at the Little House. Me and my brothers and sister headed off through the woods to Fred and Greta's ahead of my parents. When we left the Little House, there were no holiday trimmings to be seen.

Everyone came to Fred and Greta's for dinner on Christmas Eve. There were Aunts and Uncles and cousins and wives of cousins and so forth. We had a fabulous dinner of duck a l'orange and my Aunt's famous 'Princess

> *Cake', a Swedish layer cake with jam filling, covered by green marzipan and little marzipan ducks. The adults had coffee, the kids snuck chocolates off of the Christmas tree. At about ten o'clock the sound of bells could be heard outside the house. The adults shouted and all the kids poured out of the woodwork to press up against the window.*
>
> *"Eh! Joulupukki!!" Greta yelled, and everyone gasped. Out in the snow, a man dressed in red with a long cap and white beard dashed through the trees. He held a lantern aloft and the sound of bells followed him. He and the light quickly began to disappear into the woods. 'Joulupukki!' we cried and dived for hats and boots to dress for pursuit. He was not to be found.*
>
> *On the way home, there were red ribbons tied to the trees. When we got inside the Little House we found it transformed: There were presents everywhere, and lights and treats. Joulupukki had come. He hadn't missed us. Surely this was proof that he existed, I saw him with my own eyes. Maybe it was easier to believe because this was no strip-mall Santa—Finnish Santas flew through the forest.* (ML. Harju, 2003)

This story illustrates how I tie a sense of 'Finn-ness' to the northern woods and to a memory of cultural traditions at Christmas, a tendency that Jurva claims is common among Canadian Finns (Jurva, 2008). In this piece I also try to recapture the wonder of the holiday in my childhood, although the dark pastoral encroaches on this memory too. An element of disenchantment underlies the fairy tale setting. My disappointment in learning 'the truth' about Santa Claus festers

beneath the elements that dazzle (the lights, the trees, the bells, the mystery, the treats).

This piece is not just a nostalgic memory of Christmas' past; it reveals an important shift from my child to adult self. Discovering that Santa Claus was not real made quite an impression on me. It was not that the 'magic' of the portly, white-bearded man bringing gifts was not real (though that was certainly part of it), I recall being most upset by the lie, by having been kept outside of adult knowledge of 'the truth'. This feeling of injustice in being kept from the truth actually marked an important point of connection between Ginny and I in one of our book talks. By sharing this memory with her and revisiting my own experience I was able to understand her recent feelings of "loss" upon learning the truth that Santa Claus did not exist (Book talk, December 13, 2009).

What most resonates in these pieces for me, however, is my storying of identity through place, the fetid summer and snow-draped winter forests of these childhood memories. I find it most perplexing that, though I spend most of my time as a city, rather than a country, mouse, I feel most at home in these woods. Maslow (1971) identifies this "thrilling to nature […] as a kind of self-recognition or self-experience, a way of being oneself and fully functional, a way of being at home, a kind of biological authenticity" (p. 333). Even when I am away from this private and sacred place, I return to and foster a sense of self in this landscape, through stories. In winter, for example, I like to imagine our little house waiting for our return, buried like the *Moominhouse Midwinter*, blanketed by snow and full of dreaming inhabitants. I imagine myself a Moomin, deep in a hibernation sleep with a belly full of pine needles, waiting for the spring thaw

(Jansson, 1992/1957, p. 6). Although some scholars (Rathunde, 2009, pp .35-36) argue that reading stories reflects a disembodied knowledge of natural places, the connections I maintain between real and imagined forests suggests otherwise. I connect to the northern woods through story when I cannot be in it myself. By reimagining it through reading or writing, I use this fantastical wood as a safe space where I can continue to explore critical questions about my identity (Goodenough, 2003). In her consideration of the appeal of fantasy to cross-readers, Falconer (2009) similarly suggests that we locate a sense of 'home' in fantasy worlds and use them as spaces for self-exploration (p. 78).

While I generally share my narrative writing with a select few (and consider these performances of storied self private acts), other readers are compelled to share their storied identity-making with a wider audience. Molly is one such reader who chooses to shares her self-exploration readily and quite widely with an anonymous public through her personal blog writing. She does this, she suggests, to counter a childhood cloaked in secrets, as a way of keeping friends and family involved in her life, and as a means of making meaning of her own experiences by storying them for and sharing them with others (personal communication, Dec 17, 2011).

Red Cap, Fox and Bramble Bush: Molly

Molly talks about many things on her blog, her family experiences, her work and research in education, and reflections on her changing sense of identity. She has often also discussed the significance of stories to her life and to her life writing:

> *Story story story, I frame everything in my mind as stories. […] Sometimes the stories fall over themselves trying to get out and sometimes I can't shake them out for the life of me.*
>
> *Even if I see them peeking at me over the boulders of Inconsistency in my brain, and offer scones and peppermint tea, they will not come.*
>
> *Othertimes, I have merely to linger on the doorstep while they race over my body in their effort to get out, be told, be known.*
>
> (Molly, blog post, March, 2011)

In her blog writing, Molly identifies two fairy tales that are deeply significant to her: 'Red Riding Hood' ('Little Red Cap': Grimm & Grimm, 2009b) and 'Snow-White and Rose-Red' (Grimm & Grimm, 2009c). She has literally surrounded herself, in fact, with the story of 'Red Riding Hood', having lined the walls of her home with a series of prints from this particular tale (blog post, July 19, 2011):

Figure 2-7. Molly's Red Riding Hood print (Studio MME, n.d)

When I asked Molly why Red Riding Hood was so important to her, she reflected that perhaps it had to do with the theme of 'being hunted',having had to manage this threat in many different ways in her life (personal communication, Dec 17, 2011). She believes that this fairy tale is tied, quite deeply, to some of her darker childhood experiences of abuse, events that she has also publicly shared on her blog (e.g. blog post December, 2011; August 2006).

A response to the dark pastoral also haunts Molly's recent blog post about *Tender Morsels* (Lanagan, 2008), a complex, evocative, re-telling of the fairy tale 'Snow-White and Rose-Red' (Grimm & Grimm, 2009c). In this piece, Molly details the story's significance for her, as an adult reader:

> *Tender Morsels:*
>
> *A few weeks ago I read a book.*
>
> *A book that shook my core so profoundly that I sobbed through the last 50 pages. Not just trickle of tear here and there. Sobbed. Like "end of Old Yeller" sobbed.*
>
> *Therefore, when a story extends a papery finger and places it in spots so tender and unguarded as to make me sob? I notice. I attend. I ponder. I ruminate and reflect. I get uncomfortable and fret until I can articulate what got inside and how it did so. The castle walls, after all, are not made to be breached. Therefore that which does demands close and particular attention.*

The mother in this story goes to extraordinary lengths to keep her daughters from the pain of how they were conceived (through incest, and then a gang rape). Far more than the societal shame (although she fears that too), the mother seeks to raise her girls in a world without emotional discomfort. Why did this make me cry?

Partly it is the understanding of the desire to keep from your child, your daughter, the terrors of the world. The lengths to which you will go to protect, the careful manipulation of the world so that they see no ugliness, no gangs of boys, no fathers who molest. You do not want them to worry about walking home at night, or how their clothes may be interpreted in ways that could make them vulnerable to rape.

You want them to believe that they are strong and capable and will be given fair opportunities in life, work and relationships. You want them to know that their beauty does not come from some external measure of pretty. That the people they love will love them and never hurt them with forethought and malice

I confess that in my past year, as I rended and gnashed and poured ashes on my hair, I'd retained an idea that I deserved happiness. That I - of anyone I knew, More than anyone I knew - Deserved Happiness. In every regard. I guarded that idea like a virulent envy. Even as I had my body deconstructed and knit back together, even as my Wendy stitched my shadow back onto my self, I held onto this. I deserve to be happy.

> *"You may never be entirely happy; few people are. You may never achieve your heart's desire in this world, for people seldom do. Sit by enough deathbeds, Branza, and you will hear your fill of stories of missed chances, and wrong turnings and spurned opportunities for love. It is required of you only to be here, not be happy."*
>
> *and like a thump in the gut, I disintegrated.*
>
> *Oh.*
>
> *I read it again. And cried.*
>
> . . .
>
> *My happiness is not required. It is not obligated. I deserve no more than any other person living, and some may say that for my privilege of race and education that I deserve less.*
>
> (Molly, blog post, August, 2011)

In this post, Molly shares a complex response to story that is informed by multiple reading identities, both her childhood experiences and her adult fears as a parent surface here. She also reveals early fantasy reading souvenirs by referencing Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1911). Molly's adult experience of this story reverberates. She has subsequently returned to reflect on the story on her blog, and has been driven to work out the meaning of it not only through her writing but through crafting, as well.

