



are seen to be vastly inferior to popular literature” (175). In contrast, films of lesser-known texts have a much stronger chance of being highly regarded.

Critics of fidelity as a cinematic virtue often stereotype English professors as the primary proponents of a theoretically naive desire, highly appreciative of verbal artistry, and woefully ignorant of cinematic codes. As an English professor/reader of children’s literature, I admit that there is a certain truth to the stereotype. A great fan of Maurice Sendak’s work, I fell asleep during a screening of Spike Jonze’s 2009 film, *Where the Wild Things Are*. Leaving the theater, I immediately purchased—no doubt out of guilt for my midday nap—Dave Eggers’s *The Wild Things*, a double adaptation since it is both an adaptation of Sendak and an extension of the screenplay that Eggers and Jonze wrote. Undoubtedly *The Wild Things* demonstrates the profound impact on Eggers of Sendak’s picture book; just as assuredly, Eggers’s novelization has not changed my preference for Sendak’s picture book.

But what happens if the English professor is not a fan of the source text? My enthusiasm for Wes Anderson’s 2009 stop-motion animated film, *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, may be informed by my prior indifference toward Roald Dahl’s work, but there are other reasons why I find the film compelling. Not only has the film prompted my return to Dahl, including books that I had never read simply because Anderson’s affection for Dahl’s fiction and his decade-long determination to make the film made me wonder what I had been missing, but it has also driven me from an initial indifference to whether the film is faithful to Dahl to a curiosity about the obsession with fidelity operative within both the discourse of the film and its subsequent marketing. The subject of this paper is the theoretical incoherence that is consequent to this obsession and the way in which Anderson must invoke fidelity even though he appears much more interested in playing around.

Signs of this obsession and its theoretical contradictions are evident in numerous sites. For example, my Puffin edition of Dahl’s *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, purchased after the film’s release, contains Quentin Blake’s 1998 illustrations, but the front and back covers depict images from the film and the text includes an additional eight full-page color photos. The insertion is advertised in a front-cover banner—“Includes color photos from the film!”—and the exclamation point implies that this version is even better. Dahl’s name appears on the cover, but below the book’s title we see Anderson’s *Mr. Fox*. The cover design implies that the book that is now a “Major Motion Picture from Twentieth Century Fox” is somehow still the same work, yet the inclusion of two different sets of images—Quentin Blake’s and Wes Anderson’s—contradicts this implication. Even more perplexing is the cover design on the DVD, released in March 2010: it consists of four puppets from the film that are posed beside *Mr. Fox* sitting in a miniature recreation of one of Dahl’s chairs and holding a copy of the story book to which the film is supposedly faithful. But when *Mr. Fox* sits in Anderson’s recreation of Dahl’s chair, and the cover design of the story book he holds does not exist outside the world of the film, who exactly is the storyteller

and to whom/what is he faithful? The fact that Mr. Fox on the DVD cover is wearing a corduroy suit that mimics a suit often worn by Anderson, especially in publicity stills for the film, offers one answer to this question.

According to Cathlena Martin, “A new media version of a text expands the text’s boundaries” (88). My Puffin edition reflects one way such expansion works. Another is the text’s literal expansion in that Anderson and Noah Baumbach’s script treats Dahl’s short story as the middle chapter of a three-chapter plot. The result, a script as interested in Mr. Fox’s wife and son as it is in its “fantastic” protagonist, is ideologically hardly faithful to Dahl’s story. Yet Anderson appears unwilling to acknowledge these ideological differences, as though that would disrupt the discourse of fidelity so central to the making and publicizing of the film. Demonstrating the possibilities of cinematic adaptation that, despite what Anderson claims, does not limit itself to fidelity to the children’s story that inspired it, his film is definitely a tribute to Roald Dahl, but it is a tribute complicated by the distance between the adult filmmaker and his childhood memories of what he most appreciated in what Anderson says was the first book he ever owned.

Contributing to the insistence on fidelity may be the public perception that Roald Dahl and Wes Anderson have little in common and therefore it is more likely that the film will be unfaithful. Viewers familiar with Anderson’s previous films may well see how *Fantastic Mr. Fox* perfects cinematic techniques used in those earlier films and how he uses Dahl’s story to explore themes that continue to fascinate him, but few would conclude on the basis of those earlier films that Anderson and Dahl resembled each other in any way. Mark I. West writes that Dahl had the “mind-set of an outsider”; considering Dahl in Twayne’s English authors series, West proposes that “A case could be made . . . that [Dahl] should be seen as an American author” (2, ix). In contrast, Anderson is often described as an American filmmaker obsessed with a fantasy of British life: the Texas private school that is the setting for Anderson’s film *Rushmore* (1998) caters to this fantasy, unlike the setting of his first feature film, *Bottle Rocket* (1996), which is firmly grounded in the suburbs and country roads of the American Southwest.

But other than sharing a sense of alienation and on occasion being criticized for their problematic representations of gender and race—Dahl most famously for the initial description of the Oompa-Loompas in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*; Anderson most recently for allegedly invoking the “black power salute” when Mr. Fox encounters the black wolf (a wolf that is “grey” in Anderson and Baumbach’s final script [95])—Anderson and Dahl appear radically different.<sup>1</sup> Anderson’s interest in the travails of adolescence, and dysfunctional family dynamics when adolescence continues into adulthood, have led to comparisons with J. D. Salinger, particularly between the Glass family in Salinger’s *Franny and Zooey* and the Tenenbaum family in Anderson’s film *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001). In contrast, most of Dahl’s children’s fiction is

directed at pre-adolescents, and stories such as *Fantastic Mr. Fox* are designed for even younger children.

The different public reputations of these two artists also figure prominently in the way their work is marketed. The home page of Dahl's official Web site bears a stamp declaring that Dahl is "The World's No. 1 Storyteller." In contrast, Anderson, even following the considerable media attention he has received because of *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, is not likely ever to be promoted as the world's most popular filmmaker. He is situated as either an up-and-coming auteur—the next Martin Scorsese according to Martin Scorsese—valued for his sense of style and a body of work that is routinely praised as "edgy," or his films are dismissed as the "quirky" product of a self-indulgent aesthete. Anderson's adaptation of *Fantastic Mr. Fox* playfully recognizes this difference. When the chief villain, Franklin Bean, asks his farmhand Petey what he is singing, and Petey stammers that he was "just kind of making it up as [he] was going along," Bean is contemptuous of Petey's lack of planning: "That's just weak song-writing!" Who would have expected the film's chief villain to have any aesthetic views? Yet Bean clearly resembles a scary version of Roald Dahl, a resemblance that is acknowledged in "*The Fantastic Mr. Fox*" *Production Notes*, a Web press kit released prior to the Oscars (15). Dahl, known for his "carefully constructed stories," might well have been as scathing about the apparent indifference to plot in some of Anderson's earlier films (West 36). But given how Bean interrupts Petey just as he sings about how the farmers are still sitting—words that parallel the ending of Dahl's short story that leaves the farmers sitting and waiting for Mr. Fox to emerge—Bean's dismissal of Petey's song might also serve as a joke at Dahl's expense.

