

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PARANÁ

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**AN ANALYSIS OF ADAPTATION THROUGH TIM BURTON'S *ALICE IN
WONDERLAND* (2010)**

CURITIBA
2011

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WONDERLAND* (2010)**

Monograph presented for Monograph Orientation II as a partial requisite for a Bachelor's Degree in English Literature, Sector of Human Sciences, Literature and Art of the Federal University of Paraná.

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TO MY FAMILY, A NEVER-ENDING LESSON IN ADAPTATION



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ABSTRACT

This monograph initially gives a brief overview on opinions regarding adaptation throughout the last two centuries as presented by Kamilla Elliott in her book *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*. From this standpoint, we then go on to analyze Linda Woolverton's 2008 script and Tim Burton's 2010 filmic interpretation of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. In order to do so, Carroll's treatment of language is first discussed. Then the manner through which Linda Woolverton and Tim Burton adapted this often adapted story is presented. Special elements considered transferable from text to film, as presented in Linda Hutcheon's *Theory of Adaptation*, are studied, including characters, imagery, plot, and overarching themes.

Key-words: Adaptation. Kamilla Elliott. Linda Hutcheon. Word-image dichotomy. Fidelity. Form and content. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

RESUMO

Esta monografia inicialmente apresenta um breve panorama das opiniões a cerca de adaptação ao longo dos dois últimos séculos, como apresentada por Kamilla Elliott no livro *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*. A partir deste ponto de vista, podemos então analisar o roteiro de Linda Woolverton (2008) e a interpretação fílmica de *Alice no País das Maravilhas* de Tim Burton (2010). Para tanto, o tratamento da linguagem de Carroll será discutido primeiramente. Em seguida, será apresentada a maneira pela qual Linda Woolverton e Tim Burton adaptaram essa tão frequentemente adaptada história. Elementos especiais, considerados transferíveis de texto para filme, como apresentados por Linda Hutcheon em *Theory of Adaptation*, incluindo personagens, imagens, enredo e temas transversais, serão estudados.

Palavras-chave: Adaptação. Kamilla Elliott. Linda Hutcheon. Dicotomia palavra-imagem. Fidelidade. Forma e conteúdo. Alice no País das Maravilhas.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the ubiquitous nature of adaptations currently (as well as throughout history), adaptation studies have until recently not been as far reaching as the process itself. According to Walter Benjamin, as quoted in Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation*, "storytelling is always the art of repeating stories" (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. 2). Films have not only made use of the process to recreate adapted texts but, more recently, have also focused on the process itself. I was initially interested in analyzing one of these films, Spike Jonze's *Adaptation* (2002), based on Charlie Kaufman's screenplay adaptation of *The Orchid Thief*, written by Susan Orlean. First of all, the film wonderfully portrays the adapter's role with respect to the source text in his/her process of adaptation. When an agent suggests that Charlie make a story up since he seems stumped about how to start the adaptation, Charlie affirms, "I didn't want to do that this time. It's someone else's material. I have a responsibility..."(KAUFMAN, 2000, p. 49). Second, (though not secondary) is the superb parallel that Jonze's *Adaptation* draws between adaptation in the fields of human expression and the process of adaptation as seen through Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. By adopting this perspective, *Adaptation* (2002) refutes some of the negative definitions which had been attached to adaptations, ranging from "culturally inferior", to "violation" and even to "perversion, infidelity, and desecration" (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. 4). In fact, many moments of the film demonstrate an admiration for adaptation, such as when Laroche, the orchid hunter, tells journalist Susan Orlean "Adaptation is a profound process. It means you figure out how to thrive in the world," to which Orlean responds, "Well, it's easier for plants; they have no memory [...]. For a person, it's almost shameful to adapt. It's like running away"(KAUFMAN, 2000, p. 48).

However, passages of the source text, *The Orchid Thief*, as presented in Susan Orlean's voice-overs within the movie, seemed to fall short in their treatment of language, with regards to the word/image dichotomy or form and content divide that I wished to take up. I was also discouraged from using *The Orchid Thief* as a

source text for analyzing adaptation by the review that Kaufman reads (as the character within the movie) about the book:

KAUFMAN: "There is not nearly enough of him to fill a book." So Orlean "digresses in long passages." Blah blah blah... "No narrative really unites these passages." (KAUFMAN, 2000, p. 49)

Hence, I continued my search to find an object of study which dealt more specifically with these dichotomies, and a source text which dwelt more explicitly upon the meaning of words and their ability to represent given realities. The aim was to find these features in a recent adaptation of a written work into film.

In my search for a source text with a high level of focus on language and a recent adaptation, one work seemed to stand out, which was Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, particularly due to its high concentration of puns, leading to more than one interpretation of meaning. Two of its central poems were also of special interest, the sad tale told by the mouse in the shape of a tail (with its echo in modern poetry)¹ and *The Jabberwocky*², with its inventive original language. One of its most recent adaptations, Tim Burton's *Alice* (2010) and Linda Woolverton's screenplay *Alice* (2008) also seemed to fit the intended focus of study. To refute any claims of an adaptation being secondary (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. 9)³, what better choice than a production by Tim Burton? I intend to use his 2010 production, based upon Woolverton's 2008 script, to dwell upon the following questions: If Carroll's tale has survived the test of time, can it "survive" the test of adaptation, i.e., can a modern screenplay and a filmic adaptation do it justice? And what would "doing it justice" entail?

Beginning my research based on Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* and Robert Stam's *Literature through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of*

¹ CARROLL, L. **Alice's Adventures in Wonderland**. The Annotated Alice -The Definitive Edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2000, p. 34.

² CARROLL, L. **Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There**. The Annotated Alice -The Definitive Edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2000, p. 149.

³ Here Hutcheon affirms that "an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing."

Adaptation, I was soon caught up in the process. Linda Hutcheon's stance to the ubiquitous nature of adaptations is also seconded by Kamilla Elliott in *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*. Hutcheon's approach to adaptation takes into account both the process and product of adaptation. It also demonstrates the modes of engagement, in an effort to expand upon the changes created with changes in media. Additionally, her theory is aligned to the concept of palimpsest as presented by Genette⁴.

In *Literature through Film*, Robert Stam speaks of "key moments in the history of the novel, both in literary terms and as refracted through the prism of adaptation" (STAM, 2005, p. 1). He analyzes a set of novels which he considers "classics" due to their capacity to generate a vast progeny of literary and filmic descendants. While *Alice in Wonderland* is not specifically cited, it has produced a progeny of both literary and filmic versions.

One of the source texts studied by Stam is *Don Quixote*, for its capacity to generate the parodic, intertextual and magical tradition of novels. Parody and intertextuality likewise abound in *Alice in Wonderland*. In fact, it is curious to note that an image in Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* pays tribute specifically to Cervantes' work. The March Hare's home, originally described in Lewis Carroll's text as a home with features of a rabbit's anatomy⁵, is substituted in Burton's 2010 *Alice* by a dilapidated windmill, a recurring image in Don Quixote's quest.

Stam points out a different tension rather than that created by words and images or form and content, that is, the "tension between magic and realism, reflexivity and illusionism" (STAM, 2005, p.2), which he states has nourished all art. Seeing as one of Lewis Carroll's main overarching themes revolves around the nature of dreams and reality, Stam's line of analysis proved quite fitting. Stam also points out the Cervantic trajectory of disenchantment, "in which the illusions fostered by adolescent reading are subsequently undone by experience in the real

⁴ GENETTE, G. **Palimpsests: literature in the second degree**. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, translated by Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky, 1982, p. 81-83.

⁵ CARROLL, L. **Alice's Adventures in Wonderland**. The Annotated Alice -The Definitive Edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2000, p. 67. "She [Alice] thought it must be the right house, because the chimneys were shaped like ears and the roof was thatched with fur."

world” (STAM, 2005, p.2). This process of disenchantment is skillfully portrayed by Carroll, Woolverton and Burton, as Alice faces the disillusionment characteristic of the process of growing up.

Another reason why Stam’s work was of utmost importance in this research was the fact that he dwells as well upon the critique of fidelity discourse. While the take on “fidelity” has been generally abandoned in favor of studies regarding intermediality, he reasons that it has some grains of truth, though fidelity should not be used as a methodological principle. His words seem true to the response possible from those receiving an adapted work:

The notion of fidelity gains its persuasive force from our sense that (a) some adaptations **do** fail to “realize” what we most appreciated in the source novels; (b) some adaptations **are** indeed better than others; and (c) some adaptations miss at least some of the salient features of their sources. (STAM, 2005, p. 3)

Linda Hutcheon speaks as well of fidelity, but to say that she is more interested in the fact that the “morally loaded discourse of fidelity is based on the implied assumption that adapters aim simply to reproduce the adapted text” (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. 7). In her three-pointed analysis of adaptation – as a product, a process, and a form of intertextuality, through its process of repetition – Linda Hutcheon seems to demonstrate that fidelity to the aims of adaptation is what is actually being sought. Perhaps Stam’s words regarding viewers’ feelings about adaptation refer to this, as well as Linda Hutcheon’s words, that “With adaptations, we seem to desire the repetition as much as the change” (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. 9).

Linda Hutcheon’s *A Theory of Adaptation* brought me to another scholar, Kamilla Elliott, and hence to insights which pinpointed the direction my research would then take. Hutcheon said

As Kamilla Elliott has astutely noted, adaptation commits the heresy of showing that form (expression) can be separated from content (ideas) – something both mainstream aesthetic and semiotic theories have resisted or denied. (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. 9)

This quote led me to realize why adaptation studies had perhaps steered away from issues regarding fidelity to source texts to focus on how adaptations have dealt with changes resulting from changes in media. Although a significant portion of my research involved analyzing Kamilla Elliott's perspective regarding adaptation, it was directed as well by many insights provided by Hutcheon and Stam on the issue.

The first part of this work treats historical arguments and semantic definitions regarding interart transfers and is centered on the thinking of Kamilla Elliott as presented in her book *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*. We are stimulated to ask: Do film adaptations of novels actually work? And, if so, have adaptation studies done away with the maxim presented by Bluestone and upheld formerly by many critics that "You can't make a good film from a good book"? And, if they do not "work", what can be said of their ubiquitous nature?

The second part of this monograph describes the adaptation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to the screen in terms of elements considered transferable through "equivalences" by Linda Hutcheon. The ambiguity of the written word as presented by Lewis Carroll will be dwelt upon as well as its susceptibility to mutation as presented by the director Tim Burton and by the screenwriter Linda Woolverton. This analysis raises the question of how legitimate it is to allow the dichotomous categorizations such as those of the written word versus images on the screen or of content versus form to direct our perception of artistic expressions in different media. Perhaps intertextuality can provide a more holistic approach to studying source and adapted texts. In this case, it is necessary to bear in mind that viewers familiar with Lewis Carroll's books will undoubtedly have a different reception to an adaptation than those who are not. Another approach involves what Linda Hutcheon refers to as "the story argument", in which "equivalences" are sought in different sign systems for the various elements of the story: its themes, events, world, characters, motivation, points of view, consequences, contexts, symbols, imagery and so on" (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. 10).

1 A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF INTERART ANALOGIES

1.1 ANALOGIES VERSUS CATEGORIZATIONS

While the analysis of a work of art through analogies which adopt terminology used in other art forms may seem inefficient, it is no novel concept. Kamilla Elliott has dedicated a large portion of her book *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (2003) to retracing the historical evolution of art analogies dating back as far as Horace (e.g. *ut pictura poesis*, as adopted by critics in the Renaissance).⁶ Initially analogies compared and contrasted sister arts. Then, in an era which valued scientific thought above aesthetic considerations, Lessing developed a form of categorization that emulated the Linnaean system of classification, in an effort to counter interart analogies which had pervaded the interart criticism during the 18th century. According to Elliott (2003, p.10), “Against interart analogies that maintained shared sources of inspiration, aesthetic principles, and techniques, Lessing pressed the higher priority of the bond between form and content”. Elliot noted, notwithstanding, that Lessing’s categorization was unable to eliminate the use of analogies, although his approach put more emphasis on analogies between each art form’s content and form than on analogies between distinct art forms.

In the 19th century, interart analogies abounded. However, in the first half of the 20th century, Irving Babbitt denounced interart analogies as “self-indulgent half-truths”,⁷ suggesting a return to Lessing’s categorization. Many theorists concurred with Babbitt, including René Wellek and Austin Warren, authors of the chapter on *Literature and the Other Arts*, a highly renowned work in the field of interart

⁶ I am indebted to Dr. Anna Camati for her clarification regarding the shift in reference of Horace’s quote to that of an analogy between painting and prose during the Renaissance.

⁷ BABBITT, Irving, *The New Laocoön: An Essay on the Confusion of the Arts*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910, *apud* ELLIOTT, 2003, p. 11.

criticism, which considered interart analogies as “vague metaphor[s] that “never lend themselves to verification.”⁸

Elliott summed up the biases against analogical analyses in different eras as follows:

Even though figurative rhetoric has more recently gained critical substance under deconstructive and psychoanalytic theories, these theories have done little to redress analogy’s reputation for deception and half-truth. If analogy proved too rhapsodic, impressionistic, unverifiable, and partial for earlier critics, for postmodern scholars it is calculating, manipulative, agenda-driven, and deceptive. [...] Thus, even though analytical rhetoric pervades the novel and film debate, categorical approaches have dominated its theorization. (ELLIOTT, 2003, p.11)

George Bluestone proposed a categorization based on differences which defined the novel “as conceptual, linguistic, discursive, symbolic, and inspiring mental imagery, with time as its formative principle” and the film “as perceptual, visual, presentational, literal, and given to visual images, with space as its formative principle”.⁹ Bluestone is notorious as well for a maxim still upheld in lay discussions of novels and films, i.e., “You can’t make a good film from a good book.” Elliott enumerates various critics who supported the maxim coined by Bluestone:

- The adaptation of a content to a different art form can only be detrimental to a work of art if that work of art was good. In other words, one may perhaps make a good film out of a bad novel, but never out of a good one. (Béla Bálazs);
- A masterpiece is something that has already found its perfection of form, its definitive form. (Truffaut); and

⁸ WELLEK, R; WARREN, A. **Theory of Literature**. New York: Harcourt, 1942 *apud* ELLIOTT, K. 2003, p. 11.

⁹ BLUESTONE, G. *et al.* **Novels into Film**. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957, p. vi-vii *apud* ELLIOTT, K. 2003, p. 61.

- ...Brilliant adaptations are nearly always of fiction of the second or third class. (Anthony Burgess).¹⁰

Elliott points out that neither Keith Cohen's representation of adaptation nor Brian McFarlane's structuralist designation of the novel and film seem able to steer away from the dichotomy that divides novels into the realm of words and film into the realm of images.

The critic also emphasizes that "Keith Cohen's representation of adaptation as "words to images" takes into account neither the word-to-word transfer of a novel's dialogue or narration nor the ways in which the illustrations have been copied by filmmakers nor a host of similar interchanges"¹¹. According to Elliott, Brian McFarlane did acknowledge the visual, aural and verbal signifiers present in film but nevertheless "continued to designate the novel linear, the film spatial, the novel conceptual, and the film perceptual, after Lessing's categorizations of poetry and painting"¹². Indeed, Elliott stresses that hybrid art forms "put pressure on Lessing's most central categorization: the temporal and spatial dichotomy of words and images"¹³. Elliott concludes:

Clearly, the designation of novels as "words" and of films as "images" is neither empirically nor logically sustainable: rather it participates in ancient representational rivalries. W.J. Mitchell has demonstrated that "the history of culture is in part the story of a protracted struggle for dominance between pictorial and linguistic signs". [...] Everywhere, novels and films are seen to wrangle in a relationship that Bluestone describes as "overtly compatible, secretly hostile". In the end, however, novels and films tend to unravel the very word and image divide they have been conscripted to uphold. (ELLIOTT, 2003, p.14)

¹⁰ BURGESS, A. **On the Hopelessness of Turning Good Books into Films**. New York Times, April 20th, 1975

¹¹ ELLIOTT, K. **Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate**. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p.13.

¹² *Ibid*, p.13.

¹³ *Ibid*, p.15.

According to Elliott, the images that first encountered bias in their classification as art forms were book illustrations, which were labeled distractions, a label attached to intertitles in silent movies as well.¹⁴ These drawings and intertitles ended up being more temporally static than the prose and film to which they were related, upsetting Lessing's temporal/spatial opposition.

Vanity Fair is studied at length in *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*. One reason that Elliott chose this work as a case study for interart analogies is that the art work and prose were executed by the same person, Thackeray, hence eliminating distinctions that might have occurred if the two forms of expression had been executed by different individuals. One of the myriad points often made in the image/word divide is that only film adopts present tenses. This can be refuted by analyzing *Vanity Fair's* chapter titles, which also make use of present tenses. Elliott points out:

That the present tense of a novel's chapter titles differs little from the present tense of a film's intertitles calls into question widespread claims that film has only a present tense and that this present tense differentiates film from literature. There is nothing to stop us from regarding film scenes as past deeds presently narrated, just as we do in novels. Practically speaking, film scenes are recordings of past deeds performed before a witnessing camera, which presents them to present viewers. Indeed, one might argue that film's present tense derives from the novel rather than existing in contradistinction to it. (ELLIOTT, 2003, p. 23)

Through various examples, Elliott demonstrates that words and images in illustrated novels and early films portray functions that go beyond the categorical model presented by Lessing. This leads to questioning whether art forms considered "pure" arts forms haven't been more highly valued historically precisely because they do not deal with the

underminings of word and image oppositions and, concomitantly, **whether the long-standing resistance to hybrid arts** (whether their aesthetic excoriation or the denial of their very existence in aesthetic theories of novels and films) **is motivated chiefly by the challenges they present to word and image oppositions.** (ELLIOTT, 2003, p. 26, bold added)

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.18.

The development of semiotics brought legitimacy to interart analogies, but nevertheless subjected film to verbal analysis. Such is the case when Barthes speaks of meaning as being linked to verbal language. Elliott points out that “When narratology replaced semiotics as the dominant critical model of novel and film studies, the categorical subjugation of pictorial forms to verbal paradigms through interart analogy continued” (ELLIOTT, 2003, p. 28).

The analogy/categorization view for the position of ultimate tool in interart studies is defined in Elliott’s concluding paragraph of Chapter 1:

Far from representing “literal” truth in contrast to the half-truths of analogies, categories prove less elucidating of interdisciplinary interchanges and criticism than analogies [...] Indeed categorical claims that falsely consign novels and films to word and image camps in defiance of aesthetic practices yield very little insight into anything except word and image rivalries and they hide a great deal of the working that word and image analogies reveal. [...] In the final analysis, the relationship between categorical and analogical modes of criticism emerges not so much as a binary opposition as an analogy itself. (ELLIOTT, 2003, p. 30)

Blackburn’s theory of illustration has illustrations appearing “where words fail to express” or where “words fail to communicate the right meaning”. [...] “In this theory, the very appearance of an illustration implies a failure of prose’s representational power and self-sufficiency” (ELLIOTT, 2003, p. 47). Henry James, rather than press for a separation of visual and verbal realms due to these art forms’ innate differences, pressed to separate illustrations from prose based on the competitive overlap produced.