Along with her blog writing, Molly shares stories through craftwork (Ulrich, 2002; Dailies, 2011). She is almost always weaving tales into "Stuff. Quilts.

Braided Rugs. Hooked Rugs. Needlework" (blog post, June, 2010). She connects crafting to a tradition of women who narrate their history, creativity and identity through the domestic materials (e.g. "fabric, wool, or canned fruit and vegetables" that they have at hand (blog post, June, 2010). For Molly, crafting is not just a hobby, it is an important part of her life. She reads about craftwork, revels in choosing and buying craft materials, and develops and maintains social connections to other women through her work (Flannery, 2001, p. 630). 'Making stuff' becomes a way for her to communicate, too, when she cannot express herself with language:

> *During the worst of my post partum depression, I made quilts for Emily. It was, I later came to understand, the way I could show my daughter I loved her. Textile arms to wrap her when I could not connect. My quilts still cover her bed today.* (Blog post, June 2010).

Molly's current craft of choice is rug-hooking, work, she suggests, that has been inspired by her fairy tale formations:

Figure 2-8. Molly's fox rug

Tonight, I sketched the base of the next rug - based on Snow White and Rose Red - but more so on Tender Morsels and my still reverberating reaction to the story. (Molly, blog post, October, 2011).

Figure 2-9 and 2-10. Molly's Snow White and Rose Red rug: sketch and process

This is the bear. He'll be big and shaggy and many-brown toned and take up a fairly large part of the rug. He will have a forest, quite dark behind him. I am not sure yet if you will see sky at all, or if I can simply make the perspective of being very deep in a very old forest. I have decided to do a whole series of rugs based on Fairy Tales that I loved. This will be the first in the group. (Molly, blog post, October, 2011).

Figure 2-11. Molly's Snow White and Rose Red rug : Finished

> *I've not shown you updates on the Snow White and Rose Red rug for ages now. I have, of course, been working hard on it, for it soothes me to have the wool in my hands and the colours before me.*
>
> *My affinity for the story is told here and here. I still think about Tender Morsels, you know. Almost every day and my screen saver has never changed...reminding me that my happiness is not paramount, but my presence always is required.*
>
> (Molly, blog post, December, 2011)

Molly also uses rug-hooking to revisit and story her own history (Fitzpatrick, 1999; Ulrich, 1991; 2002), as a way to "retain the memories for the women who come after me— so my grandmothers can be remembered for not only as names in a book, but as women who created things that resonated in the world" (Molly, blog post, December, 2010). The following series of rugs are tributes to her grandparents and detail stories of her memories spending time with them:

> *I wandered the grounds, looking, thinking, smelling. A house my grandfather had built himself, at the corners of four counties so my grandmother could look out of each side of her house into a different place. A place where I had climbed trees with swings and eaten plums after being warned that too many would make me sick. A place where I had wandered the gardens to find cucumbers to slice and place in vinegar for dinner, only to disturb sleeping garter snakes under wide leaves. A place where I had ridden horses, bareback, through fields, or sat underneath old trusting ponies slapping horseflies before they could bite.*

A place where I fell in manure, and got caught up in barbed wire only to have my aunt wash the wounds with Mercurachrome...leading me to believe that the cure was much worse than the injury.

This was my family's farm, and to honor them I made a rug of my memories. A rug that will live in my house, and the house of my daughter and granddaughters so they can see what I saw (Molly, blog post, December, 2010).

Figure 2.12. Molly's memory rug #1

Figure 2.13. Molly's memory rug #2

While Molly makes these rugs, in part, to leave Ginny a legacy of her own history, Ginny has not yet taken up crafting as a way to tell stories. She did, however, suggest that she has also started to 'perform' story through writing when she showed me pieces she has produced for school assignments that she says were inspired by her readings of *Harry Potter*, and the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* (e.g. Riordan, 2005) books (Book talk, December 13, 2009).

Furtherances on Storying the Self

When I consider my and Molly's autobiographical writing as a 'performance' of storied self, I note a few significant truths. First, that our early storied formation, the tales that we identified with most in childhood, echo. In our writing, we narrate ourselves through a web of stories, casting intertextual associations (e.g. to A.A. Milne [1926, 1928], 'Hansel and Gretel' [Grimm & Grimm, 2009/1884a], 'Red Riding Hood' [Grimm & Grimm, 2009/1884b], 'Snow

White and Rose Red [Grimm & Grimm, 2009/1884c], and by using a fairy tale language of wonder, like breadcrumbs, throughout.

Although Molly's blog writing is mostly spontaneous and unedited (personal communication, Dec 17, 2011), my narrative writing reflects a deliberate process of storying self. I construct and reconstruct these memory texts consistently as I return to them. In my excerpts, I heighten both the romance and the darkness that I associate with the enchanted wood, using it as a setting for my exploration of self in memory. I also demonstrate the way I have learned to narrate by grounding memory in sensory details such as the food, warmth, light, and winter and summer forests. In these tactile details I recognize continuity between my child self and adult self through the things that please and comfort me. I also actively heighten descriptions of these delights in the narrative to appeal to others, to draw them into my memory and to provoke their own (McAdams, 2003, p. 187).

This admission also suggests that in storying themselves, adults may deliberately reconstruct their childhood memories in a way that gives them a sense of agency that they did not feel as a child. It's possible, for example, that in 'Joulupoukki', I create a utopic Christmas to counter the disappointment of learning the truth about Santa Claus. This process in storying self is, perhaps, more evident in Molly's rug-hooking in that she carefully designs and sketches out her rugs and is particular about the colours and weights of wool she uses; in these ways she more deliberately controls the texture of her tale. As adults, we have the ability to paint our remembrance of past events as we wish:

> We choose the events that we consider most important for defining who we are and providing our lives with some semblance of unity and purpose, and we endow them with symbolism, lessons learned, integrative themes, and other personal meanings. (McAdams, 2003, p. 196)

That is the wonderful thing about making one's own stories. In our different ways, Molly and I both work to heighten the wonder of our childhood memories to make magic real.

The Uses of Enchantment

Tatar specifically pinpoints the fairy tale forest as a potent metaphor that speaks to our fears and anxieties:

> The fairy tales with the forest at their center have been seen collectively by writers, translators, and collectors as 'maps for coping with personal anxieties, family conflicts, social frictions, and the myriad frustrations of everyday life'. (2009, xi)

By including both the light and dark, the enchanted wood reflects our real world experience, and the true nature of human desires (Bettelheim, 1975/1989, p. 7). Zipes (1999) similarly contends that fairy tales, in particular, allow us to conquer our fears through such metaphors (p. 1). We remember and return to these kinds of stories to "keep our sense of wonderment alive and to nurture our hope that we can seize possibilities and opportunities to transform ourselves and our worlds" (p. 7). In the various ways we play, Molly, Ginny and I certainly use the meaningful fairy tale memes from our childhood reading to better understand and narrate our own lives.

Though early fairy and fantasy reading has been significant to our storied formation, I acknowledge that this is not necessarily the case for all readers. I conclude this chapter by considering if a reader must have had experience with fantasy worlds in the past for the enchantment of faerie and fantasy to continue to inform their storied self as they age.

Singer and Singer (1992) suggest that our ability to 'make believe' produces imagery skills that are a critical "aspect of our capacity to appreciate the beauties of nature," and that these skills may fade in later life (p. 138). The authors promote fantasy play in childhood as a way to build a "fuller capacity for imagery and, ultimately, a richer life experience" (p. 138). It may be that adults who do not carry souvenirs of early experiences in fairy and fantasy world cannot commit wholeheartedly to fantasy worlds. Tatar (2009) contends that, "As we grow older, we begin to draw boundaries and develop the sense of critical detachment that makes it harder to inhabit a fictional world" (p. 22). While that has not yet been my experience, I was surprised to hear evidence for this inference one morning in the café where I get my coffee before sitting down to write. As two men in their late forties discussed recent fantasy films, I overheard one of them complain that it was getting difficult for him, as he got older, to engage with fantasy stories that had no connection to the real world. In *Crossover Fiction* (2009), Beckett suggests that the success of the *Harry Potter* and *The Lord of the Rings* books prove that adults embrace these books as readily as younger readers (2009, p. 137). To answer this question, I would suggest, we need to know more about fantasy and fairy tale formations and their influence on cross-reader's reasons for engaging with crossover books.

