

Alice in Adaptation

Disney's Re-Imaginations of Lewis Carroll's Victorian Girl-Child

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Title: *Alice in Adaptation: Disney's Re-Imagination of Lewis Carroll's Victorian Girl-Child*

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Abstract: Since the publication of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, it has proven to be an inexhaustible source for adapters. The character is still much beloved nearly 150 after Carroll's original Alice. According to many critics, Carroll's Alice broke with the tradition of the girl-child. This thesis explores the concept of the girl-child in relation to Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. Subsequently, it compares its findings to two of the most influential adaptations, namely the 1951 animation and the 2010 live-action film by Tim Burton, both of which were produced by Disney. Each adaptation has failed to represent the Alice from Carroll's novel as the antithesis of the Victorian girl-child.

Content

Introduction	1
Chapter 1 Lewis Carroll's Victorian Girl-Child	5
Chapter 2 Walt Disney's Re-Imagination of Alice	10
Chapter 3: Burton's Defiant Young Woman	14
Conclusion	19
Works Cited	21

Introduction

Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its sequel *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There* have proven to be an inexhaustible source for adapters since the first novel was published in 1865. The colourful world of Wonderland and its many creatures have called for different interpretations throughout the years, and it has been demonstrated through the many adaptations that the story is timeless. Not only have they been adapted into film many times, the first silent film dating all the way back to 1903, but there are also video games, songs, comics, literary retellings and many more types of adaptations. The film adaptations all differ greatly from each other, not in the first place because technology has advanced since the early beginnings of filmmaking, but also because each adapter has a different way of interpreting the original story and there have been different approaches to adapting novels throughout the history of adaptation theory. When film was introduced as a new story-telling medium around the beginning of the twentieth century, it was seen as inferior to novels and text. A few of the reasons for this view were the fact that print was an older art than film, "class prejudice" because it was aimed at the masses, and the assumption that the making and consuming of films were easy and straightforward (Stam 7). It was considered as something for people with lower intelligence, as opposed to novels. The widespread opinion that film was inferior to literature was the basis of the initial approach to film adaptation, in which fidelity to the novel was deemed of the utmost importance. Film critics often referred to adaptations with negative terms that had to do with a lack of fidelity or even betrayal to the original novel (Stam 3). Only when poststructuralism and theory of intertextuality began to emerge in the 60s and 70s, this view of being true to the novel changed and texts and adaptations were seen as being in dialogue with each other, rather than simply being a copy of each other (Aragay 21).

This change in the perception of the interplay between different texts has caused a new approach to film adaptation of novels. The adaptations are no longer seen in light of the original novel, but as standing on their own or as a discourse with the original novel, as well as with other adaptations that preceded it; and the adaptations of the *Alice* novels are no exception. Particularly relevant are the two Disney adaptations, both called *Alice in Wonderland*, which have taken a spot in the canon of (children's) film, like most Disney films. Both films do not adhere to the original story line: the 1951 cartoon version adds characters and events that are originally in *Through the Looking Glass*, and the 2010 live action film changes the story line so radically, that it can be debated upon whether it is an adaptation or a sequel to the original novels. It can be argued that those adaptations have shaped the contemporary perception of *Alice in Wonderland* in popular culture. Frances Bonner and Jason Jacobs have conducted a study on the chronology of encounter regarding several adaptations and the original novel of *Alice in Wonderland*, in which they have found that for the contemporary generation "the Disney version was the innocent version, the one appropriate for their reception as children" whereas for older generations "the print original fulfilled that childhood role" (46). They argue that the first encounter of *Alice in Wonderland* in childhood is important, because it creates a nostalgia that Disney uses to sell its most recent *Alice* adaptation by Burton (Bonner and Jacobs 46).

