

‘I’ll Get You, Tom and Jerry. And That Little Dog, Too!’: Adaptation, Transmedia, and Franchise Management in the *Tom and Jerry* and *Wizard of Oz* Crossovers

David McGowan

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Abstract:

This article will offer a close reading of two Warner Bros. direct-to-video animated features – *Tom and Jerry & the Wizard of Oz* (2011) and *Tom and Jerry: Back to Oz* (2016) – as an example of the transmedia tendencies of studios in the conglomerate era. Although *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and *Tom and Jerry* were originally MGM productions, the modern distribution of these works provides an insight into the complicated post-‘Golden Age’ trajectories of studio archives. Ted Turner’s brief takeover of MGM in the mid-1980s stripped the studio of many of its assets, while

the merger of Turner's company with Warner Bros. in 1996 brought these MGM properties under Warner control. The *Tom and Jerry/Wizard of Oz* crossover films heavily reference the 1939 MGM movie (the songs, the ruby slippers, and so on) – something that other adaptations of Baum's novels have not been permitted to do. This paper will suggest that these new extensions of old brands subtly rewrite MGM's industrial history in favour of establishing them as Warner Bros. franchises, while also re-establishing the brand identity of the 1939 film at a time where *Oz* adaptations are facing greater competition, particularly from the successful stage musical *Wicked* (2003).

The recent Disney+ short *The Simpsons: The Good, The Bart, and The Loki* (2021) presents a number of *Simpsons* characters transformed into Marvel-branded superheroes, with one background figure holding up a sign stating 'This is what happens when Disney buys Marvel and Fox': a sardonic commentary on the conglomerate machinations that have prompted the sequence's existence. The direct-to-video animated feature *Tom and Jerry & The Wizard of Oz* (2011, hereafter known as *T&J&Oz*) offers a similarly curious—if less overtly self-aware—crossover of media properties. As the movie's signposted title implies, it blends elements from the 1939 MGM live-action adaptation of *The Wizard of Oz* with the MGM Cartoon Studio's *Tom and Jerry* series (hereafter known as *T&J*), which debuted in 1940. *T&J&Oz* broadly retells the narrative of the 1939 film, but presents many events from the perspective of Tom and Jerry, who appear essentially as 'themselves' rather than assuming the role of any of *Oz*'s established characters. The movie was successful enough to spawn a sequel, *Tom and Jerry: Back to Oz* (2016, hereafter known as *T&J: Back to Oz*), which offered the tantalizing promise of continuing, rather than merely retelling, events from the MGM interpretation of *Oz*. The two films were only

possible, however, due to a complicated series of mergers and acquisitions, which have ultimately seen the underlying rights transition from one ‘Golden Age’ studio to another, from MGM to Warner Bros.

The last couple of decades of Hollywood production have been dubbed the ‘franchise era’, in which ‘the role of transmedia environments in managing interest, buzz, and development has become an integral part of the process’, to the detriment of one-off ‘tentpole’ releases, which have ‘seen their roles diminished or recalibrated as but one segment of a larger brand experience’ (Fleury et al. 2–3). In 2012, responding to this changing production landscape, Simone Murray proclaimed: ‘What is still lacking in adaptation studies is a thorough understanding of whose intellectual property interests [...“spin-offs” and crossovers...] serve, [and] the intellectual property and licensing agreements by which they are governed’ (15). Although convergence and transgenerational cultures have received greater attention from scholars in recent years (see, for instance, Gray; Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*; Johnson, *Media Franchising*; Johnson, *Transgenerational Media Industries*), there has been a particular focus on the growth of varied storytelling modes and character interactions within universes, most notably the wide-reaching Marvel and *Star Wars* properties as governed by Disney (see, for instance, Flanagan et al.; Yockey; Proctor and McCulloch). Crossovers between *different* cinematic franchises, by contrast, have prompted less direct analysis. *T&J&Oz* thus offers a particularly pertinent case study for this overlooked branch of transmedia production. *Tom and Jerry* and the 1939 version of the *Wizard of Oz* are well-established properties: each over eighty years old at the time of writing, with both still arguably possessing significant cultural and commercial capital. That said, beyond this continued (but historically separate) appeal, and the MGM/Warner ownership history that encircles both sets of works, the two appear to have little in common. As this article will elaborate,

the particular combination of the narrative worlds and characterizations ends up creating numerous inconsistencies, complicating certain readings associated with the original texts. However, in his study of comic book crossovers, Lincoln Geraghty notes that the form overtly challenges the assumptions of ‘fidelity criticism’, and even invites viewers to seek pleasure in the deviations and unexpected connections created by this mixture: ‘what is at stake [...] is not the faithful adaptation of the two fictional groups [...], but instead a transtextual experiment designed to market two distinct media products’ (109, 111). *T&J&Oz* offers a further example of this modern adaptive process, in which the movie and its sequel specifically aim to operate as a nexus for a variety of commercial works, joining together revenue streams that had previously existed in isolation, and repositioning lucrative aspects of film history in new, financially beneficial ways.

(Re-)Branding in the Franchise Era

For much of the twentieth century, *The Wizard of Oz* and *Tom and Jerry* were carefully branded (and, arguably, consumed) as MGM products. The classical Hollywood era of the mid-1920s to 1960s was dominated by eight major studios. While some collusion was necessary to maintain this oligopolistic hold on the industry, there was also ‘aggressive [...] competition] over market shares’ within the closed system, with each player aiming to differentiate its output from others partly through the promotion of a specific (and recognizable) ‘corporate personality’ (Christensen 4; Grainge 72). As Jerome Christensen notes, MGM and Warner Bros. fostered a particularly ‘long-standing opposition’ in terms of production philosophy (4): the former emphasized ‘high-gloss and glamour [...] through] numerous prestige spectacles’, while the latter ‘became associated with films of a certain narrative and technical economy, expressed in the studio’s hard-bitten and stark foundation genre of the gangster films’ (Grainge 73). The 1939 *Wizard of Oz* thus reflected

MGM's reputation for lavish musicals, while the *T&J* series became the most prominent output of the MGM Cartoon Studio, reiterating the studio's association with 'quality' by winning seven Academy Awards for Best Animated Short film (as well as racking up many other nominations). MGM even sometimes cross-promoted Tom and Jerry *within* their live-action musicals, including Jerry dancing alongside Gene Kelly in *Anchors Aweigh* (1945), and both cat and mouse featuring in a choreographed underwater sequence with Esther Williams in *Dangerous When Wet* (1953).¹ The affective connection between the *T&J* series and its parent studio was further intensified in the 1960s Chuck Jones cartoons, in which Tom appears after the famous lion and gives his own, somewhat aggressive, meow (figure 1). As such, the comparatively recent transition of ownership of these franchises to Warner undoubtedly impacts both the reception of the original texts, as well as the transmedia adaptations that have followed.