It is evident that early exposure to fantasy and fairy tales can certainly influence adult reading interests. Having an affinity for Narnia allowed me to indulge in a trip (or seven) to the world of Harry Potter, for example. Reading those stories then inspired me to return to reread favourite fantasy from my youth such as *A Wizard of Earthsea* (Le Guin, 1968), *The Marrow of the World* (Nichols, 1972), *The Hobbit* (Tolkien, 1937), *The Fionavar Tapestry* (Kay, 1984-1986), *The Chronicles of Prydain* (Alexander, 1964-1968), *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (Bradbury, 1962) and investigate other fantasy titles from my childhood I had missed (e.g. Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* [1984]). In our book talk, Molly similarly suggested that her early reading drove her to read *Harry Potter* as an adult, and that those books, also inspired her to revisit her childhood favourites:

> I think the first time I read the HP series specifically, I think I was just enjoying the story and the magical aspect. I was enjoying going back to places that evoked the Narnias, and the other places I had been as a younger child. (Book talk transcript, November 8, 2009)

Falconer (2009) identifies this cycling backwards in reading practice as a key element of the crossover phenomenon, because it demonstrates how a continuum in reading interests between child and adulthood can be mapped through fantasy stories (p. 153). She further suggests that, in returning to fantasy and fairy tales, cross-readers experience a transportive, heightened desire for the particular treasures they long for and remember (p. 173). By continuing to read tales of wonder in adulthood, it seems, we can linger, just a little longer, in the twilight of the enchanted wood.

Chapter 5

Dancing the Danse Macabre: Exploring Grand Conversations about Fear, Death and Anxiety over Crossover Books

Figure 3. Death takes a child , *The Dance of Death* (Holbein, 1538)

In Chapter 1, I suggest that cross-readers are drawn to particular stories that promote continuance between life stages, community, and conversation between readers of all ages. In the course of our book talk together, I was able to examine the real world possibilities for this hypothesis through my conversations with Molly and Ginny about crossover books. I found that our shared responses to *Coraline* (Gaiman, 2002) and *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2008) in particular, prompted candid, reflective and meaningful talk on such difficult crossover themes as death, fear and our ability to confront and manage monstrous things.

Eeds and Wells (1989) suggest that grand conversations between intergenerational readers occur through the sharing of "aesthetic reading" and shared response to story (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995). Readers of all ages can experience deep and meaningful conversation by revealing their lived through story experiences to others (Eeds & Wells, 1989; Peterson & Eeds, 1990). I suggest that crossover books further facilitate this kind of talk between readers because they extend an open invitation to story that does not privilege one readership over another. For example, crossover stories like *Coraline* (Gaiman, 2002) and *The Graveyard Book (*Gaiman, 2008)*,* which tackle dark and unsettling subjects, neither "patronize nor idolize" the child reader, but address them "man to man" (Lewis, 2002/1967, p. 34). In this way, young readers are made to feel that their own knowledge is valued, and that adults are not considered "authorities on meaning, explicators of text, or sources of answers, but simply other readers with whom to talk" (Eeds & Wells, 1989, p. 28). In this chapter, I see "grand conversation" in the ways Molly, Ginny and I shared knowledge and

experience as we made sense of horrible things together by talking about our responses to Gaiman's crossover books.

A Word about the Books

Molly chose both Gaiman books to read with Ginny because she is a fan of the author, and because *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2008) had just won the Newberry Award (Book talk, November 8, 2009). Gaiman is an established cross-writer (booktrust, 2009; Beckett, 2009; Falconer, 2009) who produces stories in many formats that have always appealed to a diverse audience (e.g. comics, graphic novels, adult novels, young adult novels, picture books and short films). I believe that one of the most compelling reasons readers of all ages are drawn to Gaiman's work is that he consistently tackles dark and unsettling themes.

The Graveyard Book (Gaiman, 2008), for example, is the story of Nobody (Bod) Owens, a boy orphaned at infancy when his parents are brutally murdered, who is adopted and raised by a vampire and a community of ghosts in a neighbouring graveyard. Bod learns and grows in this liminal space, under constant threat of meeting the same fate as his parents. Gaiman's story *Coraline* (2002) is similarly macabre, detailing a young girl's uncanny adventure in an "Other World" that she enters through a hidden door in her new house. In this alternate reality things seem better, her parents are more attentive and her life is more exciting, but the horror of the place quickly becomes apparent.

Molly suggested that although she was a little concerned the stories might be a bit 'dark' for Ginny, her desire to share Gaiman's stories trumped her concern (November 22, 2009). Our conversation about both books soon reminded

us that fear knows no boundaries—that readers young and old must find ways to face the pursuing dark.

The Gliding 'Groke' —Crossover Fears

Adams insists that we "must at all costs tell the truth to children, not so much about mere physical pain and fear, but about the really unanswerable things, what Hardy called 'the essential grimness of the human situation'" (as cited in Hunt, 2005, p. 560). Crossover literature is notable for its exploration of taboo topics like death, mortality, sexuality and other so-called 'adult' themes, or the subjects previously presumed by adults to be inappropriate for children (Kooistra, 1997, p. 183).

Jansson's books, for example, reflect frank discussions for readers of all ages about death and existential queries (ML. Harju, 2007c, 2009b). Death is a constant presence in the Moomin books, embodied in the figure of the Groke, a shapeless, haunting, lonely, and unknowable creature that glides over Moominvalley causing anything living to shrink in her presence (Jansson, 1965/1993). Moominmamma explains the Moomin (and similarly, human) tendency of avoiding the Groke this way: "'She's like the rain or the darkness, or a stone you have to walk round if you want to get past **...** No one talks to her, or about her either, otherwise she gets bigger and starts to chase one'" (1965/1993, pp. 27-28). In *Moominpappa at Sea (*Jansson,1965/1993), Moomintroll, on the cusp of adolescence, is the subject of the Groke's fixation. She pursues him relentlessly from Moominvalley to their island retreat. The figure of the Groke reminds us, in this story in particular, that fearful things follow us, even as we grow.

Though fear and anxiety manifest in night terrors and nightmares mostly in our early years, they are not exclusive to childhood. Adults must also subvert or learn to address horror (Freud, 1919; ML. Harju, 2007c; Mack, 1965). One of the ways we manage fears is by facing them through story encounters (Bettelheim, 1975/1989; Nodelman, 1997; Nicholson & Pearson, 2003) when we choose to read and re-read classic (e.g. *Dracula* [Stoker, 1897], *Frankenstein* [Shelley, 1818]) and contemporary tales of terror (e.g. *The Monstrumologist* [Yancey, 2009-in-press], and Stephen King's work). That readers keep reaching for scary stories throughout their lives demonstrates a continuing fascination with these themes. As Lewis relates, even children want to be a little frightened (2002/1966, p. 31). Fear is a complex emotion—it rankles, but also makes us feel a little more alive.

A continuum of interest in fearful things doesn't mean that adults and young people have the same fears, or that they respond to fear in the same way, however. As the transcripts of our books talks reveal, Molly (the adult) and Ginny (the child) often express their fears differently. When Ginny details a general dread of dead bodies and graveyards: "only because I think a hand will grab up and drag me down to the earth-sucking darkness of the ground and then the zombies, or whoever, will eat my flesh," her anxiety stems from imagination, a fantasy of terrible possibilities (Book talk, November 8, 2009). Molly, alternatively, grounds her apprehension in real world experiences. In the following passage, Molly discusses the things that make her most uneasy about the *Harry Potter* narrative:

> Molly: I think that idea of Tom Riddle as a child, having essentially been abandoned…

Ginny: He's kind of like Harry…

Molly: Well, I mean, yes, he's kind of like Harry, but I've worked with children in some ways that are like that… children who have been tossed aside, and it does reflect a basic lack of empathy, and they do have to look after themselves. And I find the making of the Voldemort, one, very realistic and two, that is what's scary for me as an adult, I know there are children experiencing quasi- similar things, that this is what happens, they grow up and become non-empathetic sociopaths…

Ginny: I think Voldemort is crazy, he [unintelligible] his soul in seven parts!

Maija: So it's the realistic stuff that resonates with you as an adult, not the supernatural… do you get scared by supernatural stuff? Or for example, the whole thing of the soul-splitting really alarmed me, I think that really freaked me out… it's not supernatural but it's something crazy I was trying to get my brain around that sounded really horrifying. You know, Voldemort putting pieces of his soul in different places.

Molly: Certainly, reading to her, the issues of a child losing his parents, all of those parental fears wrapped up in that, but reading that to your child, worrying that they're going to worry that you're going to die, it's not really a conversation that you want to have and you're just trying to read a light book, and then come on, now, now you're into mortality…

Maija: Yes, but that's true… I don't know if Harry Potter is light reading, anyway, but it could happen reading anything, and I think that I was very afraid, at some point, of my parents dying, and that didn't come from a book. I think that's relatively normal…

Molly: Yeah, it's the awareness that things don't last and you have no control over other circumstances in the world.