Anderson draws attention to Bean's unexpected artistic proclivities in other ways. In an early draft of the script, Bean observes of Mrs. Fox's landscape paintings, "She's got a good eye, but she's obviously very depressed" (Anderson, *The Making* 122). Although the film omits this comment, it does demonstrate that Mr. Fox has similar views about Mrs. Fox's talent, if not her psychological state; in the film, Mr. Fox compliments his wife: "possibly the best landscape painter working on the scene today." Bean's artistic side is also evident in the construction of the ransom note. When Mr. Fox replies to Bean's demands with a note constructed in an identical manner to Bean's—made out of colorful letters cut out of magazines—Bean's suspicious response mirrors that of the animals when they received Bean's note. Bean wonders why Mr. Fox would bother to write in such a labor-intensive manner, a question that many might ask about Anderson's determination to make his film using stop-motion animation. Kylie, Mr. Fox's opossum sidekick, initially concludes that the farmers used the magazine letters "to protect their identities," an answer that even the dim-witted Kylie recognizes makes no sense since the note is signed. A more likely answer is that Anderson is drawing attention to the pleasures of artful play and, in the course of doing so, teasing out the unexpected parallels, not

just between the film's villain and the film's hero but also between the children's writer and the filmmaker adapting his work.

Reviewers concerned about whether the film will appeal to children ignore the film's sense of playfulness, evident in the way the animals outwit the humans through reliance on devices that children might invent in their games—such as the tin can attached to a string through which Mole reports the above-ground action during the go-for-broke rescue mission—as well as strategies clearly derived from childhood games such as whack-bat. The film is also playful in the way its opening pays homage to the book. As the words of Dahl's rhyme about the three farmers, Boggis, Bunce, and Bean, scroll in silence across the screen, viewers are implicitly constructed as readers looking at an excerpt from the first chapter of Dahl's *Fantastic Mr. Fox*. As the soundtrack begins, this construction is disrupted by the names of the different companies involved in the making of the film, which is followed by a shot of a human hand holding a library copy of Dahl's book. The degree to which viewers are already familiar with Dahl's book will affect their responses—that is, viewers familiar with illustrated editions of Dahl's book may note that the tree bears some resemblance to the tree on the cover design of the 1970 Knopf edition illustrated by Donald Chaffin but that the fox standing by the tree does not quite resemble Mr. Fox in either Quentin Blake or Chaffin's illustrations. But only viewers who have purchased their copies of Dahl's book since the release of the film will recognize the similarity between the book that they have purchased and the words on the cover design—"Now a Major Motion Picture"—that they also see on the screen. Viewers who are familiar with photographs of the director may also notice that the arm holding the book wears a light brown suit jacket similar to the kind Anderson often wears.

In addition, viewers may well recognize that the film's discourse of fidelity to Roald Dahl is juxtaposed beside a playful resemblance to other Anderson films. The opening of *Fantastic Mr. Fox* has strong parallels to the opening of *The Royal Tenenbaums*, a film that parodies expectations of fidelity in film adaptation when the story book it displays on screen does not exist outside the screenplay written by Anderson and Owen Wilson. During *The Royal Tenenbaums* viewers see chapter titles from that imaginary book; Anderson's *Fantastic Mr. Fox* incorporates chapter titles too—sometimes based on Dahl's words, but just as often an invention of Anderson and Baumbach.

## **Fidelity, Felicity, and a Very Interesting Man**

Such gestures toward playful and multiple sites of fidelity posed a dilemma for publicizing the film. Given that Anderson's two previous films, *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* (2004) and *The Darjeeling Limited* (2007), had not done well at the box office, Twentieth Century Fox appears to have worried that publicizing the film as a Wes Anderson film might be counter-productive. The first trailer for the film does not name either Dahl or Anderson but midway

through slips in that the film is based on a book by the author of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Brody 57). The omission of Dahl's name hints that the target audience is more likely to know the story than the author (and possibly that they know Tim Burton's 2005 film, in which case the name of the author becomes ambiguous). The studio was more confident about the film's success by the time another trailer was released: quoting a very positive *Rolling Stone* review, the trailer names Anderson but not Dahl, as though the *Rolling Stone* imprimatur resulted in the studio's recognition that a primary target audience would be fans of Anderson, not fans of Dahl. The premise that fans of the one would not likely be fans of the other remained, and the puzzle about what Wes Anderson could possibly have in common with Roald Dahl continued to underlie subsequent publicity, with its insistence that the film is true to the spirit of Dahl and its simultaneous reluctance to clarify what exactly such fidelity means.

Michael Specter's introduction to *The Making of "Fantastic Mr. Fox"* is exemplary in its incoherent invocations to fidelity. Specter acknowledges his surprise that Anderson would adapt Dahl's book, but he reassures Dahl readers who watch the film that they "will have no trouble finding their cherished text" and then adds, "But they will also find more: a Roald Dahl story for modern times" (Specter 5). The dust jacket, advertising *The Making of "Fantastic Mr. Fox"* as "a lavishly illustrated look behind the scenes," is equally undisturbed by contradiction, for it says that the film "is as true to the spirit of Roald Dahl's story as it is to [Anderson's] vision as an auteur." The tension between such statements is glossed over through a strategic use of the voice of Dahl's widow, Felicity Dahl. Although *The Making of "Fantastic Mr. Fox"* includes Specter's interviews with Wes Anderson, his brother Eric (who plays Kristofferson, a cousin sent to visit the Fox family while his father recovers from pneumonia), and Jason Schwartzman (an actor who has appeared in two other Anderson films and plays the Fox son, Ash), the interview with "Liccy" Dahl dominates the text, apparent in the way Specter's introduction repeats key words taken from her interview: "Wes has expanded it in the true spirit of the book, and of Roald particularly" (Specter 5). In his introduction Specter also repeats Anderson's stock response about his childhood memories of owning the book and the obsession "with being underground" that it inspired, but it is up to Dahl's widow to pass judgment on the film's fidelity, and to do so in a manner that locates fidelity in two different places—the book and the author (Specter 5).

This strategy is typical of numerous interviews in which Felicity Dahl and Wes Anderson speak: Anderson presents himself as the world's greatest fan of the world's greatest storyteller; Felicity Dahl—described on the dust jacket as someone Anderson "worked with" in the same way that he worked with Noah Baumbach—confirms the resulting fidelity to her husband's work. Anderson tells Specter that the "goal was to try to do a Roald Dahl story" (32); he leaves it up to Felicity Dahl to confirm his success. Anderson initially contacted her

in 2000 about his interest in making the film; he thanks her in the credits but he also honors her through calling the film's heroine Felicity.<sup>2</sup>

The naming of Mrs. Fox demands attention for at least three reasons. The first is that such naming is unusual since few of the other animal characters have both a given name and an animal surname. The only first name Mr. Fox has is the nickname Foxy. Kristofferson's unaccompanied minor badge identifies him as Kristofferson Silverfox, but in the film he is only called Kristofferson, and not many viewers are likely to be able to read the small print on the badge.<sup>3</sup> When Mr. Fox teaches the animals their Latin names, another dual-named female, Linda Otter, records the Latinate names. Kylie, who wants but does not receive a Latinate name, is the only animal with two given names: his full name, Kylie Sven Opossum, is printed on his Titanium Credit Card.