Indeed, Tim Burton's 2010 adaptation for Disney plays on more than just the nostalgia of the audience, who are presumed to have encountered either the novel or the 1951 adaptation in childhood. Alice too returns to her childhood dream of Wonderland as a young adult, which has become a much darker and adventurous place. Unlike the novel and the first Disney adaptation, this film is obviously not meant for an audience of children. It deals with more mature subjects, for example Alice rejecting a marriage proposal against the wishes of her family in the beginning of the film, and the dark graphics and monsters such as the

dragon-like Jabberwocky, which earned the film a PG-13 rating. Even though Disney has changed many aspects of Wonderland in both adaptations, one thing has remained consistent: the films and novels are still centred around the character of Alice. Alice has become an iconic character on her own, not in the least because she is the protagonist of the story and the only human character from the real world among the unusual ones from Wonderland, but also because Disney has deliberately advertised its film around the character. In the trailer for the 1951 film, attention is first drawn to the characters of Snow White and Cinderella from Disney's previous films, before it states that "Walt Disney is bringing his third heroine of fiction..." ("Original Trailer" 00:00:11), referring to Alice. Several studies on Walt Disney and the Disney Studios have shown that they are very particular about the trademarks of their products, wanting to ensure their films "were all marketed as products of Disney and no one else" (Leitch 116). Aiming to put their mark on Alice, and because Walt Disney complained that he found Alice "too passive" (Bonner and Jacobs 43), the studio made some changes with regard to the character and the story.

One of the reasons Alice has become such a memorable character in literature, is the fact that Carroll's original Alice broke with a long tradition within Victorian fiction. Ulrich Knoepfelmacher argued that Carroll's "playful anarchy" in *Alice in Wonderland* has made way for future young female protagonists to express emotions such as anger and hostility (14). The girls in Victorian novels preceding *Alice in Wonderland* were not allowed to behave undomesticated and always had to display a sense of decorum. The concept of the girl-child is one that is frequently encountered in literature about Victorian novels. The word consists of two parts: "girl", indicating that gender is an integral part of the phenomenon, and "child", so one which has not yet hit puberty and adulthood. According to Maier, especially early Victorian literature was focused on mainly the positive development of young males, resulting in a complete lack of attention toward the female sex (317). The focus of Victorians

on novels exploring the development of children can be attributed to the “conflicting values” (318) between the rules of society and the nature of men, which is a very gendered perspective and therefore does not lend itself to girl protagonists. The only development girl-children had to go through was the path to wifehood and motherhood (319), which resulted in the portrayal of girl-children as passive, dependent and selfless. Most importantly, the girl-children in Victorian fiction lacked depth and acted as the supporting character of the development of a male protagonist.

Although much has been written about *Alice in Wonderland* and its adaptations, none have yet explored the concept of the girl-child in the novel and in the two most popular adaptations: Disney’s 1951 animation and 2010 live-action film, directed by Burton. This thesis will examine the ways in which Carroll’s *Alice* broke with the tradition of the Victorian girl-child, and argue that the Disney adaptations fail to duplicate that characteristic in their respective Alice characters, which can be attributed to the changes the adapters have chosen to make to Wonderland.

Chapter 1

Lewis Carroll's Victorian Girl-Child

Before turning to the adaptations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the novel is examined first in this chapter. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is part of a wide range of Victorian novels that are meant for children or have a child as its protagonist. Therefore, to get a better sense of Alice as a character and the gender norms within Victorian literature, it will be insightful to see how Alice may or may not fit in with other girl-children in the Victorian literary tradition. This chapter analyses the characteristics of Victorian girl-child protagonists further and argue that Carroll's Alice deviates from the typical girl-child in Victorian fiction. The observations in this chapter are subsequently used as ground for comparison with Disney's 1951 animation and Burton's 2010 live-action film.