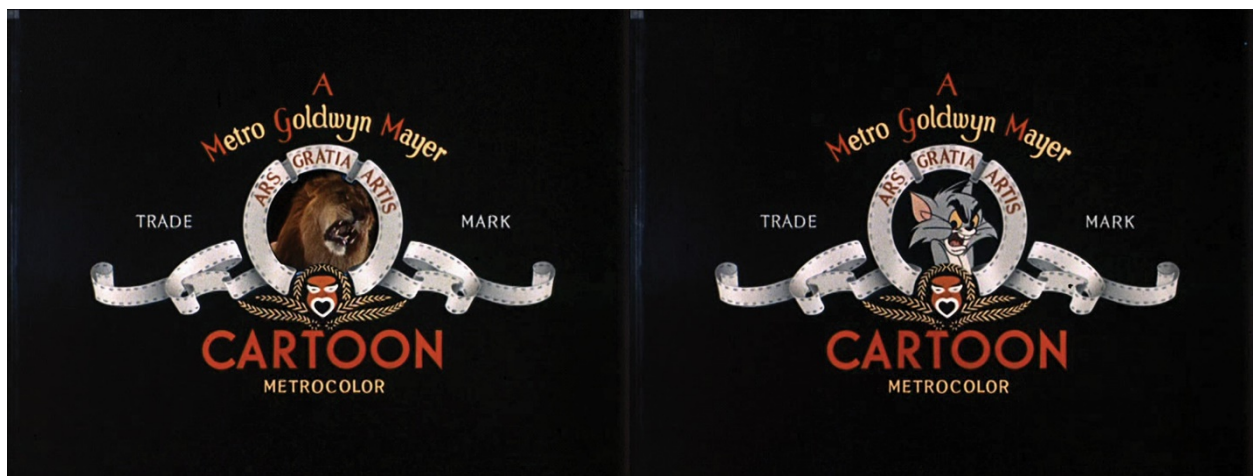


Figure 1. Crossover branding with MGM and Tom and Jerry in the title logo for *Pent-House Mouse* (1963).

The slow postwar decline of the Hollywood studio system and the rise of television played a big part in the complicated rights issues, and the intermingling of different producers' content, that would follow in subsequent decades. In the mid-1950s, a number of studios sold off many of their archival films to television syndication companies, believing that they were generating 'significant profits on what – but for television – would have been obsolete, useless properties' (Hilmes 165).² Several moguls came to regret the permanency of the sales when many of these older films (and especially short cartoons) proved very successful on the small screen, with the syndication companies—rather than the studios—profiting from the ongoing repeat fees (Kompere 71). With the subsequent development of home video technologies and cable television, Hollywood placed an increased value on possessing a library of older films, which could now be (re-)exploited for new profits in several different areas.

Unlike these other (arguably shortsighted) studios, MGM retained underlying ownership of many of its properties in the 1950s, including *T&J* and *The Wizard of Oz*. Indeed, as a result of the studio's acquisition of United Artists (UA) in 1981, they boosted their holdings even further, inheriting many of UA's films, including 'twelve James Bond features and the *Rocky* and *Pink Panther* series'. UA had also obtained the rights to other studio's films—mostly via television syndication libraries—including '550 pre-1950 Warner Bros. [...] and 700 RKO features', as well as numerous short subjects, which now became part of the MGM/UA brand (Prince 15–16). MGM's own movie production had been faltering across the 1970s, however, and the additional debt incurred from the UA purchase—coupled with a number of disappointing film releases in the early 1980s—led to a period of financial uncertainty. As Stephen Prince notes, a deal was negotiated in 1985 between MGM's then-owner Kirk Kerkorian and Ted Turner, 'whereby Turner bought MGM/UA for \$1.4 billion, with an immediate sell-back to Kerkorian of UA for \$480

million. [...] Turner sold all of the studio operations he had purchased [including returning MGM's movie, television, and videocassette production and distribution operations to Kerkorian for a further \$300 million], but he kept 3,650 films from the MGM/UA library, which had been his real target from the start' (71–72). The focus on the accumulated intellectual property, rather than the studio itself, establishes some of the preconditions for the subsequent rise of the franchise era, which as Ben Fritz argues, 'is, in many ways, a return to the ["Golden Age" of the] studio system. Only now the major entertainment companies don't own the most important talent – they own the most important cinematic brands' (xv).

Turner used these acquired films to bolster his cable television operations, most notably Turner Classic Movies (TCM), which began screening *The Wizard of Oz* and many other MGM (and MGM-acquired) releases. Another Turner-run channel, Cartoon Network, took advantage of the *T&J* library, as well as other studio productions that had been obtained via UA, such as the pre-1948 *Looney Tunes* cartoons and the Fleischer (latterly Famous) Studio *Popeye* cartoons (Mittell 83). In 1991, Turner Broadcasting also acquired the Hanna-Barbera television studio (Lenburg 147), bringing the creators of *Tom and Jerry* back into a corporation that also owned their old MGM films. In 1995, a deal was proposed (and finalized the following year) to merge Turner Broadcasting with Time Warner, itself a conglomerate formed between Warner Bros. and Time, Inc. in 1989 (Kumar 132, 135, 137). As such, although MGM still exists as a studio, many of its older properties such as *The Wizard of Oz* and *T&J* have been distributed (and extended) under the Warner, and sometimes Turner, brands since this time.³

The laserdisc era and beyond has tended to follow a cinephile preference for preserving the historical context of a film's original presentation (Kendrick 64), and thus re-releases of *The*

Wizard of Oz and *T&J* on home video have tended to retain the MGM logos within the movies themselves. Nonetheless, as Grainge notes in reference to the DVD of another MGM-produced but Warner-acquired text, *North by Northwest* (1959), this is preceded by the item's packaging—and even the studio idents that appear before the user reaches the disc's menu—which instead contain the 'contemporary logo of Warner'. Grainge suggests that:

By replacing or refreshing old studio signatures, media corporations have been able to claim proprietary rights over Hollywood's past, a form of brand annexation tied to the appropriation and circulation of competing logos. This must be seen in the context of developing transmission technologies and exhibition windows that have given film an extended product life cycle, for which copyright ownership has become essential in spinning out corporate profits at as many levels as possible (77).

The production of brand new content involving these properties helps to establish the revised 'proprietary rights' even further. As will be elaborated further below, it is possible to chart a significant rise in (separate) *Wizard of Oz* and *T&J* media products since their acquisition by Turner, which makes the new corporate ownership more overt.

T&J&Oz's crossover status maximizes many of these strategies for rebranding the historical franchises. The film commences with a title card stating 'Turner Entertainment Co. and Warner Bros. Animation Present', replacing the MGM logo and credit found in the 1939 original *Oz* production. However, the sequence then reproduces several other familiar elements to help audiences overcome this dissonance and embrace a sense of nostalgia: there is a medley of instrumental versions of songs from the MGM film, and the movie's title is presented using the designs found in the original *T&J* theatrical cartoons, as well as the earlier version of *The Wizard*

of *Oz* (figure 2). Although the default version of *T&J&Oz* is in full colour, there is an option in the DVD menu (also present on the disc for *T&J: Back to Oz*) to view the credits and Kansas sequences in sepia, again evoking the early and closing sections of the original 1939 movie, without needing to mention the originating studio. The ‘quotation’ of established intellectual property in the design of the credits creates a direct link to these earlier texts (Betancourt 13), but subtly nudges the viewer to link these experiences with Turner/Warner, reiterating that consumers now need to look to them—rather than MGM—for further experiences with these respective universes.



Figure 2. The nostalgic use of ‘classic’ brand logos in *Tom and Jerry & The Wizard of Oz*.