The second reason for paying attention to the name Felicity is more complicated: not only is the name Felicity omitted from the film credits, but the film also implies that Felicity Fox's fidelity is itself an issue. When Rat, Bean's security guard, calls Felicity the "town tart," Kylie asks Mr. Fox if Rat is telling the truth and is not content with Mr. Fox's explanation—"It was a different time. Let's not use a double standard." We never know if Felicity was the "town tart"; after Kylie repeats his question, Mr. Fox tells him to "Shut up." In the final film script, there are hints of a more complete answer when Rat taunts Mr. Fox by showing him a child's watch: "She never asked for it back" (Anderson and Baumbach 71). The script does not name this person: after Rat dies, Badger asks about the watch, and Mr. Fox, "with a sad nostalgia," dismisses it as "some old back-story" (Anderson and Baumbach 73).

In the time between the finalizing of the script (June 1, 2009) and the release of the film (November 13, 2009), Anderson omitted this dialogue, as though fidelity is an issue best not examined too closely. Instead the comic tone of the film is generous and hopeful: celebrating Anderson's childhood response to Dahl even as Anderson distances himself from it. In his film review, Hank Sartin claims that *Fantastic Mr. Fox* "is not a kids' movie exactly" but rather a children's story for adults, at least those adults who share Anderson's "intense nostalgia for their inner child." But Anderson's films are never simply nostalgic: digital watches and cell phones with no reception when the animals are trapped underground are not part of Anderson's childhood. In *The Life Aquatic*, Anderson and his co-writer Noah Baumbach offer a very different adult perspective on their childhood memories of watching Jacques Cousteau television specials; in the same way, Anderson's *Fantastic Mr. Fox* goes far beyond his childhood memories of how Dahl's story inspired the building of underground forts and the digging of tunnels. Juxtaposed beside the soundtrack's use of "The Ballad of Davy Crockett" and several songs sung by Burl Ives—evoking an American childhood that was already past in Anderson's own childhood—is music by Mozart and the Rolling Stones and Georges Delerue's compositions for François Truffaut films. Given that Anderson, born in 1969, was a pre-schooler when Truffaut's film *Day for Night* was released in 1973, the soundtrack, like

the film's use of props, disturbs assumptions of the film's nostalgia. What kind of nostalgia operates when Kylie's World Traveler Titanium Card does not expire until October 2010, nearly a year after the release of the film? Animal fables are supposedly timeless; in contrast, the time and setting of the film are multilayered. For the most part, the film is set in an environment similar to the landscape surrounding Dahl's home, yet when Mr. Fox finally confronts the wolf, the backdrop evokes icy mountain landscapes that have no place in England; this is perhaps true to the reality that there are no wolves in England but equally demonstrative of the film's playful infidelity.

The most intriguing reason for naming Mrs. Fox Felicity emerges in "Behind *Fantastic Mr. Fox*: The World of Roald Dahl," one of several promotional videos released by Fox Searchlight and advertised as a way to learn how "Anderson immersed himself in the author's world and ensured that the film remained faithful to the book" ("Behind"). To prove this fidelity, the director and the widow situate the film as a biographical tribute. **They note how the film is set in a landscape like that surrounding Dahl's home**, Gipsy House, and in his neighborhood, Great Missenden; how the script was written by Anderson and Baumbach in Gipsy House; and how the Dahl furniture was photographed and then recreated in miniature in the film. Felicity Dahl speaks with legitimate astonishment about how Anderson "copied everything." But the video serves as more than the usual demonstration of Felicity's approval of such fidelity. At the end of the video, immediately after Felicity Dahl says that Dahl would have "loved this," we see a scene from the film, the moment when Mr. Fox embraces Felicity and tells her—in a speech that is the only time Mr. Fox calls her Felicity in the entire film—that he loves her.<sup>4</sup>

Whether or not Dahl would have loved "this," the juxtaposition of Felicity Dahl's voice with the embrace of Mr. Fox and Felicity transforms the embrace into an expression of Dahl's love of his Felicity. The scene also inadvertently demonstrates that with fidelity, it is always a question of faithfulness to what. The film's vision of Dahl's world is not a precise copy: at the time Dahl wrote *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, he was married to Patricia Neal; this is a detail of his life that does not, on first glance, find its way into the movie. The video also pointedly omits Felicity Fox's response to Mr. Fox's expression of love: "I love you, too, but I should never have married you." The omission is necessary, for if Felicity Fox is in some sense a representation of Felicity Dahl, then who is speaking when Felicity Fox expresses her regrets? Roald Dahl had a second chance at love and, according to numerous biographies, he found it with his second marriage to Felicity. **The film both represses and re-imagines this biographical information in that Anderson ends the film by giving the Fox marriage a second chance:** Felicity announces that she is pregnant again. Unlike her first announcement, this time both Mr. Fox and Felicity glow, and the film implies that the second time around, Mr. Fox will strive to be a better husband and father.

Whatever Anderson's stated intentions about making a film faithful to Roald Dahl, the considerable differences between the film and the book produce an



ambivalent portrait of the author and a significantly altered story. For it is one thing to decorate Mr. Fox's study with the objects in Dahl's writing hut; it is another to admit that the film's chief villain, Franklin Bean, "has a little bit of Dahl in him," not just in his appearance but in the way that details of Gipsy House are duplicated in Bean's home "with its big yellow door and whitewashed brick walls" ("*The Fantastic Mr. Fox*" *Production Notes* 15). For every detail in the film that serves as an homage to Dahl's work—for example, the blueberries laced with sleeping powder are an obvious allusion to the raisins that knock out the pheasants in *Danny the Champion of the World*—there are others that satirize the extremity of some of Dahl's views: Dahl expressed contempt for television, most famously through the punishment of Mike Teavee in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. In contrast, Bean not only owns a television, but the animals are smart enough to recognize the value of a television when they steal one during their raid on the farmers' storehouse. How does this exemplify the true spirit of Roald Dahl?

In "Behind *Fantastic Mr. Fox*," Felicity Dahl even regards the difference between the published story's ending and the film's as evidence of fidelity. As she mentions showing Anderson an early draft of the story in which the foxes are depicted pushing supermarket trolleys, viewers can see those sketches, and the video thereby implies that the film is closer to Dahl than the published story. Not surprisingly, the video does not address how the publishing history of Dahl's story contributed to the difference between the notebook draft and the published story. According to biographer Jeremy Treglown, Knopf was not impressed by the initial draft, partly because of concern that the adults who purchased children's books might not approve of a story that encourages indiscriminate shoplifting (194). Knopf persuaded Dahl to revise the manuscript by making the foxes steal from their persecutors, a detail maintained in the film in that the supermarket is owned by Boggis, Bunce, and Bean. The video omits this history. The great writer cannot be imagined as someone who revised his texts because his publisher disliked the original; instead, it suggests that the filmmaker's greatness is that he can channel the great writer's spirit by creating a film that is closer to the original intent than the published work.

Felicity Dahl's role as enthusiast for the film's fidelity serves multiple functions. In an interview with *Saga*, a lifestyle magazine aimed at older British readers, she furthers the presumed bond between Dahl and Anderson by telling the interviewer that "Anderson fell so in love with the chair that Roald Dahl used at the dining table that she believes that he has had it copied for his own house" (F. Dahl).<sup>5</sup> Her enthusiasm also allows Anderson on occasion to be more circumspect in his discussion of the relationship between Dahl and the film.<sup>6</sup> For example, at one point in "Behind *Fantastic Mr. Fox*," Anderson declares, "a lot of the details of [Dahl's] life sort of found their way into our story, into his character" (emphasis added). Recognizing the difference between Dahl and Mr. Fox, he adds, "Dahl probably wrote Mr. Fox to be an animal version of himself. As a result Dahl is a very interesting man." In "*The Fantastic Mr. Fox*"

*Production Notes*, Anderson uses similar language: “Dahl was a very interesting man with many colors” and then adds, “I think he would have liked to be Mr. Fox, and he was in a certain way” (5). “Interesting” is always a carefully chosen adjective; “in a certain way” is equally open to interpretation. Felicity Dahl’s subsequent observation acknowledges the difference between Dahl and his vulpine protagonist: “I think it’s sad that Wes never met Roald because I think they would have got on very well. But maybe it was better that Wes didn’t meet Roald because he met him through the book” (6). Felicity does not comment further on why fidelity to Dahl’s animal version of himself in the book is preferable to fidelity to Dahl.