According to Springer, Lewis Carroll "was an exemplary Victorian man" (201), and the Victorian time period has undoubtedly had an influence on him as a writer. Victorian children were the focus of an "extreme conflict of attitudes" (Auerbach 44): on the one hand, they were seen as innocent and pure, not tainted by sin yet, but on the other hand, they could be loud, rude, and a source of embarrassment to their parents. However, many children in Victorian literature, the girls especially, were perfected and resemble ideal children (Auerbach 31-32). They were elevated to a surreal level, only embodying the innocent and pure aspect of childhood, while the loud and rowdy aspect was left out. Often, they served as foils to the male protagonists; the girl-children were angelic creatures that lead the protagonists onto the right path, such as Agnes in Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*. Auerbach argues that young, female protagonists in Victorian literature were "emotional and spiritual catalysts" (45); they did not personally develop or grow up, but remained superficial and unchangeable. The girl-children were merely devices used to guide the developing, young male protagonists. Auerbach's statement of the girl-child as underdeveloped is

narrow-minded, since there are multiple examples of later Victorian novels of development, so-called *Bildungsromans*, which feature a female protagonist, of which *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë is perhaps the most famous example. However, where many novels did incorporate the innocent and pure girl-child, such as Little Nell in Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop* and Dorothy in Wordsworth's *Prelude*, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* does not.

One of the ways in which Alice defies the notion of the Victorian girl-child is her inability to conform to the rigid Victorian norms of politeness and thoughtfulness. Alice constantly manages to offend the creatures she encounters in Wonderland, even though she is trying to be polite. For example, she offends the Mouse by mentioning her predatory cat Dinah, saying that "she is such a capital one for catching mice!" (Carroll 38). Although she notices that the Mouse is not pleased with this fact, she does not seem to know why, merely remarking that "nobody seems to like [Dinah] down here" and "I'm sure that she is the best cat in the world!" (38). She makes similar mistakes repeatedly throughout the novel and does not seem to regard the feelings of the animals very much. Additionally, she is sometimes very nasty about other children that she knows, particularly in the part where she cradles a baby who slowly turns into a pig. Alice does not seem very bothered by this transformation, saying that "it would have made a dreadfully ugly child: but it makes a rather handsome pig," but she then starts thinking of "other children she knew, who might very well do as pigs" (66). Another example when she gives her blunt and impolite opinion of other children occurs when Alice wonders if she has been changed for someone else, but she thinks she "can't be Mabel, for I know all sorts of things, and ... she knows so very little" (27). Alice tries to be polite, and she is in her use of language by saying "please" and "thank you" and other formalities, but she can be very frank and sometimes even rude. Since she displays the bluntness and embarrassing aspect Victorians preferred to hide from the public sphere, she is

more like a real child than many of the other girl-children of Victorian fiction. She is a little selfish because she does not think of another's feelings before speaking, and does not conform to the selflessness that was one of the defining ideals of girl-children as defined by Maier (319).

Even though Alice is a child in the novel, Carroll constantly plays with the notion of childhood and adulthood. Where other girl-children were not allowed to develop or grow up, Carroll repeatedly hints at inevitable adulthood and womanhood in Wonderland. Auerbach sees the incident with the Pigeon, where Alice has grown so much that the Pigeon mistakes her for a Serpent, as a foreshadowing of what Alice eventually will become: a woman who bears the original sin, as all women do. Auerbach compares the mistake of the Pigeon with the serpent in the Garden of Eden. In Carroll's novel, the Pigeon is afraid that Alice will eat her eggs, as serpents would do. Alice then admits that she has eaten eggs before (57), which Auerbach compares with the forbidden fruit that Eve was seduced into eating (41). Similarly, Mulderig argues that Alice's struggle to cope with life in Wonderland has often been characterised as "the struggle of the child in the adult world, or the clash of innocence with experience" (321). Indeed, Alice as a child has trouble understanding the creatures of Wonderland, representing adulthood, in the same way in which children in Victorian society did not yet understand the strict modes of behaviour, which contrast with the unruly nature of children. In this view where Wonderland represents the adult world, whereas Alice represents a child's world, it is no wonder that Wonderland is a scary and hostile place where she constantly feels misunderstood, even though she is trying to be nice and polite.