(Book talk transcript, November 8, 2009)

Molly's response to Harry Potter is greatly informed by both her experience as a professional children's caregiver and a parent, something Malu similarly identifies (2003). When I asked Ginny what frightened *her* about the Harry Potter books, she claimed that it was neither Voldemort (the series' ultimate villain), nor the soul-sucking Dementors; this surprised me because those were the monsters

that I was most afraid of. She did admit that she was a bit afraid of Voldemort "at the beginning", but then decided that he was "not scary" because he didn't have a heart (Book talk, November 8, 2009). In a recent correspondence, Ginny clarified that because he didn't have a heart, she felt Voldemort was "not real" and "less human". She found, therefore, that it was not easy to relate to, or even fear him, because "he felt so distant and weird" (personal communication, February 25, 2012).

In our book discussions, Molly and Ginny not only reveal distinct fears, but they also articulate their fears differently. For example, Ginny often responds to organic, sensuous story details: She feels "creeped out" by the Other Mother's button eyes and is "grossed out" by her bug-eating in *Coraline* (November 22, 2009). She grounds her terror of the scary story sessions held in her cabin at sleep away camp in the "complete darkness" that surrounds her and her bunkmates (Book talk, November 8, 2009). Her reflections remind me of the way Lewis (1960/1955) talks about his childhood phobia of insects, locating his fear in their works, "Their angular limbs, their jerky movements, their dry, metallic noises, all suggest either machines that have come to life or life degenerating into mechanism" (p. 3). As a child, my greatest fear was of spiders, and if asked, I would have simply put my fear down to their wiggly legs. This way of articulating fear, pinpointing the tactile, sensory details that disturb, reflects an early, embodied way of knowing the world (Johnson, 2007; Rathunde, 2009). Adult anxieties, alternatively, seem to swell from the broader associations we make to monstrous things.

Molly's fear responses reflect a cerebral conception of horror that is informed by memory and experience. In a recent email she remarked that part of her anxiety around the character of Voldemort (a.k.a. Tom Riddle) in *Harry Potter* came from "completely relating" to his choice to disconnect emotionally from other people, noting: "The best villains are the ones that you can *almost* understand" (personal communication, November 26, 2011). In both her *Harry Potter* responses and blog writing (October 2009), Molly reflects that our later fears are more deeply embedded in this 'adult' knowledge of the world, in an awareness that monsters *do* exist (though they more often have human skins) and that we all have the potential to become monstrous.

Though these aspects of our talk demonstrated that young people and adults respond to and understand some fears differently, our conversation also revealed that other terrors chase us across age barriers.

Encountering the Uncanny. Ginny's greatest fears and anxieties revolve around a particular class of the terrifying that Freud identifies as the *'unheimlich'*, or, the 'uncanny' (1919, p. 219). In his seminal essay examining the psychoanalytic roots of this horror, Freud clarifies that we experience this kind of fear when we have doubt whether an "apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object might not be in fact animate" (p. 226). Ginny expresses *unheimlich* anxiety when she identifies "dead bodies coming to life . . . dolls talking . . . bringing back the dead, and statues of any kind" as the things that cause her the most distress (Book talk, November 8, 2009). This is also evident when she admits to being most afraid of the 'inferi' in *Harry Potter*, the "corpses, dead bodies that have been bewitched to do a Dark wizard's

bidding“ (Rowling, 2005, pp. 59 – 80). We feel distinctly unsettled when we encounter the *unheimlich* because we are confronting that which should not have life, but appears to be animate (Jentsch as cited in Freud, 1919, p. 233).

Ginny's fear of the uncanny is a good example of the kind of anxiety that can cross over—one that is born in childhood but pursues us as adults (Freud, 1919, p. 231). Freud specifically identifies the *unheimlich* fear of "damaging or losing one's eyes", for example, as "a terrible fear of childhood" that adults often maintain (p. 231). He suggests that adults can, cyclically, perpetuate these fears in their own children by reading them *unheimlich* horror stories. In his treatise, Freud (1919) discusses Hoffmann's classic *The Sand-man (*1817/1885) as one such story that cultivates the fear of losing one's eyes. The Sand-man is:

> a wicked man who comes when children won't go to bed, and throws handfuls of sand in their eyes so that they jump out of their heads all bleeding. Then he puts the eyes in a sack and carries them off to the half-moon to feed his children. They sit up there in their nest, and their beaks are hooked like owls' beaks, and they use them to peck up naughty boys' and girls' eyes with. (1919, p. 228)

While the intention in sharing this version of the Sand-man myth with children was probably meant to petrify them into going to sleep, I suspect this story had quite the opposite effect, making more than one child easy game for the ghastly marauder.

Though *The Sand-man* is certainly not considered bedside reading these days, references to this story, and its *unheimlich* horror, do still haunt contemporary children's literature. In *Coraline*, Gaiman employs a similarly

unsettling eye motif through his use of the black button eyes that denote one's place in the Other World. If Coraline wants to stay in the idealized Other World, she must surrender her sight and allow the Other Mother to replace her eyes with black buttons. In our book talk, Molly, Ginny and I all agreed that our greatest horror from the story came from first encountering the Other Mother's button eyes (November 22, 2009). Our shared distress was certainly related to thought of having someone pluck out our eyes and sew buttons onto our heads, but also had to do with the sacrifices one has to make in order to gain the button eyes:

> Molly: So I think for those other three children, for whom the ghosts remain, I think that the other mother was able to portray for them whatever they wanted to see, long enough for them to be trapped as well. They serve as kind of the Greek chorus behind Coraline saying, 'She's lying to you. This is what she does, she strips away your name, she strips away…
>
> Ginny: Your heart, your breath…
>
> Molly: Your heart, your eyes, she takes everything. Yes, they do say she takes your breath…
>
> Ginny: She takes your soul… well, I think at first for the button eyes she takes your eyes first, then your soul, then your heart, then your breath.
>
> Molly: And then you die because you forget who you are.
>
> Maija: Yikes.
>
> Ginny: Yeah.
>
> Molly: Again, it is the awareness of death that spooks. The idea that you lose your identity and then your life in order to remain in this perfect, but despairing version of the world.
>
> (Book talk transcript, November 22, 2009)

Our conjoined alarm at having to die to live in the Other World, and to be saddled with stitched eyes resonated, despite the fact that Molly and I are both adults who should recognize this as a highly unlikely scenario. When one faces terrible

things, however real or unreal, it often makes no difference if you are an adult and should know better—fear abides.

While our discussions about both *The Graveyard Book* and *Coraline* are notable because they allowed Molly, Ginny and I to find camaraderie in metaphysical terrors, they are more significant, perhaps, for engendering some honest talk about another theme that Molly identifies: the real world apprehension of facing our own mortality.

Dealing with Death and Grief

Most adults would rather not acknowledge that children have death experiences and existential fears in their early lives because it is easier to maintain a myth of childhood innocence (Seibert & Drolet, 1993; Corr, 2004; Rofes, 1985). However, scholars in death and grief remind us that even

> [p]reschool children . . . experience death almost daily. Death is a natural part of their lives, just as it is for adults. Death experiences for young children include stepping on insects, wilting flowers, television deaths in cartoons, movies, dramas, and news reports, death of pets, and death of loved ones from siblings to grandparents. (Seibert & Drolet, 1993, pp. 13-15)

They advise that it may be increasingly necessary to initiate conversations about death issues with children today, because their exposure to global incidents of perplexing and violent through media is growing (Nicholson & Pearson 2003). Because there is no set age for when a child first becomes aware of their mortality, and this knowledge can be deeply unsettling, it is critical that adults try to create safe spaces for discussion about these things early on.

In the process of preparing for a conference presentation in 2006, I was prompted to reflect on my growing awareness of mortality as a child. I shared this memory with the conference participants:

> *I had been sent to bed. The last daylight peeked in under my window blind, because it was summertime and only 7 o'clock or so. I had that twilight restlessness of childhood—an inability to settle because it is still light out. I remember getting lost in contemplation of my flower-patterned wallpaper, and becoming aware, quite suddenly and distinctly, of time ending—MY time, in particular. What happened when your time ran out? I wondered. If death was next, how long did you do death for, and when could you come back? Because, what else was there, if not life as I knew it, but…a big, black hole of nothingness? As I lay there, trying to get my head around the idea of not returning to this life—not after a day, a month, a year… the endlessness of infinity— I began to panic. I scrambled for my rosary, knowing that repeating prayers was a surefire way to put me to sleep…*
>
> (ML. Harju, 2006b)

I think it is important to mention that, although I have had to manage death experiences often since this existential awakening, time has not helped me face the 'black hole of nothingness' that threatens. The same existential crisis still, to this day, sends me into a tailspin. All I can do is try to suppress it. I still don't feel that I have adequate tools to face death in any useful way.

