



# Adapting “Alice’s Adventures In Wonderland”

*A Summary of Central Issues and New Research Directions*

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**Abstract:** The study of Adaptations of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* has grown considerably in the last fifteen years. However, for a new researcher, it is not easy to know where to start. The information regarding the field is vast and scattered. Publications are not always found in books and journals about Adaptation Studies.

This paper presents a brief introduction to the developments in the approaches taken towards studying *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* since its publication. It also discusses topics in adaptations that most interested the researchers in this direction. This paper reviews the texts considered seminal in the domain of adapting *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, thus outlining some future research paths that are opening up in this promising area of research.

**Keywords:** Adaptation of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, Research, Film Adaptation, Game Adaptation, Graphic novel, Children’s Literature, Translation

Charles Dodgson started writing *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* in 1863, read out the story to Alice Liddell as a Christmas gift in 1864 and finally published it in 1865 under the pseudonym Lewis Carroll. He published the sequel *Through the Looking Glass* in 1871. The first theatrical version of the story is performed in 1886 and Charles Dodgson leaves this mortal world in 1898. In 1899, with the publication of Sigmund Freud’s book *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the stage was set for the world to take on a new kind of approach to look at everything. In 1907, when the Alice’s text entered the public domain, it became a successful story which was read in every home who could afford it. After almost 30 years, A. m. E. Goldschmidt published an article titled *Alice in Wonderland Psychoanalyzed* opening up the discourse of psychoanalytic interpretation. *The Child as Swain* was the next article published by William Empson in 1935. In 1965, hundred years after the story was first published, comes a remarkable article by George Pitcher, *Wittgenstein, Nonsense, and Lewis Carroll*. Salvador Dali creates his series of prints on Alice in 1969. As the time progresses, the interest of the readers and the critics finds more and more layers of meanings hidden in the story. The initial interest in the psychoanalytic interpretation shifts to biographical interpretation and then moves to the feminist approach pioneered by Judith Little in 1976 article *Liberated Alice: Dodgson Female Hero as Domestic Rebel*. 1984 saw the interest of critic in the inherent logic in the stylistics of Dodgson shown by Helena Pycior’s *At the Intersection of Mathematics and Humour: Lewis Carroll’s ‘Alices’ and Symbolic Algebra*. Jumping to the year 2000, a video game *American McGee’s Alice* is released showing the shift of influence into its cultural

adaptations. In 2002 a Wikipedia article *Alice in Wonderland* is created. With the development of appetite sensibility in 2008, Carina Garland's article *Curious Appetites: Food, Desire, Gender, and Subjectivity in Lewis Carroll's Alice's* is published. 2010 saw the release of Burton's film adaption and the popularity and influence of *Alice* continues to move in all directions today. We have today researches on "Alice in Wonderland Syndrome" in Medical Sciences and Neurology. From psychoanalytic, biographical, gender studies, genre, character study, feminist, reader's response to translations, adaptations and postcolonial approaches, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has found itself being contested throughout its evolution. Today critics and scholars have dedicated their study to the problems of identity crises, child-adult dialogue, and the question of *Alice* becoming a classic.

*Alice's Adventures in Adaptation: The Evolution of Power in Children's and Young Adult Literature* (2020) by Allyson Hibdon is a comparative study of Carroll's original work to three different adaptations – Walt Disney's animation (1951), Tim Burton's film adaptation *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) and A. G. Howard's young adult trilogy *Splintered* (2013) shows how Alice purpose and responsibility to Wonderland changes as she gets older with each adaptations. Adaptations tend to make Alice a heroine with more power and responsibilities in Wonderland.

*Tim Burton's Adaptation of Alice in Wonderland* (2021) by Lisa Miller is an essay arguing that Tim Burton's postmodern film adaptation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking Glass* is part colonisation and part superimposition of Carroll's original text. Burton's deviation from the original storyline and his liberal use of grim themes make it a wonderful adaptation. His adaptation contains a nineteen year old Alice who returns to the Wonderland forced by her concerns about her identity. He has put fear and terror in Alice and made the story darker which the original could not afford to become. Critically noted as a loose adaptation, Burton's work is a progression of the original story.

*Investigating Adaptation Shifts: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland versus Alice: Madness Returns* (2022) by Tules ÖNENÇ treats adaptation as a form of intersemiotic and functional translation and using the model of translation shift proposed by Perdikaki (2017), it studies the adaptation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* into a video game, *Alice: Madness Returns*. It analyses the descriptive component of the text as it is independent of the text-type and concludes that the plot structure, narrative techniques, characterisation and setting undergoes modulations in the adapted video game. The central focus of the study is to test the model's applicability to the video game type of target text and observe if a new model is to be developed or not.