Photography became another factor that led to the collapse of illustrations in adult books. Film, however, soon came to represent an even greater threat to prose’s “pictorial” claims, as was pointed out by Virginia Woolf, in her essay “The Cinema”:

All the famous novels of the world, with their well-known characters and their famous scenes, only asked, it seemed, to be put on the films. What could be easier and simpler? The cinema fell upon its prey with immense rapacity, and to the moment largely subsists upon the body of its unfortunate victim. But the results are disastrous to both. The alliance is unnatural. Eye and brain are torn asunder ruthlessly as they try vainly to work in couples. [...] For the brain knows Anna almost entirely by the inside of her mind—her charm, her passion, her despair. All the emphasis is laid by the cinema upon her teeth, her pearls, and her velvet. [...] So we lurch and lumber through the most famous novels of the world. So we spell them out in words of one syllable, written, too, in the scrawl of an illiterate schoolboy. A kiss is love. A broken cup is jealousy. A grin is happiness. Death is a hearse. None of these things has the least connexion with the novel that Tolstoy wrote, and it is only when we give up trying to connect the pictures with the book that we guess from some accidental scene—like the gardener mowing the lawn—what the cinema might do if left to its own devices. (WOOLF, 1926, online version)

Elliott illustrates other academic viewpoints regarding the irreducibility of words and images. She begins by stating that “Hillis Miller shares mainstream twentieth-century structuralist convictions that words and images are irreducible, untranslatable, *a priori* elements eternally in conflict with each other.”¹⁵ She then points out that many other 20th century scholars shared Miller’s views:

Roland Barthes concludes that “there is never a real incorporation since the substances of the two structures (graphic and iconic) are irreducible. Michel Foucault presents “statements” and “visibilities” as pure, *a priori* elements. And, **although W. J. Mitchell has argued convincingly that the word and image opposition is culturally constructed rather than essential, he nevertheless claims their opposition as an essentialist principle: words and images are always opposed, for they “are not merely different kinds of creatures, but antithetical kinds”**. Thus, when words and images do engage, modern and postmodern critics insist that they can only do so in rivalrous, parasitic, hierarchical, or subversive ways. (ELLIOT, 2003, p.64-65, bold added)

¹⁵ MILLER, H. *et al. Illustration*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 95 “A picture and a text juxtaposed will always have different meanings or logoi. They will conflict irreconcilably with one another, since they are different signs, just as would two different sentences side by side, or two different pictures. Only the same can mean the same. Neither the meaning of a picture nor the meaning of a sentence is by any means translatable. The picture means itself. The sentence means itself. The two can never meet, not even at some vanishing-point where the sun has set.” Hillis Miller is also quoted in *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (p. 72) for his differentiation of verbal absence and pictorial presence – words “are by nature the presence of an absence. **In the presence of the thing itself words are not needed.** A painting is there, here and now” (MILLER, H. *et al. Illustration*, p.66)

In a manner similar to how prose painting analogies “subjugated” a novel’s illustrations to the pictures created by prose, film language analogies have been used to subjugate film words to film images. Elliott points out that just as Henry James opposed illustration as a pictorial rival to prose ‘painting’, so too have filmmakers and critics objected to film words primarily as rivals to film’s visual ‘language’. Elliott (2003, p. 79) restates this concept as follows: “Just as novel illustrations are deemed too pictorially loud, disrupting prose reading and blocking out mental imaging, so too, film words are seen to shut down and slow down the visual ‘speech of film images’”.

Screenwriters experienced a period of prestige in the early 20th century, just as British illustrators had exactly a century earlier. Nevertheless, by the 1950s, screenwriters began to lose ground in terms of authorship to directors, as could be witnessed by the *Cahiers du cinema* movement. Furthermore, screenplays began to be referred to in technical terms – in a fashion similar to analogies of illustrations to nonverbal rather than verbal arts¹⁶. Films started to be referred to as “texts” and cinema was often analyzed using terms taken up by linguistics and literary study. Elliott stresses that the scholarly treatment of film language analogy as though it were a literal truth led, against all filmic agendas, paradoxically to a subjugation of cinema to literary scholarship.

Elliott provides insight into the downfalls of constantly subjecting film to scholarly approaches linked to literature and linguistics. She affirms: “Not only do such methods tend to occlude the nonlinguistic elements of film and to shackle “meaning” to linguistic models, but such methods are also all but guaranteed to conclude that novels represent “better” than films” (ELLIOTT, 2003, p. 114).

¹⁶ The manner by which screenwriters lost authorial ground to directors parallels the manner in which illustrators lost prestige a century earlier, when their illustrations became considered “plates” and their art was yoked to technical terminology and nonverbal analogies, gradually leading to illustrations being substituted by photography.

1.2 THE NOVEL AS A 'CINEMATIC' ART FORM

No art form has been considered “cinematic” more often than the novel. Elliott divides the studies of cinematic novels into two categories:

those that address cotemporaneous cross-fertilizations between novels and films [...] and those that find a cinematic novel before the birth of cinema and adapt it in an anachronistic argument of historical importance. (ELLIOTT, 2003, p. 113)

Attributing cinematic traits to novels before the advent of cinema is an anachronistic concept. Notwithstanding, film scholars have turned this anachronism into an advantage, demonstrating that film was able to fulfill what the novel had only hinted at or dreamed of, thereby granting film its standing as a “seventh” art. In Elliott’s opinion, a

far more (chrono)logically cogent analogy for an argument of influence would be “novelistic cinema” but the cinematic novel “has served literary interest so well that literary scholars have championed it as much as film scholars. (ELLIOTT, 2003, p. 114)

The cinematic novel also served to shift attention from the threat posed by theater to film’s ranking as an art form. Scholars proposed that film more closely resembled the novel than theater only to subsequently separate one from the other by announcing film as a new art and the words of the novel as uncinematic. How can novels be cinematic while their words are not? And how can all of the influence theater has had on film be overlooked, seeing as it ranges from production practices all the way to consumption, i.e., from screenwriting manuals to viewing in movie **theaters**?

Elliott presents two arguments to demonstrate why the novel is considered the film’s closest relation: she claims that both the novel and film share (a) a “realist, empirical, visual representation style” and (b) a practice of montage or editing, i.e. shifting between characters and cutting between various points of view within a scene. She asserts, in summary:

In spite of all the evidence to the contrary, the novel/film/montage trinity reigns supreme in the film history textbooks on which each new generation of film scholars is reared and remains unchallenged in overviews of the novel and film debate. (ELLIOTT, 2003, p. 120-124)

Elliott goes on to say:

Were film to acknowledge its debt to literal and visible arts (painting, photography, theater [...]) or its tangible debts to the words of novels, its birth would appear far more mundanely derivative, if it appeared as a birth at all. (ELLIOT, 2003, p. 125)

The literary camp has by and large viewed adaptation as translation. For a film to be a successful adaptation, critics formerly analyzed if it was faithful to the original. Elliott points out:

In 2000, Robert Stam advanced resistance to the “elitist prejudices” of fidelity imperatives through Michel Foucault’s demystification of the author; Michail Bahktin’s notion of dialogic exchange, Jacques Derrida’s blasting of the original/copy differential, and Roland Barthes’s semiotic leveling of literature and film alike as “texts”[...] But the most common objection raised to fidelity maxims argues that literary cinema is an oxymoron – it is uncinematic cinema (ELLIOTT, 2003, p. 129).

Elliot points out that from 1927 to 2000 two-thirds of all of the awards granted for Best Picture in the Academy of Motion Picture Awards and Science went to literary adaptations. Linda Hutcheon seconds the notion of adaptations’ omnipresence in our culture, posing the questions “Why, even according to 1992 statistics, are 85 percent of all Oscar-winning Best Pictures adaptations? Why do adaptations make up 95 percent of all the miniseries and 70 percent of all the TV movies of the week that win Emmy Awards?” (HUTCHEON, 2006, p.4) Given that so many canonical films are literary adaptations, the near silence of film scholars on the subject is baffling unless one understands that **rivalry** governs interdisciplinary study (ELLIOTT, 2003, p. 131).

1.3 ADAPTATIONS AS SECOND, NOT SECONDARY, EXPRESSIONS

In her book *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon enumerated adjectives encountered by various scholars that were formerly used by adaptations' detractors: (a) "belated, middlebrow, or culturally inferior" (cited by Naremore, 2002b); (b) strong and moralistic terms such as "tampering, interference, and violation" (listed in MacFarlane, 1996), and (c) "betrayal, deformation, perversion, infidelity, and desecration" (found by Stam, 2000). In contrast, Hutcheon summed up the current point of view regarding adaptation by stating that "an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing."¹⁷ (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. 9) She also presented an explanation for this phenomenon formulated by Robert Stam:

For some, as Robert Stam argues, literature will always have axiomatic superiority over any adaptation of it because of its seniority as an art form. But this hierarchy also involves what he calls iconophobia (a suspicion of the visual) and logophilia (love of the word as sacred). (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. 4)

Hutcheon points out that while Elliott stated that "adaptation commits the heresy of showing that form (expression) can be separated from content (ideas) – something both mainstream aesthetic and semiotic theories have resisted or denied" (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. 9), legal theory has embraced the notion. In legal terms, adaptations avoid legal prosecution precisely by demonstrating that form has changed, seeing as ideas (content) cannot be copyrighted, but only their expression (form).

While scholars (from Saussure to structuralists) had always emphatically asserted that form does not and cannot separate from content, Elliott states that

¹⁷ HUTCHEON, L. **A Theory of Adaptation**. New York: Routledge, 2006, p.9. The works from which Hutcheon has taken terms are as follows: NAREMORE, James, "Introduction: Film and the reign of adaptation". In: **Film Adaptation**. New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 2000, 1-16; McFARLANE, Brian. **Novel to film: An introduction to the theory of adaptation**. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996; and STAM, Robert. "The dialogics of adaptation". In: **Film Adaptation**, p. 54-76.

“poststructuralist semiotics have done away with form/content binarisms by “debunking and ghosting content altogether, by fusing form and content in such a way that content evaporates altogether in favor of pure form” (ELLIOTT, 2003, p.134). Shifts in adaptation studies have brought a different type of analysis to filmic adaptations. Former tendencies of hierarchizations have been replaced by a closer look at the ways in which filmic adaptations have sought to mediate literary texts, through, for example, appropriation and (re)creation.

2 LEWIS CARROLL'S TREATMENT OF LANGUAGE: SIGNS AND SIGNIFIEDS IN ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND AND THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS AND WHAT ALICE FOUND THERE

Carroll seemed to be a reasonably obvious choice for analysis in the area of adaptation for two main reasons: a) the manner in which he repeatedly questioned the supremacy of the written word, often considered granted by other scholars due to its seniority, and b) the frequency with which he demonstrated the ambiguous nature of signs in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*¹⁸. First, let us look at just a few of the many instances in which Carroll spoofs the idea that the written word holds a hierarchically superior position, with respect to images:

Once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, "and what is the use of a book," thought Alice, "without pictures or conversations?" (CARROLL, 2000, p. 11)

Later on in the story, during the Caucus race, the driest of words, recited by the Dormouse, don't dry the animals, but rather actions do. Furthermore, when Alice asks the Dodo what the caucus race is, it says "the best way to explain it is to do it" (CARROLL, 2000, p. 31). The Dodo clearly demonstrates its opinion that actions are more effective than explanations (or, as Carroll might have put it, actions speak louder than words)¹⁹. Alice holds to this view as well, as can be seen in the following quote, when she reaches a conclusion based on previous experiences and not words:

¹⁸ Although the complete title of Lewis Carroll's work is *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, I will refer to it from now on as *Through the Looking-Glass*, for brevity's sake.

¹⁹ It is interesting to note, likewise, that the Dodo, exterminated by the human species, is the animal who uses the most sophisticated language in the passage of the Caucus race. The participants in the episode were in fact the Liddell sisters, members of Dodgson's family, and Reverend Duckworth. The Dodo is a caricature of Dodgson himself. (see CARROLL, 2000, p. 27, note #10)

There was no label this time with the words "DRINK ME," but nevertheless she uncorked it and put it to her lips. "I know something interesting is sure to happen," she said to herself, "whenever I eat or drink anything. (CARROLL, 2000, p. 38)

In fact, one of the first situations dealing with a feeling of disappointment with respect to words is connected to yet another labeled object, which Alice finds as she begins to fall down the rabbit hole.

She took down a jar from one of the shelves as she passed; it was labeled "ORANGE MARMALADE," but, to her great disappointment, it was empty; she did not like to drop the jar for fear of killing somebody underneath, so managed to put it into one of the cupboards as she fell past it. (CARROLL, 2000, p. 13)

In this passage, one can see that the words did not fulfill Alice's expectations upon reading them, though she felt sure that the concrete object to which they were attached could create a physical impact.

Words also seem to be of no avail when Alice tries to use them to console herself or to coax herself into action. As Alice begins to produce a pool of tears, she tells herself: "a great girl like you" [...] "to go on crying in this way! Stop this moment, I tell you!" (CARROLL, 2000, p. 21). Her words do not have any impact upon her, for she continues to cry profusely. They also do not seem to do much for her other than to simply fill up silence, as shown on page 9: "There was nothing else to do, so Alice soon began talking to herself".

As if to demonstrate the ambiguous feelings people have with respect to the power of written language, perhaps part of a cultural heritage, there are other passages in which Carroll emphasizes the authoritative nature granted to the written word. When Alice debates asking a female 'antipathy' where she has fallen to, she concludes: "And what an ignorant little girl she'll think me for asking! No, it'll never do to ask: perhaps I shall see it *written up somewhere*" (CARROLL, 2000, p. 9, italics added). In this passage, Alice seems to think that simply seeing the information written somewhere can guarantee an accurate representation of her

real location, though the issue of reality is another matter taken up by Carroll in his works and greatly stressed as well in Tim Burton's *Alice*.

In the beginning of her adventures in Wonderland, Alice seems to rely upon written information to compensate somehow for the disconcertingly unusual nature of the visual stimuli all around her. When Alice sees a bottle on the glass table, she feels inclined to rely on words:

and tied round the neck of the bottle was a paper label, with the words "DRINK ME" beautifully printed on it in large letters.[...] "No, I'll look first," she said, "*and see whether it's marked 'poison' or not,*": for *she had read several nice little stories [...]* and she had never forgotten that, if you drink from a bottle marked "poison," it is almost certain to disagree with you, sooner or later. However, *this bottle was not marked "poison," so Alice ventured to taste it.* (CARROLL, L., 2000, p. 16-17, italics added)

One of the cleverest ways adopted by Lewis Carroll of demonstrating the contextual nature of language is his use of plays on words. These intentional ambiguities seem to play along with logical fallacies or inversions as well as card game and chess analogies while competing for crowning creativity. Puns abound throughout Carroll's works but I will only exemplify a few closely linked to images created in the stories. When Alice refers to herself as "a *great* girl like you" (she might well say this)" (CARROLL, 2000, p. 18), she is speaking of herself both figuratively and physically. Another well-known pun with reference to images occurs when the Mouse says "Mine is a long and sad *tale!*" to which Alice replies, "It is a long tail, certainly," said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse's tail; "but why do you call it sad?"²⁰. It is interesting to note that the poem that ensues is a tale in the shape of a tail²¹.

When Alice says "I know I have to beat time when I learn music," the Hatter responds "Ah! That accounts for it." The Mad Hatter goes on to elucidate that Time

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 32-33

²¹ CARROLL, 2000, p. 35-36. Gardner, in this Definitive Edition, brings another interesting fact related to this poem. In 1989, two teenage students discovered that this poem, if printed in a traditional form, resembles the shape of a mouse. Carroll managed to turn this poem into the image of a mouse by using a shorter rhyming couplet followed by a longer unrhymed line, which is known as a "tail rhyme".

has been uncooperative and this has led the Tea Party to be continually reenacted, with the March Hare, the Mad Hatter and the Dormouse moving one seat down each time dishes have been used. The Mad Hatter explains that Time “won’t stand beating” (CARROLL, 2003, p. 72).

The two chapters that have the highest concentration of puns are Chapters IX and X, i.e. The Mock Turtle’s Story and The Lobster-Quadrille. In Chapter IX, the Mock Turtle tells Alice that he and other students who went to school in the sea called an old turtle a “Tortoise because he taught us”. He then goes on to enumerate the subjects he studied (in parentheses, see what each pun refers to, as elucidated by Gardner on p. 98, note # 17): Reeling and Writhing (Reading and Writing); Ambition, Distraction, Uglification and Derision (Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication and Division); Mystery and Seaography (History and Geography); Drawling, Stretching and Fainting in Coils (Drawing, Sketching and Painting in Oils); and Laughing and Grief (Latin and Greek). According to the Mock Turtle, the reason the classes are called lessons is that “they lessen from day to day”²².

One final example of how ambiguous words can seem, be them images on a printed page or words proffered, is cited below. When the Duchess addresses Alice, quite a confusion is established, even to the reader following along on the printed page:

“Be what you would seem to be” or, if you’d like it put more simply – “Never imagine yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that what you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise.”
 “I think I should understand that better,” Alice said very politely, “if I had it written down: but I can’t quite follow it as you say it.”
 “That’s nothing to what I could say if I chose”, the Duchess replied in a pleased tone”. (CARROLL, 2000, p. 93)

Allusions to intertextuality seem to provide a type of mediating role in the debate regarding the importance of the written or spoken word, while portraying that the text does not exist in a vacuum, but rather has a context. This notion is taken up as well with respect to adaptations by Linda Hutcheon in her *A Theory of Adaptation*. She states: “Neither the product nor the process of adaptation exists in

²² *Ibid.*, p. 96-99.

a vacuum: they all have a context – a time and a place, a society and a culture” (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. xvi). In his *Definitive Edition of The Annotated Alice* (2000), Martin Gardner points out many allusions to proverbs and songs popular at the time when Carroll wrote both *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking- Glass*. When the Duchess says to Alice “Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves”, Gardner explains that Carroll is referring to the British proverb “Take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves” (CARROLL, 2000, p. 35, note #6). Nevertheless, Carroll also seems to be referring, in an inverted manner, to his poem “Jabberwocky”, in which the sounds he has chosen take care of the poem’s criteria for rhyming, while the words do not necessarily present any conventional type of sense. When Alice tells the Duchess that she (Alice) has a right to think, the Duchess responds, “Just about as much right as pigs have to fly”, Gardner attributes this statement to an old Scottish proverb which states “Pigs may fly but it’s not likely”²³.

Many elements of intertextuality involve parodies of poems that were well-known to Carroll’s readers. According to Gardner, the Mock Turtle’s song parodies the poem “The Spider and the Fly” written by Mary Howitt, while Carroll’s original chorus line parodies a Negro minstrel song “Sally, come up! Sally, go down! Sally, come twist your heel around.”²⁴ In turn, the poem Alice recites to the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon, “’Tis the voice of the Lobster” parodies the opening lines of “The Sluggard”, by Isaac Watts²⁵. Finally, the Mock Turtle’s song “Beautiful soup” parodies the song “Star of the Evening” composed by James M. Sayles.²⁶

Obviously not all parodies in Lewis Carroll’s works refer to poems or songs only familiar to English readers in the second half of the nineteenth century. The accusation presented in court that the Knave of Hearts had stolen the Queen of Heart’s tarts is both an allusion to a Mother Goose rhyme still identified by modern

²³ *Ibid*, p. 93, note #9. Note: This proverb reappears in Tweedledee’s song in *Alice Through the Looking Glass*.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 102, note #3.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 106, note #7.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p.108, note #10. Gardner points out that turtles indeed weep because of a glandular secretion, which is imperceptible when the turtle is underwater.

readers and a poke at the British judicial system at that time.²⁷ While the Mad Hatter's song "Twinkle, twinkle little bat" contains an inside joke most modern readers would be unfamiliar with,²⁸ the tune is a parody of the first verse of a still well-known children's song named "The Star", (better known by its first verse, "Twinkle, twinkle, little star") written in 1806 by Jane Taylor.²⁹

Other elements of intertextuality allude to other works by Carroll, and many poems in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* have been adapted from poems that Carroll had written prior to publishing these books. To state one example, Gardner points out that the "letter" read in court in Chapter XII is an allusion to Carroll's nonsense poem "She's All My Fancy Painted Him". This poem, in turn, alludes to the first line and meter of a song popular at the time, "Alice Gray" by William Mee, which speaks of a man's unrequited love for Alice (Gray), and most probably alludes to Dodgson's love for Alice Liddell³⁰. Gardner also points out that the statement the Duchess makes to Alice "Every thing's got a moral, if only you can find it" alludes to a quote made in Carroll's monograph entitled *The New Belfry of Christ Church, Oxford*: "Everything has a moral if you choose to look for it. In Wordsworth a good half of every poem is devoted to the Moral: in Byron, a smaller proportion: in Tupper, the whole"³¹. One example of intertextuality which represents Carroll's type of '*looking glass*' perspective is when Alice refers to the book she is contained in:

²⁷ Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Chapter XI: 'Who Stole the Tarts?' lampoons the British legal system through means of the trial of the Knave of Hearts, where the rhyme is presented as evidence. The poem became more popular after its inclusion in Carroll's work.

²⁸ According to Gardner, Bartholomew Price, a professor of mathematics at Oxford and a good friend of Carroll's, was called "The Bat" by his students, for it seems that his lectures were often way over the heads of his students (CARROLL, 2000, p. 74, note #8).

²⁹ Speaking of adaptations, the first stanza of the poem "The Star" was set to the French song called "*Ah! vous dirai-je, Maman*", which has in turn been the tune behind the "Alphabet Song" and, with a variation, "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep".