Geraghty notes that the timing of such products often betray the ‘cross-market nature’ of the endeavour. He highlights the creation of a *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *X-Men* crossover comic book, which emerged just as a new *Star Trek* film, *Insurrection* (1998), had been released in theatres, and during a period in which ‘the X-Men were about to be turned into a multimillion dollar movie franchise’ (109, 111). *T&J&Oz* also fits into this trend. The film was produced as part of a wider series of (narratively unconnected) *T&J* direct-to-video movies, and

released a couple of months ahead of Warner's *Tom & Jerry: Golden Collection Volume 1* (2011), the first of a (planned) series of deluxe Blu-ray releases offering high-definition restorations of the 1940s MGM *T&J* shorts. The crossover also helped to promote the continued availability of Warner's '70th Anniversary Edition' of *The Wizard of Oz*, released on DVD and Blu-ray in 2009, and anticipated the production of a retrofitted stereoscopic 3D version of the film, released theatrically and on Blu-ray in 2013 in advance of the seventy-fifth anniversary. As this indicates, the crossover may be less interested in generating a particularly sustainable and ongoing combined universe, but instead often occurs as brand management for the continued financial health of the separate properties—by 'borrow[ing] audiences' from the respective fandoms, Warner aims to 'increase [the wider] market' for both (Geraghty 109). It is therefore necessary to consider the impetus for creating a new product in each of the franchises—*The Wizard of Oz* and *Tom and Jerry*—in isolation, before evaluating the repercussions of choosing to crossover these specific brands.

The Wizard of Oz: The 1939 Movie, Adaptations, and the Public Domain

The Wizard of Oz has a complicated adaptation history, especially as—unlike Tom and Jerry—it did not originate as a cinematic property. Although MGM owned the rights to their version, and the particular innovations contained therein, the wider *Oz* universe was a different matter. The franchise began as a series of novels written by L. Frank Baum, starting with *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) and followed by thirteen sequels over the next twenty years until Baum's death (whereupon the series was continued by other authors). After the success of the first novel, Baum quickly expanded into other *Oz* media, including producing a stage musical and licensing

several silent-era motion picture adaptations (Newell 4). The 1939 film has nonetheless gone on to occupy a particularly prominent position within popular memory, arguably eclipsing the source novels, as well as many other adaptations that either predate the MGM version or have followed in its wake. As Jonas Westover notes, ‘for many fans of *The Wizard of Oz*, the story begins with the 1939 movie’ (7). This is echoed by numerous other critics, including Alissa Burger: the ‘MGM film version of *The Wizard of Oz* is undoubtedly the most well-known [...], rather than Baum’s book, and this film’s now iconic imagery tends to be the first and foremost associated with the *Wizard of Oz* discourse’ (6).

The 1939 version was not regarded as an immediate classic, however. It initially proved both a commercial failure for the studio—losing ‘over a million dollars, an MGM record’ (MacKenzie 175)—as well as a critical disappointment, garnering mixed reviews from contemporary journalists (Birkett 123). The film’s fortunes were improved by theatrical re-releases in 1949 and particularly 1955 (aided in part by interest generated following Judy Garland’s ‘comeback’ role in *A Star is Born* [1954]). MGM then licensed *The Wizard of Oz* to the CBS network in 1956, and—after a further successful screening in 1959—the film became enshrined as an institution, playing on free-to-air network television on an (almost) annual basis for well over three decades, achieving impressive ratings each time (Birkett 124, 137; Drummond et al. 110–11). As Burger argues, ‘ritually performed viewing patterns developed around the film’s broadcast’ (36), encouraging not just cyclical re-watching by older fans, but also the introduction of the work to successive generations of children. Since this time, *Oz* has become a regular fixture on cable (most notably on the Turner-owned TCM channel), has been reissued numerous times on home video, and has recently been marketed as a tent-pole addition to the Warner-owned library of classic movies on the HBO Max subscription service. While many 1939 films are now relatively

difficult to access, or betray their age with print deterioration (scratches, audio pops, and so on), Warner has committed significant resources to ensure *Oz*'s ongoing compatibility with (ever-evolving) audio-visual standards, and—much like the television airings of the mid-to-late twentieth century—each re-release is promoted as an ‘event’ (Harmetz 322).

The belated success of MGM's *Oz* on television contributed to a renewed desire to bring the franchise back to the screen; an act that became significantly easier between 1960 and 1965, when the Baum novels successively fell out of copyright (Drummond et al. 128). Many of these later productions reflect Thomas Leitch's conception of a ‘triangular relationship’ between the most significant sources of adaptation: the pre-existing ‘original’ film being remade or continued (in this case, the 1939 MGM version), and ‘the property on which both films are based’ (the L. Frank Baum stories). In most instances, the new work ‘is competing much more directly with the original film than with the [...novel] on which both of them are based’, and yet, usually for legal reasons, the new version is presented as a (re-)adaptation of the source novel(s) rather than an authorized remake or continuation of the earlier film (‘Twice-Told Tales’ 39). The animated feature *Journey Back to Oz* (1972), for instance, flirts with the implication that it is a direct sequel to the MGM work, but it is actually an adaptation of Baum's sequel novel, *The Marvelous Land of Oz* (1904), which was in the public domain at the time of production (Mangels et al.). Such is the quandary of many late twentieth (and even some twenty-first) century works that return to *Oz*: by the mid-1960s, anyone was free to adapt Baum's stories and characters, and yet much of the continued interest in the property was arguably being fuelled by the 1939 movie, still protected under copyright.

Most of these adaptations thus aim to ‘nudge the audience’s memory’ back to the MGM version (Drummond et al. 129), but ‘without duplicating it so closely that it constitutes plagiarism’, especially in the case of anything originated by the 1939 film that was not found in the source novels (Jenkins, ‘All Over the Map’ 186). Kate Newell, with reference to the scholar Brian McFarlane, argues that ‘for adaptations of Oz to be recognized as such, they must reproduce key narrative moments [or “hinge points”] and reinscribe a particular iconography. [...The] practice of selecting the same features over and over, by adapter after adapter across media, is less about necessary condensing than about a practiced inscription of what counts in a work’ (9–10). As Drummond et al. elaborate, ‘a generation brought up on the MGM film expected specific features from this magical land, and a new adventure needed to extend from the old’ (129). Although Baum’s *Marvelous Land of Oz* novel introduces a new protagonist (an orphan called Tip) in place of Dorothy Gale, the adaptation *Journey Back to Oz* shows the events happening to Dorothy instead, and also finds an opportunity to work the (previously absent) Cowardly Lion into the story. The film further evokes a link to the 1939 version with its use of songs (albeit none owned by MGM), and some nostalgic casting: Judy Garland’s real-life daughter Liza Minnelli takes the role of Dorothy, Garland’s frequent 1930s and 1940s MGM co-star Mickey Rooney plays the Scarecrow, and Margaret Hamilton (the Wicked Witch of the earlier film) voices Aunt Em (Drummond et al. 129). Even the musical *Wicked* (2003) which has often been positioned as a more transformative *Oz* adaptation, nonetheless saw numerous lines of the draft script cut due to legal fears of infringing upon the 1939 film version, and the finished show still contains several ‘knowing’ (but legally deniable) references targeted towards the movie’s fans (Laird 206, 216–19). For productions leaning on the public domain status of Baum’s books, it is possible to allude to MGM’s film, but—unlike works such as *T&J&Oz*—they cannot directly reproduce it.