While Wonderland is a confusing place for Alice, Auerbach argues that she has more agency within that world than one might think (35). Alice is frustrated by the way her size changes all the time, remarking that "being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing" (Carroll 50). According to Auerbach, she directs these changes herself by eating

the mushroom to grow or shrink to the appropriate size (Auerbach 35; Carroll 58), and only at the trial at the end of the novel she grows involuntarily, “[giving] her the power to break out of a dream that has become too dangerous” (Auerbach 35). Although Auerbach is right in saying that only at the trial Alice changes without having eaten or having drunk something to change her size, it has to be noted that contrary to Auerbach’s belief that Alice has control over her size, she did not have complete agency with regard to growing or shrinking from the start of the novel onwards. She rather has an increasing sense of agency: in the beginning, she eats the cake and drinks from the bottle without knowing what they do, but merely follows the instructions “drink me” (22) and “eat me” (23). She soon starts to notice that “something interesting is sure to happen ... whenever [she] eat[s] or drink[s] anything” (40) and she is then able to change her size at will, until she starts growing involuntarily at the trial. Sometimes she is able to direct Wonderland and change size at will, but at other times she seems to have no control and changes into what Wonderland needs her to be. Nevertheless, the little agency she has makes her more independent than a girl-child would ideally be in the eyes of Victorian society.

The changeability of Wonderland, where Alice can never be sure of her own agency, lands her into a sort of identity crisis. Wonderland is not only a “world that subverts accepted norms of behaviour,” but it also does not intend to punish bad behaviour, which is the opposite of what many of other Victorian children’s books did (Mulderig 327). Many other children’s books, but also books for adults, were meant to be didactic, punishing evil and rewarding the good, such as Thomas Day’s *Sandford and Merton* and the anonymously written *Dangerous Sports, a Tale Addressed to Children Warning them against Wanton, Careless, or Mischievous Exposure to Situations from which Alarming Injuries often Proceed* (324). The reversed behaviour of the creatures in Wonderland to what Alice is used to only reinforces her confusion. She tries to connect to the people in Wonderland by displaying the

behaviour she was taught, reciting school verses and remembering her manners, but without avail: she keeps forgetting her lines and seems to offend all the creatures in Wonderland. Her confusion makes her wonder who she is, emphasising that since she arrived in Wonderland “[she] think[s] [she] must have changed several times” (Carroll 49). It causes her to keep asking herself “who am I?” (Carroll 26), no longer identifying with who she was before, and wondering if she is someone other than herself. She blurs the lines between self and the other; she does not feel like herself, but rather than accepting the fact that she simply changed, she assumes that she must have turned into someone else. This can be interpreted as confusion of her own development. Alice comes from a society in which women are portrayed as unchangeable, but she feels as if she has changed in Wonderland. This might have led her to think she must have changed into someone else: she is not aware that a girl can change personally through experience. Because the subversive behaviour of Wonderland is such a contrast with the rigid Victorian world that Alice comes from, she no longer recognises herself in the process.

Alice is an antithesis of the Victorian girl-children in several ways, as she can be rude, she has changed so that she does not recognise herself and she has to keep sane in a world that is in contrast with the Victorian modes of behaviour. The novel is unique in its depiction of childhood within Victorian tradition and that is ground for consideration for adapters of the novel. Since the novel was written at such a different time than Disney’s animation and their Burton film, it has to be evaluated whether Carroll’s choices are still relevant today. The adapters might find an equivalence for the revolutionary depiction of girl-children that is better suited and understandable for the audiences that will consume their adaptations, depict Alice in the same way Carroll did, or depict Alice differently altogether. The next chapters analyse how Disney has treated the Alice character in relation to the Victorian girl-child in both their adaptations and what effect that has on the adaptations as a whole.