## **Intertextuality and the (Child) Viewer**

A major problem with prioritizing fidelity is that even the most faithful adaptations never restrict themselves to one source; for this reason, some film critics have proposed intertextuality “as a possible alternative to fidelity criticism” (Welsh xiv). Anderson lends himself to this approach. His commentaries available on the Criterion Collection DVDs of his earlier films demonstrate his pleasure in intertextuality, but such pleasure has proven troublesome to those who would define children’s films as simpler than adult films. According to Thomas M. Leitch, the central question in adaptation studies should be why “particular adaptation[s] aim to be faithful” (Leitch 127). Applied to *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, we might answer that the marketing insistence that the film is faithful may distract attention from the film’s rich intertextuality, part of a strategy of assuring adults that the film is suitable for children. Just as Mr. Fox’s son Ash, struggling with his perceived “difference,” insists that he is an athlete, Anderson, a densely intertextual filmmaker, keeps protesting that he is being faithful.

Several reviews of *Fantastic Mr. Fox* make the film’s dense web of allusions grounds for wavering between praise of the film and uncertainty about children getting the jokes. Nearly all critics agree that Anderson’s adaptation is a great film, possibly Anderson’s best, but with a few exceptions they qualify their praise with uncertainty regarding the film’s appeal to children (Byrnes). Roger Ebert may be one of the few not particularly disturbed about children’s response to the film: “Oh, what if the kids start crying about words they don’t know?— ‘*Mommy, Mommy! What’s creme brulee?*’” More typical is Paul Byrnes, who quips that the film is so good that “it is safe for adults to see even without children.” Critics concerned about the film’s genre mistakenly assume that adults will get the joke, but this is far from the truth given the way that Anderson incorporates private jokes into many of his films. For example, in his commentary to *The Life Aquatic*, Anderson reveals that the protagonist’s oceanographic observatory on Pescespada Island is named for a swordfish dish served at the Italian restaurant where he and Noah Baumbach wrote the script. Similarly, in *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, Rabbit supervises the cooking of the banquet. How many adult viewers know that Mario Batali, who voices Rabbit, is a famous American chef, and that

Rabbit's outfit incorporates some of Batali's sartorial choices? When Ash and his cousin Kristofferson break into Mrs. Bean's kitchen and are distracted by a plate of Mrs. Bean's "famous nutmeg-ginger-apple-snaps," viewers might well guess that these cookies are famous because they are mentioned in one of the cookbooks Felicity and Roald Dahl published. They would be wrong; according to a recipe now posted on an Anderson fan site, *The Rushmore Academy*, the recipe is Batali's.

The intertextual possibilities in Anderson's films are so rich that no viewer, child or adult, can possibly recognize them all. Even Anderson maintains that he is oblivious to some of the film's intertexts. After his younger brother, Eric, observed in a *Guardian* interview that the tension between Ash and Kristofferson resembled the family dynamic between Anderson and his older brother, Anderson was asked about the similarity. He acknowledged the resemblance but added that it was unintentional: "it never would have occurred to me" (Anderson, "Wes Anderson on *Fantastic Mr. Fox*"). In my viewing of the film, I was particularly impressed by the scene leading up to the banquet in the flint mine, not because of the complexity of filming the longest tracking shot in the film but because of Mole's playing of an excerpt from Cole Porter's *Night and Day*. Recalling Mole's protest that he hates being trapped underground unable to see the light, knowing the soundtrack's use of George Delerue's music from various François Truffaut films, and juxtaposing *Fantastic Mr. Fox*'s self-consciousness about the making of art beside Truffaut's film about the making of a film, *Day for Night*, whose music contributes to Anderson's soundtrack, I found Mole's playing of *Night and Day* a witty and moving demonstration of how the animals are trapped by their double desires for wildness and culture. At the time I was not aware that the playing of *Night and Day* may be another in-joke in that it is performed by Art Tatum, a nearly blind musician.<sup>7</sup> Watching an Anderson film, one can either be irritated by such in-jokes or view them as an opportunity to learn more, for surely an intertext that we do not recognize is always an in-joke, whether it is in Shakespeare or in a Wes Anderson film, and whether the viewer is child or adult. For example, only a child viewer familiar with the Harry Potter books might recognize how the complicated rules of whack-bat mirror the equally complex rules of quidditch. Under the heading "Fun Stuff," the "Fantastic Mr. Fox" *Internet Movie Database* site differentiates between intertexts that are "Trivia"—such as the information about Art Tatum—and those that are more important, such as "Movie Connections" and "Goofs," but such distinctions are specious for a filmmaker to whom nothing appears trivial and "Goofs" may well be intentional. Is it a goof that when the Fox family flees the invading farmers they are in their pajamas, but they resume wearing their normal clothes at the beginning of the flint-mine banquet scene?

When David L. Kranz proposes that "only intertextual connections which are sustained or foregrounded will be recognized and possibly have a significant effect on the understanding of any given film," his advice makes sense until we ask ourselves, but recognized by whom? (89). Should we ignore the dynamic

between Anderson and his older brother because Anderson claims that he never thought of it and insists that all filming decisions were made on purely aesthetic grounds? One of the interpretative problems posed by the film is Anderson's reluctance to probe his interest in making the film beyond a discourse that juxtaposes a few fragments of childhood memory with aesthetic questions and remarkable technical solutions. Every time he is asked why he decided to film *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, Anderson falls back on the same answer: Dahl's short story was the first book he recalls owning, and he and his two brothers enjoyed building forts and playing digging games. In an interview with Joe Utichi, he expands upon these reasons: the cinematic possibilities of digging, his love of Mr. Fox's character, the opportunity to explore his admiration of stop motion where the puppets have fur, and the fact that no one else had yet made a film of *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (Anderson, "Wes Anderson Talks"). The attention to aesthetics—"digging was something nice for movies"—is characteristic of the way Anderson prefers to discuss his films. When Utichi asks Anderson whether dressing Mr. Fox in a corduroy suit made out of material that Anderson himself wears means that he identifies with the character, Anderson demurs: "The reason I used the material from my suit was that I really liked it, and I thought he'd probably like it too." Yet surely Anderson is playing a game here since publicity photos constantly draw attention to the resemblance between Anderson and Mr. Fox, including the way Mr. Fox wears the suit: snug fit and exposed ankles. In a *New Yorker* profile, the photograph by Tim Walker shows Anderson behind three figurines: on the left is Felicity Fox holding a rifle; in the center is Mr. Fox, standing directly in front of Anderson and wearing the Anderson-style suit; to the right is Ash, their unhappy child, posed in profile and dressed in his white cape and pants that cover his ankles (Brody 48).