In one of her blog entries, Molly shares a similar reflection on becoming aware of time's end in childhood:

> *As a child, the Fair was a time of wonderful things. Fried Dough, Fries and Vinegar, small mirrors with the logos of 1980 rock bands on them, the occasional feathered roach clip which was worn as a hair accessory in my small Vermont town, and the ever present multi-layered fancy colored candles.*
>
> *So what happened? Did the Fair get progressively more dangerous as time went on?*
>
> *I don't think so. My best guess is that I crossed a threshold in which I became aware of my own mortality. Aware of my mortality in a way that was not possible for me to know, even as the precocious, street smart kid that I was. I understood that I was going to die, and that this death could come at any time from anywhere. I gained fear - true fear. Scary movies were no longer thrilling...they were SCARY. There were monsters in the world, and more often than not, they looked like people I knew.*
>
> *I wonder if that is the moment in which we choose to forget what it is to be a child - the moment in which we decide that we are adults and we must protect children from the dangers that don't exist for them.*
>
> (Molly, blog post, November, 2007)

In this post, Molly suggests, realizing our mortality marks an important moment of transition from child to adulthood, highlighting that once we've gained this knowledge we can never 'unknow' it. Her response is also insightful in that it articulates how our feelings of fear manifest differently in these life stages. In this piece, Molly also points to a key reason why parents have such a hard time

addressing death issues with their children, as one of our first instincts is to protect our children from distressing things.

Some psychoanalysts suggest that adults are not able to broach the subject of death with children because they *cannot* face their own mortality (Gibson & Zaidman, 1991, p. 233). Freud (1919) pinpoints this denial as an inherently human flaw:

> It is true that the statement 'All men are mortal' is paraded in text-books of logic as an example of a general proposition; but no human being really grasps it, and our unconscious has as little use now as it ever had for the idea of its own mortality. (p. 242)

Our unconscious has so little use for conceiving its own end that thinking about death can induce a feeling of abject terror. Kristeva (1982) describes the feeling as:

> A massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A "something" that I do not recognize as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is noth-ing insignificant, and which crushes me. On the edge of non-existence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me. (p. 2)

In her discourse on abjection, Kristeva suggests that we turn, in horror, from knowledge of the death of our bodies (1982, p. 3). We blanch at death because

the awareness of mortality "draws [us] "toward the place where meaning collapses" (p. 2). Because we cannot truly accept the inevitability of our own deaths, we must try to forget that it is forever with us.

Molly, Ginny and I discussed the complexity of this reaction to death, the knowing and the turning away from knowing, when we talked about "The Danse Macabre" in *The Graveyard Book*. In this part of the story, the spirits of the graveyard descend upon the town to take part in a celebratory dance with the living :

> Maija: Bod's not afraid of anything. And he's not afraid of death, either.
>
> Ginny: He welcomes death.
>
> Molly: Well, it's almost like the danse macabre, when everybody comes together and living and dead are dancing, and then the living forget, immediately, but the dead don't forget, they just don't talk about it. I think at one point doesn't Josiah say it would be embarrassing for them to remember? You know, we don't want to embarrass them by reminding them that they were dancing with us.
>
> Ginny: Bod remembers it, but he doesn't talk about it.
>
> Molly: Which is another interesting thing… the remembering, but not talking about it.
>
> Maija: But that's often what happens with people, with death, anyway. People don't like to talk about those experiences, I don't really know why…maybe just because we still don't know how to deal with them.
>
> (Book talk transcript, December 13, 2009)

It is may be that adults choose not to discuss death issues with young people, because they don't feel that they have sufficient answers for challenging existential questions (Corr, 2004; ML. Harju, 2006b, 2007c; Harris & McKenzie, 2005). In this excerpt, Molly describes how she grapples with this issue:

Molly: As for me, I think that adults live too much in their own fears and don't let [children] experience whatever they're going to get out of it. And just because I'm afraid of the questions about death or loss, doesn't mean it's not a valuable experience for [Ginny]. Certainly that's the beauty of, particularly these, stories that seem to hit several different layers of the psyche is that, by rights, we do experience things differently as we age and things that felt very comforting as a child, we read them as adults and think 'oh, well, that's not so great', but, letting that first reaction stand as is, is important. Again, we've discussed this personally, but certainly I believe that kids know a lot more than parents believe that they know.

Ginny: Yeah.

Molly: So, trying to pretend that things don't exist is useless. Because all it does is reassure the child that the adult isn't telling the truth, and so why should I trust you when you're blatantly lying to me about what's going on, or what really is scary.

(Book talk transcript, November 8, 2009)

Molly may be unique in that she *does* make a point of trying to address very difficult issues with Ginny, rather than hide them from her. In her blog posts, she details different occasions where she has had to discuss challenging subjects such as depression and suicide with Ginny because of their family history (blog post, September 2010). Molly explains her thinking on initiating talk in this excerpt:

> *But most importantly - MOST importantly, there is nothing that is so terrible that it can't be shared. That there is nothing that she can tell me which would make me love her less or run away from her. That everything changes in time - even things which feel unchangeable and insurmountable. I explain that I tell her this not to scare her, but to let her know that I am willing to face anything with her.* (Molly, blog post, September, 2010)

Ultimately, it seems that the act of sharing, which acknowledges that even adults struggle with difficult things, is what can prompt young people to open up (Berns, 2004; Corr, 2004).

As Molly, Ginny and I discussed Bod's unique childhood growing up in the graveyard, we began to share some of our own individual experiences with death. Although Molly and I did most of the talking in this part of the conversation, Ginny actively listened and occasionally jumped in to offer her thoughts on the subject:

Molly: I don't know. It's almost like…it's similar with death, that the minute you don't have to think about it, you don't think about it, until you have to think about it again.

Maija: And then by then, it's not like you necessarily know how to deal with it any better because you've spent so much time trying not to think about it. It's, you know, a very tough thing to deal with…death… when things die.

Ginny: Kitty died. My cat.

Maija: Your kitty died? Wait a minute, that was just last year, was it?

Molly: That was in April… March/April…

Ginny: Yeah. She got really sick, and one time when I came from school I asked, and then Daddy told me.

Maija: So she was not here when you got home from school, is that what happened?

Ginny: She was at the vet's and when she was coming home, Daddy said she wasn't coming home. I was very sad. And then we cremated her, and she's in the backyard now.

Maija: Well, okay, that's nice…. So she's close by, you can still think about her.

Ginny: She's in a favourite place, by the raspberry bush.

Maija: Did you pick the place where you wanted to put her?

Ginny: Yup.

(Book talk transcript, November 8, 2009)

In another session, Ginny revealed that a cousin her age had died from cancer, but did not seem keen to speak about that experience in detail (Book talk, December 13, 2009). I asked her if she thought it was important to talk about death experiences:

Ginny: Uhm, I don't like talking about it when these things happen, but… it's just the circle of life, so…it comes, it goes, it comes, it goes…

Maija: Right. You can't pretend it doesn't happen… because it happens and you feel really terrible and then you have to know how to not feel terrible anymore.

Molly: Well, one of the things we talked about when La Chatte died was, you know, Ginny asked if we were going to go get another cat right away and I said No…

Ginny: That wouldn't be nice to Kitty…

Molly: You know, it's okay to grieve for your pet, for an appropriate amount of time, until you're ready to get another pet…

Ginny: And we're ready to get another cat.

Maija: But, you haven't done that yet, right?

Molly: You don't rush out and grab another pet from the SPCA when your cat dies and pretend like nothing happened.

Ginny: Well, usually we kill our goldfish…We're not good goldfish owners.

(Book talk transcript, November 8, 2009)

In this part of the discussion, Molly and Ginny reveal ways of managing the death of a pet that are often encouraged in children's literature (e.g. Brown, 1958; Demas, 2004; Newman, 2004). By taking part in burial activities (e.g. planting a tree to remember their companion), or by eventually gaining a new pet, children

can learn to manage their feelings of grief. Even if young people don't conduct these memorial rites themselves, being able to discuss them with adults through story-sharing can help them manage their feelings of loss (Corr, 2004).

Talking about books like *The Graveyard Book*, *Coraline*, and *Harry Potter* did encourage Molly, Ginny and I to consider the things, both real and imagined that trouble us. While sharing our personal horrors didn't necessarily dispel them, it was comforting to know that others were plagued by similar anxieties and to hear their own ways of dealing with the darkness.