³⁰ CARROLL, 2000, p. 122. On page 75, note #11, Gardner explains that the names of the little girls mentioned in the Dormouse's story during the Mad Tea Party refer to three of the Liddell sisters. Elsie refers to Lorina Charlotte's initials (L.C.), Tillie refers to Matilde's nickname and Lacie represents an anagram of Alice's name.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 91, note #3. Gardner explains that James Kincaid referred to this monograph in his book *Through the Looking Glass* (1983).

When I used to read fairy tales, I fancied that kind of thing never happened, and now I am in the middle of one! *There ought to be a book written about me*, that there ought! And when I grow up, I'll write one, but I'm grown up now. (CARROLL, 2000, p. 41, italics added)

3 ALICE IN WONDERLAND REVISITED IN 2010

3.1 WOOLVERTON'S RECONTEXTUALIZATIONS

Linda Woolverton is the screenwriter responsible not only for the script on which Tim Burton's 2010 *Alice* is based but also for the screenplays for *The Lion King* and *Beauty and the Beast*. Woolverton clearly had no intention of reproducing Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* but rather intended to produce a work of her own. One of the most obvious differences consists in her setting the script to a different moment in Alice's life. Woolverton says "I wasn't trying to re-tell the old story; I was toying with the thought: what if Alice was older and she went back into Wonderland?"³². Woolverton, in an interview to the Writers Guild of America, explains that the story takes place "in a time in this girl's life when she's facing imminent choices about life and who she's going to be. The adventure down the rabbit hole is a chance [for Alice] to find that inner strength she lost when she lost her father." This strength in character is referred to by both Alice and the Mad Hatter in Tim Burton's *Alice* as "muchness"³³. This concept of muchness comes straight from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, when at the Mad Tea Party the Dormouse speaks of "much of a muchness" (CARROLL, 2000, p. 77).

Woolverton's conception of *Alice* seems to be aligned with Burton's desire to bring "framework and emotional grounding" to the story as he had never seen in an

³² BOSHOFF, A. **Alice's very weird wonderland: Why a behind-the-scenes row might see Tim Burton's most fantastical film yet disappear from cinemas as fast as the Cheshire Cat.** The Daily Mail. April 20th, 2010. Available at <<http://www.webcitation.org/5uGU2R9mM>>.

³³ WOOLVERTON, Linda, **Alice**, script based on *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland* and *Through The Looking Glass* by Lewis Carroll, 2008 (blue revised pages, Oct., 28th, 2008) In the script, the references to muchness are as follows:
MAD HATTER: "You're not the same as you were before. You were much more...much more muchier...you've lost your muchness."
ALICE: "My muchness?" (p.38).
Later on, when faced with the dilemma of having to cross the moat to the Red Queen's castle by stepping on the heads of those executed, Alice says to herself "Lost my muchness, have I?"

adaptation before.³⁴ Woolverton chose to begin the story with a 19-year-old Alice revisiting a place she had been before. She points out that her script also provides her older Alice with a chance “to realize that this dream she’d always thought she had was actually a memory.” She adds, “I had this mental picture of her standing at a very crucial moment in her life and having to make an important decision, but being distracted by the White Rabbit.”

Just as *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* may be considered turning points in fiction, the screenplay for Burton’s production stems from Woolverton’s vision of Alice’s turning point in her life. Alice receives a very public marriage proposal in a very crowded Victorian garden. Contrary to expectations, she decides to reject the proposal (and at the end of the film even goes into business with her ex-future father-in-law, no common outcome for women at the time). The Alice portrayed by Woolverton and Burton is trying to make sense of her life much as Carroll’s Alice was trying to make sense of her adventures. Woolverton says “There’s a lot that Lewis Carroll didn’t write, but I’ve based other scenes on things he did.”

³⁴ BOSHOFF, A. **Alice's very weird wonderland: Why a behind-the-scenes row might see Tim Burton's most fantastical film yet disappear from cinemas as fast as the Cheshire Cat.** The Daily Mail. April 20th, 2010. Available at <<http://www.webcitation.org/5uGU2R9mM>>.

4 TIM BURTON'S *ALICE IN WONDERLAND*

Alison Boshoff wrote in an article posted on The Daily Mail on April 20th, 2010 that “The word is that watching Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* is the closest you can come to falling down the rabbit hole yourself and into Lewis Carroll's fantasy world³⁵”. This quote echoes the findings to be discussed in this paper. Tim Burton's adaptation of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* is used as a case study in the analysis of the process of adaptation between novel and film.

Lewis Carroll was definitely already a choice shortlisted at the beginning of this adaptation research due to his highly critical stance on the effectiveness of language to portray meaning. The ambiguous nature of language lends not only to many very interesting puns, as mentioned in the previous section, but also finds itself inserted in the form and content debate which used to be considered so central to adaptation processes.

Nothing seems more logical than to align mathematician Charles Dodgson's creativity to Burton's mastery in filmic productions. One of the overarching aims of this paper is to refute the formerly upheld maxim that it is only possible to make a great film out of a mediocre book. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* can be considered anything but mediocre. Written over a century ago, these narratives have gone from being a written record of stories told to the daughters of the Dean of Christ Church, particularly Alice Liddell, to being one of the most well-known and frequently adapted pieces of literature in the world. Carroll's text, according to one listing, has been translated into thirty-three different languages³⁶. Fifteen different *direct* film or TV adaptations of *Adventures in Wonderland* (sometimes merging it with *Through the Looking-Glass*), not including sequels or other works inspired by Carroll's works, such as Burton's *Alice*, have

³⁵ BOSHOFF, A. **Alice's very weird wonderland: Why a behind-the-scenes row might see Tim Burton's most fantastical film yet disappear from cinemas as fast as the Cheshire Cat.** The Daily Mail. April 20th, 2010. Available at <<http://www.webcitation.org/5uGU2R9mM>>.

³⁶ Verify “Translations of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland”, available at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Translations_of_Alice%27s_Adventures_in_Wonderland>.

also been listed.³⁷ Martin Gardner includes a listing provided by David Schaefer³⁸ of all “Alice on the Screen” productions, whether feature films, Alice sequences in other feature films, films made for TV, or cartoons (CARROLL, 2000, p. 309-312). Schaefer’s list enumerates twenty-seven different works, not to mention a newsreel and two educational productions. Other lists contain hundreds of works influenced by Carroll’s stories. BBC’s 2003 survey of Britain’s best-loved novels ranked Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* in thirtieth place, among novels.

Right from the beginning of the movie, it becomes evident that Tim Burton has no intention of replicating either the plot created by Carroll in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* or that of any former filmic adaptation of *Alice*. In Boshoff’s article, Burton is quoted as having said “I read the Alice stories when I was eight, and I’ve seen the various TV and cinema versions, including the 1951 Disney cartoon. But, to be honest, I’ve never liked any of them”³⁹. According to Linda Hutcheon, “Because adaptation is a form of repetition without replication, change is inevitable, even without any conscious updating or alteration of setting” (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. xvi). Hence, imagine if both screenwriter and director intentionally alter elements of the source text to tell a different story. Will the new Alice be any worse off as a result of this transposition? Or is transposition as inevitable as is Alice’s process of growing up?

Linda Hutcheon states that many reviewers and viewers alike feel that the “spirit” of a work or an author “has to be captured and conveyed in the adaptation for it to be a success”. Hutcheon points out, nevertheless, that an author or work’s “spirit” may be invoked simply to justify radical changes in the “letter” or form. At other moments, “tone” or “style” may be invoked, but, needless to say, all three elements are subjective and hence difficult to theorize. Hutcheon concedes that in most theories of adaptation, the story is a common denominator and “equivalences” are sought in different sign systems for the various elements of the

³⁷ Verify “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland”, available at:
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice%27s_Adventures_in_Wonderland>

³⁹ BOSHOFF, A. **Alice’s very weird wonderland: Why a behind-the-scenes row might see Tim Burton’s most fantastical film yet disappear from cinemas as fast as the Cheshire Cat.** The Daily Mail. April 20th, 2010. Available at <<http://www.webcitation.org/5uGU2R9mM>>.

story: its themes, events, world, characters, motivations, points of view, consequences, contexts, symbols, imagery, and so on” (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. 10).

What could seem like a more illogical ‘equivalence’ in an adaptation - an initially seemingly ‘realistic’ depiction of the Victorian era - than maintaining a white rabbit decked out in a waistcoat? He indeed is the first animal character that Alice encounters in both Carroll’s as well as Burton’s plot (if we rule out the dull Hamish) and certainly an omen of the illogical adventure that lies ahead. In Tim Burton’s adaptation, *Alice returns* to Wonderland after chasing the rabbit and falling into a hole. From the onset of her descent, differences in source text and adaptation can be noted.

To begin with, in Burton’s production, Alice fails to be disappointed by an empty marmalade jar, but is almost overtaken by a piano. Tim Burton seems to have done his homework in terms of researching the interest present during Carroll’s time with regards to what would happen to objects falling towards the center of the Earth⁴⁰. This is simply the first indication that choices made in Burton’s adaptation may be subjective, as all choices are to a certain extent, but should not be discarded as irrelevant. The “curiouser and curiouser”⁴¹ settings, where Alice’s adventures unfold for Carroll, reappear in Tim Burton’s settings, as do main characters.

Linda Hutcheon points out that themes may be “the easiest story elements to see as adaptable across media and even genres or framing events.” She then goes on to say,

Characters, too, can obviously be transported from one text to another, and indeed, as Murray Smith has argued, characters are crucial to the rhetorical and aesthetic effects of both narrative and performance texts because they engage receivers’ imaginations through what he calls recognition, alignment, and allegiance. (SMITH, M., 1995, *apud* HUTCHEON, L., 2006, p. 11)

⁴⁰ CARROLL, 2000, p. 13, note #4. Note: According to Galileo, differences in speed and acceleration would lead an object to continue oscillating from one hole to the other, until air resistance brought it to rest at the center of the earth.

⁴¹ CARROLL, 2000, p. 20, and WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 15.

Hence, I will begin by analyzing the alignment of characters in Woolverton's and Burton's *Alice* with those depicted in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (and, in some cases, in *Through the Looking Glass*). I will then proceed to establish comparisons and contrasts between the works in terms of plot, major themes, and imagery.

4.1 MAIN CHARACTERS IN WOOLVERTON'S AND BURTON'S ALICE

Both Woolverton and Burton wisely chose to maintain, in addition to the protagonist Alice, the White Rabbit, the Mad Hatter, the Blue Caterpillar (renamed Absolem), the Red Queen, the Knave of Hearts, the Cheshire Cat, the White Queen, Tweedledee and Tweedledum, the Bandersnatch and the Jabberwock, all essential to creating receivers' recognition and allegiance in an adaptation which makes no claims to replication. Other characters in supporting roles in their adaptations include the March Hare and the Dormouse. In fact, Woolverton's and Burton's characterization of the Dormouse is aligned with Woolverton's viewpoint that women and girls need role models of strong-willed, empowered women⁴². The Dormouse seems to be the reflection of Alice's character in the animal kingdom for both Woolverton and Burton.

Even before Alice encounters a different animal character, the White Rabbit, she speaks with the twin sisters Faith and Fiona Chattaway, 'teasers' to the twins Tweedledee and Tweedledum, whom she will encounter, once *again*, in Underland. In Woolverton's script, Fiona and Faith babble on – 'reflecting' the nature of the twins whom inspired them - until Fiona, true to her last name, ends up blurting out that the event is in fact a surprise engagement party for Alice. Alice seems to be the last person to find out that the party has been staged in her honor. This parallels the fact that Alice is also the last to figure out (in Burton's *Alice*) that what she thought was a recurring dream was in fact a memory of an adventure she

⁴² ROHTER, L. **Drinking Blood: New Wonders of Alice's World**, New York Times, Feb. 28th, 2010. Available at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/28/movies/28alice.html?pagewanted=all>>.

had already had. This is one moment in which the story line of the movie drifts from Carroll's story. Alice in Tim Burton's adaptation is recognizably Alice *revisited*, who is also revisiting the underground world, now dubbed Underland.

An interesting echo of Carroll's *Alice* appears even before Alice falls down into Underland, when Lady Ascot blurts out: "Imbeciles! The gardeners planted white roses when I specifically asked for red", to which Alice responds, "You could always paint the roses red". This is an allusion to the gardeners painting white roses red to avoid being beheaded by the Red Queen in Carroll's *Alice* (CARROLL, 2000, p. 79-80). Additionally, the way this phrase has been inserted into Alice's and Lady Ascot's dialogue demonstrates that both the script and film have strived to remain aligned to Carroll's critical stance, both with respect to government, as well as to the ambiguous nature of the meaning of language, as can be seen as follows:

LADY ASCOT: Do you know what I've always dreaded?

ALICE: The decline of the aristocracy?

LADY ASCOT: Ugly grandchildren. But you're so lovely. You're bound to produce *little...* (she gasps) *Imbeciles!* The gardeners planted white roses when I specifically asked for red.

ALICE: You could always paint the roses red. (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 8-9, italics added)

Tim Burton is stated as saying that the Red Queen, played by his wife Helena Bonham Carter, reminds him of the New York property millionaire Leona Hemsley, who has received the title of the 'queen of mean'.⁴³ Helena's head was enlarged to three times its normal size through computer graphics, which seems very fitting for a queen with an obsession for ordering that all those whom go against her be beheaded. Here lies an interesting distinction between Burton's 2010 *Alice* and Carroll's text. While the source text has the mean queen constantly saying "Off with their heads," no actual evidence of beheading is ever provided. In fact, the Gryphon tells Alice, "It's all her fancy, that: they never executes nobody,

⁴³ BOSHOFF, A. **Alice's very weird wonderland: Why a behind-the-scenes row might see Tim Burton's most fantastical film yet disappear from cinemas as fast as the Cheshire Cat.** The Daily Mail. April 20th, 2010. Available at <<http://www.webcitation.org/5uGU2R9mM>>. In this article it is mentioned that, ironically, Leona Hemsley was a hatter's daughter.

you know,” although this double negative might lead readers to conclude that beheading actually takes place (CARROLL, 2000, p. 79-80).

This ambiguous statement is beyond any doubt an allusion to Ulysses blinding Polyphemus, while Polyphemus yells “No man is killing me!”⁴⁴ Where this element of intertextuality has been extracted from is cleverly reinforced when the Bandersnatch’s eye is extracted by the Dormouse. The modern twist to the story occurs when Alice wins the Bandersnatch over by returning its eye. She tells the character, which has licked the infected wound inflicted upon her by it, that she supposes that makes them even (though this fair exchange does not involve an eye for an eye). The Bandersnatch not only allows Alice to take the Vorpal sword, but also takes her away to the White Queen’s palace after she has been apparently defeated by the Red Queen’s soldiers. This scene, as well as a similar image when the Bloodhound takes Alice to the Red Queen’s palace, is most definitely an allusion to a scene in *The Neverending Story* (1984). Due to the familiarity of the image of Falkor, the luckdragon, carrying Bastian, (and the ubiquitous nature of subsequent parodies), Burton seems to be alluding to the fact that the course of literature and its adaptations are, in fact, a never-ending story. Curiously, it is an *image* which makes this very insightful remark, whereas words would most possibly detract from the fast-paced action in the plot at that moment. For those familiar with the actual dialogue in *The Neverending Story*, the intertextuality goes full circle, when “No man” is substituted by “Nothing”, and Fantasia represents every part of human fantasy (involving both words and images):

⁴⁴ Homer, ULYSSES, Book IX, extracted from:
http://www.classicbookshelf.com/library/homer/the_odyssey/9/

"What ails you, Polyphemus," said they, "that you make such a noise, breaking the stillness of the night, and preventing us from being able to sleep? Surely no man is carrying off your sheep? Surely no man is trying to kill you either by fraud or by force?"

"But Polyphemus shouted to them from inside the cave, 'No man is killing me by fraud; no man is killing me by force.'

"Then," said they, "if no man is attacking you, you must be ill; when Jove makes people ill, there is no help for it, and you had better pray to your father Neptune."

"Then they went away, and I laughed inwardly at the success of my clever stratagem, but the Cyclops, groaning and in an agony of pain, felt about with his hands till he found the stone and took it from the door; then he sat in the doorway and stretched his hands in front of it to catch anyone going out with the sheep, for he thought I might be foolish enough to attempt this."

G'mork: Foolish boy. Don't you know anything about Fantasia? It's the world of human fantasy. Every part, every creature of it, is a piece of the dreams and hopes of mankind. Therefore, it has no boundaries.
 Atreyu: But why is Fantasia dying, then?
 G'mork: Because people have begun to lose their hopes and forget their dreams. So the Nothing grows stronger.
 Atreyu: What is the Nothing?
 G'mork: It's the emptiness that's left. It's like a despair, destroying this world. (PETERSEN and WEIGEL, 1984)⁴⁵

In Tim Burton's *Alice*, 'contrariwise' to Carroll's, one scene does show evidence that the Red Queen has actually beheaded those opposing her. For Alice to reach the Red Queen's garden, she must use as stepping stones the heads of those whom have been beheaded. Furthermore, the Red Queen tells the Knave of Hearts that she "had to do it", referring to having the King beheaded, for otherwise he would have left her.⁴⁶ Tim Burton's plot thickens, as viewers come to realize that the Red Queen has usurped power, at least in part, as retaliation for losing the King's love to the White Queen. (A King being lost to another Queen surely echoes references to chess present in Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, but that is a whole other story.)

In Tim Burton's plot, the Mad Hatter convinces the Red Queen that her head is a real opportunity for him to hat (as opposed to the puny head her sister, the White Queen, possesses). There seems to be no better way to flatter such a bigheaded figure. When he has managed to make a hat that totally hides her head, a big nosed courtier states "Your majesty has never looked better," a statement that could have come straight out of Carroll's story. This scene is one of the Mad Hatter's moments of lucidity that lend to his character, for both Tim Burton and

⁴⁵ PETERSEN, Wolfgang, and WEIGEL, Herman, **The Neverending Story**, 1984, quoted at <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0088323/quotes>>

⁴⁶ "RED QUEEN: I know. But Mirana can make anyone fall in love with her: men, women, even the furniture.
 She glances at the captive ANIMALS/FURNITURE.
 KNAVE OF HEARTS: Even the King.
 Her dark, bitter gaze travels down to the **grim moat below**.
 RED QUEEN: I had to do it. He would have left me". (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 48 - Blue Revised Pages, bold added)

Johnny Depp resist the temptation of portraying the Mad Hatter as a shallow totally off-the-wall figure.

Tim Burton and Woolverton chose for the Red Queen to be surrounded by an entourage of subjects boasting fake oversized body parts⁴⁷. When a grotesquely large nose falls off of one of the subjects, the Hatter quips, “It smells as though you might have dropped something.” The rest of the grovellingly exaggerated courtiers proceed to inadvertently ‘drop’ their farces, after the Mad Hatter has been saved from losing his own head with the help of the magical Cheshire Cat and the Hat⁴⁸. This scene is linked to the moment in Carroll’s story in which the executioner is debating with the King and Queen of Hearts that he couldn’t cut off a head (the Cheshire Cat’s) unless there was a body to cut it off from⁴⁹. Tim Burton inserts this event superbly into his own plot, while adding an ulterior motive to the Cheshire Cat’s willingness to help the Mad Hatter escape execution: his own desire to wear the hat. The Knave of Clubs is portrayed in Tenniel’s original illustration as the executioner in Carroll’s text, while the only knave in the 2010 *Alice* is the Knave of Hearts.

The 2010 Knave of Hearts, played by Crispin Glover, is disproportional in his height. His image is half real, half digital. Glover wore a green suit and a pair of green stilts to film against a green backdrop and then his entire body, costume and cape, were computer-generated. According to a Disney release, he can be described as follow:

⁴⁷ “The Queen and her Courtiers play croquet. The Red Queen with her huge head is surrounded by three powdered and painted COURTIERS with equally out-sized body parts: a woman with an EXTRA-LARGE NOSE, another with LONG HANGING EARS, a man with a HUGE PROTRUDING BELLY.” (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 39)

⁴⁸ Surely children who grew up reading Dr. Seuss will find an allusion to “The Cat in the Hat” in this scene.