Felicity Fox never holds a rifle in the film, but when Rat is threatening her son, she uses a chain to stop him, one of the many ways Anderson's characterization of Mrs. Fox deviates from Dahl's description of her and from Donald Chaffin's illustrations in the Knopf edition that Anderson read as a child. Felicity Fox challenges any analysis of the film that focuses solely on aesthetic decisions and technical solutions. Given that Chaffin served as part of the film's design team, the distinction between her appearance and Chaffin's original illustrations is striking ("The *Fantastic Mr. Fox*" Production Notes 14). *The Making of "Fantastic Mr. Fox"* frequently juxtaposes Chaffin's illustrations beside stills from the film; similarly "From Script to Screen," one of the extras included on the *Fantastic Mr. Fox* DVD, begins by noting the film's indebtedness to Chaffin. Chaffin's illustrations of Mr. Fox clearly influence Anderson's Mr. Fox: change the color and fabric of the red jacket and green pants and drastically tighten the pants on the original cover and we arrive at Mr. Fox/Anderson's corduroy suit. But Chaffin's depiction of Mrs. Fox in a dress similar to Mrs. Rabbit in Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* has nothing to do with the way Felicity is dressed. In the final version of the script, she is described as wearing a "paint-splattered . . . Victorian-style dress," very different from the fitted knee-length

housedress that also serves as her painting outfit in the film (Anderson and Baumbach 4). Quentin Blake, like Chaffin, dresses Mrs. Fox in a floor-length dress that resembles an Empire-style nightgown; Dahl's Mrs. Fox spends a considerable time sleeping, and Blake dresses her accordingly.

Very little attention is paid to Felicity Fox in "*The Fantastic Mr. Fox*" *Production Notes*. After Meryl Streep is quoted as accepting the role of Mrs. Fox because it gave her the chance "to be Mrs. George Clooney," Allison Abbate, one of the film's producers, describes Mrs. Fox as "the moral center of the movie," and Bill Murray, who plays Mr. Fox's lawyer, Badger, notes that Mrs. Fox is "the one person he can't lie to" (10). While Mr. Fox planning the thefts likely borrows from Clooney's role as the master thief Danny Ocean in *Ocean's Eleven* (2001), another powerful intertext is the discourse of Hollywood celebrity, the way viewers may bring to the film Clooney's reputation as one of Hollywood's most desirable bachelors. "*The Fantastic Mr. Fox*" *Production Notes* contains only one other reference to Mrs. Fox; Abbate cites Mrs. Fox's dress as an example of the difficulty of designing clothes for the film. Just as Streep alludes to Clooney's status as an eligible bachelor, Abbate's language blurs the technical challenge of fitting puppets to the aesthetic challenge of dressing one of Hollywood's major stars: "She's Meryl Streep after all. She needs something beautiful" (18). In *The Making of "Fantastic Mr. Fox,"* Mrs. Fox is also discussed only in reference to the design of her costumes. Streep may have been unavailable for an interview with Specter, but Anderson's silence about Felicity Fox's character appears strategic, consistent with his unwillingness to discuss his films' politics. Given that Anderson's previous work has been critiqued for its indifference to politics, and Anderson has tended to shy away from discussions of the politics of his films, to expect political analysis in *Fantastic Mr. Fox* may be asking too much. But when Anderson is criticized for shunning politics, he has responded that "The politics in them is the politics among the characters" (Brody 56). This paper takes him at his word by considering in the following section the film's representation of the Fox marriage and the uneasy fit between this representation and the film's discourse of fidelity.

### **"I love you too, but I should never have married you"**

According to Peter Hollindale, Dahl's "subversive narratives exist within a conformist metanarrative" (280). Consistent with the relative lack of scholarly attention to *Fantastic Mr. Fox* prior to the release of Anderson's film, Hollindale pays no attention to *Fantastic Mr. Fox* other than citing sales figures that actually demonstrate that by 1975, both *James and the Giant Peach* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* had sold far more copies (272). Felicity Dahl claims that *Fantastic Mr. Fox* is "one of the most loved Dahl books internationally"; regardless, scholarly attention has tended to concentrate upon other Dahl works, possibly because they are regarded as more subversive and/or controversial (Anderson, *The Making* 104).<sup>8</sup> Whatever subversive potential exists within Dahl's

story is located in the behavior of Mr. Fox, yet Dahl effaces this subversiveness when Mr. Fox justifies his stealing as a parental act: “do you know anyone in the *whole world* who wouldn’t swipe a few chickens if his children were starving to death?” (Dahl, *Fantastic Mr. Fox* [2009] 58–59). When Badger remains skeptical, Mr. Fox points out that the animals are morally superior to Boggis, Bunce, and Bean since the animals are only stealing, not trying to kill the farmers. In this context, Hollindale’s comment about the conformist metanarrative rings true. However, in contrast to Mr. Fox’s behavior, Mrs. Fox throughout functions as part of the conformist metanarrative; she neither initiates nor criticizes the thefts. In contrast, in Anderson’s film, Felicity Fox has moments that push against that metanarrative. Although the film remains true to Dahl’s vision of adventure as essentially male, Felicity’s voice troubles that vision and signals that the relationship between Anderson’s film and the fiction of Roald Dahl is not straightforward. The film thereby functions as both a tribute and a critique, differing significantly from previous filmic adaptations that never consider challenging Dahl’s depiction of adult women; Miss Trunchbull in the 1996 film of *Matilda* is even more repellent than in Dahl’s novel.

Comparing the role played by Mrs. Fox in Dahl’s short story with her role in Anderson’s film highlights how Anderson’s adaptation is subversive in a different way in that within it Mrs. Fox also struggles with conformity. It is Felicity who advises her unhappy son, Ash, “I know what it’s like to be different. We all are, him [gesturing toward Mr. Fox] especially.” It is also the difference between Dahl’s Mrs. Fox and Anderson’s Felicity that perplexes critics’ determination to identify the intended audience of Anderson’s film and leads one film reviewer, Dorothy Woodend, to describe its depiction of a marital relationship “as a portrait of a marriage [that] rivals something Ingmar Bergman might have thought up.” Despite the extravagance of her language, Woodend’s review is significant for paying attention to the film’s depiction of marriage; most reviewers choose to focus instead on the father-son dynamic between Mr. Fox and Ash. Since Anderson’s films, albeit sympathetic to female characters, routinely pay more attention to fathers and sons, this critical oversight is predictable. Yet the development of Felicity Fox is as innovative as Anderson’s decision to turn the four unnamed young foxes—drawn by Chaffin as two females and two males; drawn by Blake as one female and three males—into one frustrated pre-adolescent male who might well appear in one of his earlier films.<sup>9</sup>

In Dahl’s short story, Mrs. Fox rarely speaks, and when she does, Dahl restricts her to some version of telling her children “what a fantastic fox your father is” (Dahl, *Fantastic Mr. Fox* [2009] 44). She states this three times—after the first time, the narrator wryly observes that Mr. Fox “loved her more than ever when she said things like that” (Dahl, *Fantastic Mr. Fox* [2009] 19). Her silence has major plot implications; since Mrs. Fox does not oppose her husband’s nightly thefts, there is no need, as there is in Anderson’s film, for Mr. Fox to sneak around. He asks her what he should bring home for dinner, and she places her take-out order. Although she twice warns him to be careful (Dahl,

*Fantastic Mr. Fox* [2009] 10), she never once criticizes him for failing to heed her advice. Always the devoted wife, her love is exemplified after the farmers shoot his tail, and she not only “tenderly lick[s] the stump of Mr. Fox’s tail to stop the bleeding” but laments the loss of “the finest tail for miles around” (Dahl, *Fantastic Mr. Fox* [2009] 15). Neither Quentin Blake nor Donald Chaffin illustrates this action: Blake’s Mrs. Fox inspects the stump but Blake does not reveal Mr. Fox’s backside. Anderson playfully respects the self-censorship of children’s films through using the word “Cuss”; he also chooses not to represent Dahl’s bawdy description of Mrs. Fox’s marital dedication. Despite how the final script includes reference to Mrs. Fox “lick[ing] the stump of Fox’s tail,” the actual film restricts itself to copying Chaffin’s discreet image of Mrs. Fox bandaging Mr. Fox’s tail through an *x* sewn on top of his breeches (Anderson and Baumbach 41).