Defence Against the Dark Arts

> I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration. I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it has gone past I will turn the inner eye to see its path. Where the fear has gone there will be nothing. Only I will remain. (Herbert, 1965, p. 19)

In the face of frightening things, I try to remember the Bene Gesserit litany against fear from Herbert's (1965) novel *Dune* because I have always found it promising, but it is not really a useful way to counter horror. In our book talks, Molly, Ginny and I were inspired to share our silly and serious attempts to manage our fears.

Mack (1965) details a "desperate creativity" in the ways we learn to master tension and defend ourselves against fear and anxiety in childhood (p. 424). He suggests that with each developmental stage we develop different mechanisms of defense in our dreams and nightmares (p. 424). Molly, Ginny and I talked about some of our defenses against the dark:

Ginny: Yeah. Except… I run really fast because I don't like to get out of my bed in the dark…

Maija: [laughing] Why is that? Do you think there are things on the floor?

Molly: Only the things she has left there from not picking up…

Maija: I used to think there were things under my bed, that's why I was wondering…

Molly: I made the magic ring of stuffed animals around me at night…

Maija: Oh, yes.

Molly: I would do the whole ring, and they had to all be touching so the ring couldn't be broken, and then I would sleep in the middle of the ring.

Ginny: I put the covers up…

Molly: Ginny burrows… she is a small rodent.

Ginny: [giggling] You can barely see my head, you make a little breathing hole…I just burrow down there, that's how I sleep. Sometime's you're like… Where is she?...

(Book talk, October 24, 2009)

Techniques such as becoming fleet of foot when getting out of bed in the middle of the night, constructing magic rings of stuffed animal power, and burrowing into the safety of bedcovers all reveal the different ways that we "prepare the field" before bed (Mack, 1965, p. 424). Mack suggests that children concoct these "elaborate rituals and ceremonies" to guard against the terrors they may encounter in their sleep (p. 424).

Winnicott (1984) similarly identifies dolls, security blankets, and plush animal companions as "transitional objects" that help us to travel from a state of wakefulness into slumber in childhood (p. 186). Tatar (2009) suggests that we carry these defences into adulthood, noting that adults use reading souvenirs

rather than stuffed securities to help them transition back from story worlds (p. 91). The *Dune* litany is one such talisman for me, a refrain I use to keep real world anxiety at bay. In our book talks, Ginny revealed the reading relics that help her manage a very real-world menace—that of dealing with bullies at school.

Facing Monsters in the 'Real' World

The first time Molly and Ginny and I met, we had lunch together in their neighbourhood to spend some unofficial time getting to know each other before we 'talked books'. When the conversation came around to how Ginny was doing at school, Ginny launched into an update on the recent antics of the "queen bees", or popular girls in her class (Wiseman, 2009). Over the course of our book talks, Ginny would repeatedly return to the challenges she faced with bullies, and often invoked story souvenirs that helped her cope with these experiences:

Maija: *Blubber* is a hard story to read, eh? It just made me so mad.

Ginny: Yeah. I like it but it's so sad.

Maija: But kind of true, would you say it's pretty honest, that story? That girls can be that mean, for sure.

Ginny: I've been through it all. I still hate her.

Maija: Who? Your nemesis?

Ginny: I've been in her class for three years now.

Maija: You're in her class still, right? But now you're not paying attention to her. Isn't that what you said?

Ginny: Yeah. I think she's Draco Malfoy, in a girl form.

(Book talk transcript, December 13, 2009)

Though Ginny's real world strategy to avoid confrontations with her 'Draco Malfoy' often hinged on her ability to ignore her bully, she found that reading provided a more imaginative and satisfying way of dealing with the problem:

Maija: What did you think about the way he dealt with those bullies, Ginny?

Ginny: I thought it was cool.

Maija; [laughing] Maybe if you could fade and take them to the graveyard and scare them silly you'd be good, too.

Ginny: Or completely destroy them.

Maija: Destroy them! With one of your magical potions?

Ginny: Yeah.

(Book talk transcript, November 8, 2009)

In this excerpt, Ginny and I refer to the delight we took in a passage from *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2008) where Bod uses his powers of invisibility to taunt his tormentors, and consider the promise that spell-casting holds for young wizards in *Harry Potter*. Imagining supernatural means of responding to bullies may not be realistic, but it is always gratifying.

Molly shared other instances where fantasy play helped Ginny cope with bullying experiences (G. Jones, 2002; Lewis, 2002/1966). She suggested that Ginny gained a sense of empowerment by relating to the kids who have both special needs and special abilities in the *Percy Jackson* books (e.g. Riordan, 2005) (Book talk, December 13, 2009), and by imagining she was a member of the 'Assassins Academy' in *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2002). Molly relates this particular instance in a blog post:

> *After [Ginny] had heard she was accepted to the school that - in the words of her Teacher "Is harder to get into than McGill" - and we had all*

> *rejoiced, [Ginny] began telling her peers.*
>
> *One girl looked at [Ginny] and said "Isn't that where murderers go?"*
>
> *My daughter, who has endlessly more patience than I, explained that No, murderers don't attend this school, but it is a school for kids with learning difficulties. At which this other girl sneered and scoffed. Which is ironic since this particular girl would be lucky to get into such a school given what I know about her own learning difficulties.*
>
> *When [Ginny] told me, I laughed. "Next time you see her, tell her that it is a school for Assassins and you will be issued your curved blade upon your first day. The Assassins Academy - like for the Jack of all Trades in the Graveyard Book."*
>
> *If there is one thing I know, it is how to delight my daughters [sic] imagination. She immediately latched on to this idea and we began to talk about what classes she may take in her upcoming Assassin training.*
>
> (Molly, blog post, June 2011)

While I do not mean to suggest, here, that Ginny's story souvenirs had the power to resolve her problems with her peers, they did act as talismans for her, reminding her of her own strengths and ability to overcome threats in the real world. Talking about bullying in a context of 'story' seemed to make it safer for Ginny to broach a discussion of her real life experiences with us, an important point, since too often young people are afraid to talk about these trials with adults (Derry, 2005; Wiseman, 2009).

Furtherances on Crossover Reading and Grand Conversation

While sharing any kind of story can prompt conversation between intergenerational readers, the discussions that Molly, Ginny and I held support the notion that crossover books are particularly effective for generating open and equal talk between readers of all ages (ML. Harju, 2007c, 2009b). Articulating exactly *how* crossover stories achieve this is nearly impossible, however. In one of our sessions, Molly and Ginny tried to pinpoint the ways that they engage differently with crossover titles. They compared how *The Mother Daughter Book Club* (Frederick, 2007), a novel directed at a young audience, and *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2008) addressed fear, death, and family issues. Ginny described Gaiman's books as "dark", and found that he addressed these subjects in a way that was "more interesting" (Book Talk, November 8, 2009). Molly also felt that Gaiman's stories were "darker", and dealt with the themes on a more "primal" level, suggesting they were "poking at a different place in your inside" (November 8, 2009). I believe Gaiman's ability to reach a diverse readership begins with his open and diverse address. His willingness to explore taboo subjects with an unrestricted readership may be what encourages readers to accept the invitation to dance the danse macabre.

Still, why would we *want* to talk to each other about the things that haunt and terrify? Sell (2002) proposes that we seek out stories because, above all, "literature gives its readers the experience—not just an illusion—of being not alone in the world" (p. 12). I suggest that crossover books, in particular, create a "circle of companionship" that "break[s] down the youth-age binarism" and makes intergenerational connections possible (p. 12). It may be that cross-readers

are increasingly seeking camaraderie to defend against an overwhelming sense of *weltschmerz*, as they grow overexposed to the world's woes (Falconer, 2009). In our grand conversations over crossover books, Molly, Ginny and I certainly found safe harbour together against the monsters that lurk and the darkness that lingers.

Furtherances

> [I]n all the scholarly commotion surrounding efforts to put children's literature on the curricular map, we have not always paid attention to how childhood stories get under our skin—and how they stay there, long after the books containing them have been put aside.
>
> (Tatar, 2009, p. 201)

I return to Tatar (2009) here, to emphasize the role a reader's literary history plays in their storied formation and motivation for engaging with crossover books. It is evident in both the self and group cross-reading portraits presented in this study that childhood story experiences (e.g. a reader's literary inheritance, storied formation and reading relationships) critically inform adult reading practices and interests (Radigan, 2001; Strong-Wilson, 2006). If scholars are to understand why cross-readers continue to reach beyond boundaries for crossover books, they must first look to the stories that get under their skins.