⁴⁹ CARROLL, 2000, p. 87-89. Gardner points out that the executioner was portrayed as the Knave of Clubs in Tenniel’s illustration of the scene (note # 7). The Cheshire Cat has affronted the King by looking at him in a seemingly inappropriate manner and refusing to kiss his hand. Alice remarks that she had read a book in which a “cat may look at a king”. Gardner states (p. 87, note #6) that Frankie Morris suggested in *Jabberwocky* (1985) that the book Alice refers to may have been *A Cat May Look Upon a King*, written by Sir Archibald Weldon (1652). The title in itself refers to a proverb which implies that inferiors have certain privileges in the presence of superiors.

Ilosovic Stayne, The Knave of Hearts (Crispin Glover) is the head of the Red Queen's Army. Seven feet, six-inches tall, with a scarred face and a heart-shaped patch covering his left eye, Stayne is an arrogant, tricky character who follows the Red Queen's every order. He's the only one capable of pacifying her and calming her dramatic mood swings. "I am the martial element for the Red Queen," says Glover. "The Red Queen has a fair amount of short-tempered reactions to things that people do, and so my character has to be quite diplomatic." His darker side emerges in the shadows of the castle hallways.⁵⁰

The relative nature of reality is quite evident when Ilosovic, formerly apparently satisfied with the Queen of Heart's infatuation for him, becomes first envious and then interested in Alice, who is disguised as a 10-foot tall Um from Umbrage. In Burton's *Alice*, the Knave of Hearts is not accused of stealing tarts, but rather accuses Alice of having tried to seduce him. His nature is duplicitous, as can be seen by his alternating red and black heart-shaped eye patches, for he was loyal to the Red Queen (at least until Alice appeared), but seems Machiavellian in the manner in which he feels the ends justify the means. His scarred face is a constant reminder to viewers of the price he is willing to pay to hold power, since he lost his eye while capturing the Jabberwock, in his role as accomplice to the Red Queen's scheme to usurp power from her sister.

The Blue Caterpillar in Burton's 2010 *Alice* has many similarities to the character created by Carroll. In both cases, the caterpillar questions Alice, "Who are you?"

In Carroll's story, their initial dialogue went as follows:

"Who are you?" said the Caterpillar.
 [...] Alice replied, rather shyly, "I – I hardly know, Sir, just at present – at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then."
 What do you mean by that?" said the Caterpillar, sternly, "Explain yourself!"
 "I ca'n't explain *myself*, I'm afraid, Sir," said Alice, "because I'm not myself, you see." (CARROLL, 2000, p. 47)

The question as to identity is also brought up in Burton's *Alice*, but goes a little bit differently for it is based on the issue as to whether the White Rabbit has brought back the right Alice:

⁵⁰ Verify: <<http://movies.about.com/od/aliceinwonderland/ig/Alice-in-Wonderland-Photos/aliceinwonderlandpic27.htm>>

CATERPILLAR: Who are you?
 ALICE: Absolem?
 THE CATERPILLAR: You're not Absolem. I'm Absolem. The question is...who are YOU?
 ALICE: Alice.
 THE CATERPILLAR: We shall see.
 ALICE: What do you mean by that? I ought to know who I am!
 THE CATERPILLAR: Yes, you ought. Stupid girl. Unroll the Oraculum.
 (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 18)

When questioned by the other characters if Alice is the right Alice, Absolem answers “Hardly” (a word used in Alice’s answer in Carroll’s story). Alice is accused of being an impostor and defends herself by saying, “I’m sorry. I don’t mean to be the wrong Alice. Wait, this is my dream. I’m going to wake up now and you’ll all disappear” (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 20). She tries pinching herself as her father had taught her to do, in the first few minutes of the film, but her strategy doesn’t work. She also tries to imagine that the Bandersnatch is just a figment of her imagination, and is saved at the last moment when the Dormouse valiantly attacks the creature and takes out one of its eyes. The cryptic nature of the Blue caterpillar’s answers might bring viewers to remember the Dungeon Master from the animated TV series, *Dungeons and Dragons*, which was screened from 1985 to 1987⁵¹. In other instances, the Dungeon Master’s disappearing acts could be compared to those of the Cheshire Cat.

The White Queen is a figment of Carroll’s imagination in *Through the Looking Glass*, for only the Red Queen is mentioned in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. Tim Burton has blended the references to card games used in Carroll’s first story (all of the Red Queen’s soldiers being portrayed as playing cards, as well as her gardeners) with the recurrent checkered motif used in Carroll’s sequel. The White Queen is depicted by Carroll as a rather disheveled figure who has to deal with living backwards. She tells Alice in her brief

⁵¹ It is interesting to note that this TV series is in fact an adaptation of a role-playing game created by Dave Arneson and E. Gary Gygax, which was then made into a cartoon series by Marvel Production and TSR. Furthermore, the fact that the story line is based on the adventures of six friends who have inadvertently fallen into the realm of “Dungeons and Dragons” and are trying to find their way home may have been written as a parallel to Alice’s adventures.

appearance: “Why, sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast” (CARROLL, 2000, p. 199). In Tim Burton’s 2010 *Alice*, Alice uses these words to describe her father to the unimaginative Hamish:

HAMISH: Why would you waste your time thinking about such an impossible thing?

ALICE: Why wouldn’t I? My father said he sometimes believed in six impossible things before breakfast. (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p.6)⁵²

The White Queen in Burton’s *Alice* is played by Anne Hathaway. She is quoted as saying “I wanted her to have the punk spirit of Debbie Harry, the etherealness of American artist Dan Flavin and the grace of Greta Garbo.”⁵³ She seems fragile though ingenious, as was Carroll’s character. In Burton’s film, however, the White Queen seems to be a washed-out cook who knows her ingredients but adds little else to the story. Perhaps his long list of main characters makes it impossible for Burton to give the White Queen a more 3-D role, for she seems as pale as her physical appearance. Is this what Anne Hathaway meant by “etherealness” or is she simply a ‘cadaveric’ character (present in body but with no soul)?

The Cheshire Cat could not be missing from the story, at least not unless it is doing its vanishing act. It is responsible in both versions for taking Alice to the Mad Tea Party. In Carroll’s text, it appears after Alice has left the Duchess, carrying what turns out to be a pig. Its ‘entrance’ in Burton’s *Alice* is more dramatic, for it appears after the attack of the Bandersnatch and offers to take care of Alice’s wound.

Carroll’s Cat warns Alice that the people at the tea party are mad, to which she replies that she doesn’t want to go among mad people. To that the Cat says

⁵² It seems particularly fitting for Alice to speak about her father’s gift for imagining the unimaginable. Charles Kingsley is first portrayed in Burton’s *Alice* as being mad for envisioning “impossible” business opportunities way before others. A decade later, Lord Ascot confesses to Mrs. Kingsley that he was a fool for not investing in the venture when he had a chance.

⁵³ BOSHOFF, A. *Alice's very weird wonderland: Why a behind-the-scenes row might see Tim Burton's most fantastical film yet disappear from cinemas as fast as the Cheshire Cat.* The Daily Mail. April 20th, 2010.

“Oh, you ca’n’t help that, we’re all mad here. I’m mad. You’re mad” (CARROLL, 2000, p. 66). This has its parallel in Charles Kingsley’s reply when Alice asks him if she has gone mad because of her recurring dream. “I’m afraid so. You’re mad. Bonkers. Off your head. But I’ll tell you a secret...all the best people are” (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 2). The Mad Hatter in the 2010 version blames the Cheshire Cat for not having helped to defend Underland against the Jabberwock’s attack. It redeems itself however by saving the Mad Hatter from execution later on in the story, when the Red Queen is overthrown.

This leads us, last but not least, to Burton’s very Mad Hatter, played superbly by Johnny Depp. Alison Boshoff said “Having previously portrayed the equally weird and wonderful Edward Scissorhands and Willy Wonka for Burton, Johnny Depp was a shoo-in for the Mad Hatter”⁵⁴. While their long-standing partnership may have made Depp a first choice, it was hard work that made his performance first-class. Johnny Depp is quoted as saying:

I knew Tim would be wanting more than that [madness in his character] - there had to be a reason why he was like that, because something had tipped him over the edge....I read the Lewis Carroll stories over and over again, and I learned everything I could about Victorian times.[...]It would have been too easy, and not very believable, to have played the Mad Hatter as just a straightforward crazy guy⁵⁵.

Depp’s research led him to the discovery that hatters often became mad due to mercury poisoning. This finding is documented by Martin Gardner in *The Annotated Alice- The Definitive Edition*⁵⁶.

Johnny Depp even painted what he imagined his character Tarrant Hightopp would look like and his ideas proved to be very similar to Burton’s own conception. Special effects were then used to update the Mad Hatter’s look. *Alice* fans however may be disappointed by Burton and Depp’s Mad Hatter, for he is quite

⁵⁴ BOSHOFF, A. **Alice’s very weird wonderland: Why a behind-the-scenes row might see Tim Burton’s most fantastical film yet disappear from cinemas as fast as the Cheshire Cat.**
The Daily Mail. April 20th, 2010

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ [...] “The mercury used in curing felt [...] was a common cause of mercury poisoning. Victims developed a tremor called “hatter’s shakes,” which affected their eyes and limbs and addled their speech. In advanced stages they developed hallucinations and other psychotic symptoms”
CARROLL, 2000, p.66, note #8.

different from Carroll's. The 2010 film portrays him as a tortured action hero. The destruction of his clan seems to be what triggers his detachment from reality, along probably with mercury poisoning. Viewers can tell when he is upset, for his eyes change from green to yellow. He relies on other characters to be snapped out of his altered state, but shows at times to be aware of his condition, as when he speaks to Alice while imprisoned in the Red Queen's castle:

MAD HATTER: Have you any idea why a raven is like a writing desk? I'm frightened. I don't like it in here, terribly crowded. Have I gone mad?

She feels his forehead, like her father did years ago.

ALICE: I'm afraid so. You're entirely bonkers. But I'll tell you a secret...all the best people are. (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 49)

4.2. PLOT IN WOOLVERTON'S AND BURTON'S ALICE

As mentioned previously, neither Woolverton nor Tim Burton had any intention of replicating Lewis Carroll's story. Nevertheless, some events most definitely had to be maintained in order to help support their efforts towards creating an adaptation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. If the entirety of the plot, the backbone of the story, were to disappear, Alice fans might feel disappointed with the lack of alignment of the 2010 *Alice* to Carroll's beloved creation. Seeing as adaptations do not exist in a vacuum, but rather in a historical, cultural, and economic context, it would not seem very wise to ask the general public to have to dig for meaning at an "underground" level, not involving the plot, in a movie which cost £158,000,000 to be produced. This might be like burying a project before it even got started, a fate as unfruitful as the one that Burton risked facing when Disney decided it would release the DVD and Blu-Ray versions of the film only three months (rather than the standard 17-week period) after it was screened in the movie theaters. Many cinemas protested and threatened not to show the film, but Disney countered that 97 percent of box office revenues occur

within the first eight weeks of a movie's launch⁵⁷. After reaching agreements with major cinema chains, the movie went on to gross over one billion dollars worldwide and reached the rank of ninth-highest grossing film (starting as of 1977) in October, 2011⁵⁸.

Let us analyze which elements of Carroll's plot Woolverton and Burton chose to take up in the publicly acclaimed 2010 *Alice*. A brief summary of plot of Lewis Carroll's chapters in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is available in the footnotes to facilitate comparisons⁵⁹.

While the 2010 *Alice* is likewise bored before beginning her adventure, in this adaptation it is because of a very dull courter named Hamish and his accompanying Victorian period entourage. After gently removing a blue caterpillar from Hamish's right shoulder (is it the same insect that will revisit Alice as a butterfly in the last seconds of the film?), she listens to his wedding proposition in the gazebo, accompanied by hundreds of static onlookers. Flustered by being pressured into making a decision, Alice, now nineteen years old, runs from the scene, following the White Rabbit (once again) down the rabbit hole. Her fall, once again long,⁶⁰ has her landing first on a surface which turns out to be a domed ceiling. Her hair flowing downwards makes viewers intrigued, but not more intrigued than Alice herself will be in her adventures. The image is then inverted as

⁵⁷ BOSHOFF, A. **Alice's very weird wonderland: Why a behind-the-scenes row might see Tim Burton's most fantastical film yet disappear from cinemas as fast as the Cheshire Cat.** The Daily Mail. April 20th, 2010

⁵⁸ See: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice_in_Wonderland_%282010_film%29>

⁵⁹ CARROLL, 2000, p.11-19, Summary of the original **Chapter I: Down the Rabbit-Hole**: Alice is bored sitting with her sister, when suddenly she sees and hears a vested rabbit - muttering "I shall be late!" – and she follows it down a rabbit hole. Her long (or slow) fall gives her time to look around and to even consider if she might be falling to the other side of Earth. Finally, she finds herself in a hall with many doors. She sights a key on a glass table which opens a door too small for her to fit through, though she can see it leads to an enticing garden. She drinks from a bottle labeled "DRINK ME" but is then too small to retrieve the key she inadvertently forgot to pick up from the table. When she eats the cake with the words "EAT ME" written on it, she grows so tall she hits the ceiling.

⁶⁰ Note-Alice's fall in Burton's film is not quite so slow-motion as in Carroll's story, for Alice does not have time to observe the objects around her (such as the marmalade jar). In this different medium, we viewers also have no idea of what is going through Alice's head. In Carroll's version, Alice has time to imagine what she would say to an Antipathy if she met one.

Alice proceeds to fall down, once again, now onto a black and white checkered floor, one of the many allusions to Lewis Carroll's references to chess in *Through the Looking Glass*. The events seem to show that the story itself is being seen through a looking-glass created by Woolverton and Burton, whom have incorporated elements of Carroll's subsequent story into their film. The many locked doors in the hall, the key on the glass table which unlocks the small door, and the bottle and the cake labeled with written instructions are elements that reappear in Burton's *Alice*, lending initial credibility to the project.

Nevertheless, for those Carroll fans expecting a certain amount of "fidelity", the reassuring beginning of the film takes a sudden turn of events as three entire chapters of Carroll's work are immediately excluded⁶¹. Burton's Alice does have some fleeting encounters with some incredible insects, such as those described in Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*, when she enters the lush garden - e.g. dragonflies and rocking-horse flies (CARROLL, 2000, p.173-174). And she does seem to have the same feeling that she had in the book when her adventures begin, for she echoes the words "Curiouser and curiouser"⁶². However, the garden itself is depicted in a manner distinct from that of Carroll's garden in *Through the Looking Glass*. While visually stunning and aesthetically pleasing, it must be noted that this backdrop to events is an element that has been introduced by the adapters, with only small details taken from Carroll's text. It limits its definition to saying Alice longed to "wander about those beds of bright flowers and cool

⁶¹ CARROLL, 2000, p. 20-46, **Chapter II** – The Pool of Tears: In this chapter of Lewis Carroll's story, Alice cries a pool of tears, and finds herself swimming in it when she shrinks after fanning herself with a fan. She meets a mouse, which she manages to offend and frighten away, with her talk about her cat Dinah and a neighbor's dog, both of whom hunt rodents. The mouse offers to tell her about its hatred for cats and dogs when the animals get ashore. **Chapter III** – **The Caucus Race and a Long Tale**: The animals swim out of the pool of tears and try to decide how to get themselves dry. The mouse tries to dry them by telling a very dry lecture, while the Dodo proposes a Caucus-Race, where all (or none of them) will be winners. Alice once again fails to measure her words and frightens the animals away by speaking of her cat. **Chapter IV** – **The Rabbit Sends in a Little Bill**: The White Rabbit mistakes Alice for his servant and sends her to fetch him gloves and a fan. Once Alice goes inside the house, she begins to grow as she hoped she would, after drinking a potion she found there. Bill the Lizard (the Rabbit's gardener) is instructed to go down the chimney but Alice kicks him back out of the house. Pebbles that were thrown become little cakes, which Alice eats, and they cause her to shrink in size. She encounters an enormous puppy once outside the house but manages to distract him with a stick and run away.

⁶² *Ibid*, p. 20. Alice says these words after she has eaten the cake and grown so tall.

fountains”⁶³. In the source text as well, when Alice later returns to the hall and is able to unlock the door, the garden she enters is in fact part of the Red Queen’s palace grounds, where the game of croquet is taking place⁶⁴.

No less fantastic in content, Alice then meets Tweedledee and Tweedledum, and is escorted by the bickering twins, the White Rabbit, the Dormouse, and the Dodo bird to the Blue Caterpillar, now known as Absolem⁶⁵. The debate amongst the characters as to whether Alice is the “right” Alice reinforces the fact that this is a story being *revisited*. Flowers with human faces, which appear in *Through the Looking Glass*⁶⁶, also take part in the discussion in this 2010 *Alice*. The purpose of the White Rabbit’s mission, to bring Alice back, soon becomes clear, as the characters look upon the Oraculum, which portrays an image of them looking upon the Oraculum. Lewis Carroll’s fascination with recurring (and particularly inverted) images, as seen in *Through the Looking Glass*, is reproduced here⁶⁷. The Oraculum, a compendium of all events, past and future, also prophetically portrays Alice slaying the Jabberwocky with the Vorpal sword.

Alice’s encounter with the Blue hookah-smoking Caterpillar sets Carroll fans back on track once again.⁶⁸ As Alice is leaving in Carroll’s story, the Caterpillar

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 10.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 78-79.

⁶⁵ In Carroll’s story, Alice encounters the Blue caterpillar on her own.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 159, note #4. Gardner points out: “In addition to the three Liddell girls of whom Carroll was so fond, there were two younger sisters, Rhoda and Violet. They appear in this chapter as the Rose and Violet – the only reference to them in the Alice books.”

⁶⁷ CARROLL, 2000, p.141-144, note #5.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 47-68, **Chapter V - Advice from a Caterpillar**: Alice meets the Caterpillar, whose questioning leads her to question her own identity. She is also confused by her inability to perform acts she could before, such as reciting the poem, “You are old, father William” (a parody written by Carroll based on Robert Southey’s poem “The Old Man’s Comforts and How He Gained Them.”) Before crawling away, the caterpillar tells her about the mushroom, whose sides can make her shrink or grow. Alice soon arrives at the Duchess’ estate. **Chapter VI - Pig and Pepper**: A fish-footman delivers an invitation for the Duchess to play croquet with the Red Queen to the Duchess’ frog footman. Alice seizes the opportunity to get inside the ugly Duchess’ house. The cook is throwing dishes while making a soup full of pepper, which causes Alice, the Duchess and her baby to sneeze. Alice takes the baby away, but discovers it has turned into a pig. The Cheshire Cat (which belongs to the Duchess) directs Alice to the March Hare’s House,

calls her back to advise her to keep her temper. When she complains about not being able to remember things as well as she used to, he suggests that she recite “*You are old, Father William.*”⁶⁹ He finally informs her that the mushroom can help her grow taller or shorter, before crawling away.

The sudden, visually impressive attack of the Bandersnatch and the Knave of Heart’s card soldiers adds action to the plot that might be expected to please modern viewers. In the 2010 *Alice*, the Felfel bird appears to snatch up the Tweedle twins and carry them off to Salazun⁷⁰ Grum.

In the meantime, both the Duchess and her cook are eliminated from the adaptation, (though the March Hare can later be found throwing soup in the White Queen’s kitchen). The fish footmen and the frogs described in Carroll’s Chapter VI can be seen as servants in the Red Queen’s castle, while she is questioning who has stolen her tarts. A drop of squimberry juice on the corner of the big mouth of one of the frogs gives him away and leads him to his execution⁷¹. The Knave of Hearts shows the irascible Iracebeth, the Red Queen, the Oraculum and informs her that Alice has returned to carry out the prophecy of slaying the Jabberwocky on Frabjous Day. The Red Queen is distressed at the prospect of her “Jabberbabywocky” being harmed, but even more distressed at the possibility of having her reign taken away from her to be restored to her sister, the White Queen. She commands the Knave of Hearts to bring Alice to her and he in turns offers freedom to Bayard the Bloodhound and his family if he should find Alice (To this, the Knave’s horse quips “Dogs will believe anything”).

where the Mad Tea Party is taking place. The Cheshire Cat then almost totally disappears, leaving only its grin. Alice remarks she has often seen a cat without a grin but never a grin without a cat.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 49. In note # 3, Gardner points out that this poem is one of the “undisputed masterpieces of nonsense verse” and a parody of Robert Southey’s poem “The Old Man’s Comforts and How He Gained Them.”

⁷⁰ The location is also spelt Salazen Grum on occasions in the script.