Unlike Felicity Fox, who participates in the defeat of Rat both physically and psychologically, Dahl’s Mrs. Fox is not a fighter. “They’ll kill my children!” she cries out (Dahl, *Fantastic Mr. Fox* [2009] 16). In the film, Mrs. Fox says the same sentence, but when Mr. Fox attempts to reassure her with some male bravado—“Over my dead body, they will”—she replies, “That’s what I’m saying! You’d be dead too.” In Dahl’s story, by the time Mr. Fox concocts the scheme of digging into Boggis’s chicken house, Mrs. Fox has collapsed. For no reason other than catering presumably to Dahl’s fantasy about the lack of stamina possessed by the ideal wife, Mrs. Fox is described as “suffering more than any of them from the lack of food and water” (Dahl, *Fantastic Mr. Fox* [2009] 36). Far weaker than any of her children, she apologizes for her inability to help, but Mr. Fox reassures her that he and the children do not need her help. As he and the small foxes trick the farmers, Mrs. Fox grows weaker than ever. Constantly being told what to do, she does whatever she is told. Toward the end of the story, Mr. Fox, sounding remarkably like the corporate spouse phoning his stay-at-home wife, sends two of the small foxes back to her with precise orders: “Give her my love and tell her we are having guests for dinner. . . . Tell her it must be a truly great feast. And tell her the rest of us will be home as soon as we’ve done one more little job” (Dahl, *Fantastic Mr. Fox* [2009] 57). As the heroes return, anticipating the great feast, Mrs. Fox in turn resembles Odysseus’s Penelope, albeit a Penelope purified of any hint of infidelity. Home is the place “where they knew Mrs. Fox would be waiting” (Dahl, *Fantastic Mr. Fox* [2009] 73).

Like Dahl’s Mrs. Fox, Felicity Fox remains loyal and does not participate directly in the battles with Boggis, Bunce, and Bean. It is the nature of her loyalty that is different. The opening dialogue in the film is Mr. Fox’s question, “What’d the doctor say?” to which Felicity replies: “Nothing. Supposedly it’s just a 24-hour bug. He gave me some pills.” The rest of the scene confirms that Mr. Fox never listens to Felicity’s advice; he gives her options, but he always gets his way. It is only when they are trapped in a cage because he has once again ignored her advice that we realize that Felicity’s first words in the film were a lie. Telling Mr. Fox that she is pregnant, for the moment she has

the upper hand and she uses it, insisting that if they survive, he must promise to find another “line of work.” Felicity’s willingness to lie resonates in a later scene when she asks Kylie if Mr. Fox is telling the truth after Mr. Fox claims that they have been out late covering a local fire. Her question does not take for granted any gendered distinctions between truth-telling women and lying men. Felicity knows that not just tricksters lie.

Two years later—or as the film informs us, twelve fox-years later—Mr. Fox is a newspaper man writing a debonair column, “Fox About Town.”<sup>10</sup> Frustrated with living in a hole and complaining that it makes him feel poor, he is reminded by Felicity that foxes live in a hole for a reason. It takes the rest of the film for Mr. Fox to heed the wisdom of her words. When she discovers that he is once again stealing, she reminds him of his broken promise. Attempting to justify his behavior by reference to his “wild animal” nature, he is cut off when Felicity points out that he is also a husband and a father. After he starts to pose the kind of “existentialist” questions that baffle his sidekick Kylie, she tells him that she is not interested in “the truth” about himself; and when he laments not listening to his lawyer, she generalizes that he never listens to anyone. Her statement of regret, “I love you too, but I should never have married you,” haunts the film, not just because Mr. Fox has no answer to these words but also because Felicity remains in the marriage despite her realization.

In sharp contrast, Dahl’s Mrs. Fox has no such regrets. Although reluctant to speak in public, she declares in full-cap enthusiasm at the banquet: “MY HUSBAND IS A FANTASTIC FOX” (Dahl, *Fantastic Mr. Fox* [2009] 77). This description is always ironized through the use of quotation marks in the film, including the time when Mr. Fox offers his need to be regarded as “the quote-unquote fantastic Mr. Fox” as an explanation for the mess he has created. As they enter the supermarket at the end of the film, Felicity agrees with him: “You really are kind of a quote unquote fantastic fox.”<sup>11</sup> In Anderson’s adult films, divorce and separation are the norm—*Rushmore*, *The Royal Tenenbaums*, *The Life Aquatic*, *The Darjeeling Limited*—as they are in Noah Baumbach’s *The Squid and the Whale*. In *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, the marriage survives but barely.

The ending reflects this ironic tone of compromise. Asked by Ash to make another toast, Mr. Fox literally steps on a soap-box and makes a speech about compromises that resemble those humans make whenever they enter the contemporary world of “International Supermarkets”: praising the coolness of the supermarket’s linoleum even though foxes are “slightly allergic” to it; pointing out the purported advantages of his detachable tail; and observing that the food that looks fake is nicely decorated. Having come to terms with the difference between himself and the wild wolf that he can never be, accepting that he will live underground but unable/unwilling to hunt outside the world of the supermarket, Mr. Fox asks “the most wonderful wild animals [he has] ever met” to join him in a toast to their “survival.”

Just as the encounter with the wild wolf emphasizes that Mr. Fox cannot survive as the wild animal he most envies/fears, Anderson selects music for



the film's concluding dance of victory that also speaks to compromise. In the soundtrack that ends the film, the animals dance to Bobby Fuller Four's "Let Her Dance," an ironic choice given that the song's lyrics indicate that the music is a break-up song in which the singer remembers how "she" used to dance with him the same way and that all that he can now do is give her permission to dance to their favorite song. He lets her dance because he has no power to stop her.<sup>12</sup> In its attention to a female dancing, the concluding song hearkens back to the track from "Heroes and Villains" that is used when Felicity and Mr. Fox rob the squab farm in the film's beginning and the Beach Boys sing about falling in love with an innocent girl who is still dancing. By the end of the film, Felicity, no longer innocent, aware that marriage was a mistake, is still dancing.