Although MGM did license their version of *The Wizard of Oz* for some theatrical events and commercials (see Sherman), ‘official’ adaptations have become more prominent in the Turner, and latterly Warner, era. *The Wizard of Oz* (1990), a thirteen-part cartoon series by Turner and DiC Animation, re-visualizes the spaces from the 1939 version, and finds numerous opportunities to incorporate many of the film’s famous songs, as does the Super Nintendo videogame *The Wizard of Oz* (1993). More recently, Warner incorporated a *Wizard of Oz* world in the Traveller’s Tales console game *LEGO Dimensions* (2015), which featured content from many different franchises, including *The A-Team*, *The Simpsons*, *Harry Potter*, and *Doctor Who*. *Space Jam: A New Legacy* (2021) presents the MGM *Wizard of Oz* existing within the Warner Bros. ‘Serververse’—an imagined Online realm that contains all of Warner Media’s different properties, from the *Looney Tunes* to *Casablanca* (1942), HBO’s *Game of Thrones* (2011–2019), Adult Swim’s *Rick and Morty* (2013–), and even acquired brands such as the DC superheroes (including Batman and Superman), Hanna-Barbera characters such as Yogi Bear and Dick Dastardly, and RKO’s King Kong. Warner has additionally launched another animated series, *Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz* (2017–20), which expands on the iconography of the MGM film, offering versions of the characters aimed principally at a child audience. *Oz* is also exploited by Turner/Warner as a multigenerational property, as indicated by the existence of a number of adult-focused licensed gambling games, including physical casino machines and mobile apps. The *T&J/Wizard of Oz* crossovers thus fit within this wider strategy of exploiting the elements of the MGM film, in attempt to keep attracting consumers to this specific, corporate-owned, franchise. Compared to generic adaptations of *Oz* with public domain elements, where the references to the earlier film— from Warner’s perspective—could be somewhat vampiric (see Leitch, ‘Vampire Adaptation’), the

‘official’ adaptations can be seen as complementary texts, aiming to maximize profits for the governing studio.

The rise in new Warner/Turner products connected to the 1939 *Wizard of Oz* movie over the last couple of decades may also reflect recent shifts in the evocations of Baum’s fictional universe. Drummond et al. argue that new Oz-focused productions had somewhat dwindled in the early twenty-first century, citing the release of the stage musical *Wicked* in 2003 as an important rejuvenation of the wider *Oz* franchise:

If not for *Wicked*’s phenomenal success, Oz may well have fossilized into a classic book and a classic film, passing into the hands of scholars and fans, a subject and a passion, moving it – at least temporarily – from the stream of cultural sustainability as a living, evolving narrative. The sold-out performances and cultural phenomena of *Wicked* averted this. *Wicked*, by making Oz culturally current again, made the narrative newly marketable (263).⁴

As noted, *Wicked* does pay tribute to the 1939 adaptation of *The Wizard of Oz*, but it also retells and rewrites its story, recasting the ‘Wicked’ Witch as a sympathetic character, and shifting criticism towards the Wizard and his corrupt government. While it is likely that *Wicked*’s success has encouraged new audiences to seek out the MGM version—providing additional revenue for Turner and Warner—it has also begun to challenge the cultural dominance held by the 1939 movie for many decades. Drummond et al. chart a significant rise in ‘Revisionist Oz’ public domain adaptations following *Wicked*’s release, noting that it has become ‘both the expected mode for Oz and the most popular mode for re-consuming it’ (298). New interpretations such as the miniseries *Tin Man* (2007) offer a grittier and bleaker representation of the characters, inviting

viewers into a world ‘that was definitely not MGM’s Oz. *Tin Man*’s Oz is more *Lord of the Rings* than technicolor Emerald City’ (Drummond et al. 265). Simply put, it has become more fashionable (and often lucrative) to challenge the memory of the 1939 version, rather than evoking and emulating it as closely as possible.

The production of a film such as *T&J&Oz* thus capitalizes on the renewed interest in Oz-related content, but arguably also aims to reinvigorate the incarnation of the property owned by Turner and Warner. *T&J&Oz* falls under Leitch’s definition of the adaptation/remake operating as an ‘homage’, in which the ‘primary purpose is to pay tribute to an earlier film rather than usurp its place of honor’. Leitch also suggests that these are often produced to valorize a work ‘in danger of being ignored or forgotten’ (‘Twice-Told Tales’ 47). This may be a little alarmist in the case of the 1939 *Wizard of Oz*, but *T&J&Oz* certainly aims—to reiterate the description of many of the previous decades of public domain adaptations—to ‘nudge the audience’s memory’ back to this specific version of the franchise (Drummond et al. 129). The film operates as a ‘secondary text’ to the MGM feature (Leitch, ‘Twice-Told Tales’ 47)—indicated in part by its less prestigious non-theatrical release and smaller budget compared to the original—which is working to (re-)establish the previous ‘adaptation as definitive’ at a time where a greater number of alternative interpretations are available (Leitch, *Film Adaptation* 96). Although the presence of Tom and Jerry adds some additional humour, there is no real attempt to parody or burlesque the key elements that have historically made the earlier movie so beloved. For instance, despite its condensed running time, *T&J&Oz* ensures that the entirety of ‘Somewhere Over the Rainbow’ is sung by Dorothy in the initial Kansas setting. The sequence is punctuated by new moments of physical comedy—Tom and Jerry rush to stop a hay bale from falling on Dorothy; Jerry has to interject to stop Tom from eating one of the bluebirds visualized from the lyrics; and so on—but each bit of ‘business’

concludes with the characters returning to enjoy the performance (figure 3). The framing of these shots, and the admiring gaze delivered towards Dorothy by Tom and Jerry, reiterates this intertextual endorsement of the MGM version, while also making it clear that we are once again visiting the ‘official’ narrative space of the 1939 film.



Figure 3. Tom and Jerry offering an approving gaze at the reproduction (in *Tom and Jerry & The Wizard of Oz*) of ‘Somewhere Over the Rainbow’ from the 1939 film.

T&J&Oz also fits loosely into the category of the paraquel to MGM’s *Wizard of Oz*. Mark J. P. Wolf describes this approach as ‘stories or storylines that run in parallel with existing ones, along with their events. While they may share many assets with the already existing worlds, they usually have a different main character and storyline, though one that ties into an existing one enough’ to establish the connection (47). Examples include Tom Stoppard’s play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1966)—which follows two minor characters from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (c.1599–1601) while the major events of the Bard’s play mostly take place off-stage—and Disney’s *The Lion King 1½* (2004, also titled *The Lion King 3* in some

territories)—which shows what was happening to the comedic sidekick characters of Timon and Pumbaa before, during, and after the plot of *The Lion King* (1994). *T&J&Oz* echoes some aspects of this approach by placing Tom and Jerry on a parallel journey to the 1939 version for much of the film. When the characters awaken in Munchkinland, they are informed that Dorothy already began her quest ‘hours ago’. While following the Yellow Brick Road, a group of crows tell them about Dorothy meeting the Scarecrow, and accidentally send Tom and Jerry down the wrong pathway in pursuit. Although all of the characters eventually meet shortly before their arrival in Emerald City, the Wicked Witch’s ‘Surrender Dorothy’ skywriting threat—in this film appended with ‘and Tom and Jerry’—causes Tom to run away in fright. Jerry then goes after him, separating them once again from Dorothy and her companions until they travel to the Witch’s castle. As with most paraquels, *T&J&Oz* rewards familiarity with the source text. The decision to follow Tom and Jerry creates certain ellipses from the earlier version—we do not, for instance, see Dorothy first encounter the Scarecrow, Tin Man, or Cowardly Lion, and as a result many aspects of their personalities and backstories are ‘filled in’ by a knowledge of the 1939 original.