⁷¹ Since the frog confesses to stealing the Queen’s tarts, the accusation changes in the film to that of Alice seducing Ilosovic Stayne, the Knave of Hearts, although he in fact tried to seduce her.

The enigmatic Cheshire Cat leads the frightened and wounded Alice to the Mad Tea Party, where she encounters the Dormouse, the Mad Hatter, and the March Hare, in a scene very similar to the one described in Lewis Carroll's Chapter VII, right down to the price tag⁷² on the Mad Hatter's hat⁷³. The Mad Hatter tells Alice that they have been continuously having tea, for he has had to kill time waiting for her to return. While the motive for Time's having become offended is different, the resulting standstill is aligned with Carroll's version. The Cheshire Cat (Chessur) and the Mad Hatter (Tarrant Hightopp) are visibly at odds with each other. The Mad Hatter feels the Cheshire Cat shouldn't have disappeared during the attack on the village of the Hightopps. The motto of the Underland Underground Resistance is exclaimed by all "Downal with Bluddy Behg Hid!" After Tarrant has thrown curses at the Chessur, the latter remembers how Tarrant used to do the best *Futterwacken*. (Note: Woolverton's script says he is the best dancer in all of Witzend, and Johnny Depp's character truly appears to be at wit's end.) Tarrant makes Alice shrink just as the Knave of Hearts comes looking for her, being led to the party by Bayard, the Bloodhound. Tim Burton uses the moment to include the song "Twinkle, twinkle, little bat", which also appears in Carroll's work (CARROLL, 2000, p. 74)⁷⁴. Bayard stops dead in his tracks when the Mad Hatter

⁷² See: <<http://www.alice-in-wonderland.net/alice11.html>>. According to this website, the card is a price tag in 'old' English money: pounds, shillings and pennies, which was then written as l/s/d. Hence, the price of the hat would be ten shillings and sixpence. Lewis Carroll explained the meaning of the tag in his 'Nursery Alice': Chris Somerville added to the explanation: The actual amount was significant also. Professional people (doctors, lawyers, etc) all charged fees, not in pounds but in guineas. One guinea was one pound plus one shilling. And while pounds were the currency of trade, guineas were the currency of the professions. There used to be a gold coin called, and valued at a guinea, and a smaller gold coin, a half guinea, valued at ten and six (10/6). The pound however was merely a paper note, as was the half-pound or ten shillings. So the hat worn by the Mad Hatter was priced at half-a-guinea, signifying its superior style.

⁷³ CARROLL, 2000, p. 69-78, **Chapter VII – The Mad Tea Party**: It is constantly being held by the March Hare, the Mad Hatter and a very sleepy Dormouse, since Time has punished the Hatter by making it always 6:00 p.m. Alice says that she has never spoken to Time, but she knows she has to beat it when she learns music. The Mad Hatter says that explains Time's reaction, for Time wo'n't stand a beating. Alice becomes tired of all the stories and riddles, such as the unsolved riddle of why a raven is like a writing desk, and leaves. She finds herself once again in the hall and is able to unlock the little door, which leads into a garden at the Red Queen's palace.

⁷⁴ See also footnotes #28 & #29.

confronts him with the Resistance's motto, and then leads soldiers away, pretending to have picked up another trail.

The Mad Hatter decides to take Alice to the White Queen. During the journey, he recites the poem *The Jabberwocky*⁷⁵, which is an essential element in both Carroll's text and the 2010 *Alice*. The plot in the latter revolves around bringing Alice back to Underland to make the prophecy of slaying the Jabberwocky come true. Tarrant accuses Alice of having lost much of her muchness, when she says she doesn't intend to slay. He tells her of the Jabberwocky's former attack on the village of Hightopps, an event most likely to have contributed to his madness. He recounts how in that very forest called Tulgey Wood he managed to save the White Queen by leading her away to safety, only to find his village destroyed when he returned. A flashback shows him placing a burned and trampled hat left on the ground on his head as if it were a sad war trophy. This tragic event most probably was included to add depth to the character of the Mad Hatter, something Johnny Depp strove as well to do in his well-balanced performance.

The Mad Hatter saves Alice by giving himself up when the Red Queen's soldiers, commanded by the Knave of Hearts, catch up with them. Alice is thrust to safety on the Mad Hatter's hat and found the next day by Bayard the bloodhound. Instead of going to the White Queen's palace, Marmoreal, as Bayard says is "foretold", Alice decides to return to save the imprisoned Mad Hatter. Bayard's concern about diverging from the path may quite well be an allusion to what happens to content as it changes form in adaptation across media. Alice's answer could well be Woolverton's and Burton's answer to criticism regarding fidelity, for after all, this is *their* film. Alice expresses her exasperation, as she also does in Carroll's text⁷⁶, by saying:

⁷⁵ The 2010 film uses the term Jabberwocky to refer to the animal. In Carroll's text, "Jabberwocky" is the title of the poem, which also mentions the Bandersnatch, while the creature is called the Jabberwock (see CARROLL, 2000, p. 148).

⁷⁶ CARROLL, 2000, p.95. Among other moments of exasperation at the many turn of events, Alice says on page 95, "Everybody says 'come on!' here, thought Alice, as she went slowly after it [the Gryphon]."

I have had quite enough! Since the moment I fell down that rabbit hole, I've been told what I must do and who I must be. I've been shrunk, stretched, scratched and stuffed into a teapot. I've been accused of being Alice and of not being Alice. But this is my dream! I'll decide how it goes from here. (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 38)

Alice arrives at the Red Queen's castle and demonstrates that she hasn't lost her "muchness" by stepping on skulls (with noses?) to cross the moat. As stated earlier, Carroll's Red Queen makes much ado about beheading anyone who gets in her way, but the Gryphon says that the beheadings are just her fancy. The floating skulls show this is not the case in the 2010 *Alice*.⁷⁷ Alice enters the garden through a hole in the castle's wall just in time to watch a strange game of croquet, being played using live flamingoes as mallets and hedgehogs as balls. This scene is very similar to the scene described in Chapter VIII of Lewis Carroll's text.⁷⁸ Alice encounters the White Rabbit, who sarcastically says "Well! If it isn't the wrong Alice"⁷⁹, but then gives her some Upelkuchen to eat, so that she can become large enough to actually help rescue the Mad Hatter. The Queen, unaware of who Alice really is, welcomes the overgrown girl to her castle, saying that anyone with a head that large is welcome in her court. When the White Rabbit hesitates while trying to cover up who she really is, saying Alice is "...Um", Alice fills in with, "From Umbridge".

⁷⁷ WOOLVERTON, L. *Alice*, 2008. In contrast, in CARROLL, L., 2000, p. 95, "Why, she," said the Gryphon. "It's all her fancy, that: they never executes nobody, you know. (In addition to the ambiguity of the double negative – do two wrongs make a right?- Gardner points out in note #12: "If the Gryphon's "nobody" is never executed, then Alice may well have seen nobody on the road in Chapter 7 of the second *Alice* book."

⁷⁸ CARROLL, 2000, p. 79-89. **Chapter VIII – The Queen's Croquet Ground:** After finding playing cards painting white roses red, to avoid being beheaded by the Red Queen, Alice sees the King and Queen playing croquet, using flamingoes as mallets and hedgehogs as balls. Alice is "ordered" to play as well. She then sees the Cheshire Cat once again. The executioner gets into a discussion with the King and the Queen about it being impossible to behead a figure (the Cat) whose body is not visible. The Queen - who has used her infamous phrase "Off with his head!"- decides to release the Duchess from prison, upon Alice's request, to resolve the matter, since the Cheshire Cat belongs to her (the Duchess). The Cheshire Cat is being sentenced to execution because of his "inappropriate" behavior with regards to the King.

⁷⁹ WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 40.

Chapters IX and X of Carroll's text were also not included in Woolverton's 2008 script and Burton's 2010 *Alice*.⁸⁰ The Red Queen has the Tweedle twins brought in to entertain her and her guest, but luckily for Alice they refrain from giving away her true identity. The Mad Hatter is then brought to the Queen to be questioned as to Alice's whereabouts. He plays a word game which the Dormouse played in Carroll's former version of the Tea Party (speaking of objects the little sisters had drawn, all beginning with the letter 'm', including much of a muchness)⁸¹. In the 2010 version, the Mad Hatter uses the letter 'm' to speak of "moron, mutiny, murder, malice". To this, the Queen replies they are now looking for an 'a' word, Alice, without seeming to notice that the word malice contains the name Alice. The Knave of Hearts becomes interested in "Um", that is, Alice, but she is only interested in getting her hands on the Vorpals sword and on rescuing the Mad Hatter.

When Alice speaks in private with the Mad Hatter, he suddenly becomes aware that his happiness at working at his trade is misplaced, for he is hating the evil Red Queen. He asks "What's the hatter with me?"⁸² and begins to destroy his creations. As is the case in other moments in the film, he requires intervention by another person (in this case, Alice) to snap out of his altered state. When once again 'lucid', he asks Alice if he has gone mad, to which she replies. "I'm afraid so.

⁸⁰ CARROLL, 2000, p. 90-109. **Chapter IX-The Mock Turtle's Story:** After the Duchess is brought to the croquet game, she tells Alice that everything has a moral, if one can only find it. Their conversation later revolves around a guessing game called "animal, vegetable, mineral", similar to a game played nowadays called "Twenty questions". The Queen gives the Duchess the ultimatum that either she or her head should be off, so she takes the hint and rushes away. The Queen then introduces Alice to the Gryphon, who in turn takes her to meet the Mock Turtle. The Mock Turtle weeps but according to the Gryphon has no sorrow. (See footnote #26). When the Turtle speaks of his school days, a long list of puns pervades, until the Gryphon interrupts him to speak of games. **Chapter X – The Lobster Quadrille:** The Mock Turtle and the Gryphon dance to the Lobster Quadrille, while Alice recites (rather incorrectly) "Tis the voice of the sluggard", rather, lobster. As the Mock Turtle sings "Beautiful Soup", the Gryphon drags Alice away for the trial.

⁸¹ CARROLL, 2000, p.77. In Woolverton's script (p. 27) and Burton's film, it is the Mad Hatter who is investigating things beginning with the letter 'm' also at the Mad Tea Party.

⁸² WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 49.

You're entirely bonkers. But I'll tell you a secret...all the best people are"⁸³. Before Alice leaves the room, the Mad Hatter asks "Why is it you're always too small or too tall?"⁸⁴. This is one of the moments when the script/film hints that something more might have developed between them.

The Mad Hatter keeps the Red Queen busy trying on hats while Alice looks for the Vorpal sword. She finds it guarded by the Bandersnatch, who relinquishes it to Alice after she gives back his eye (which she has taken from the Dormouse). Meanwhile, back at the White Palace, Bayard has already taken news to the White Queen that Alice has arrived at Salazen Grum in search of the Vorpal sword. When Alice returns with the sword to get the Mad Hatter, the Knave of Hearts barges in to arrest Alice, also known as "Um", for unlawful seduction. The Dormouse inadvertently says, "Run, Alice!" revealing Um's real identity. Alice only escapes through the Mad Hatter's intervention, once again. When Alice seems to be surrounded by the Red Queen's army, the Bandersnatch comes to the rescue and takes her away to the White Queen's palace.

Two of Alice's co-conspirators, the Mad Hatter and the Dormouse, are captured and sentenced to be executed the following day⁸⁵. While Tarrant is imprisoned, Chessur goes to visit him, requesting that he bequeath his hat to him, since Tarrant won't be in further need of it⁸⁶. The following day, the Mad Hatter is saved precisely by the Cheshire Cat, whose head floats up wearing the hat. The

⁸³ *Ibid*, p.49 and p.2. This is a reference to Charles Kingsley's response when Alice asks him as a child if she is mad because of her recurring dream.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 50.

⁸⁵ CARROLL, 2000, p. 110-127. **Chapter XI – Who Stole the Tarts?:** The Knave of Hearts is accused in court of stealing the Queen's tarts (an allusion to a well-known Mother Goose rhyme). The jury of animals listens to the witnesses, including the Mad Hatter and the Duchess's cook. **Chapter 12 – Alice's Evidence:** Alice literally disrupts the jury and is ordered to leave the court. When the Queen shouts out "Off with her head", Alice is not intimidated and says they are just a pack of cards. At this moment, Alice's sister wakes her up, brushing off some leaves (not playing cards) from her face. Alice goes off to wonder about all the imaginings that had happened to her.

⁸⁶ In Woolverton's script, the Knave of Hearts goes to visit Bayard and the Mad Hatter in the Queen's dungeon. This visit does not take place in Tim Burton's film, though Chessur does visit the Mad Hatter in his cell. Chessur's interest in the Hatter's hat proves crucial to the plot for he helps save the Mad Hatter from being executed.

fact that the executioner cannot carry out his instructions is a parallel to the discussion the executioner has in Carroll's story with the King and the Queen of Hearts when he has been told to cut off the Cheshire Cat's head but can't do so for lack of a body. Woolverton and Burton carefully adapted this incident to the Mad Hatter's execution, using the Cat's vanishing abilities. The Dormouse is so pleased by the scheme that she says "Chess, you dog!"⁸⁷ One could imagine that kind of loyalty to a friend in fact from a dog, and the phrase seems to play into Burton's confessed dislike for cats. It would seem more fitting to the self-serving aspects of Chessur's personality for him to have helped the Mad Hatter escape execution in exchange for the hat, but the Hatter keeps it.

The Mad Hatter is in fact in the balustrade near the Red Queen and exposes her courtiers' fake oversized body parts to her. He then tries to incite a rebellion against her rule, but the crowd frantically scatters as soon as the Felfel bird is released. The other members of the resistance flee to Marmoreal. The Red Queen concludes that it is far better to be feared than loved, as she had discussed earlier with the Knave of Hearts. This is aligned to the line of thinking outlined in Chapter XVI of Machiavelli's *The Prince*⁸⁸.

After a reasonably uneventful chat with the White Queen, which is more of a cooking lesson than anything else, Alice meets Absolom again. He says that at their previous encounter he had said that she was "not hardly the right Alice, but that now she was Almost Alice". Later that evening, the Mad Hatter and Alice speak about the following day, Frabjous Day. Alice is worried but at the same time confident that all of the events add up to just a dream. She does however mention that she will miss the Mad Hatter when she wakes up.

When the fatidic day finally arrives, many come forward to champion the White Queen in battle. The armies position themselves on a chess-like battlefield, another allusion to *Through the Looking Glass*. In fact, the White Queen's soldiers

⁸⁷ WOOLVERTON, 2008, p.65.

⁸⁸ MACHIAVELLI, N. *The Prince*,: 2nd edition, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 65. When asked whether it is better to be loved or feared, Machiavelli writes, "The answer is that one would like to be both the one and the other; but because it is difficult to combine them, it is far safer to be feared than loved if you cannot be both."

represent chess pieces, such as towers and horses, while the Red Queen's are numbered hearts playing cards. Alice, once again feeling pressured, runs away crying, only to encounter Absolem now metamorphosing into a butterfly. When he says "I've come to the end of this life"⁸⁹, Alice is afraid he is dying. She tells him she needs him because she doesn't know what to do, to which he responds "I can't help you if you don't even know who you are, stupid girl." At this, Alice speaks of herself and the fact that she is her father's daughter. When she affirms that she is Alice Kingsley, Absolem exclaims "Alice At Last! You were just as dim-witted the first time you were here. You called it Wonderland as I recall"⁹⁰. His remarks trigger her memory of everything she had experienced as the younger Alice. She realizes that what she had considered a dream was in fact a memory. A series of flashbacks go through her mind and are presented as well to the viewers of her former visit to Underland. Interestingly, in one of the flashbacks, Alice is the one who is painting white roses red, under the Red Queen's careful supervision, instead of the Red Queen's gardeners, as in Carroll's text. Perhaps this could be an allusion to Ruskin, who tutored the "real Alice" and her siblings in painting⁹¹. After Absolem has helped her understand her true nature, she prepares to carry out her mission.

When Alice catches sight of the Jabberwocky, she tells the Mad Hatter that the task of slaying it is impossible. The Mad Hatter's response, "Only if you believe it is" reminds her of her father. She lists six impossible things (as her father used to do before breakfast) to keep herself from losing courage. The scene soon becomes a full-scale battle, with the Mad Hatter fighting against the Knave of Hearts. It is finally Alice's turn to say "Off with your head" as she, or rather the Vorpal sword, slays the Jabberwocky. Once the Red Queen's champion has been slain, the Red Knights refuse to follow her orders, and the resounding clinking of metal swords falling to the ground makes the scene seem more realistic. The

⁸⁹ WOOLVERTON, 2008, p.71.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 71.

⁹¹ For more details, see footnote #113.

White Queen regains power. She proclaims that the Red Queen shall be banished together with Ilosovic Stayne and they are chained together. Stayne tries to kill Iracebeth but the Mad Hatter thwarts his plans and then he begins to dance the Futterwacken.

The White Queen presents Alice with a vial containing the Jabberwocky's blood. Alice asks if it will take her home, to which the Queen responds "If that is what you choose"⁹². After saying goodbye to the Mad Hatter, we see Alice coming out of the rabbit hole she had fallen into. She addresses all of her unresolved matters at the party, beginning by turning down Hamish. She also tells Aunt Imogene that she is delusional for thinking that she has a fiancé, though her aunt's presence in the story hardly seems to add to the plot. As she shows her firm convictions, she gains the respect of Lord Ascot, who takes her under his wing. They discuss trade routes to China and her visionary plans seem to prove that she is in fact Charles Kingsley's daughter. This takes Woolverton's and Burton's story full circle, as the movie began with a group of men, including Lord Ascot, debating Charles Kingsley's trading visions. As the story closes, Alice is on the deck of a trading ship. Absolem lands on her shoulders. She recognizes him and greets him before he flies away.

⁹² WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 78.

4.3. MAJOR THEMES IN CARROLL'S, WOOLVERTON'S, AND BURTON'S ALICE

One of the major and most overtly expressed themes developed in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* involves growing up and learning how to live according to the rules and logic of an adult world. Carroll's story portrays many moments in which Alice has to make decisions, starting from the first bottle labeled "Drink me", to what kinds of conversations to have with mice and other animals, the responsibility of caring for the Duchess' baby, or discussing morals with her, to even summoning her to resolve the impasse created by a bodiless head at the Cheshire Cat's execution. In Carroll's text, Alice first almost stumbles upon the question about what life would be like when she is grown up when she has physically grown. She asks "...shall I *never* get any older than I am now? That'll be a comfort, one way – never to be an old woman – but then – always to have lessons to learn! Oh, I shouldn't like *that!*" (CARROLL, 2000, p. 39-40).

Seeing as Woolverton and Burton chose to begin the story with a nineteen-year-old Alice, viewers could raise the issue that most of her process of maturing has taken place. Nevertheless, Alice is shown to be quite indecisive at the beginning of the movie, when she is faced with Hamish's wedding proposition. First, she enumerates all of the reasons given by society why she should marry him, and then, flustered, she runs away before reaching any decision. After all of the ordeals she has faced in Underland, Alice decides to return home to deal with all the issues left unaddressed at the party. The adventures have indeed made her grow up, as the decisions Carroll's Alice made in the book also did.

Towards the end of her adventures in the 2010 *Alice*, when she is asked to champion the White Queen, the Queen says: "Alice, you cannot live your life to please others. The choice must be yours because when you step out to face that creature, you will step out alone" (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 70). The fact that adults not only have to make their own decisions but also have to face the consequences of their decisions alone is put forward here. Up until that moment, Alice had been usually accompanied in the events she had to face and aided

particularly by the Mad Hatter. The Alice at the end of the movie, having tackled the seemingly unfathomable task of slaying the Jabberwocky on her own, has matured to the point of tackling now the world in new business relationships and ventures.

The viewpoint is feministic in Woolverton's script and Burton's movie, as is shown by Mia Wasikowska's evolution into a strong-willed Alice, willing to scoff at social conventions to the point of baring her ankles and dancing the Futterwacken⁹³. In an article written by Larry Rohter for *The New York Times*, printed on February 28th, 2010, Woolverton is quoted as saying, "I do feel it is really important to depict strong-willed, empowered women because women and girls need role models, which is what art and characters bring"⁹⁴. Due to Woolverton's emphasis on self-esteem and moral uplifting of character, which can be seen in many of her other works, the episode in Carroll's work when Alice cries herself a pool of tears was excised, for Woolverton did not want to show Alice breaking down. Additionally, in the scene in Tim Burton's *Alice* in which the Oraculum shows the Jabberwocky being slain, Alice is portrayed. Woolverton points out that in Tenniel's original illustration, it was a boy who was drawn slaying the monster. Carroll's take on growing up seems to have been much more playful (though a little melancholic) and involved learning the rules and logic of the games or scenarios to adapt to the reality being presented. It was as if Carroll wanted his Alice to learn the rules without truly becoming an adult.