### **A Classic Text for Our Time**

When critics characterize earlier Anderson films as cartoonish or similar to children's books, such comments are not intended as compliments. A reviewer of *The Royal Tenenbaums* quips that the film is "*Eloise and Madeline on drugs*" (Mark Steyn qtd. in "Wes Anderson" 21). Even more disappointed in Anderson's subsequent film, *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*, the reviewer summarizes the film's script by asking his readers to imagine "*Moby Dick* written by a pot-head A. A. Milne" (Mark Steyn qtd. in "Wes Anderson" 31). Yet in adapting a children's book, Anderson has produced what may be his best film, one that confirms not only "that adaptations can improve upon their literary originals" (Cartmell and Whelehan 5) but also that "texts remain alive only to the extent that they can be rewritten" (Leitch 12). According to Rachel Carroll, "every 'return' is inevitably transformative of its object—whether that object be the original text or the memory of its first encounter" (Carroll 1). Anderson may genuinely believe that he is being faithful to his childhood memories, but as Mr. Fox muses in his final newspaper column, "life has a way of shuffling the deck from time to time" and what Anderson remembers is not exactly what he creates (Anderson, *The Making* 174). Claiming to be faithful is a necessary but duplicitous strategy, consistent with Thomas M. Leitch's observation that "new adaptations are admitted as canonical only to the degree that they both acknowledge the primacy of earlier texts and succeed in establishing their own reality as superior" (295).

The likelihood that Anderson's *Fantastic Mr. Fox* will shift Dahl's story "from [relative] obscurity to 'classic' status" and will even become "the classic text" is inextricable from Anderson's willingness to play around (Cartmell 172). Until the release of the film, Dahl's *Fantastic Mr. Fox* was barely noticeable in the marketing of Dahl as a popular children's author: in the lengthy (444 pages) *Roald Dahl Treasury* (1997), the story is delegated only four pages, and in Wendy Cooling's compilation, *D Is for Dahl: A Glorionptious A–Z Guide to the World of Roald Dahl* (2004), the story receives only one entry and supplementary mention in another. This situation is sure to change now.

There have been at least five previous filmic adaptations of Dahl's children's novels—*James and the Giant Peach* (1996), *Matilda* (1996), *The Witches* (1990), and the two *Chocolate Factory* films (*Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* [1971] followed by *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* [2005]). In a year that has seen the filmic adaptation of so many children's and young adult works, many of which turn from relatively faithful adaptations marketed for children to a paradoxical use of children's fiction as the vehicle for exploring contemporary adult concerns, Anderson's *Fantastic Mr. Fox* slyly subverts Dahl's representation of gender and any expectation that children's films wholeheartedly embrace the American dream. The ending of Anderson's film begs comparison with the ending of Henry Selick's *James and the Giant Peach*. In Selick's adaptation, one of the major deviations from the novel occurs when James compares the power of his dream to the evidence of the American dream that he sees around him and persuades the cynical adult New Yorkers that he is telling the truth; in contrast to James's exultation as he ends his journey perched on top of the Statue of Liberty are the compromises that resonate throughout Anderson's film: the distance between the world of the lone wolf and the grocery store that is the only option remaining in Mr. Fox's arsenal of trickery. This is not exactly happily ever after, but the American dream circa 2009 where refugee camps represent prime real estate opportunities and fidelity to someone she knows she shouldn't have married is Felicity Fox's compromise of choice.

## Notes

1. For an alternate reading that proposes the possibility that a clenched fist can be a symbol of "unity and revolutionary fervor," see Stephen Moss, "What's in a Clenched Fist?"
2. According to Richard Brody, Bean's wife "derive[s] some of [her] attributes" from Felicity Dahl (Brody 56). Felicity Dahl has described how she and Anderson "went all around the countryside in our gumboots," and Mrs. Bean's boots may inscribe Anderson's memory of the unglamorous attire that Felicity wore that day (F. Dahl). However, unlike the similarity between Franklin Bean and a scary Roald Dahl, it is harder to find any resemblance between Felicity Dahl and the harsh features of Mrs. Bean.
3. Anderson has acknowledged that the film has numerous details that viewers cannot read; one of the functions of *The Making of "Fantastic Mr. Fox"* is that it provides photographs of some of those details. It also includes memos from Anderson that demonstrate his painstaking attention to details that prior to the release of the DVD viewers were not likely to notice, such as the memo in which Anderson suggests that the flint-mine dinner menu include a dessert of "little red berries poisonous to human" as well as pages from the comic book Ash is reading (Anderson, *The Making* 141).
4. The only other time the film uses the name Felicity is on the signature of her large painting. Of course, Felicity Fox being an artist is yet another difference between Anderson's representation and Dahl's construction of Mrs. Fox as a woman whose whole identity is defined by her motherhood. Eric Anderson mentions that their mother was

a painter; his brother, the filmmaker, has never offered this biographical detail as the reason he makes Felicity a painter (Anderson, *The Making* 71). The mother in *The Royal Tenenbaums*, like Anderson's mother, works as an archaeologist.

5. On the *Saga* Web site viewers are invited to join Saga Zone, "The social networking site for the over 50s."

6. In contrast, when Anderson is interviewed without Felicity Dahl, he is more insistent on the film's fidelity. For example, in Abbey Goodman's *Rolling Stone* interview with Anderson and Jason Schwartzman, Anderson observes that the tree that originally inspired Dahl's book "died over the course of making the film." He then adds, "I don't know if that's a bad omen or a handing of the baton."

7. This claim is made on the "Fantastic Mr. Fox" *Internet Movie Database* site.

8. In her *New Yorker* profile of Dahl, published just before the 2005 release of Tim Burton's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Margaret Talbot makes no reference to *Fantastic Mr. Fox*. Partly this is because her article is a response to feminist critics of Dahl's work as well as a rebuttal of the less than flattering portrait of Dahl presented by Jeremy Treglown's unauthorized biography. But Talbot may also have excluded *Fantastic Mr. Fox* because it is irrelevant to her premise that the "essence of Dahl is his willingness to let children triumph over adults." Talbot writes that "Dahl's most memorable protagonists—Charlie, James, Matilda—are timid characters who nevertheless succeed." She is right, but her statement only reinforces the way in which *Fantastic Mr. Fox* is, as characters in Anderson's film might say, after a suitable and baffled pause, different—a story for younger children who want to be reassured that daddy can take care of everything.

9. As noted above, Mr. Fox's son, Ash, is voiced by Jason Schwartzman, who has appeared in similar roles in Anderson's films *Rushmore* and *The Darjeeling Limited*.

10. The three newspaper depictions are another example of Anderson's inclusion of material that is thematically significant but invisible in the circumstances of the film's original viewing. The first newspaper excerpt introduces Mr. Fox's irrational terror of wolves: in his column, he writes that he has never met one but "they scare the cuss out of me. What sort of creature sleeps with the windows open?" The second newspaper excerpt consists of passages from Dahl's short story; the final newspaper excerpt has Mr. Fox admit in his column that he is "not the fox [he] used to be" (Anderson, *The Making* 174).

11. The DVD includes a trailer in which Felicity Fox, wearing the costume she wears at the beginning of the film, tells Mr. Fox "You really are fantastic" and she does not modify "fantastic" with "quote unquote." This speech does not appear in the film.

12. Mr. Fox's final newspaper column also reflects a husband's limited power: "I overheard my wife say sadly on the telephone, it's been a terrible year. Sometimes it's better not to know, especially if she wasn't going to tell you" (Anderson, *The Making* 174).

## Works Cited

Anderson, Wes. "Wes Anderson on *Fantastic Mr. Fox*." Interview by Krista Smith. 21 Nov. 2009. *Vanity Fair*. 24 Mar. 2010. <<http://www.vanityfair.com/online/oscars/2009/11/wes-anderson-interview.html>>.