The notion of a ‘secondary’ text is nonetheless complicated, especially for franchises such as *The Wizard of Oz* and *T&J*, which have spanned several generations. *T&J&Oz* is aimed principally—though not exclusively—at child audiences, and it is certainly possible that the film could serve as an *introduction* to the world of Oz for some viewers, rather than as a continuation or retelling.⁵ As Leitch notes, remakes or homages ‘most often address this problem by adding a twist to their exposition, teasing knowing audiences as they bring new audiences up to their level of background knowledge’ (‘Twice-Told Tales’ 41–42). The main plot points of the MGM version are still provided to the viewer, partly through cutaways and some expositional dialogue. The film also introduces a sidekick for Tom and Jerry, a Munchkin mouse called Tuffy, who parallels some

of the traits of the live-action characters in the 1939 film: he exclaims ‘put ‘em up!’ upon first meeting Tom (echoing the Cowardly Lion in the original), and—much like Dorothy’s companions—Tuffy also wants to see the Wizard, singing a variant of the ‘If I Only Had a...’ song about his diminutive height. For those who have seen the MGM film, these ‘twists’ serve as knowing callbacks, while new viewers receive not just a narrative primer, but also a condensed version of some of the ‘pleasures’ associated with the earlier work. Kyle Meikle notes that, in the modern corporate era especially, producers have a vested interest in creating ‘networks [...that steer consumers from one...] property to another’ (40). Regardless of the initial entry text for the viewer, the paraquel helps to promote a consumption loop, potentially encompassing many products within the franchise universe(s). This is perhaps made most obvious in *The Lion King 1½*, which shows the characters literally fast-forwarding and rewinding a copy of *The Lion King* as they add to the story, emphasizing the importance of viewers (already or eventually) having knowledge of—and ideally owning—the original as well (see T. Brown 176–77).

The production of a sequel, *T&J: Back to Oz*, further extends this process of consumption of the MGM (or Turner/Warner) *Wizard of Oz* universe. Although, as noted, there have been earlier public domain ‘sequels’ that have shakily asserted a link to the 1939 film, *T&J: Back to Oz* is able to more confidently establish its credentials as an ‘official’ (and, by extension, seemingly more legitimate) continuation of the story. The feature begins with a brief recap of the established narrative (ostensibly that of *T&J&Oz*, but—bar a few shots of Tom and Jerry—broadly serving as another precis of the 1939 version as well). Within the first three minutes, the film has already worked in another reprise of ‘Somewhere Over the Rainbow’ from Dorothy (including additional fawning responses from Tom, Jerry, and Toto), as well as later repeating another famous song, ‘We’re Off to See the Wizard’. The film also brings back many of the surviving characters

from the previous film, most notably returning Dorothy and company to Oz, allowing her to catch up with the Wizard, the Scarecrow, the Tin Man, and the Cowardly Lion.

T&J: Back to Oz introduces a new villain, rather than reviving the Wicked Witch, but attempts to authenticate this choice by returning to Baum's novels and selecting his character of the Nome King (introduced in the third book, *Ozma of Oz* [1907]).⁶ The film also makes the bold decision to include some new songs, a potentially risky prospect considering the 'classic' status frequently attributed to the MGM originals. However, these generally play things safe: for instance, one early tune, 'There's No Place Like Home', draws its refrain from one of the most famous lines uttered in the 1939 movie.⁷ The most significant musical inclusion, though, is arguably the 'The Jitterbug' (written by Harold Arlen, with lyrics by Yip Harburg), which had been originally prepared for—but ultimately cut from—the MGM original. As Claudia Funder explains:

The narrative premise for the scene in the [1939] film is that the Wicked Witch of the West has sent a scary insect, the 'jitterbug,' to bite Dorothy and her friends, the effect of which sees victims dancing the jitterbug until they are exhausted. This allows the flying monkeys to swoop in and kidnap Dorothy. None of the original footage for the scene is extant except a piecemeal section filmed by the producer, mostly from the side, at a dress rehearsal (114).⁸

This 'lost' sequence has thus become an object of intrigue for *Oz* fans, especially as the Witch still briefly references sending 'a little insect on ahead to take the fight out of them' in the finished 1939 film. The song has been reinstated in certain licensed stage adaptations of the MGM musical (McHugh 168), and the limited surviving footage referenced above has been included as a special

feature on several of the DVD and Blu-ray versions of the *Wizard of Oz* feature issued by Warner Home Entertainment.

The ability to see the ‘Jitterbug’ sequence finally visualized within the context of the MGM *Oz* cinematic universe is undoubtedly appealing for certain classic movie aficionados. This does speak to the complex audience demographics that the *T&J/Wizard of Oz* adaptations target: although the two films are mostly advertised as family-focused products, there are—as with the separate *Oz* and *T&J* franchises more generally—appeals to adult (and more culturally ‘aware’) viewers as well. This kind of ‘integrated’ transmedia approach is becoming more widespread: for instance, the authors of *The Marvel Studios Phenomenon* make reference to a deleted scene from *The Incredible Hulk* (2008), which was re-created—in a slightly altered form—in the video game adaptation of the same name (released in the same year). The events of the sequence are then described in the feature *The Avengers* (2012), played out in the manner shown in the game. Flanagan et al. note that, even if this narrative link from one product to the next was not a huge priority within the scene, ‘competent fans can put it together, thus enhancing the game’s legitimacy’ (194). Equally, the sequence in *T&J: Back to Oz* can be seen to appeal to a certain type of consumer, extending beyond the film’s primary child-based audience, who will (hopefully) recognize and appreciate this gesture towards one of the franchise’s ‘forgotten’ elements. The Jitterbug, as featured in this *T&J* version, is a rather stereotypical 1930s jive-talking, jazz-loving figure, whose reference points will likely not be understood by many younger viewers: indeed, MGM had cut the sequence from the 1939 film partly for length, but also due to fears that it ‘might date the picture’ (Yip Harburg, qtd. in Harmetz 85). Nonetheless, the inclusion of the Jitterbug character in *T&J: Back to Oz* does not attempt to actively exclude anyone—his narrative function is still comprehensible without knowledge of this earlier historical period, or his relevance to the

production of MGM's *The Wizard of Oz*—but it provides an additional selling point for long-term *Oz* fans, and reactivates a dormant aspect of the 1939 version during a period of greater competition for Baum adaptations across the industry. The *T&J&Oz* movies therefore not only attempt to reposition the MGM film as the primary source text, but also contribute to the franchise's expansion, in which viewers eager to experience more *Oz* content are encouraged to focus their consumption *within* the Turner/Warner stable of products.

Tom and Jerry: The Flexible Canon

The *T&J* series, by contrast, has not had to deal with the difficulties of 'public domain' adaptations from other studios, but nonetheless has a complicated history. As I have argued elsewhere, animated creations such as Tom and Jerry function more as stars than as consistent diegetic beings. While it can be suggested that both Dorothy Gale, and Tom and Jerry, 'have undoubtedly become popular characters, extended by a variety of media sources, [...] cartoon protagonists from the studio era tend to be much less tied to the narrative requirements of an originating text' (McGowan, *Animated Personalities* 15–16). The MGM *Oz* universe presents a specific set of circumstances: a farm girl, Dorothy, is transported from Kansas to the magical world of *Oz* by a tornado (or, potentially, dreams these events while knocked unconscious). Although the *T&J* theatrical shorts have a recurring formula of a warring cat and mouse (with the latter usually getting the upper hand), there is little effort to preserve a true sense of continuity: Tom dies in a few of the entries yet is back to life in the next instalment, the house in which the two characters usually reside changes in design from film-to-film, and so on.