Chapter 2

Walt Disney's Re-Imagination of Alice

Disney has made some considerable changes in their 1951 animation of Carroll's tale with regard to the plot and form of the story. Their version is a combination of Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*; it includes characters from both novels. These changes can be attributed to Walt Disney, since he was very keen on having autonomy over his own product and tried to ensure that his films were seen as Disney productions primarily, rather than being associated with other artists, including any original authors (Leitch 116). Another reason was the convention of story-telling in Hollywood filmmaking, which was focused on a protagonist with a goal around which the plot revolves (Chaston 13), and rejects elements that do not add to the plot or to the character building. This would then suggest that *Alice in Wonderland* does not lend itself at all to a Hollywood adaptation, as the story is full of illogical occurrences and coincidences. This chapter establishes that the changes Disney has made to the original Alice from Carroll's novel mandate the Hollywood story-telling model. Where Carroll's story broke with the tradition of the Victorian dream-child and the didacticism and realism of his time-period, this chapter argues that Disney establishes Alice as an essentially Victorian child in his 1951 animation.

One of the biggest changes Disney made in comparison to the book concerns the plot of the story. Whereas in the novel Alice walks around Wonderland aimlessly, stumbling upon new adventures and new creatures, Disney has given her a goal of where she has to go within Wonderland. In fact, Wonderland itself is seen as a goal by Alice even before she ever went there, when she is fantasising at the beginning of the film about her own world, where "everything would be nonsense" (*Alice*, Geronimi, Jackson, and Luske 00:02:56). Wonderland is Alice's fantasy coming to life, rather than a place she stumbles into and she cannot get out of. She is led through Wonderland by her desire to find the White Rabbit and

the party she assumes he is going to, and Wonderland enables her to find her way.

Immediately when Alice falls down the rabbit hole Wonderland is helping her. She encounters a talking doorknob, another element that is not in the novel, who directs her to the little bottle she has to drink to shrink to the right size. Although Alice is occasionally exasperated by the behaviour of the creatures in Wonderland, she is generally delighted by everything. Only at the end of the film, when she is put on trial by the Queen of Hearts and then chased through a maze by angry creatures, Wonderland poses a real threat to her.

Joel Chaston calls this the “Ozification” of Wonderland, as he identified a similar occurrence in other children’s films where they incorporated the idea of “there is no place like home”, taken from the 1939 *The Wizard of Oz* film (13). Although Walt Disney complained that he found Alice “too passive” in the novel (qtd. in Bonner and Jacobs 43), it can be argued that her character in the film is weaker and more passive than in the novel, which is facilitated by the changes that were made to Wonderland. In the novel, Alice rarely complains she wants to go home and has to rely on herself to find her way through a world she was involuntarily thrown into. However, she voices her desire to go home multiple times in the film (Chaston 16), ultimately culminating in the scene where she is crying alone in the dark. She just remains sitting on a stone, passively waiting for “someone to find [her]” (*Alice*, Geronimi, Jackson, and Luske 00:51:59) while singing a sad song about how she seldom follows her own good advice. And indeed, she does not find the courage to go on until the Cheshire Cat appears to tell her where to go. Similarly, at the end of the film, Alice has to rely on the advice of the doorknob to flee the angry mob that is chasing her, instead of angrily beating the packs of cards of before waking up (Carroll 121). When she finally wakes up in the novel, Alice tells her splendid tales to her sister, who fantasises about making other children’s “eyes bright and eager with many a strange tale” (124). Alice in Disney’s animation does no such thing. She tries to tell her adult sister about her adventure, but her

sister is not interested in hearing about Alice's dream, and instead pulls her back to the safe domesticated world of tea and lessons. Alice's sister takes a much more active stance in the novel by encouraging Alice as an adventurous person, whereas in the film she disapproves of such adventures.