- . “Wes Anderson Talks Fantastic Mr. Fox—RT Interview.” Interview by Joe Urichi. *Rotten Tomatoes*. 21 Oct. 2009. 25 Mar. 2010. <[http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/1197696-fantastic\\_mr\\_fox/news/1851087/wes\\_anderson\\_talks\\_fantastic\\_mr\\_fox\\_rt\\_interview](http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/1197696-fantastic_mr_fox/news/1851087/wes_anderson_talks_fantastic_mr_fox_rt_interview)>.
- Anderson, Wes, and Noah Baumbach. *Fantastic Mr. Fox* by Roald Dahl. *Script-Fantastic Mr. Fox (final)*. fdr. 2009. 31 Mar. 2010. <<http://www.foxsearchlight.com/scripts/fmf.pdf>>.
- Anderson, Wes, and Jason Schwartzman. “Wes Anderson’s Fantastic Fox Tale.” Interview by Abbey Goodman. *Rolling Stone* 18 Nov. 2009. 24 Mar. 2010. <[http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/30965038/wes\\_andersons\\_fantastic\\_fox\\_tale](http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/30965038/wes_andersons_fantastic_fox_tale)>.
- Anderson, Wes, with Michael Specter. *The Making of “Fantastic Mr. Fox.”* New York: Rizzoli, 2009.
- “Behind *Fantastic Mr. Fox*: The World of Roald Dahl.” *Fox Searchlight*. 5 Oct. 2009. 24 Apr. 2010. <<http://content.foxsearchlight.com/videos/node/3951>>.
- Brody, Richard. “Wild, Wild Wes.” *New Yorker* 2 Nov. 2009: 48–57.
- Byrnes, Paul. Rev. of *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, dir. Wes Anderson. *Sydney Morning Herald* 5 Jan. 2010. 7 Jan. 2010. <<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2010/01/05/1262453580490.html>>.
- Carroll, Rachel. “Introduction: Textual Infidelities.” *Adaptation in Contemporary Culture: Textual Infidelities*. Ed. Rachel Carroll. London: Continuum, 2009. 1–7.
- Cartmell, Deborah. “Adapting Children’s Literature.” *Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*. Ed. Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007. 167–80.
- Cartmell, Deborah, and Imelda Whelehan. “Introduction—Literature on Screen: A Synoptic View.” *Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*. Ed. Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1–12.
- Cooling, Wendy, comp. *D Is for Dahl: A Gloriumsious A–Z Guide to the World of Roald Dahl*. Illus. Quentin Blake. London: Puffin, 2004.
- Dahl, Felicity. “Felicity Dahl Talks to Saga Online about *Fantastic Mr. Fox*.” Interview by Melody Rousseau. n.d. *Saga*. 31 Mar. 2010. <<http://www.saga.co.uk/homeandlifestyle/people/celebrities/felicity-dahl-talks-to-saga-online-about-fantastic-mr-fox.asp>>.
- Dahl, Roald. *Fantastic Mr. Fox*. Illus. Donald Chaffin. New York: Knopf, 1970.
- . *Fantastic Mr. Fox*. Illus. Quentin Blake. 1970. New York: Puffin-Penguin, 2009.
- . *The Roald Dahl Treasury*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1997.
- Ebert, Roger. Rev. of *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, dir. Wes Anderson. *Chicago Sun-Times* 24 Nov. 2009. 7 Jan. 2010. <<http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20091124/REVIEWS/911249995/1023>>.
- Eggers, Dave. *The Wild Things*. San Francisco: McSweeney’s Books, 2009.
- Fantastic Mr. Fox*. Dir. Wes Anderson. Twentieth Century Fox, Indian Paintbrush, and Regency Enterprises, 2009. DVD, 2010.
- “*Fantastic Mr. Fox*.” *Internet Movie Database*. n.d. 3 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0432283/>>.
- “*The Fantastic Mr. Fox*” *Production Notes*. n.d. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. 31 Mar. 2010. <[http://www.oscars.org/press/presskits/nominations/pdf/fantastic\\_mr\\_fox.pdf](http://www.oscars.org/press/presskits/nominations/pdf/fantastic_mr_fox.pdf)>.

- Hollindale, Peter. "And Children Swarmed to Him Like Settlers. He Became a Land': The Outrageous Success of Roald Dahl." *Popular Children's Literature in Britain*. Ed. Julia Briggs, Dennis Butts, and M. O. Grenby. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008. 271–86.
- James and the Giant Peach*. Dir. Henry Selick. Walt Disney Pictures and Allied Filmmakers, 1996. DVD.
- Kranz, David L. "Trying Harder: Probability, Objectivity, and Rationality in Adaptation Studies." *The Literature/Film Reader: Issues of Adaptation*. Ed. James M. Welsh and Peter Lev. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow P, 2007. 77–102.
- Leitch, Thomas M. *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents: From "Gone with the Wind" to "The Passion of the Christ"*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 2007.
- Martin, Cathlena. "Charlotte's Website: Media Transformation and the Intertextual Web of Children's Culture." *Adaptation in Contemporary Culture: Textual Infidelities*. Ed. Rachel Carroll. London: Continuum, 2009. 85–95.
- McFarlane, Brian. "It Wasn't Like That in the Book . . ." *The Literature/Film Reader: Issues of Adaptation*. Ed. James M. Welsh and Peter Lev. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow P, 2007. 3–14.
- Moss, Stephen. "What's in a Clenched Fist?" 30 May 2006. *The Guardian*. 3 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2006/may/30/cannes2006.cannesfilmfestival>>.
- Roald Dahl: *The Official Web Site*. n.d. 3 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.roalddahl.com/>>.
- The Rushmore Academy: The World of Wes Anderson*. n.d. 27 Mar. 2010. <<http://rushmoreacademy.com/>>.
- Sartin, Hank. Rev. of *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, dir. Wes Anderson. *Time Out Chicago* 26 Nov.–2 Dec. 2009. 7 Jan. 2010. <<http://chicago.timeout.com/articles/film/80940/fantastic-mr-fox-film-review>>.
- Specter, Michael. Introduction. *The Making of "Fantastic Mr. Fox."* By Wes Anderson, with Michael Specter. New York: Rizzoli, 2009. 5.
- Talbot, Margaret. "The Candy Man." *New Yorker* 11 July 2005. 17 Mar. 2010. <[http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/07/11/050711crat\\_atlarge](http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/07/11/050711crat_atlarge)>.
- Treglown, Jeremy. *Roald Dahl: A Biography*. New York: Farrar, Straus Giroux, 1994.
- Welsh, James M. "Introduction: Issues of Screen Adaptation: What Is Truth?" *The Literature/ Film Reader: Issues of Adaptation*. Ed. James M. Welsh and Peter Lev. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow P, 2007. xiii–xxviii.
- "Wes Anderson." *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Ed. Jeffrey W. Hunter. Vol. 227. Detroit: Thomas Gale, 2006. 1–43. *Literature Criticism Online*.
- West, Mark I. *Roald Dahl*. New York: Twayne, 1992.
- Wojcik-Andrews, Ian. *Children's Films: History, Ideology, Pedagogy, Theory*. New York: Garland P, 2000.
- Woodend, Dorothy. "'Fantastic Mr. Fox' Is, Well, Fantastic." Rev. of *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, dir. Wes Anderson. *The Tye* 11 Dec. 2009. 7 Jan. 2010. <<http://thetyee.ca/ArtsAndCulture/2009/12/11/FantasticMrFox/>>.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.