The sheer volume of content featuring these characters further complicates any sense of canon. Tom and Jerry debuted in the (initially) one-off cartoon, *Puss Gets the Boot* (1940), created by two MGM animators, William Hanna and Joseph Barbera.⁹ After a positive audience response, MGM upgraded production to an ongoing series, with a dedicated cartoon unit headed by the characters' creators. The studio discontinued the *T&J* shorts in 1957 after 114 instalments had been made (with the final films released the following year). Hanna and Barbera moved to television, finding success with shows such as *The Flintstones* (1960–66), and latterly a myriad of productions for the child-focused Saturday morning timeslot. MGM retained the rights to Tom and Jerry, and commissioned further made-for-theatre shorts in the 1960s, initially outsourcing work to Prague via the independent animation studio Rembrandt films, and latterly hiring ex-Warner Bros. director Chuck Jones to provide his own take on the characters.

The theatrical cartoons were leased to television from 1965 onwards (Woolery 294), and MGM also commissioned several made-for-TV series: Hanna-Barbera returned to the characters (albeit as temporary licensees) with the production of *The Tom and Jerry Show* (1975), while the Filmation Studio made a series entitled *The Tom and Jerry Comedy Show* (1980–82). As with *The Wizard of Oz*, exploitation of the rights to Tom and Jerry increased dramatically after their acquisition by Turner and subsequently Warner. Turner produced a new television series, *Tom & Jerry Kids* (1990–94), and brought the characters back to the big screen in *Tom and Jerry: The Movie* (1992). During the Warner era, the characters have appeared in further TV series such as *Tom and Jerry Tales* (2006–08) and *The Tom and Jerry Show* (2014–; separate from the earlier Hanna-Barbera version of the same name) and began a series of direct-to-video movies in 2002 that eventually led to the production of *T&J&Oz* and *T&J: Back to Oz*. The multitude of new

content, released under the Warner brand, similarly aims to transition the series away from its MGM origins.¹⁰

Whereas the 1939 *Wizard of Oz* has historically proven an evergreen archival text, achieving many successful re-releases, the *T&J* library has encountered problems. The original theatrical shorts are generally the most widely celebrated, but some of the entries have proven controversial following their remediation on television, due primarily to the presence of violence, as well as some racial gags (especially concerning the recurring character of the maid, Mammy Two Shoes). Warner have released most of the films on home video in the United States, though certain cartoons were edited for content, while two entries—*Mouse Cleaning* (1948) and *Casanova Cat* (1951)—were omitted entirely.¹¹ The original *T&J* shorts have been distributed more widely, albeit in a more selective form, by various ‘best of’ and themed DVD collections, which sidestep the problematic entries and promote the series as more ‘family friendly’ than it may truly be in its entirety.¹² The production of some of the subsequent *T&J* content also served to subtly rewrite the characters: the 1975 Hanna-Barbera show, for instance, avoided violent content, reflecting limitations placed on children’s television at the time. *Tom and Jerry Tales* (somewhat awkwardly) sidesteps the racist components of Mammy Two Shoes by substituting a white woman called *Mrs. Two Shoes* in her place (while retaining some of the original’s characteristics, including a southern accent). Although most recent productions have reverted back to an antagonistic relationship between Tom and Jerry, the franchise is now arguably better understood in relation to its mutability than in the existence of a definitive urtext.

Unlike *The Wizard of Oz*, then, there is less of a focus on promoting one specific work, with new entries in the *T&J* universe arguably looking as much forwards as backwards in terms of

encouraging continued consumption, overwriting any problematic elements of the franchise's history in the process. Post-studio era *T&J* productions have generally aimed to refresh the property for emerging generations of viewers, while also trying to retain some aspects that will appeal to longer-term fans. As early as the first made-for-television series, the characters have been subjected to modular formats, swapping in and out different personalities under different 'umbrella' titles. For instance, the aforementioned Hanna-Barbera *T&J* series that ran from 1975 to 1977 was variously known as *The New Tom and Jerry/Grape Ape Show*, *The Tom and Jerry/Grape Ape/Mumbly Show*, and *The Tom and Jerry/Mumbly Show* (Woolery 292).¹³ Warner Home Entertainment increasingly exploited crossovers in animated productions of the 2010s, with several acquired Hanna-Barbera franchises being promoted alongside an external co-producer, World Wrestling Entertainment, including the specials *Scooby-Doo! WrestleMania Mystery* (2014), *The Flintstones & WWE: Stone Age SmackDown!* (2015), and *The Jetsons & WWE: Robo-WrestleMania!* (2017). Warner adopted similar strategies for their *T&J* direct-to-video features: whereas early entries had been focused principally on the cat and mouse, movies such as *Tom and Jerry: A Nutcracker Tale* (2007), *Tom and Jerry Meet Sherlock Holmes* (2010), and *Tom and Jerry: Robin Hood and his Merry Mouse* (2012) saw the characters placed within pre-existing—although initially public domain—narratives, even transplanting the characters throughout history and across the globe when required. While *T&J&Oz* marked the first *T&J* film in which Warner paired the characters with another trademarked property connected with the studio (the 1939 MGM *Wizard of Oz* film), the series had already established itself as accommodating and adaptable, able to be integrated into a multitude of different potential scenarios.

The Crossover Impulse: Marketing and Metalepsis

The tradition of the crossover has occurred most frequently in fan fiction and in adaptations of public domain franchises, where copyright and trademark restrictions either do not apply or—in the case of the former—are often wilfully disregarded in favour of intertextual exploration (see Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*). The challenges for ‘official’ crossovers are myriad, especially if there are multiple rightsholders with potentially different goals for the end product(s). *T&J&Oz* and its sequel benefit from both major properties being held by Turner/Warner, even though the films also have to negotiate the previous associations with MGM. There remain questions, however, about the upsides and downsides of choosing to combine two largely unrelated texts, with the crossover needing to find some way to normalize the different narrative spaces.

The historical flexibility of the cat and mouse is clearly beneficial to *T&J&Oz* and its sequel, where—as has been indicated—there has been a lot of work undertaken to evoke the specifics of the 1939 *Wizard of Oz* movie. Nonetheless, as Henry Jenkins and Kristine Brunovska Karnick note, ‘the star [or, in the case of Tom and Jerry, stars] always brings to a given role much more semiotic significance than can be successfully contained within the individual film narrative’ (151).¹⁴ *T&J&Oz* arguably exacerbates this further with the decision to feature Tom and Jerry in the Kansas wraparounds as well as the more fantastical Oz sequences. While this does, in itself, pay tribute to the MGM film’s blurring of the lines between the two spaces—the actors playing the farmhands double up as the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion; Frank Morgan plays Professor Marvel as well as numerous Oz inhabitants (including the Wizard); and so on—it also creates logistical issues. Like Dorothy and Toto, Tom and Jerry *remain* Tom and Jerry in Kansas and in Oz. To ensure that they have a meaningful presence within the film as a whole, they are

also recognized and acknowledged by many of the pre-existing MGM *Oz* protagonists, rather than contributing in a way that could imply that they were somehow also present (but simply off-screen and/or unobserved) in the 1939 original. The requirements of the star image thus negate *T&J&Oz*'s status as an entirely 'pure' paraquel to the MGM movie, since we are shown some events that partially reproduce, but then also contradict, moments from the earlier work.¹⁵