Previously it has been observed that Alice in Carroll's novel does not conform to other portrayals of girls in Victorian fiction, because she frequently offends the creatures in Wonderland and can be deliberately nasty about others on some occasions. This characteristic is severely diminished in the animation. Although she is exasperated by the behaviour of the creatures in Wonderland on occasion, such as when the flowers mistake her for a weed and she tells them that she "would pick every one of you" (*Alice*, Geronimi, Jackson, and Luske 00:30:17) if she could, she is only unkind to the creatures if they have offended her as well. The parts in the novel where she is unkind about others without having been provoked have been left out of the film, such as when she says that she "can't be Mabel" (Carroll 27) because she is much smarter than Mabel, or where she compares children that she knows to pigs (66). Other incidents have been changed in the animation, in Alice's favour: when she grows in the White Rabbit's house and the White Rabbit and the Dodo mistake her for a monster, Bill the Lizard tries to pull her out the chimney. In the novel, Alice deliberately kicks the Lizard out of the chimney, not wanting to be bothered (44), whereas the animation gives the scene a more comical effect and Alice a more sympathetic character by letting her sneeze so hard that the Lizard is flying out of the chimney by accident (*Alice*, Geronimi, Jackson, and Luske 00:23:11).

Thus, this post-war American children's animation is in many ways much more Victorian than the original novel by Carroll (Ross 56). Carroll has given his Alice the traits of a real human child, such as the occasional impatience, unkindness, and curiosity, thereby setting her apart from the other girl-children in Victorian novels. Although Disney has not

taken these characteristics completely away, they have weakened them. Rather than learning how to stand up for herself and defy the Queen of Hearts, Alice flees or passively waits to be rescued, all the while having the goal of going home in her mind. Alice is an outsider in Disney's animation, whereas she becomes more assimilated with Wonderland in the novel; the Cheshire Cat tells her that "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad" (Carroll 67). This has decidedly been left out in the film, where the Cheshire Cat just tells Alice that everyone in Wonderland is mad. Similarly, the incident with the Caterpillar where Alice has an identity crisis features in the film as well, but only briefly as a device to display Alice's confusion. The incident does not make her doubt whether she could be someone else and does not reflect the importance of the changes within Alice regarding her identity crisis. Consequently, Alice has become much more passive, which is more in line with the concept of the Victorian girl-child. She is reliant on Wonderland and her sister to wake up from her dream, just as Snow White had to wait for a prince to kiss her awake and Cinderella's prince has to find her in Disney's earlier animations.

Chapter 3

Burton's Defiant Young Woman

Although the status of Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* as an adaptation is debatable, since it is about Alice when she is a young adult rather than a child and can thus be classified as a sequel, it can be argued that it is both a sequel and an adaptation. The story follows Alice as she returns to Wonderland, having dreamt of it every night since she was a child. The film retains many elements and characters of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, and essentially adapts more than just the novels, as it is obvious that Burton has been inspired by the long history of *Alice* adaptations (Elliott 8; Johannessen 13).

Probably the most resonant adaptation that Burton has been inspired by is the Disney animation, as the films are visually very similar. Kara Manning argues that for this reason the Alice that Burton has created is a celebration of the growth that the character has gone through independently of her original creator (171). Burton's film came out approximately 150 years after the first novel on Alice was published, and since then it has been adapted countless times, of which Disney's animation has been one of the most influential adaptations. This chapter aims to bring the changes in the plot and Alice's transformation of a girl-child to a young woman into context with the novel and the Disney animation, and will examine the consequences of Burton's choices for the concept of Alice as a girl-child that was explored in the previous chapters.