Another theme present in both Carroll's and Burton's *Alice* involves the relativity of things or situations depending on one's point of view. Gardner points out that Alice changes size twelve times during Carroll's first book. In contrast, she only changes size five times during Burton's film. Gardner also mentions that

⁹³ Interestingly, Woolverton's dormouse is also a feisty female character. Gardner says on CARROLL, 2000, page 70, note #2, that it was pointed out by Dr. Selwyn Goodacre that the dormouse is sexless at the Tea Party, but revealed to be a male in Chapter XI. This occurs when the Queen shrieks "Collar that dormouse! [...] Suppress him! Pinch him!"

⁹⁴ ROHTER, L. **Drinking Blood: New Wonders of Alice's World**, New York Times, Feb. 28th, 2010. Available at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/28/movies/28alice.html?pagewanted=al>>.

Richard Ellmann hypothesized that Carroll might have been trying to demonstrate the “discrepancy between the small Alice whom he loved but could not marry and the large Alice she would soon become.”⁹⁵ This can also be seen in Burton’s *Alice* in terms of the Mad Hatter and Alice. When they first meet, Alice is much smaller than him and he shrinks her even more to conceal her in a teapot as the Knave of Hearts is approaching.⁹⁶ Later, when she is taller than him in their encounter at the Red Queen’s palace, the Hatter says, “Why is it you’re always too small or too tall?” (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 50). When the Mad Hatter escapes execution and reencounters Alice at Marmoreal, he says that he would have regretted not seeing her again, “especially now that you’re the proper size...it’s a good size...just right, in fact...a right proper Alice size...”⁹⁷.

Other characters tend to notice her changes in height also according to their own perspective. When she first meets the Tweedles, she is about half as tall as they are. Later, when she meets them again at the Red Queen’s castle, she is roughly twice their size, as can be seen in their conversation below:

TWEEDLEDEE: How is it you’re being so great big?
 TWEEDLEDUM: She ain’t great big. This is how she normal is.
 ALICE: Where’s the...?
 TWEEDLEDUM: I’m certain she is smaller when we met.
 TWEEDLEDEE: She had drank the *pishsalver*, to get through the door, recall it? (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 50-51)

Alice in fact had arrived at the castle small enough to ride on Tarrant’s top hat, yet grows much larger upon eating Upelkuchen. She then is so large that she towers over the despotic Red Queen and is even taller than the 7 ½ -foot Knave of Hearts. Her size seems to make her interesting to him, for he corners her in the hallway and tells her “I like them large”⁹⁸. Later, when Alice arrives at Marmoreal,

⁹⁵ CARROLL, 2000, p. 17, note# 10.

⁹⁶ In Carroll’s text, the Mad Hatter and the March Hare try to put the Dormouse into a teapot as Alice leaves the Mad Tea Party. Gardner points out, on p. 77, note # 77, that he was informed by Roger Green “that Victorian children actually had dormice as pets, keeping them in old teapots with grass or hay.”

⁹⁷ WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 68

Mirana comments that Alice is taller than she thought she'd be, to which Alice replies "Blame it on too much Upelkuchen"⁹⁹. After the White Queen prepares a concoction, Alice drinks it and shrinks to her "normal size", commenting that she feels much better.

Even the largeness of the Red Queen's head depends on perspective. The Mad Hatter says "What a regrettably large head you have", expressing in a veiled manner his opinion while playing into the Queen's bigheadedness. He then plays into her rivalry with her sister by saying that the White Queen's head is puny. The Mad Hatter reinforces the greatness of the Red Queen's head also by saying "What I could do with this monument, this orb. Nay, this magnificently heroic globe!" (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 45). Iracebeth's blindness to the irony of the Mad Hatter's remarks seems equivalent to the greatness of her head. While Lewis Carroll's work criticizes the British judicial system of his time, Woolverton and Burton seem to remain aligned with Carroll's ironic stance towards certain aspects of government by portraying a rash, ruthless and really nearsighted ruler in the 2010 *Alice*. When Mirana questions Alice about Iracebeth, particularly her head, Alice replies that it is "bulbous". The White Queen suggests that her sister may have some kind of growth in her brain, perhaps in an attempt to explain her sister's mean behavior.

Perspectives are created as well by shots from different angles. One fantastic example of this is the point of view which viewers share with Tweedledee and Tweedledum as they are being taken by the Felfel bird back to the Red Queen's castle. Viewers can almost feel as if they are hanging upside down as well, with branches in their way. The relativity of all objects is masterfully handled in shot after shot of Tim Burton's *Alice*, particularly with respect to Alice's perception of the world around her as she shrinks and grows.

A third theme shared by Carroll, Woolverton and Burton involves identity. This theme was developed in Carroll's book most specifically through the Blue

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 46.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 59.

Caterpillar's line of questioning. In Woolverton's and Tim Burton's *Alice*, however, Alice's identity is brought up by many different characters. From the moment she is in the hall full of doors and forgets to pick up the key lying upon the glass table before shrinking, voices discuss that she might be the wrong Alice:

(Off-screen voices)

DODO: You'd think she would remember this from the first time.

DORMOUSE: You've brought the wrong Alice.

WHITE RABBIT: She's the right one. I'm certain of it.

DORMOUSE: She's the wrong Alice.

WHITE RABBIT: Give her a chance.

(WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 14-15)

Even the flowers with human faces and the Tweedles become involved in the debate, though the group decides that it is Absolem who will know who Alice is for sure. Needless to say, Absolem's first question, as that of the Blue Caterpillar in Carroll's version, is "Who are you?" After the group has studied the Oraculum, the White Rabbit asks Absolem if the Alice he has brought down to Underland is the right Alice, to which he replies "Not Hardly" (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 20). When Absolem says "We shall see [if she is Alice]", Alice retorts "I ought to know who I am." The Blue caterpillar seconds that and revisits the notion in another conversation with Alice at Marmoreal.

When Burton's Alice first meets the Cheshire Cat, he asks her "What do you call yourself?" to which she replies, "Alice".¹⁰⁰ He then goes on to ask, "The Alice?" (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 26). At this point, Woolverton's script reads, "I'm not going into that again!" but Alice's line in Burton's movie is "There's been some debate about that." Alice's answer in the movie fits better with the following line, spoken by Chessur, "I never get involved in politics." The Cheshire Cat's answer also seems quite fitting for his character, since he did disappear when the Hightopp's village was being attacked, avoiding involvement. The Mad Hatter reinforces the Cheshire Cat's often egocentric attitude at the Mad Tea Party, when he says, "The entire world is falling to ruin and poor Chessur's off his tea"

¹⁰⁰ CARROLL, 2000, p. 173. In *Through the Looking Glass*, the Gnat asks Alice "What's the use of their [the insects] having names, the Gnat said, "if they wo'n't answer to them?"

(WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 28). Then, when Chessur realizes that the Knave of Hearts is approaching with soldiers, right on cue, he evaporates once more. Carroll's Cheshire Cat's disappearing acts seem enigmatic yet entertaining, but Woolverton's/Burton's Cheshire Cat displays more self-serving interests, most of the time.

Whether Alice is the Alice is once again brought up by Bayard, the Bloodhound, when he encounters her underneath the Hatter's hat. He asks "Would your name be "Alice" by any chance?" She answers "Yes, but I'm not that one." The bloodhound then says "The Hatter would not have given himself up for just any Alice" (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 37). Bayard makes an important point, for in fact, the Mad Hatter repeatedly sacrifices his own well-being to protect Alice. In fact, from a different angle, Carroll probably wouldn't have gone to the trouble of writing the story for just any Alice either.

In Alice's second encounter with Absolem, now at Marmoreal, he once again asks her who she is and she replies, "I thought we'd settled this. I'm Alice...but not that one." He then asks her "How do you know?" (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 63). She says that he had said so himself but Absolem corrects her, saying "I said you were Not Hardly Alice. But you're much more her now. In fact, you're Almost Alice."

When Alice faces the Jabberwocky, there seems to be no doubt in anyone's mind that she is the right Alice to fulfill the prophecy. Nevertheless, the Jabberwocky refers to her as an insignificant bearer and considers the Vorpal sword the enemy. As the action picks up, Alice cuts off its tongue, saying "That's enough chatter" (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 75). This seems to also allude to the fact that too many words at that moment would have interfered in the pace of the action. Images of the battle speak for themselves in this filmic version. In Burton's film, the Red Queen accuses the Mad Hatter of interfering because he picks up the Vorpal sword and gives it to Alice. In Woolverton's script, the Mad Hatter's verbal warnings¹⁰¹ saved Alice from being killed by the monster. In this case, in the battle between words and images, images spoke louder in the movie.

¹⁰¹ WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 75. First the Mad Hatter yells "Watch your head!" in time for Alice to duck and avoid the Jabberwocky's jaws. Then he yells, "Behind you". Although Alice says she

The question as to what is a dream and what is reality is a theme brought up not only in Carroll's work and Linda Woolverton's/Tim Burton's adaptations, but in many other works of artistic expression in many different media since the beginning of time. In one instance in which the reality within the movie (already a fiction in itself) blends with the fantasy of Underland, a caterpillar appears on Hamish's right shoulder right before he proposes. His proposal leads a flustered Alice to run after the white rabbit, which in turn leads her to return to Underland.

The distinction, however, is that in Woolverton's/Burton's versions, voices off-screen discuss whether Alice is or not the "right" Alice. The viewers discover that the White Rabbit has been charged with the mission of bringing Alice **back** to Underland, for her to carry out the prophecy of slaying the Jabberwock (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 14-15). Alice asks Tweedledee and Tweedledum how she can be "the wrong Alice" if it in fact is her dream. The issue of what is a dream and what is reality was taken up by Lewis Carroll, not only in *Alice in Wonderland*, but also in other passages. Gardner quotes an entry in Carroll's diary dated February 9th, 1856:

Query: when we are dreaming and, as often happens, have a dim consciousness of the fact and try to wake, do we not say and do things which in waking life would be insane? May we not then sometimes define insanity as an inability to distinguish which is the waking and which the sleeping life? We often dream without the least suspicion of unreality: "Sleep hath its own world," and it is often as lifelike as the other." (CARROLL, 2000, p. 67, note #9)¹⁰²

Gardner also points out that Socrates and Theaetetus had a similar discussion in Plato's *Theaetetus*. Socrates asks Theaetetus:

[...] how can you determine whether at this moment we are sleeping, and all our thoughts are a dream; or whether we are awake, and talking to one another in the waking state?[..] in either sphere of existence the soul contends that the thoughts which are present to our minds at the time are true... (CARROLL, 2000, p. 67, note #9)

can manage, even the mean Red Queen is aware that the Mad Hatter's words have helped Alice, for she says "The Hatter's interfering!"

¹⁰² The quote Carroll wrote is by Lord Bryon, and is as follows: "Sleep hath its own world, and a wide realm of wild reality. And dreams in their development have breath, and tears, and tortures, and the touch of joy."

When Alice is awoken by her sister at the end of Carroll's first book, we readers presume her adventures were a dream. After Alice has retold her dream, her sister then goes on to dream about Alice's dream, creating a dream-within-a-dream motif. This situation repeats itself when, in *Through the Looking Glass*, the Tweedle twins question Alice about what would happen to her if they were to wake the Red King, since surely she is in his dream. Tweedledee asks Alice where she would be if the King stopped dreaming about her. While she says that she would be right where she is, Tweedledee disagrees, saying "You'd be nowhere. Why you're only a sort of thing in his dream!" Alice begins to cry and tries to use this in her defense, "If I wasn't real [...] I shouldn't be able to cry", to which Tweedledum retorts contemptuously "I hope you don't suppose those are *real* tears?" taking the debate right back to where it started, about what is or isn't real¹⁰³.

In the beginning of Burton's *Alice*, Alice asks "How can I be the 'wrong Alice' when it's my dream?" (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p.16). The animals are glaring so intensely at her that Alice goes on to say "I'm sorry. I don't mean to be the wrong Alice. Wait, this is my dream. I'm going to wake up and you'll all disappear"¹⁰⁴. Even though she pinches herself and the Dormouse sticks her with a pin, she does not awaken, but was she supposed to?

The Dormouse goes on to save Alice from the Bandersnatch's attack since Alice keeps trying to tell herself that nothing can harm her for it is only a dream. Nevertheless, what can be said about the smell that she smells not only during the attack but also once again before she enters the Bandersnatch's den? Would she sense smell in her dream as if it were reality? Or would she simply be dreaming that she had smelled the smell?

Shortly afterwards, when Alice first encounters the head of the Cheshire Cat, she says "And I'm still dreaming!" He offers to purify the wound that the

¹⁰³ CARROLL, 2000, p. 189, note #10. Gardner provides greater detail to this debate: "The Tweedle brothers defend Bishop Berkeley's view that all material objects, including ourselves, are only "sorts of things" in the mind of God. Alice takes the common-sense position of Samuel Johnson, who supposed that he refuted Berkeley by kicking a large stone."

¹⁰⁴ WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 20.

Bandersnatch has inflicted upon her, but Alice replies that she will be fine as soon as she wakes up. The Cheshire Cat adds that it is best she be on her way, but she says “What way? All I want to do is wake up from this dream!” (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 26).

When Alice arrives at the Mad Tea Party and the Mad Hatter admonishes her, saying that she is terribly late, she comments “Time can be funny in dreams”¹⁰⁵. After the departure of the Knave of Hearts, the Mad Hare suggests that it is best to take Alice to Marmoreal, for she will be safe with the White Queen. Alice then asks if Mirana will be able to help her wake up, to which the Mad Hatter responds, “If she doesn’t put you to sleep.” This reply seems fitting not only in terms of being aligned to the theme regarding dreams or reality, but also with respect to the washed-out character of the White Queen, pale in all aspects, not just in appearance.

The fact that Alice is revisiting Underland is brought up on different occasions by the Mad Hatter, perhaps to counter the notion that her adventures are just part of a dream. First he says he would know her anywhere. In fact, when Alice arrives at the Mad Tea Party, the Mad Hatter says: “It’s absolutely Alice. You’re absolutely Alice! I’d know you anywhere. I’d know him anywhere”¹⁰⁶. Later, when escorting her to Marmoreal, he comments wistfully “You’re not the same as you were before. You were much more...much more muchier...you’ve lost your muchness”¹⁰⁷. When viewers are beginning to feel more certain that the adventures are actually real, since she is revisiting the place, they are soon led to wonder once again. The dreamlike quality of the flashback of the village’s attack and the trancelike nature of the unreliable narrator Tarrant leads us to question again what is a representation of reality or fiction, within this fictional representation. Then, Tarrant seems to be back to ‘reality’ when he is able to hear the Red Knight approaching.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid*, p. 27. I cannot fathom why the Mad Hatter used a masculine pronoun; it doesn’t seem to refer to Chessur due to the location and movement of the characters in the film, but there doesn’t seem to be any other referent to link the pronoun to.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid*, p.34.

In the conversation Alice and the Mad Hatter have at Marmoreal, he asks her if she knows what day the following day will be. She answers:

ALICE: The Frabjous day. How could I forget? Oh, I wish I'd wake up!
 MAD HATTER: You still think this is a dream?
 ALICE: Well, it can't possibly be real. This has all come from my own mind.
 MAD HATTER: Which would mean that I'm not real.
 ALICE: No, I'm sorry to say. You're just a figment of my imagination. I would dream up someone who's half-mad.
 MAD HATTER: But you'd have to be half-mad to dream me up.
 [...] ALICE: I'll miss you when I wake up.
 (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 69)

This dialogue reminds back to Carroll's process of creation, for the whole story is in fact a figment of Carroll's imagination. The pronoun "I" which Alice uses could also refer to Carroll speaking of himself.

At Alice's encounter with Absolem at Marmoreal, she is once again led to cough due to his smoke, as she was on their first encounter. How could a person cough in a dream, or would the person just be dreaming that they are coughing? Alice tells Absolem that he seems so real that she sometimes forgets it is a dream. In her last encounter with him as a caterpillar, before she goes into battle, he says that she was just as dimwitted the first time she was there. His words trigger past memories. Hence, Alice concludes: "It wasn't a dream at all. It was a memory! This place is real! And so are you. And so is the Hatter" (WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 72). It is interesting to note that she mentions the prospect of the Mad Hatter being real in her concluding sentence. It may be linked to the conversation she had had with him on the eve of Frabjous Day. However, it might also be linked to a kind of wishful thinking that perhaps she and Tarrant could end up together. This of course skillfully parallels the kind of wishful thinking that Carroll had with "his own" Alice.

Woolverton's script reads that when Alice returns from Underland, she has no recollection of it. "Her adventure, although unremembered, has given Alice unwavering confidence and self-awareness." This seems aligned to the fact that the Mad Hatter told her she wouldn't remember him if she left. That lack of memory is not, however, taken up in Burton's film. If Alice were to have no recollections of

her adventures in Underland, how would she have been able to recognize the blue Monarch butterfly at the closing scene of the movie as Absolem? Other lines in the script seem to indicate that she remembers Underland as well. For example, when she tells her ex-future mother-in-law “I happen to love rabbits, especially white ones,” this could refer to the White Rabbit in Underland. Her statement, however, could also just be a way of contradicting her mother-in-law, who had said earlier that she hated rabbits. Additionally, she tells the Chattaway sisters, “You two remind me of some funny boys I met in a dream.” This remark could be referring to her latest adventures but could also be related to the recurring dream she had as a child. The ambiguity of what is a dream and what is reality is hence maintained. Alice’s remarks lead viewers to question what Alice is referring to, giving more than one interpretation of meaning. These lines hold “true” to Carroll’s treatment of the ambiguous nature of words, a theme central to his *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. In reproducing this approach to language, without replicating all the exact words, Woolverton and Burton demonstrate the validity of Linda Hutcheon’s statement, that adaptation is “repetition without replication” (HUTCHEON, 2006, p.7).

In contrast, the last major theme to be discussed in this work revolves upon a certainty, the inevitability of death and of aging while alive. In Carroll’s book, Alice worries - after she begins to shrink for the first time, in Chapter I - that she “might go out altogether, like a candle”¹⁰⁸. Then, after Alice frightens the mouse in the pool of tears by telling it stories of animals that kill mice, the mouse tells a sad tale, in Chapter III, in the form of a poem, where a cunning old Fury sentences a mouse to death. In Chapter IV, the White Rabbit is sure the Duchess will sentence him to death, if he fails to appear with gloves and a fan, as sure as ferrets are ferrets¹⁰⁹. In another scene, the Duchess misunderstands Alice’s “axis” as ‘axes’ and orders her cook to chop off Alice’s head. (In contrast, all the executions in the 2010 *Alice* are linked to the Red Queen, who, by repeatedly saying “Off with his (or her) head!”,

¹⁰⁸ CARROLL, 2000, p. 17. Tweedledum uses the same metaphor again in the discussion with Alice about the King’s dream.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p.37, note #1. Gardner points out that the expression was common in Carroll’s time, but that it was also known that a rabbit was natural prey to a ferret.

becomes more comical as a character than actually scary.) In fact, Gardner points out that the first death joke that Alice makes in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is when she is falling down the hole, and she says that, in comparison, she would think nothing of tumbling downstairs¹¹⁰.

While Lewis Carroll's Alice dwells upon death more directly in *Through the Looking Glass*, the theme of aging in itself is mentioned explicitly on many different instances in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. When Alice meets the Blue Caterpillar, he asks her to recite the poem "You are old, Father William". Gardner points out that Carroll wrote this poem as a parody on Robert Southey's long-forgotten poem "The Old Man's Comforts and How He Gained Them"¹¹¹. While Southey's old man lives calmly and comfortably in his old age due to all his cautious planning during his youth and his faith in God, Carroll's Father William uses all his past experiences to turn his life upside down and do everything one wouldn't expect from an elderly man. At the very end of Carroll's story, Alice's sister dreams about what Alice may be like as a grown woman, and how she may remember "her own child-life and the happy summer days"¹¹². Notice that her sister refers to the summer days of Alice's life, while the poem in the preface of Carroll's story speaks of autumn. If one creates a parallel between the seasons of the year (or periods of a day) to the periods of a person's life, the terms 'autumn' and 'setting sun' might represent how Charles Dodgson viewed his age with respect to Alice's. The poem ends as follows:

Alice! A childish story take,
And with a gentle hand,
Lay it where Childhood's dreams are twined
In Memory's mystic ban,
Like pilgrim's wither'd wreath of flowers
Pluck'd in a far-off land.
(CARROLL, 2000, p.8)

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, p 13, note #3. Gardner points out that William Empson stated that this is the first death joke in the Alice books (in his *Some Versions of Pastoral*).