As Debra Malina suggests, with reference to the scholarship of Gérard Genette, metalepsis often occurs as a 'violation[,] as an entry into another *universe* that stresses the theoretical independence and distinct ontological status of diegetic realms: each universe sees itself as "reality"; each is real in its own terms' (4). For all of its nostalgic sepia tones, the 1939 movie suggests a fairly straightforward connection between its representation of Kansas and the 'real world', at least in terms of its physical repercussions. Dorothy is shown as being at risk of physical harm when she falls into the pigpen, and the farm residents take shelter when the tornado approaches. Even in the magical world of Oz, the threat of death is still a concern, established immediately when the falling farmhouse kills the Wicked Witch of the East. Tom and Jerry's presence, and the perceived need to incorporate their trademark violence, complicates these assumptions, with the characters seemingly playing by their own set of rules in both spaces. Perhaps most notably, in the Kansas prologue, Jerry swings a rock at Tom, which turns him into a flattened disc. Tom rolls into a bow saw, and smashes into the wall of the barn. His body re-forms its shape, and Tom attempts to continue the chase, only to discover that the saw has sliced him into numerous pieces, including removing his head from his shoulders (figure 4). In usual cartoon fashion, however, Tom is entirely back to normal in the next shot. This freedom does not extend to the human characters: in this version, Dorothy is still in danger from the animals in the pigpen (being saved in this instance by Tom and Jerry), and the falling house in Oz still fatally squashes

the Witch. The *T&J&Oz* films ultimately want to have things both ways: continuing to duplicate the most iconic elements associated with both properties' worlds, while providing no real acknowledgment of, nor meaningful reflection upon, the 'incongruities and ruptures' caused by placing these characters together (Feyersinger 129).



Figure 4. Metalepsis and the animated body in *Tom and Jerry & The Wizard of Oz*.

Animation, video games, and comic books, by virtue of their stylized images, have generally been viewed as the most accommodating mediums for crossovers and belated continuations of stories. The use of animation is undoubtedly key to the reproduction (and subsequent expansion) of the 1939 Oz universe, especially at a time where all of the original cast members had either passed away or were too old to convincingly assume the same role in a new live-action work.¹⁶ *T&J&Oz* uses the corporate ownership of the MGM film to simulate the appearance of the actors as hand-drawn designs, at least partially sidestepping the concerns of 'recasting' iconic performers such as Garland, while at the same time creating an aesthetic that aims to smooth over the complicated co-existence of the Kansas and Oz protagonists with Tom and Jerry. Nonetheless, as Erwin Feyersinger argues, 'crossovers that involve the animated version

of a live-action character are usually not considered genuine contributions to the original fictional world. The actions of the animated version are seldom integrated into the characters' canonical history' (152). The *T&J&Oz* movies are rather unclear about this point—both in the texts themselves and the surrounding publicity—especially in the degree to which *Back to Oz* should be viewed as a truly valid continuation of the 1939 film's storyline.

Some crossovers position themselves as overtly non-canonical from the outset. The various LEGO video game crossovers, for instance, which began with *LEGO Star Wars: The Video Game* (2005), make a virtue of 'canonical abandon' in allowing 'characters from the different film episodes to coexist on screen', even those previously marked as chronologically and/or geographically distanced from one another (Newman and Simons 240). The games' cutscenes also remix familiar sequences, frequently undercutting established characterizations with physical humour and simplified, LEGO-based designs. Similarly, the Marvel *What If?* (1977–) comic series, recently adapted into a Disney+ animated show of the same name (2021–), offers alternative takes on key events in the Marvel universe, presenting markedly different outcomes from the original versions of the stories. The perceived appeal of such works, if accepted by the audience, is rooted in explicitly playing with the accepted continuity. Other crossovers have been more ambiguous in their intentions. As Caroline Joan S. Picart notes, *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (1948) 'has often been critically demarcated from the earlier Universal *Frankenstein* products because it is an unabashed comedy, complete with slapstick antics and stand-up routines', and yet the horror elements are also played surprisingly straight: 'director Charles Barton was determined to keep the depiction of the creatures as authentic as possible and not to have them simply lampooned' (14, 21). Indeed, critic Donald Glut argues that the film 'emerged as an almost logical example of what would occur if the comedy team did encounter Frankenstein's Monster,

the Wolf Man, and Dracula. Remove Abbott and Costello and a legitimate horror plot remains' (qtd. in Picart 13–14). Such is arguably also the case with the *T&J&Oz* texts: with the excision of Tom and Jerry, one would be left with a fairly close (if truncated) pastiche of the original, while the sequel—sans cat and mouse—for the most part earnestly reproduces and builds upon the MGM evocation of Kansas and Oz. Equally, if the *Oz* elements were taken away, there are numerous scenes that deliver the expected cat and mouse violence of a *Tom and Jerry* cartoon.

The suitability of combining *Tom and Jerry* and *The Wizard of Oz* remains open to question, however. Geraghty notes that the aforementioned *Star Trek/X-Men* comic crossover benefits from the uniting figure of Patrick Stewart, who plays Captain Jean-Luc Picard and Professor X in the TV/film incarnations of the respective franchises—both 'cult characters that continually interact with past/present/future versions of themselves' (116–17). The *T&J&Oz* movies arguably do not have such a clear justification for the crossover—neither possessing an overt linking factor, nor a particularly compelling reason for the 'canonical abandon' created by the juxtaposition—and have not received particularly strong reviews from critics as a result. Kenneth Brown of *Blu-ray.com* describes the *T&J&Oz* as leaving 'my love of *The Wizard of Oz* betrayed, my affection for Tom and Jerry unsatisfied'. T. Keogh, in the journal *Video Librarian*, expresses similar disappointment about the sequel's mashup of the two properties: 'While the Oz material makes sense, the Tom and Jerry shenanigans are from a different universe altogether, and the film frequently stops in its tracks for them to chase each [other], throw pitchforks, and generally play out their endless war—which has nothing to do with Oz' (58). In terms of scholarship, Drummond et al. briefly mention *T&J&Oz*, but dismiss it as 'merely exploit[ing] and repackag[ing] the MGM film', especially compared to the numerous, more inventive reworkings of Baum's work being released elsewhere (266). The authors do not really

address how the inclusion of elements from *T&J* cartoons impact the overall text, treating it purely as a derivative of the MGM *Wizard of Oz* (and, in essence, lumping it in with a number of other public domain adaptations that have leeches upon this earlier film).

Such viewpoints indicate that extensions of established franchises undoubtedly have pitfalls, and such exercises have traditionally been viewed as overtly capitalistic and cynical (Johnson, *Media Franchising* 1). While this may well be true, it is not necessarily a pejorative from a corporate standpoint: indeed, it is arguably the main reason for the existence of these *T&J/Wizard of Oz* crossovers, and one that deserves further consideration in this era of large conglomerate control of the film industry. In the current franchise-dominated marketplace, studios such as Disney and Warner are expanding the production of ‘content’ offered behind pay-walled streaming services, and once again aggressively acquiring intellectual property—the former adding Pixar, Marvel, LucasFilm, 20th Century-Fox, and many others to their stable over the last couple of decades, while the latter has recently completed yet another merger to become Warner Bros. Discovery. As such, the role of corporate authorship within adaptation practices is becoming increasingly significant, and a growing determinant in the decisions underpinning franchise management. At the same time, it is important not to view such works as an *entirely* soulless financial exercise. K. Brown admits in his negative review of *T&J&Oz* that ‘a quick look at the customer reviews [on] Amazon suggests I’m being too hard on dear Tom and Jerry’, and the series as a whole appears to have sold well enough to encourage Warner and Turner to continue production of the direct-to-video *T&J* features for well over a decade, including further crossovers.¹⁷

Neither *T&J&Oz* nor its sequel necessarily offers any profound revelations about either of the main franchises (either individually or in relation to one another), though this may ultimately be a positive or a negative depending on one's point of view. As Henry Jenkins has famously opined, the modern convergence culture is marked by the 'migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want' (*Convergence Culture* 2). For some viewers, the appeal of seeing new *Wizard of Oz* or *Tom and Jerry* content (or, ideally, a combination of the two) may take precedence over any logistical issues that arise from such an unlikely media mix. By producing these additional texts, Warner aims to create a relatively closed ecosystem, retaining those 'migratory' consumers who may otherwise look to other sources for satisfaction—a particular risk in the case of *Wizard of Oz* fandom, where so many public domain alternatives exist. For others who engage with these films, the brands may simply appear too incompatible to function as a legitimate crossover. While it is unlikely that the *T&J&Oz* movies will ever be widely recognized as the high point of either franchise, they offer a valuable insight into the complex—and even unpredictable—directions of transmedia production. Such works reiterate that adaptation does not always relate to a particular originating text or self-contained narrative world, but can cross diegetic and corporate boundaries in the retelling of old stories and the creation of new ones.