Like Disney's animation, this film has also been given a goal-oriented plot in the style of Hollywood story-telling. The influences of the animation are particularly resonant in Burton's *Wonderland*, as Carroll's two *Alice* novels have again been combined to form one story and the characters from the two novels that have been included and excluded in Burton's film are nearly the same as in the animation. However, Burton has taken the addition of a plot to the story even a step further than the previous Disney adaptation. Where

in the animation Alice stumbled into Wonderland by following the White Rabbit out of curiosity and her goal is to get home eventually, Burton's Alice is accidentally thrown into Wonderland, because she was fleeing a marriage proposal that she does not want to accept. When she arrives in Wonderland, it appears that the creatures there were awaiting her and she was destined to come to Wonderland to slay the Jabberwocky, which ultimately becomes Alice's goal in the film. The real world and the fantasy world become assimilated into one reality, where she assumes the role of the hero in a more Hollywood-like good versus evil pattern (McKenna 12), rather than having to navigate herself in a world where she is the outsider, as in the novel and animation. In Burton's film, Alice is a part of both worlds and has to depend on Wonderland to believe in the impossible and give her courage. She subsequently takes these experiences with her to the real world, enabling her to stand up to the expectations of others and say no to the marriage proposal. Ultimately, she sails off with her father's company, to be the first British company that trades with China.

The transformation of Alice from a child to a young adult is especially relevant in terms of gender values. In the previous chapters, it has been established that Carroll's Alice deviates from the traditional girl-child in Victorian fiction and Disney's animated Alice is much more Victorian than the original one. However, Burton's Alice is not a girl-child any more, and for that reason has to deal with different and more adult issues. For instance, she faces the pressure of finding a good marriage and having to behave properly to increase her chances. At the beginning of Burton's film, it is established that Alice has a hard time living up to those expectations, when she is berated by her mother for not dressing correctly and she causes herself and her mother to arrive too late at a social gathering. In the novel and the Disney animation, Alice responds to situations the way she was taught by society, by curtsying and reciting verses, as a way to keep sane in the confusing world of Wonderland and placing her outside of Wonderland's discourse. However, Alice in Burton's film seems to

reject Victorian customs, by not wanting to wear a corset and expressing that she hates dancing the quadrille. Alice's behaviour in the novel is a form of mockery wherein her correct Victorian behaviour is starkly contrasted with the illogical world of Wonderland. Burton has not included this form of mockery in his film, but has implemented "contemporary ideals of female autonomy" (Manning 170) by giving Alice a determined sense of agency and making her seem critical of the society she lives in. She wonders "who's to say what is proper" (Burton 00:00:11), thereby acknowledging that rules are imposed on society, but apparently nobody knows who makes the rules. Her independent thinking echoes other historical female characters that arguably defy traditional gender norms and that have become canon in popular culture, such as Elizabeth Bennet from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Like Carroll, Burton is critical of the strict Victorian modes of behaviour, but where Carroll made this a contrast between Alice's behaviour and Wonderland, Burton's criticism is expressed through Alice herself. Carroll's Alice does not voice any criticism towards society: rather, Carroll shows his criticism through the subversive behaviour of the creatures in Wonderland, which confuses Alice as well as the reader because it is the opposite of what they are used to. In contrast, Burton's Alice frequently voices her opinions on Victorian modes of behaviour, which in addition to the craziness of Wonderland makes the criticism more explicit.

When Alice is in Wonderland, she again rejects the idea that others tell her what "[she] must do and who [she] must be" (Burton 00:41:53). Still under the impression that she is in a dream, she wants to decide what happens and have agency over her own actions, even though they have been predetermined for her by a prophecy. The role the creatures of Wonderland play have been reversed in Burton's film as opposed to the novel. Where Disney in 1951 portrayed the creatures in Wonderland as generally much more delightful than the frustrating and illogical ones in the novel, Burton has gone even further by creating lovable