*Alice Through the Ages: Childhood and Adaptation* (2016) by Željka Flegar and Tena Wertag believes in the fact that both Walt Disney and Tim Burton relied more on the expectations and tastes of the audience than the spirit of the literary original, this paper analyses the formation of three different identities of Alice in the original work, Disney's adaptation and Burton's adaptation. The culture, society and circumstances have a marking influence on the formation of identity of the three Alice appearing in three different historical times. The study uses the ideas of Erik Erikson and James Marcia to understand the identity crises undergone by Alice in the course of time.

*The Translation and Adaptation of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland into isiNdebele* (2019) by Dion Nkomo questions the universality and translatability of *Alice* is questioned through this paper. The translation of *Alice* into isiNdebele- a language of Zimbabwe, commemorating the completion of 150 years of publication of *Alice* in 1865, this paper problematizes the argument of the 'universal-child hypothesis' propounded by Warren Weaver fifty years ago. It argues that Alice should not be considered a universal child as she has a unique individual identity which is different from that of children in Zimbabwe. He attributes the formation of a universal identity to the approach of domestication taken by the translators in producing Alice for Zimbabwe.

*Interpreting the Readability in Simplified Editions of Children's Literature from a Thematic Perspective: The Case Study on Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (2017) by Tingjiya Wang uses the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics to analyse the thematic structure of the simplified editions of children's literature. It studies the appropriation of the clauses used to convey the original theme in the simplified editions of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The modifications in rearranging the clauses done

by the two different simplified editions are analysed to understand the making of a text readable to the target audience.

*Discrepancy Content of Carroll's "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" and Al-Kabir's "Alice fi Biladi Al-Ajaib"* (2023) by Misbahus Surur, Robi'atul Ukhrowiyah, and Efri Anzani studies the influence of the original work on its new rendering in Arabic. This study points out the discrepancies in setting, plot, minor characters and ending found in the Arabic tale of Alice by Al-Kabir. The study uses the concept of intertextuality proposed by Julia Kristeva to compare and establish the relationship between the original and the adapted version. The study shows that story by Al-Kabir is solely a rendering of the character sketch of Alice whereas the original story is about the adventures of the Wonderland.

*Reflecting on Wonderland: Alice's Adventures as Metatext in the Graphic Novel* (2022) by Brigid Cherry is a chapter which considers remediations of Lewis Carroll's Alice texts in Bryan Talbot's *Alice in Sunderland* (2007) and few other similar graphic novels. It applies Moula Evangelia's *Graphic Novels as Self-Conscious Contemplative Metatexts: Redefining Comics and Participating in Theoretical Discourse* (2018) argument that the graphic novel works on the level of self-conscious contemplative metatext, to these paraliterary narratives drawn on the original Alice stories and the lives of Carroll.

*(In)Appropriating Alice: The Neo-Victorian Sexualization of Carroll's Wonderland* (2022) by Anne-Marie Beller and Claire O'Callaghan examines a range of transmedia adaptations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) through the lens of Neo-Victorian theories of haunting and 'sexploitation,' this essay argues that modern reworkings of Alice are most often haunted by the allegations of pedophilia surrounding Charles Dodgson, leading to an '(in)appropriation' of the figure of Alice. But ignoring the truth behind such claims, there has been a proliferation of sexualized reimaginings in contemporary pop culture, including pornography, graphic novels, artworks, and videogames. The authors explore how Alice has been reworked in both empowering and exploitative ways by male and female writers, artists, and game designers. In the context of the allegations that have dogged Carroll's posthumous reputation, they interrogate the insistent fascination with sexualizing the figure of Alice.

In the 1973 T. S. Eliot Memorial Lectures, Frank Kermode argues for a new understanding of the literary classic. He distinguishes between what he calls the "imperial classic" and the "modern classic", with the latter, rather than being timeless, proving capable of moving through time. For Kermode, what makes a literary work a classic is precisely the fact that it cannot be fully understood in its time—or any other—; the book's seeming timelessness stems from "the coexistence in a single text of a plurality of significances from which, in the nature of human attentiveness, every reader misses some—and in the nature of human individuality, prefers one" (Kermode, 1975: 133). As such, in each of these texts, "there is a substance that prevails, however powerful the agents of change", and the classic subsists by "being patient of interpretation" (1975: 134). For Kermode, a classic must always mean too much and too little, its survival dependent upon the "possession of a surplus of signifier" (1975: 140).

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