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¹ The song ‘Somewhere Over the Rainbow’, from *The Wizard of Oz*, is also whistled nonchalantly by Tom’s recurring rival, Butch Cat, in the MGM short *Springtime for Thomas* (1946).

² For instance, Warner Bros. relinquished its monochrome *Looney Tunes* films to Sunset Productions, Inc. in 1955, and its pre-1948 colour films to Associated Artists Productions in 1956 (Kompere 46; Pierce 156). Warner also sold off many of their classic features, such as *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), *Casablanca* (1942), and *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948). RKO, similarly, put up the studio’s library for sale, with prized films including *King Kong* (1933) and *Citizen Kane* (1941) included in the package (Prince 16).

³ The Turner deal also reunited Warner Bros. with the *Looney Tunes* and *Merrie Melodies* cartoons that the studio had sold during the 1950s.

⁴ The *Wicked* musical is itself adapted from a 1995 novel by Gregory Maguire—*Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*—but it is the stage version that has proven the more successful and influential.

⁵ The text on the film’s DVD packaging nonetheless emphasizes the idea of a pre-existing familiarity, promising that ‘you’ll see your favorite characters: Dorothy, Toto, the Scarecrow, the Tin Man, the Lion, the Wicked Witch of the West, the Wizard, the Munchkins and more. You’ll hear many of your favorite songs, including Over the Rainbow’.

⁶ The Nome King is actually a more frequent antagonist in the original Baum stories, returning in several additional novels, but is arguably less well-known in popular culture, largely due to the Witch’s presence in the MGM film. The lack of knowledge surrounding this character even

extends to the character's name being misspelled as 'the Gnome King' on the back cover of the *T&J: Back to Oz* DVD.

⁷ The line is briefly uttered one time in Baum's original novel, but it was given greater prominence in the 1939 adaptation.

⁸ The Jitterbug performs a similar function in *T&J: Back to Oz* as in the planned sequence for the MGM film. Although he is ultimately captured and imprisoned in Dorothy's basket, he distracts the characters long enough to allow the Nome King to send further allies to kidnap Dorothy and the Scarecrow shortly thereafter. The Jitterbug also returns later in the film and plays a role in defeating the Nome King.

⁹ Tom is actually referred to as Jasper in the first film, and the mouse later identified as Jerry was initially nicknamed Jinx during pre-production (Lenburg 40).

¹⁰ Although Turner/Warner now have complete ownership of Tom and Jerry, it is notable that there has been little to no impetus to integrate the characters into the 'Golden Age' roster of 'homegrown' Warner characters, such as Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck, that the studio also continues to license and promote. Instead, Warner have permitted greater flexibility within the MGM universe of inherited properties—whereas during the 'classic Hollywood' era, the *Tom and Jerry* shorts and Tex Avery's *Droopy* cartoons were largely separate, despite both being released by MGM, there has since been more opportunity for the characters to interact. In *T&J&Oz* and its sequel, Droopy (and his sometimes nemesis Butch) cameo as henchmen working for the Wicked Witch and latterly the Nome King.

¹¹ Both cartoons have been included in a European DVD set entitled *Tom and Jerry: The Classic Collection* (2004), though this release contains its own edits and omissions.

¹² See McGowan, ‘*Walt Disney Treasures*’ for a discussion of home video remediations of studio-era short cartoon properties.

¹³ Hanna-Barbera became particularly proficient at this approach for TV, perhaps most infamously with *The New Scooby-Doo Movies* (1972-1974), which saw the ‘Scooby Gang’ meet everyone from the Harlem Globetrotters, to Batman and Robin, and Sonny and Cher.

¹⁴ This is even the case with established texts. In 1933, the *Motion Picture Herald* offered its prediction based on rumours that James Cagney—well-known at the time for his gangster roles—was going to star in a cinematic adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*: ‘Imagine Ophelia getting popped in the eye or being on the receiving end of a deft kick as she delivered her exit lines?’ (Cunningham 16, with thanks to Zachary Lyons for drawing my attention to this source). Although this Cagney project was unrealized, *Last Action Hero* (1993) offers a parodic glimpse of Arnold Schwarzenegger assuming the titular role in the Bard’s play, making the definitive statement ‘Not to Be’ as a large explosion erupts in the background. The movie *Room Service* (1938) is also significant for taking an established stage play (of the same name, which debuted the previous year) and reworking it to accommodate the personalities of the Marx Brothers—the only feature film in which the stars appeared where the material had not been specifically originated for them.

¹⁵ Some parables can be playful in dealing with established events: for instance, in *The Lion King*, Rafiki holds aloft the newly born Simba on Pride Rock, and it is suggested that all of the assembled animals are bowing down to their future leader. In *The Lion King 1½*, it is ‘revealed’ that Timon and Pumbaa are part of the crowd (but unaware of what they are witnessing), even though this was not explicitly shown in the earlier text. Pumbaa accidentally breaks wind, which causes several animals to faint. This is misunderstood by others as the animals bowing, and they feel that they ought to do the same. If one accepts *The Lion King 1½* as canon, the apparent deference to Simba

shown in the original film is humorously undermined, but this paraquel text simply gives us a new way to *re-interpret* the images seen in the previous work, rather than cancelling them out.

¹⁶ Some cartoon films have allowed elderly stars to revisit existing franchises: Charlton Heston returned to the title role in an animated remake of *Ben Hur* (2003), while Jerry Lewis reprised one of his famous characters in the computer-generated sequel *The Nutty Professor: Facing the Fear* (2008).

¹⁷ In 2015, Warner released *Tom and Jerry: Spy Quest*, combining the cat and mouse with the Hanna-Barbera *Jonny Quest* franchise, another property that had been acquired by Turner in 1991. After the release of *T&J: Back to Oz*, Warner produced one final entry in the series: *Tom and Jerry: Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* (2017), which adapts the 1971 live-action feature *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*. Although it was broadly identified as a Paramount picture in the 1970s, as they took responsibility for distributing it to theatres, the film was produced by Quaker Oats and David Wolper. The latter sold his studio to Warner Bros. in 1977 (Stuart with Young 105). As such, the original *Willy Wonka* movie is, like the 1939 *Wizard of Oz*, now a catalogue title in the Warner library (along with their remake from 2005, directed by Tim Burton). The *T&J* crossover once again reproduces songs and other famous elements of the original film, creating opportunities to re-monetize this archive text (and other surrounding merchandise).