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 49-52.

¹¹² *Ibid*, p. 127.

Dodgson's fondness for younger girls necessarily had to lead to musings over the great gap in age between him and Alice (as well as other little girls he befriended)¹¹³. It is interesting to note that the intertwinement of memory and dreams presented in Burton's 2010 *Alice* is present in Carroll's closing poem as well.

The themes presented represent only part of the richness of Carroll's story as well as that of Woolverton's and Burton's adaptations. The adaptations did not, for example, dwell at any length on questions regarding the functioning of the universe, which Charles Dodgson, as a mathematician, was so fond on.

Many connections have been made by researchers, including Martin Gardner, between Carroll's stories, mathematical abstractions, and formal logic, but these themes were also not developed in the movie. Even if Woolverton and Burton were to have attempted to reproduce Carroll's *Alice Adventure's in Wonderland*, it would not have been the same work. First of all, because adaptation is reproduction, but not replication.¹¹⁴ Additionally, because change is inevitable as content (ideas) are expressed in a different media (form). And, last but not least, because the different cultural and historical contexts of Carroll's period and 2010 lead inevitably to different interpretations of a same text. Linda Hutcheon points out that the different modes of engagement – telling, showing, and interacting with stories – “allow for certain precisions and distinctions that a focus on medium alone cannot. [...] These ways of engaging with stories do not, of course, ever take place in a vacuum. We engage in time and space, within a particular society and a general culture.” (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. 27-28).

¹¹³ No type of judgment is intended, nor was any type of pedophilic relationship established between Charles Dodgson and his much younger friends. In Chapter IX, the Mock Turtle makes a pun about drawing, sketching and painting in oils which, according to Gardner's note on p. 98, alludes to the art critic John Ruskin, who gave the Liddell children art classes at their home. Ruskin, like Dodgson, was attracted to little girls. When Ruskin was 47 (and had had one annulled marriage), he fell in love with a 10-year-old girl. He proposed to her when she was 18, but she turned him down.

¹¹⁴ HUTCHEON, Linda. **A Theory of Adaptation**. Routledge, New York, 2006, p.7.

4.4. IMAGERY IN BURTON'S ALICE

The use of imagery should obviously not be about playing second fiddle to the meaning being conveyed by words, for example, dialogue and voice-overs. There are many moments in Tim Burton's *Alice* where images not only convey meaning but actually allude to other works, without using a single word. As Alice enters the garden of the Red Queen's castle, she encounters a shrub trimmed in the shape of the Queen's head. This is certainly a tribute to Tim Burton's and Johnny Depp's collaborative work in *Edward Scissorhands*. Likewise, scenes in which Alice is riding on the back of the bloodhound or the Bandersnatch may remind viewers of similar scenes in *The Neverending Story*. Another scene contains a less obvious allusion. The Felfel bird is trying to demonstrate its physical advantages during battle when a technological advancement puts an end to its show: a stone thrust by a catapult hits it on the head. There is a 'similar' scene in a former movie in which a person is demonstrating his prowess in using a sword when his enemy simply pulls out a gun and shoots him down. The scene occurs in the Indiana Jones movie *Raiders in the Lost Ark*, though there may be many variations on the idea. There is no such thing as physical power representing supremacy after the invention of gunpowder.

Other images speak for themselves as well. When the Tweedles are trying to decide which way to go, the tree branches point contradictorily in both directions. In fact, when Alice asks them where to find the White Rabbit while in the Red Queen's castle, they do exactly that, point in different directions.

Johnny Depp's appearance is an interesting use of image in itself. The mercury poisoning that many hatters succumbed to is shown through his orange hair. His old hat is, beyond a reference to his profession, a constant reminder to him of the demise of the Hightopp's village. His clothes and eyes change colors to represent his moods. For example, when he is a prisoner in Iracebeth's castle, the

dark circles around his eyes change to red. In fact, he has been compared to a human mood ring in innumerable articles regarding Burton's *Alice*.

Images were used to establish the relationship between characters as well. When the Red Queen and the Knave of Hearts are speaking on the balcony outside her room, images tell their own stories. The way the Red Queen glances down at the heads floating in the moat as she says "I had to do it. He would have left me"¹¹⁵ alludes to the fate of the Red King (meanwhile, through the conversation, viewers become informed that Iracebeth lost more than the right to the crown to Mirana).

Iracebeth's servants are forced to prop up furniture and maintain candelabras and chandeliers in place. When the White Rabbit scurries into the room, hoping to remain unnoticed, the heart formed by the monkeys' tails alludes to the romantic involvement of the Red Queen with Ilosovic Stayne. But his face as Iracebeth embraces him - and the former discussion about it being better to be feared than to be loved - lead us to realize that the Knave of Hearts champions another one of Machiavelli's principles, that "the end justifies the means". He is only with the Red Queen in self-interest, while she in fact seems genuinely interested in him. His eye patch even changes to a red heart when he is in her palace, while he wears a black heart-shaped eye patch when he goes out and about intimidating others.¹¹⁶

The changing palette of colors adds to the story and sets the mood for the scenes. The movie begins with the colors of faded photographs, as Lord Ascot speaks with business partners. At that moment, a pale, ghostlike Alice appears at the threshold of the chambers, visibly haunted by a recurring dream. Her appearance reminds viewers that Lewis Carroll's story also haunts the film. When Lord Ascot tells Mrs. Kingsley that her last husband was truly a man of vision, his words could be alluding to the fact that Carroll was a man of vision as well.

When Alice and her mother arrive at the Ascot's estate, all the costumes

¹¹⁵ WOOLVERTON, 2008, p.48.

¹¹⁶ The only exception to this rule is during the final battle, when he wears the red eye patch (perhaps since he is on the Red Queen's side, or maybe due to an error in continuity).

reflect the faded blues and greens of the environment. The guests pose statically during the wedding proposal, as if in a portrait, while a commissioned painter reproduces the couple's moment in the gazebo.¹¹⁷ This is one of the moments in which there is an image within an image, something along the lines of what Carroll would create. Another moment in Tim Burton's *Alice* is when the group looks upon the Oraculum, and sees the image of the group looking at the Oraculum. A similar situation occurs in *Through the Looking-Glass*, when Alice is being asked by the Tweedle twins what would happen to her if the Red King were to awaken, since he is dreaming of her. Yet, isn't she also dreaming of him? This is a dream within a dream motif.

A flustered Alice, upon seeing the White Rabbit tap his pocket watch, blurts out that she needs a moment, and runs off after the rabbit. As she reaches the trunk of a tree, the blues become a richer color, but once falling down the rabbit hole, the images return to tones of brown, the color of old, faded books and of earth. The hallway with doors also follows the same palette, but the garden she enters, in contrast, is decked out in vibrant colors.

Another great contrast in colors is apparent as Alice returns to rescue the Mad Hatter at Salazen Grum. The somber colors of the floating skulls in the morbid moat are replaced by vivid colors as Alice goes through a crack in the wall into the garden where the Red Queen is playing croquet. It is as if the castle were a type of oasis in an otherwise desolate land, barren of hope. Red is the color found everywhere in Iracebeth's surroundings. From the color of her hair to her clothes, from the carpet to the throne to the servants' livery, all we see is red, especially in heart-shaped figures. All she almost ever seems to see, I might add, is red! Even the stained-glass windows, which cast realistic shadows along the walls, possess red hearts. The Red Queen even views her garden, including the red rose bushes, through pink-tinged glasses as she plays croquet. Heart shapes can be seen right down to the format of the execution block and the blade of the executioner's ax.

¹¹⁷ A parallel can be drawn to the static pose created by the characters when Alice is trying to decide if she will champion the White Queen's cause. It creates a feeling of *deja vu* in the film which is a parallel in itself to the sense of *deja vu* Alice has whenever she dreams about Wonderland, i.e. Underland.

A deep shade of blue envelops the scenery as Alice is led to speak to Absolem by the Tweedle twins clad in brown and white striped T-shirts and matching stockings, contrasting with the deep blue colors of the White Rabbit's jacket and the plumage of the Dodo bird. This deep shade of blue appears once again when Alice encounters the Cheshire Cat. It seems particularly fitting that the vegetation sways ever so gently in the blue hues when the smoothly floating Chessur appears. As he leads Alice to the Mad Tea Party, the slice of moon in the sky takes on the appearance of his grin.

Outside the March Hare's home, everything turns to a dark hue of brown, even the dark circles around the Mad Hatter's eyes, as he curses Chessur. Browns ensue as Tarrant Hightopp proceeds to take Alice to the White Queen's palace. Here, the falling leaves may be an allusion to the passage of time, a theme aligned to aging (present in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as a theme, in the poem in its preface, and in Carroll's regrets to aging, both with respect to himself and to his young girl friends). The Mad Hatter is so absorbed in his recitation of "The Jabberwocky" that he fails to notice that Alice and he have arrived at precisely the place in the forest where the Jabberwocky itself decimated the Hightopp's village. The flashback, in vivid colors, of the village celebrating happier times, is replaced by flaming destruction and smoldering frames of houses. When Alice helps Tarrant snap out of his trancelike state, the backdrop shows the burned trunks of trees left after the disaster.

When the Mad Hatter senses that the Knave of Hearts and his card soldiers are on their trail, he flees as if he were a fugitive slave. This allusion becomes even more evident when he thrusts Alice across the stream, making it impossible for the bloodhound to pick up her scent. Shadows and differing intensity of rays of light make the images seem very realistic. Light filters down through translucent mushrooms to the understory of the forest. While Alice awakens from her slumber beneath the Hatter's hat, the rays of sunlight at dawn filter through the clouds as if an omen of a new day dawning as well in the history of the people's submission to the irascible Iracebeth.

The White Queen's palace, in contrast to the Red Queen's, is all in whites, the only hint of color in its frontal view coming from pale pink cherry blossoms. Unfortunately, the absence of color in the surroundings seems to have become reflected in Anne Hathaway's faded and artificial performance. The allusions to chess, a major recurring motif in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*, can be found in many moments in Burton's *Alice*. At the Red Queen's castle, for example, the lawn portrays a checkered pattern, as do the floors inside the palace. Even before reaching the castle, the floor that Alice falls upon, in the hall with doors, has a modified checkered pattern. At Marmoreal - which is supposed to reflect a haven for pure, good intentions, but seems more like a mausoleum - the checkered pattern reappears in a faded version on the castle's floor as well as on the cushion of the White Queen's throne. Large chess pieces in the shape of horse heads adorn the balcony at Marmoreal. The White Queen's soldiers also represent chess pieces, in contrast to the Red Queen's playing cards army.

The ultimate reference to a chess match is, however, when the queens come face to face at the culminating battle. The battleground is in fact a giant worn-down chessboard crumbling at its edges, perhaps an allusion to the long-lasting lineage of battles for power. The fight for supremacy can also be seen as stretching far into the past due to images of ancient columns overlooking the sea, quite clearly an allusion to the former supremacy of Greek and Roman culture, while also alluding to their mythology, an area of interest for Woolverton. The link to mythology is also apparent in the Jabberwocky's dragon-like form. Dark colors pervade throughout the battle, which it is relatively bloodless, perhaps to avoid becoming too gory for younger audiences.

Alice is presented with a vial of the Jabberwocky's purple blood and hesitates once again, before drinking it to resurface in the world above ground. When she does return, lighter colors return to the screen. Blue is the prevalent color as Alice journeys off to China, as can be seen in her jacket, the fluttering blue Monarch butterfly, Absolem in his metamorphosed self, and the deep blue sea.

To conclude the analysis of images, a few recurring motifs should be pointed out. First, both Woolverton's script and Burton's film have taken up the

motif of doors present in Carroll's work. Doors represent the choices Alice must make as well as passageways into other paths in life. Alice goes through a door to enter the garden in Underland, and also squeezes through a passage to get into the palace at Salazen Grum. Likewise, she must go through the door of the Bandersnatch's den to get to the key that will unlock the trunk that holds the Vorpal sword. Opening doors unlock new turns in the plot, both in Carroll's source text and the adaptations under analysis in the present work.

Speaking of the trunk in the Bandersnatch's den, it is carved with figures of warriors. This motif of medieval battles is also taken up earlier in Burton's *Alice* when the Vorpal sword falls to the ground at the moment of the Jabberwocky's attack on the Hightopp village. The image of the sword stuck in the ground, retrieved by the Knave of Hearts, is clearly an allusion to the medieval tales of King Arthur and the legend of the sword stuck in stone. Alice's suit of armor, as she champions the White Queen during the culminating battle, also reminds viewers of medieval lore. The Jabberwocky's menacing dark presence against the stark tree trunks completes the image of the warrior attempting to slay a dragon. This motif is not present per se in Carroll's work, where struggles consist of verbal or physical competitions between a few characters at most, as in the chapter of the Caucus Race.

Of course, oversized and undersized garments are recurrent images which make it possible to establish Alice's relative size as she shrinks and grows. All of these images are aligned to Lewis Carroll's story. As a way of summarizing the unusual events which have taken place in Underland, Alice lists six impossible things (an echo of her statement about her father, as well as an echo of the Duchess' statement in *Through the Looking Glass*) while trying to muster up the courage she requires to slay the Jabberwocky. The first five can all be found in Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*: 1) There's a potion that can make you shrink; 2) And a cake that can make you grow; 3) Animals can talk; 4) Cats can disappear; and 5) There's a place called Wonderland. Only the last impossible

thing strays from Carroll's plot, 6) "I can slay the Jabberwocky", which Alice says just before saying "Off with your head", a line borrowed from the Red Queen.¹¹⁸

Though a filmic adaptation necessarily involves editing and montage not just of the film but of the plot and themes developed in the source text, both Woolverton and Burton have maintained a certain alignment to Carroll's source texts with regards to the meaning and feeling conveyed by the images viewed by the audience. Those who expected a more macabre setting, true to Burton's style in *The Nightmare before Christmas* or *Corpse Bride* may have felt let down. Nevertheless, the careful blend of motion capture techniques, CG (computer generated) images, and live characters has led to a surreal land with a sense of realism. When viewers are led to almost believe that the Cheshire Cat exists, due to the meticulously created texture of his fur, they are at once reminded by the phosphorescent blue stripes and piercing eyes that he is a CG image to which an actor has lent a human voice. In the realm of images in Burton's *Alice*, nothing is entirely one thing or another, be it motion capture, CG, or real. But the impact the movie has on viewers is real and wondrous.

¹¹⁸ See also WOOLVERTON, 2008, p. 74-75

FINAL REMARKS

The acts of establishing comparisons or hierarchically ranking objects seem to have a presence in our Western society as ubiquitous as that of adaptations themselves. They may also date as far back in time as when people started telling stories, based on other stories. Hence, to better grasp the issues to be addressed in adaptation studies, I felt I had to look back upon the history of such studies to begin to understand why Kamilla Elliott had defined adaptation as the “bad boy” of interart criticism. Elliott states in *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* that “the tension between theoretical adherence and rhetorical heresy is [to her mind] a principal reason why adaptation studies always appear to lag behind critical times”¹¹⁹. Fortunately, great strides have been made in the field, rendering her stance slightly anachronistic in itself.

But, returning to Elliott’s historicization of adaptation studies, comparisons between artistic expressions in different media shifted from interart analogies, to categorizations – championed by Gotthold Lessing during a period in which scientific thought held high ranking – and then back again to analogies, this time between content and form within each art form, rather than between distinctive art forms. Analogies, according to Elliott, held a reputation for “deception and half truth”¹²⁰ (though any interpretation of “truth” holds its own bias, in my opinion). Furthermore, she summed up the biases concerning analogical analyses by stating “Thus, even though analytical rhetoric pervades the novel and film debate, categorical approaches have dominated its theorization”¹²¹. This was the case presented in structuralist approaches to adaptation.

In my studious and lengthy journey through hundreds of pages of scholarly texts regarding adaptations, more specifically, adaptations from written source

¹¹⁹ ELLIOTT, K. *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2003., p. 135.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 11.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, p. 11.

texts to films, I cannot say that I have taken the path less traveled by,¹²² though I aim for my studies to make a difference. The present work can be valued for its attempt to first narrow the field of study to an object of great interest in current times, i.e., a filmic adaptation of a written source text. More specifically, it dwells upon the filmic adaptation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as conducted by masterminds Linda Woolverton (screenplay, 2008) and Tim Burton (film, 2010), of a masterpiece penned by a no lesser genius, Charles Dodgson.

My initial interest in the process of adaptation, however, was sparked by the film *Adaptation* (2002), whose screenplay (2000) is authored by yet another genius of modern times, Charlie Kaufman, (the film's director and protagonist, as played by Nicholas Cage). This screenplay led me to study the contrasting opinions regarding adaptation at greater depth. Two major concerns became apparent, that of the capacity of written words and visual images to convey meaning to those receiving artistic expressions, and that of the ability to convey meaning (content) through different media (form). Elliott states that adaptation not only “blurs categorization of the arts” but also “commits two central heresies against mainstream 20th century aesthetic and semiotic theories.”¹²³ The first heresy is that adaptation strives to demonstrate that words and images may in fact be translatable. The second one is that adaptation makes a statement regarding the possibility of separating form from content, as stated by Elliott “that the characters, plot, themes, and rhetoric of a novel distill to content apart from form and transfer into the form of film”¹²⁴.

Based upon these two paths, I was steered away from using Susan Orlean's book *The Orchid Thief* as a source text. I felt it was necessary to find a source text that was more aligned with the debate of the ambiguous nature of the meaning of words, in order to question the ability of filmic versions to convey the meaning

¹²² FROST, R. “The Road Not Taken”, 1915, available at <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15717> (with an audiovisual presentation)

¹²³ ELLIOTT, K. **Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate**. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 133.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 133.

thought to have been intended by an author. Linda Hutcheon's definition of what can get adapted helped narrow down the choice of source text. As stated in the introduction of this monograph, Linda Hutcheon refers to "the story argument", as a manner of determining how and what gets adapted in a story. She points out that "equivalences" are sought in different sign systems for the various elements of the story: its themes, events, world, characters, motivation, points of view, consequences, contexts, symbols, imagery and so on."¹²⁵ Hence, the choice of Tim Burton's 2010 *Alice*, an adaptation in turn of Linda Woolverton's screenplay *Alice* (2008), seemed fitting in its treatment of such elements of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, published in 1865. Choosing a source text written over one hundred years ago also played into the consideration expressed by Linda Hutcheon that "one of the central beliefs of film adaptation theory is that audiences are more demanding of fidelity when dealing with classics."¹²⁶

How could Woolverton and Burton maintain "fidelity" to Lewis Carroll's source text, if they started off by having Alice revisit Wonderland at a different time in her life? Burton in fact is quoted as saying in an interview with Alison Boshoff for the Daily Mail that he didn't feel any pressure towards maintaining fidelity to any previous versions, since he had never felt any emotional connection to the characters as they had been previously portrayed. He aimed to give the story "some framework and emotional grounding" that he had never seen in any version before.¹²⁷ Woolverton in fact pointed out in the same article that purists would be infuriated, but that the film "was never meant to be a remake." This becomes obvious through her decision to write the story portraying Alice as a young woman, a choice Woolverton made based on her opinion that art should provide role models.

¹²⁵ HUTCHEON, L. **A Theory of Adaptation**. Routledge, New York, 2006, p.10.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p.29.

¹²⁷ BOSHOFF, A. **Alice's very weird wonderland: Why a behind-the-scenes row might see Tim Burton's most fantastical film yet disappear from cinemas as fast as the Cheshire Cat**. The Daily Mail. April 20th, 2010. Available at <<http://www.webcitation.org/5uGU2R9mM>>.