characters that help Alice in her endeavours, rather than confuse her. The only truly evil character is the Red Queen, a mix between the Queen of Hearts from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and the Red Queen from *Through the Looking-Glass*. In the novel, Wonderland's changeability and madness create a motive for Alice to wonder about her own identity. The subversive behaviour of the creatures in Wonderland constantly causes Alice to ask the question "Who am I?" (Carroll 26). That question is not raised in Burton's film by Alice, but by the creatures of Wonderland, who claim that Alice is "hardly" the right Alice (Burton 00:20:51). They do not recognise her, because she has grown up and does not look like the child that came to Wonderland in her dreams anymore. Even while Wonderland is fuzzy about Alice's identity, she remains grounded in the idea that "[she] ought[s] to know who [she] is" (Burton 00:19:53). Where Alice starts doubting herself in Carroll's Wonderland, in Burton's film the creatures in Wonderland doubt her, but she refuses to let that doubt overpower her and she proves to them that she is the right Alice by slaying the Jabberwocky in the end.

Burton has been able to raise different issues within Victorian society by making a sequel with a young adult protagonist, rather than a children's film. His film can be seen as a social commentary on general Victorian gender values for young women, rather than an adaptation of the issues that Carroll raised in his mockery of Victorian rules and customs that were instilled in children from a very young age onwards. Burton's film is in many ways reminiscent of both the novel and the Disney animation; while Alice is taken back to the Wonderland of the dreams she had as a child, the audience too is taken back to the Wonderland of their youth, regardless of whether they read the novel or saw the 1951 film. The issues that Alice faces in terms of a society that she does not fit into are more relevant to a contemporary older audience that the film is aimed at than the issues Carroll raised in his novel (McKenna 39). Even while the age difference between the original Alice and Burton's

Alice excludes the theme of the girl-child in Victorian society in Burton's film, his approach to gender and Victorian society have made this theme relevant again for readers of the text. The film may not be faithful to the original novel, but it highlights the theme of gender in an approachable way for the audience, who can consequently explore these themes when (re)reading the novel.

Conclusion

Of the many adaptations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* that have been made, Disney's two adaptations have probably been the most influential. Alice has become an icon in popular culture and many will think of Disney's Alice when the phenomenon is referred to. However, Disney has not been able to exactly reproduce Carroll's Alice from the novel in their films. Carroll's Alice is an antithesis to the Victorian girl-child; she is not a passive supporting character, nor does she serve as a foil to a male protagonist. Instead, she is active and she says what is on her mind, even if that affects others negatively. Carroll frequently hints at the impending adulthood and womanhood that surrounds her childhood experience in Wonderland, which shows that girls do develop and are changeable. However, Alice in Disney's animated version is much more passive and much less adventurous. Her objective in the film is mainly to go home, a wish Carroll's Alice rarely expresses. In this endeavour, she is aided by the creatures of Wonderland, who are much more amiable and less hostile than in Carroll's Wonderland. The Burton adaptation has been made with a different and older audience in mind: Burton has changed Alice from a girl-child to a young woman, which required another approach to the story. The theme of adulthood is present in the film by Alice having to deal with more mature subjects, such as a marriage proposal she does not want to accept. Burton's Alice does not have an identity crisis in the way Carroll's Alice had and her character is much more critical of Victorian society, by questioning and not wanting to adhere to their customs. These changes have been facilitated by the changes that Burton has made to Wonderland, which is less hostile to Alice, like in the animation. However, where the 1951 animation seems to neglect the theme of gender in relation to the girl-child, Burton has made the theme of gender relevant again, although in a different and more adult context.

This study aimed to point out the different approaches Disney has taken to Alice as an antithesis to Victorian girl-child in Carroll's novel in a way that has not been done before.

The observations can be used for future adaptations and as a way to read the novel in a new light. The themes of childhood and gender in *Alice in Wonderland* seem to be applicable even today, as Alice is still a beloved character. However, there is ground for more research. This study focused mostly on just one novel and two adaptations, but it might be extended further to other Victorian novels or other adaptations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

Nevertheless, *Alice in Wonderland* has proven to still be very relevant in contemporary society: both the novel and the adaptations are still widely enjoyed, even though it has been more than a century since the original novel was published.

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