At the beginning of this dissertation, I suggest that readers may be drawn to cross-read because the event can be metamorphic, changing the way readers identify themselves through story (ML. Harju, 2008b). Because crossover narratives often reflect a continuum of experience between life stages, I suggest, they extend an open invitation to readers of all ages and encourage them to make connections between their own child and adulthoods. This experience engenders a holistic understanding of self in the reader *and* encourages them to better empathize with those in other age groups. Cross-reading can, therefore, transform one's self-knowledge and potentially impact the way readers engage with the community as they apply this perspective to their intergenerational relationships

in the real world. By promoting continuance, cross-reading offers readers of all ages an alternative world view of human experience that counters dominant and divisive constructions of child and adulthood (James & Prout, 1997; Jenks, 1996) and creates opportunities for young people and adults to share knowledge and experience with each other. In this way, I posit, cross-reading can facilitate stronger connections and promote 'grand conversations' between readers of all ages.

The phenomenal success of the *Harry Potter*, *Twilight* and *Hunger Games* books suggests that young people and adults are not going to forego culture-sharing any time soon (Beckett, 2009; Falconer, 2009). As readers continue to test the boundaries between child and adulthood (Danesi, 2003; Postman, 1994), the crossover phenomenon may prove most valuable for providing a bridge between the worlds of child and adulthood, and encouraging generations to manage change together.

Seeing Theory in Real World Experience

Themes of continuance, community, and conversation echo through the qualitative data in this study, and lend support to this hypothesis for readers' engagement with crossover literature. In Molly, Ginny, and my individual responses *and* in our book talk, we repeatedly illustrate how a sense of storied identity loops through different life stages and is, therefore, cyclical not segregated. We reveal, for example, that our interest in fantasy and fairy stories is sustained by the promise of a return to the experiences of joy and wonder in our early reading. We demonstrate how we continue to identify with these stories

over time and find community through them, by 'performing' our sense of storied self through narrative writing, play, crafting, and in conversation with others.

Our book discussions also highlight how the recognition of continuance between child and adult selves can inform a reader's ability to connect through conversation with readers in other age groups. The transcript excerpts reflect considered, reflective and respectful dialogue that, I suggest, is influenced by our engaging with the narrative from multiple reading identities (Malu, 2003). While our desire to participate in the book talk was spurred on by a delight in finding camaraderie in common reading experiences, we also gained new knowledge from each other by recognizing the differences in our responses. For example, as we talked through the ways we reacted to challenging questions surrounding fear, death and anxiety in the Neil Gaiman books, we were able to make greater meaning of our responses, and gained comfort from working through the things that test and terrify us, together. This kind of 'grand conversation' reveals that cross-reading as practice may be most critical, in the end, for making readers remember themselves, and for reminding them that they are not alone in the world.

Qualifying the Research

While I set out to gain insight into readers' reasons for engaging with crossover books at the beginning of this inquiry, I do not pretend, at the end, to have found all the answers to that question. The study has, in fact, produced additional questions to be taken up by scholars.

Further inquiry should be made, for example, into young peoples' perspectives on cross-reading, as most of the research to date reflects adult

understanding of the practice, and this study also addresses mainly 'adult crossings' in their reading of children's books. I wonder, for example, whether young people are embracing book-sharing with adults readily, or deem it as a threat to their culture? More time alone in conversation with Ginny in the course of my research may have provided more insight into this question.

Because the participants chose fantasy titles to read and discuss (e.g. *Coraline, The Graveyard Book*, *Harry Potter*) and these kinds of story figured prominently in our storied histories, a discussion of cross-reading fantasy dominates this study. I remind readers however, that crossover books reflect multiple story forms and formats (Beckett, 2009; Falconer, 2009). More inquiry could be made into the particularities of generational response to picture books, non-fiction, prose, historical fiction, memoir, science fiction, etc.

There is much more to learn, too, about the complexity of reading relationships and how they affect the possibility for 'grand conversation' between intergenerational readers. This study (in both the researcher portrait and the group portraits) identifies connections made between mothers and daughter through shared reading, but is not able to fully explore the significance and specificity of this connection. I note here that reading relationships are informed by a variety of factors (e.g. literary inheritance, reading history, interpersonal connections, family trauma) and change over time. At the beginning of the research period, Ginny was eleven. She is now 14 years old, and her reading relationship with her mother has undergone a shift. Molly relates that she doesn't read to Ginny anymore, and that Ginny hasn't asked her to. This change may be due to time constraints, or because Ginny is getting older and may prefer to read on her own (personal

communication, June 30, 2011). In data that I could not include due to study design, my mother reflected with some despair on similar changes that developed in reading relationships with her children:

> It was a sad time for me when my children became independent readers and no longer wished to be read to. I always loved this sharing, cuddling, personal time with them and was sorry for that change in our relationship. (J. Harju, 2011, p. 9)

I have also recently felt a curious sadness as my daughter waxes and wanes in her interest to sit and share books with me. Shifts in reading relationships require note, as they hold insight into how deeply readers connect stories with their real world relationships and reveal how the contexts of reading shape our memories of and motivation for engaging with literature. Further inquiry into these aspects would certainly better help us understand the ability for intergenerational readers to come together through shared reading.

While it was not possible for this study to address many other critical contexts of reading (e.g. class, race, gender, language) that may affect readers' reading choices and reading relationships, I encourage other scholars to take up these paths of inquiry. The research does, however, reflect valuable and necessary exploration into a select group of readers' intimate and detailed experiences of cross-reading, and provides greater insight into the complex ways they engage with and identify through these kinds of story in their lives.

Identifying Applications for the Research

As I noted at the beginning of this inquiry, the work in crossover literature studies to date has been mostly based in children's literature criticism and relied

on analysis of texts alone to examine the crossover phenomenon, neglecting the critical role of reader and their actual experiences of reading crossover books. The phenomenological research methods I have used here have helped to address gaps in this field, "areas which previously were not considered important to research" (Campbell, nd). Other scholars may find these methods useful to help them better investigate what crossover literature actually *does* for readers (Falconer, 2009, p. 27), in order to gain a greater understanding of its true significance. In using qualitative research to support literary theory here, I hope to encourage interdisciplinary bridges, to show how reader response research can complement traditional methods in literary criticism so that scholars may gain a holistic understanding of the role of literature in our lives.

While this research reflects a new approach to the study of crossover literature by considering reader response to crossover books, it also stands as an alternate means of representing readers' engagement with story through the method of literary portraiture. I use portraiture to investigate the roots of cross-reading practice, to reveal the ways that readers develop a sense of storied self through reading, and explore how they share their storied identities with others by 'performing story'. I include self-study to highlight how my cross-reading history critically informs my role as researcher in the study and use my own story to add insight into the meaning of lived experience. The literary portraits of readers in conversation extend this line of inquiry and contribute a greater knowledge of how readers of different generations can experience more meaningful conversation by talking about their responses to crossover books.

I suspect that literary portraiture, as a method, has applications for many fields but may be most relevant to reader response and narrative inquiry studies in Education because it can help to illuminate the aesthetic, or lived through experience of reading (Rosenblatt, 1965/1995). Literary portraiture may also be useful in the burgeoning field of memory work studies as a way to further examine links between reading, remembering and developing a sense of self through story and finding purpose in these remembrances (Mackey, 2011; Mitchell et al, 2011; Weber & Mitchell, 2002).

This kind of study contributes valuable knowledge to literacy research, and has applications for curriculum policy and practice, teaching, and library studies by providing greater depth of insight into how readers connect stories with their lives and sense of identity. Self-study and memory work are important pedagogical tools for teachers, for example, because these methods encourage teachers to consider their own storied histories, making them more cognizant of their book choices for curriculum and sensitive to the range of reading responses students will bring to texts. By incorporating crossover books into their curriculum, teachers can increase the potential for engendering meaningful discussions with students through book study at all levels of education (Kooy, 2003; Smith, 1996). Libraries and organizations concerned with literacy and/or creating dialogue between young people and adults through book clubs can similarly benefit from choosing crossover books and promoting them to an intergenerational readership. By sharing books and experiencing grand conversation together, readers of all ages can know what it is to "be not alone in the world".

The research also brings critical attention to out-of-school literacy practices (DiPardo & Schnack, 2004; Meek, 1991; Zaleski, 1999) that may be useful to scholars in Childhood Studies and Family Literacy, those concerned with identity formation (e.g. Psychology, Identity Studies) and those that seek to better understand intergenerational relationships (e.g. Generational Studies). Recognizing that the 'stories that get under our skins' deeply influence teachers, educators, scholars, parents, and others engaged in public and pedagogical discourse around literacy issues is critical to understanding the greater role that literature plays in our lives.

In the end, I hope that this study has invited and evoked response in its readers, prompting them to reflect on their own storied histories, and encouraging them to experience more meaningful conversations with young people in their homes, classrooms or communities through shared reading and response to story.