Woolverton and Burton had to make attempts to maintain some form of connection to Carroll's work, since their title establishes a link to the source text. According to Hutcheon, an adaptation is an "announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works" (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. 7). Woolverton's and Burton's alignment seems focused on key elements of Carroll's source text, for example, main characters and overarching themes. These elements seem aligned to the process of seeking 'equivalences' in different sign systems put forward by Hutcheon. The 2008 screenplay and 2010 *Alice* include all the major characters created by Carroll in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, as well as the Tweedle twins¹²⁸ and the White Queen from his work *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*.¹²⁹ When asked by Gina McIntyre in an interview published on July 26th, 2009, for the *Los Angeles Times* about how to select from the quantity of the 'Alice' material available, Burton said:

T.B.: Linda [Woolverton] the screenwriter, that was the thing I thought she did well and it was a hard thing to do. As books, [the story], it's very episodic, this story, that story. She ended up kind of using a lot of the vibe of the **Jabberwocky** poem, the weird language, that figures into it. You can't have every character but we tried to keep the few iconic ones, the **Hatter**, of course, and the **Cheshire Cat** and the **White Rabbit** and the **March Hare** and **Red Queen, White Queen**, that fit within the story that Linda wrote. Obviously there are a lot of characters that aren't in it. It was more important to take that material and try to make it a movie. Every other version I've ever seen I've never really connected to because it's always just a series of weird events. She's passively wandering through, [meeting] this weird character, that weird character. It's fine in the books, but the movies always felt like there wasn't anything underneath them. That's what we tried to do. Instead of the Hatter just being weird, is get some kind of underneath him, some kind of character underneath him. That's the goal is to give the Alice material a little more weight to it. (MCINTYRE, Los Angeles Times, July 26th, 2009)

¹²⁸ Burton points out that his inspiration for the Tweedle twins came from the Grady sisters in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*. BOUCHER, G, "Tim Burton took a 'Shining' to Tweedledee and Tweedledum", Los Angeles Times, Feb. 10th, 2010.

¹²⁹ BOUCHER, G. **Tim Burton took a 'Shining' to Tweedledee and Tweedledum**. Los Angeles Times, Feb. 10th, 2010. Available at: <<http://herocomplex.latimes.com/2010/02/10/tim-burton-took-a-shining-to-tweedledee-and-tweedledum/>>

Perhaps Burton had not felt depth in former adaptations, but there are definitely varying levels of depth in Lewis Carroll's work. Burton and Woolverton maintain the themes present in the source text(s) of growing up, questioning of identity, relativity of things depending on perspective, and the debate as to what is reality and what is a dream. Though Alice is nineteen when she revisits Wonderland, she is still forced to make decisions which lead her to mature and to find her real identity, aided in the task by the blue caterpillar, now known as Absolem.

Woolverton, in her focus on creating an uplifting female role model, does take out scenes, such as Carroll's Chapter II, The Pool of Tears, for she felt that Alice as a role model shouldn't break down. Other scenes are excluded for they are, as defined by Burton, episodic. Here the adaptation process sheds some of the many episodes Carroll created to provide a more concise story line.

Notwithstanding, the main events of the plot, major characters and overarching themes of the book have successfully distilled from their written expression to the film. Imagery in the film is skillfully aligned with dialogue in a manner that refutes or at least downplays any tension between the supremacy of verbal or imagistic expressions. Viewers of Burton's 2010 *Alice*, an adaptation in turn of Woolverton's 2008 script, can return to the source text and find new meaning to Carroll's events and words, though those expecting replication may find the mixing of characters from Carroll's two works, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* a little unnerving. Boshoff has said in her article for the Daily Mail,

The word is that watching Tim Burton's *Alice In Wonderland* is the closest you can come to falling down the rabbit hole yourself and into Lewis Carroll's fantasy world. Those who have seen the film, or clips of it, say that it is utterly breathtaking, a hallucinatory alternate universe completely realised in every detail, from the sun streaming in through the gills of the mushrooms to the light falling on the individual fuzzy hairs on the caterpillar's back. (BOSHOFF, The Daily Mail, April 20th, 2010)

While Hutcheon has cited Robert Stam as saying that some critics will always grant superiority to literature over any filmic adaptation because of its

seniority as an art form (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. 4), the 2010 *Alice* never gives viewers time to worry about hierarchically trying to rank one form of expression over another. There is enough depth in Woolverton's and Burton's adaptations to please any avid reader of Lewis Carroll. On the other hand, the film does not use imagery as if Blackburn's stance on illustration were being taken up, in which, according to Elliott, "the very appearance of an illustration implies a failure of prose's representational power and self-sufficiency" (ELLIOTT, 2003, p. 47). I find myself agreeing with Kamilla Elliott with respect to considering the dichotomies that separate words and images, as well as analogies and categories, as being themselves analogies:

Indeed categorical claims that falsely consign novels and films to word and image camps in defiance of aesthetic practices yield **very little insight into anything except word and image rivalries** and they hide a great deal of the working that word and image analogies reveal. [...]In the final analysis, the relationship between categorical and analogical modes of criticism emerges not so much as a binary opposition as an analogy itself. (ELLIOTT, 2003, p. 30)

As mentioned previously in this paper, Elliott concedes that Brian McFarlane (during his structuralist phase) acknowledged visual, aural and verbal signifiers present in film but still "continued to designate the novel linear, the film spatial, the novel conceptual, and the film perceptual, after Lessing's categorizations of poetry and painting"¹³⁰. Indeed, Elliott stresses that hybrid art forms "put pressure on Lessing's most central categorization: the temporal and spatial dichotomy of words and images"¹³¹. Elliott concludes:

Clearly, the designation of novels as "words" and of films as "images" is neither empirically nor logically sustainable: rather it participates in ancient representational rivalries. W.J. Mitchell has demonstrated that "the history of culture is in part the story of a protracted struggle for dominance between pictorial and linguistic signs". [...] Everywhere, novels and films

¹³⁰ ELLIOTT, K. **Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate**. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p.13.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, p.15.

are seen to wrangle in a relationship that Bluestone describes as “overtly compatible, secretly hostile”. In the end, however, novels and films tend to unravel the very word and image divide they have been conscripted to uphold. (ELLIOTT, 2002, p.14)

Woolverton’s 2008 screenplay and Burton’s 2010 *Alice* have done just that, taken up the battle to unravel the word and image divide. Johnny Depp sums up the size of the task undertaken by Burton for Alison Boshoff, of *The Daily Mail*: “He couldn’t have bitten off anything bigger to chew. This is almost lunatic time. To choose to grab *Alice In Wonderland*, that in itself is one thing, and then to do it to the Tim Burton level is madness.”¹³² Burton is also aware of the feat he has set out to accomplish. He said, in the same interview to Boshoff:

When Lewis Carroll wrote his Alice stories nearly 150 years ago, he was taking a big chance that people would understand and appreciate that he was trying to do something unusual. Now, it’s our turn to take our own chances - and I don’t think we’ve let him down. (BOSHOFF, *Daily Mail*, posted April 20th, 2010)

Film critics and audiences alike have given mixed reviews. Dana Stevens, a movie critic for *Slate* magazine, says the 2010 *Alice* is nothing more than a “confluence of a number of depressing cinematic trends”¹³³ involving “ransacking” children’s literature for inspiration, unnecessary layering of 3D technology, and adding a Gothic “gloss” as if this would make the film a substantial reinterpretation.

Nevertheless, Stevens concedes that it would be hard for Burton to

do justice to the language of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*, to Carroll’s intricate logic puzzles and plays on the literal and figurative meaning of words. A film adaptation should, of course, treat its source material as inspiration rather than dogma. (STEVENS, *Slate*, March 4th, 2010)

¹³² BOSHOFF, Alison, “Alice’s very weird wonderland: Why a behind-the-scenes row might see Tim Burton’s most fantastical film yet disappear from cinemas as fast as the Cheshire Cat” posted on April 20th, 2010 at <http://www.webcitation.org/5uGU2R9mM>

¹³³ STEVENS, Dana, “Alice in Wonderland: Don’t follow Tim Burton down this rabbit hole.” *Slate* magazine, posted on March 4th, 2010. Available online at http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/movies/2010/03/alice_in_wonderland.html

While I agree that the 3D technology wasn't really necessary since the digital images are already amazing, this never was one of Burton's major concerns. And trying to do "justice" to Carroll's logic puzzles and puns, which abound within the source text, could prove to be an injustice to most movie viewers. In my opinion, Woolverton and Burton do "justice" to Carroll's work without making the film a remake of the source text. The very fact of producing a story at a different moment of Alice's life is a signal that neither viewers nor critics should expect "literal fidelity".

An adaptation must also prove commercially viable, even if that has meant a more "action-hero based plot" for Burton's 2010 *Alice*. Hutcheon speaks of the paradox established when viewers desire repetition in a "post-Romantic and capitalist world that values novelty primarily" (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. 4). She then goes on to quote John Ellis, who says that

the process of adaptation should thus be seen as a massive investment (financial and psychic) in the desire to repeat particular acts of consumption within a form of representation [film, in this case] that discourages such a repetition. (ELLIS, 1982, p. 4-5)

A different review written by Steve Biodrowski for *Cinefantastique* posted on August 11th, 2010, criticizes a flaw in the logic of the plot. He points out that Alice, who is defining herself as defiant, predictably slays the Jabberwock, as is expected of her. While the script tries to show that her acts are aligned with her doing something considered impossible, and hence defiant, the events do seem geared to viewers looking forward to seeing predictable outcomes from action heroes.

Biodrowski goes on to say that praise granted to Burton as a visual director often misses the mark by focusing on form over content, when the director's real strength is "the ability to create worlds in which the strange scenarios make sense or at least seem appropriate."¹³⁴ While there are differences in the treatment of

¹³⁴ BIODROWSKI, S. **Alice in Wonderland: Blu-ray Review**. *Cinefantastique*. Posted on August 11th, 2010, available at: <http://cinefantastiqueonline.com/2010/08/alice-in-wonderland-blu-ray-review/>>

Carroll's episodes, Woolverton and Burton intended to revisit Underland, not Wonderland. They have done so using so many of Lewis Carroll's main skills: wit, careful weighting of words in accordance to context, a steady development of themes, well thought-out characters who deliver lines pitched at just the right level, and imagination, lots of imagination.

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Alice's very weird wonderland: Why a behind-the-scenes row might see Tim Burton's most fantastical film yet disappear from cinemas as fast as the Cheshire Cat

By [Alison Boshoff](#)

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The word is that watching Tim Burton's *Alice In Wonderland* is the closest you can come to falling down the rabbit hole yourself and into Lewis Carroll's fantasy world.

Those who have seen the film, or clips of it, say that it is utterly breathtaking, a hallucinatory alternate universe completely realised in every detail, from the sun streaming in through the gills of the mushrooms to the light falling on the individual fuzzy hairs on the caterpillar's back.

It cost £158million to make and, with computer graphics mixed with live action and animation, it is more technically ambitious than anything Burton has done before. And it is in 3-D, putting it head-to-head with the sci-fi phenomenon that is *Avatar*.



Fantasy: Alice In Wonderland is said to be Burton's most beautiful and most perfectly imagined world yet

But far more significantly, it is said to be simply Burton's most beautiful and most perfectly imagined fantasy world.

The casting also has critical expectations rising. Who else but Matt Lucas could play the twin grotesques of Tweedledum and Tweedledee? And Johnny Depp, with green fluorescent contact lenses, rouged cheeks and a frizzy orange wig, makes the most extraordinary Mad Hatter.

With typical attention to detail, Burton has enhanced Depp's eyes with camera trickery, making them 15 per cent larger; so it's still Johnny Depp, but Through The Looking-Glass.

Oscar-winning costume designer Colleen Atwood has created a look for Depp which sees his clothes change colour as his moods come and go. He is like a human mood ring, hung with ribbons and hatpins and thimbles which dangle from his fingertips.

The Cheshire Cat, who can appear and disappear at will and has what Burton calls a creepy quality, is voiced by Stephen Fry and taps into Burton's hatred of cats.

Michael Sheen voices the White Rabbit, Alan Rickman is the caterpillar and Barbara Windsor the dormouse, Christopher Lee surfaces as the monstrous Jabberwock, Timothy Spall is a lugubrious bloodhound, Frances de la Tour is Alice's Aunt Imogene, Michael Gough the Dodo and Paul Whitehouse the March Hare.



Forget special effects, as one of the few live action characters, Mia Wasikowska - who plays Alice in Tim Burton's new movie - had to stand on a box to appear taller



Tim Burton says the Red Queen - played by wife Helena Bonham Carter - reminds him of the infamous New York property millionaire Leona Hemsley, known as the 'queen of mean', who, ironically, was a hatter's daughter

Burton's partner, Helena Bonham Carter, plays the Queen of Hearts as the acme of royal rage, with a plucked hairline, red wig, geisha-white face and uncontrollable 'Off with her head!' aggression.

On screen, her head has been enlarged to three times its size and the end result is quite grotesque. 'I can't rely on Tim to make me pretty,' sighs Helena.

Alice In Wonderland - created in the 1860s by Charles Dodgson, a mathematics lecturer at Christ Church, Oxford, under the pseudonym Lewis Carroll - is surely the literary masterpiece which Burton was born to interpret.

He has even worked in the studio once used by the English illustrator Arthur Rackham, whose illustrations for the 1907 edition 'produced the most iconic pictures of Alice that anyone has ever seen'.

'I read the Alice stories when I was eight, and I've seen the various TV and cinema versions, including the 1951 Disney cartoon. But, to be honest, I've never liked any of them,' Burton says.

'There was always a silly girl wandering around from one crazy character to another, and I never felt a real emotional connection to that, so it was an attempt to try and give it some framework and emotional grounding that I felt I hadn't seen in any version before.



White Queen: Anne Hathaway says: 'I wanted her to have the punk spirit of Debbie Harry, the etherealness of American artists Dan Flavin and the grace of Greta Garbo.' The Mad Hatter: Before filming, Johnny Depp painted pictures of his character, which later proved almost identical to Tim Burton's vision

'I think all of those characters serve to indicate some type of mental weirdness that everybody goes through.'

Burton says he wanted an Alice 'with gravity' rather than the usual little girl skipping through the grass in her white socks and a blue pinafore dress.

Eventually, he settled on Mia Wasikowska, a young Australian actress. 'She had that emotional toughness; standing her ground in a way which makes her kind of an older person but with a younger person's mentality,' the director says.

Having previously portrayed the equally weird and wonderful Edward Scissorhands and Willy Wonka for Burton, Johnny Depp was a shoo-in for the Mad Hatter.

'I read the Lewis Carroll stories over and over again, and I learned everything I could about Victorian times,' Depp says.

'It would have been too easy, and not very believable, to have played the Mad Hatter as just a straightforward crazy guy.'



New chapter: Tim Burton says he isn't trying to tell the old story in the film which will 'infuriate the purists'

'But I knew Tim would be wanting more than that - there had to be a reason why he was like that, because something had tipped him over the edge.'

Depp's research revealed that the term 'mad as a hatter' came from a truth - that hatters in Victorian times suffered from mercury poisoning, a side-effect of the hat- manufacturing process which would affect the mind.

'So now we knew why he's mad, and after that, anything went,' Depp says.

'The mercury would have also shown through his skin and his hair, so the Hatter would have looked as mad as he behaved.'

For screenwriter Linda Woolverton (*The Lion King*, *Beauty And The Beast*), the positive early reaction has been a vindication of her vision.

'I wasn't trying to re-tell the old story; I was toying with the thought: what if Alice was older and she went back into Wonderland?'



Alice In Wonderland - created in the 1860s by Charles Dodgson, a mathematics lecturer at Christ Church, Oxford, under the pseudonym Lewis Carroll - is surely the literary masterpiece Burton was born to interpret



Double-trouble: Matt Lucas plays the twin grotesques of Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Tim Burton's inspiration for them came from the creepy twins in the Stanley Kubrick horror film The Shining

'I had this mental picture of her standing at a very crucial moment in her life and having to make an important decision, but being distracted by the White Rabbit.'

In the film, Alice's turning point comes as she receives an unexpected and unwelcome very public marriage proposal in a Victorian garden.

Seeing the White Rabbit - with his trademark waistcoat and watch, of course - she runs after him, stumbles and falls down a hole into Wonderland, which is in decline, overgrown and rather haunted.

She is taken to the hookah-smoking caterpillar, who tells her that according to ancient prophecy, she has returned to slay the Red Queen's dreaded Jabberwock and bring about the end of her reign.

'There's a lot that Lewis Carroll didn't write, but I've based other scenes on things he did', Woolverton says.

'It will infuriate the purists, but this was never meant to be a remake. This is Alice as a young woman.'



Breathtaking: The film shows Alice as a young woman. And, right, the Red Queen's head has been enlarged to three times the size. 'I can't rely on Tim to make me look pretty,' actress Helena says

But despite all this nurturing of Burton's vision, his movie is under threat of being smothered at birth. Quite extraordinarily, the UK's three largest cinema chains - Odeon, Vue and Cineworld - are threatening not to show it.

They account for 65 per cent of the UK's cinemas, and 90 per cent of the 3-D screens, so the threat is a serious one.

Given that the premiere is next Thursday and the movie opens on March 5, it's a disaster.

The cause of the angst is that Disney wants to release the film on DVD and Blu-ray only three months after it opens at the cinema, rather than the standard 17 weeks.

It wants to get the DVD into the shops before the midsummer doldrums, and to capitalise on the marketing of the movie while it is still fresh in people's minds.

But the cinemas are afraid that people will just wait to buy the film on DVD rather than spend money on going to the pictures. They aren't alone: four big cinema chains in Holland are boycotting the film and the Italians are rebelling, too.



White Rabbit: Animators visited a shelter for abandoned rabbits to observe their characteristics

Disney, which stands to lose upwards of £40million because of this row, says that 97 per cent of box office takings happen within eight weeks, and argues that it is only asking for this flexibility in the case of perhaps two movies a year.

Last week the company sent two executives from Hollywood to try to find a solution.

Burton himself transferred filming from Cornwall, where a lot of exterior scenes were shot, to Los Angeles, where the technology would be brought into play. Scenes were filmed in front of all-green backgrounds which were then overlaid digitally.

'The novelty of the green wears off very quickly,' Depp complained during filming. 'It's exhausting actually - we can't see what we are doing.'

Burton had lavender lenses fitted into his glasses to counter-balance the colour. This way of working brought the director great freedoms, particularly when it came to playing with scale.

Glover's Knave Of Hearts is half real, half digital. In the film he is 71/2ft tall, so on set Glover wore a green suit and a pair of green stilts. For the final film, his entire body, costume and cape were computer-generated - only his face was real.



The Cheshire cat, which can appear and disappear at will, is voiced by Stephen Fry



Special effects: £158million was spent making the new Alice In Wonderland film

Depp is lost in admiration for Burton. He says: 'He couldn't have bitten off anything bigger to chew. This is almost lunatic time. To choose to grab Alice In Wonderland, that in itself is one thing, and then to do it to the Tim Burton level is madness.'

Burton, stuck between a rock and a hard place over the distribution row, is keeping his own counsel. But there is no doubt he will be deeply disappointed if the film over which he has taken such care is available to only a fraction of its potential audience.

As he says: 'When Lewis Carroll wrote his Alice stories nearly 150 years ago, he was taking a big chance that people would understand and appreciate that he was trying to do something unusual.'

'Now, it's our turn to take our own chances - and I don't think we've let him down.'

- Alice In Wonderland has its charity premiere in London next Thursday and is released on March 5.

ALICE

Forget special effects, as one of the few live action characters, Mia Wasikowska had to stand on a box to appear taller.



THE MAD HATTER

Before filming, Depp painted pictures of his character, which later proved almost identical to Burton's vision.



Carroll's vision: Mia Wasikowska as Alice and Johnny Depp as the Mad Hatter

TWEEDLES

Burton's inspiration for Tweedledum and Tweedledee came from the creepy twins in the Stanley Kubrick horror film *The Shining*.



WHITE QUEEN

Anne Hathaway says: 'I wanted her to have the punk spirit of Debbie Harry, the etherealness of American artist Dan Flavin and the grace of Greta Garbo.'



Carroll's vision: Tweedledums and Anne Hathaway as the White Queen

WHITE RABBIT

Animators visited a shelter for abandoned rabbits, to observe their characteristics.



RED QUEEN

Burton says that she reminds him of the infamous New York property millionaire Leona Hemsley, known as the 'queen of mean', who, ironically, really was a hatter's daughter.



Carroll's vision: The White Rabbit, left, and the Red Queen

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