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Appendix I: Letter to Child Participant and Parent

MCGILL UNIVERSITY
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Participant Consent Form
(Minor-under 18)

Date:

Dear Reader,

My name is Maija-Liisa Harju, I am a PhD student researcher at McGill University in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education. I am interested in hearing about readers' experiences with "crossover literature", or books that attract readers of all ages (such as the *Harry Potter* series). I would like to invite you to participate in a research project called: *Literary Portraiture: Researching the Readers of Crossover Literature*. The purpose of this research is to compile a literary portrait (or, a picture of your reading experiences) of a reader of crossover literature to examine how they respond to crossover books, and why reading stories might be important in their lives. In this letter, I explain the purpose of the research and what it involves so that you can make an informed decision as to whether you would like to participate.

What is your role in the study?

You will be asked to take part in five to six sessions at your home or place of your choosing, lasting approximately a half hour to an hour during the research period (Sept 2009-Dec 2009), in which we explore your reading experiences with crossover books. We may also talk about: how you feel about reading and books; whether or not reading is important in your life; how books may help you connect with other people; and how you relate stories to your sense of self (e.g. if you ever relate to characters as being like you, or want to be like characters you encounter in stories, or want to go to places you read about). With your permission I will audio-record these conversations. Additionally, I may ask you to take part in some activities, such as: writing down important stories you remember reading in the past, drawing a picture, or creating a collage to illustrate your relationship with books. I might ask you to reread and talk about a favourite book from the past, and/or talk about a current crossover book. All of these activities will get you thinking about the ways reading influences your life, and help us gather material together to co-create a rich picture of who you are as a reader.

What can be gained from your participation in the study?

1) This study gives you the chance to think and talk about the role that reading plays in your life, and to be involved in the *co-creation* of your reading portrait. In the process of discussing your response to crossover books, you will be given the opportunity to share your

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HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Participant Consent Form (Minor-under 18)

memories and experiences with books, and compile a record of who you are as a reader; one you may keep and look back on.

2) Your participation in this study will provide much needed information to scholars and educators who study reading and writing on how individual readers experience crossover books and connect story worlds with their real life experiences.

Concerns and Questions

Your participation is completely voluntary--you can choose not to participate, or you may agree to the project and stop at any time. Even if your parents gave their permission, you can still decide not to be in the project—I will respect your decision. You may choose not to answer certain questions, or might want to stop talking about something in a discussion that makes you uncomfortable. I may include portions of our discussions, images you create (e.g. photographs, drawings) or things you have written about in my final doctoral paper and/or in professional publications or conference presentations. I will not reveal your real name in any written or oral presentations of the research, but will instead refer to you using a pseudonym (a made up name). I will keep the audio-taped book discussion and any email correspondence in my home under locked, password-protected conditions; these will not be accessible to anyone else. Your participation in this project will remain confidential.

If at any point you have questions about this study, I would be happy to answer them; you can reach me by phone or by email: xxxx. If you wish to contact the McGill faculty supervisor for this study, her name is Teresa Strong-Wilson; you may reach her at her email address: xxxx.

Consent

FOR THE PARENT/GUARDIAN

1. CONSENT FOR YOUR CHILD/YOUNG ADULT'S PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH

I consent to the participation of my child/young adult in the research portion of ***Literary Portraiture: Researching the Readers of Crossover Literature*** under the conditions outlined in the above letter.

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HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Participant Consent Form
(Minor-under 18)

Child/Young Adult's Name: _____
Parent's/Guardian's Name (Please Print): _____
Parent's/Guardian's Signature: _____
Date: _____

2. CONSENT FOR THE WIDER PUBLICATION OF YOUR CHILD/YOUNG ADULT'S WORK, IMAGES AND PRODUCTIONS.

This particular consent is being requested so as to share your child/young adult's literary portrait with the academic community and/or wider public. For the child/young adult, it provides the opportunity to have their experiences heard and recognized and can give them a sense of authorship.

I consent to the publication of my child/young adult's literary portrait in academic conferences and publications. The term `portrait' includes text, photos, artwork, video and/or audio tape (but **not** the child's name or image). All submissions are original work and are free of copyright.

Child/Young Adult's Name: _____

Parent's/Guardian's Name (Please Print): _____

Parent's/Guardian's Signature: _____

Date: _____

_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	*Signature*	*Date*

FOR THE CHILD/YOUNG ADULT:

Your signature below indicates that you understand the conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

I agree to have our discussions tape-recorded ____YES _____NO

I agree that the tape may be used as described above ____YES _____NO

I agree that the researcher may make a reproduction (copy or photograph) of artifacts (objects that are part of my reading experience: e.g. book collections; scrapbooks; costumes)

that I have volunteered to share in the course of the study. I agree that she may share my literary portrait (providing my confidentiality is maintained) with the wider academic community and/or public by presenting this research in her dissertation, publications, and in conference presentations. ____YES _____NO

Name of Child/Young Adult	*Signature*	*Date*

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix II: Letter to Adult Participant

MCGILL UNIVERSITY
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Participant Consent Form (Adult

Date:

Dear Reader,

My name is Maija-Liisa Harju, I am a PhD student researcher at McGill University in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education. My area of research interest is in readers' experiences with "crossover literature", or books that attract readers of all ages (such as the *Harry Potter* series). I would like to invite you to participate in a research project called: *Literary Portraiture: Researching the Readers of Crossover Literature*. The purpose of this research is to compile a literary portrait of a reader of crossover literature to investigate how they respond to crossover books and use story to make meaning in their lives. In this letter, I explain in detail the purpose of the research and what it involves so that you can make an informed decision as to whether you would like to participate.

What is your role in the study?

You will be asked to take part in five to six sessions at your home or place of your choosing, lasting approximately one hour during the research period (Sept 2009-Dec 2009), in which we explore your reading experiences with crossover literature. Additionally, we may discuss: your attitudes towards reading and books, the role reading plays in your life, relationships or connections to others that have developed through your reading and/or sharing of books, how reading may inform your sense of past, present and future identities. With your permission I will audio-record these conversations. I may also ask you to participate in response activities, such as: sharing past and present reading interests by writing a literacy autobiography (to determine which texts have been formative for you as a reader, and why), creating a visual portrait (reflecting your relationship with books), rereading and reflecting on a favourite childhood book, and/or responding to a current crossover title. All of these activities are meant to add depth to your reading portrait, and to help get you thinking about the ways reading influences your life.

MCGILL UNIVERSITY
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Participant Consent Form (Adult)

Possible Benefits of your Participation

1) This study provides you with a unique opportunity to reflect on the role that reading plays in your life, and to participate in the *co-creation* of your reading portrait. The process of exploring and compiling this reflection on reading experiences may introduce you to a perspective of yourself you may not have considered before, and provide you with a record of your reading history.

2) Your participation in this study will also contribute much needed knowledge on individual reader response to crossover literature as well as to literacy research; it has implications for curricula, teaching, policy and practice by providing greater depth of insight into how readers connect stories with their real world experience and sense of identity.

Concerns and Questions

Your participation is completely voluntary--you can choose not to participate or you may withdraw at any time. You may not wish to respond to certain questions or aspects of the discussion and may do so without question. Portions of the discussions, documents that result from the response activities, and/or artifacts gathered (e.g. photographs, drawings) may be included in my doctoral dissertation and/or in professional publications or conference presentations I conduct as evidence of reader response to the literature. Your name will not be revealed in any written or oral presentations of the material and no record will be kept of your name. You may also request that certain artifacts not be included. The audio-taped book discussions, response documents and any email correspondence will be retained in my home under locked, password-protected conditions and will only be accessible to me. Your participation in this project will remain confidential.

If at any point you have questions about this study, I would be happy to answer them; you can reach me by phone or by email: xxxx. If you wish to contact the McGill faculty supervisor for this study, her name is Teresa Strong-Wilson; you may reach her at her email address: xxxx.

You can verify the ethical approval of this study by contacting Lynda McNeil, the Research Ethics Officer, James Administration Bldg, Room 419, Tel: xxxx.

Consent
Your signature below indicates that you understand the conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

I agree to have our discussions audio-recorded ____YES _____NO

I agree that the researcher may make a reproduction (copy or photograph) of artifacts (objects that reflect an extension of my reading experience: e.g. book collections; scrapbooks; costumes) that I have volunteered to share in the course of the study. I consent to the researcher sharing my literary portrait (providing my anonymity is maintained) with the wider academic community and/or public by presenting it in her dissertation, academic publications, and in conference presentations. The term `portrait' includes text, photos, artwork, video and/or audio tape (but **not** my name or image). All submissions are original work and are free of copyright.

____YES _____NO

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	*Signature*	*Date*

_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	*Signature*	*Date*

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.