

Charlotte Sjøberg Sørhus

Through the Modern Adaptation- Glass, and What Alice Found There

The Transformation of Lewis Carroll's
Wonderland in Nick Willing's *Alice* (2009), and
American McGee's *American McGee's Alice* (2000)
and *Alice: Madness Returns* (2011)

Master's thesis in English Literature with Teacher Education

Supervisor: Eli Løfaldli

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Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Humanities
Department of Language and Literature

Abstract

This thesis examines the transformation of Wonderland in modern adaptations of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871). The adaptations explored are Nick Willing's *Alice* (2009), and American McGee's *American McGee's Alice* (2000) and its sequel *Alice: Madness Returns* (2011). The adaptations are all termed 'new narrative adaptations', defined as adaptations that feature a new narrative as opposed to adapting the source text's narrative. The focus of this thesis is the connection between the new narratives and how Wonderland is portrayed, but it also incorporates José Ángel García Landa's identification of the fact that the perception of a classic work is influenced by its popular readings and interpretations by investigating how this has created a perception of an 'Alice in Wonderland' narrative that incorporates more than just Carroll's novels. The connection between the adaptations' new narratives and their portrayal of Wonderland is explored using ideas from ecocriticism, in particular Karin Lesnik-Oberstein's argument that children and nature are inherently linked in Western literature and Don Mitchell's argument that all landscapes reflect the values and ideologies of those who created them. The thesis finds that the links between the narrative, themes, and Wonderland's environment are more pronounced in the adaptations, something which de-emphasises Wonderland's whimsicality, instead creating a darker tone and thereby contributing to establishing a separate identity for the adaptations.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgments	iii
Down the Rabbit-Hole: An Introduction	3
Narratives in Wonderland: Originals and Adaptations	9
Original Novels: Lewis Carroll’s <i>Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland</i> and <i>Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There</i>	9
Film Adaptation: Nick Willing’s <i>Alice</i>	9
Video Game Adaptations: American McGee’s <i>Alice</i> Game Series	10
The Pool of Theory	13
‘New Narrative Adaptations’	13
Adaptation and External Influences	14
Ecocriticism.....	15
Authors of the Environment.....	15
Children and Nature	16
‘It’s My Own Invention’: Lewis Carroll’s <i>Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland</i> and <i>Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There</i>	19
The Garden of Adaptations: The Influence of Other Adaptations	25
Additional Reference Points.....	25
Other Influences	29
A Mad Tea-Party: Nick Willing’s <i>Alice</i>	37
The Queen and the Dollmaker: American McGee’s <i>American McGee’s Alice</i> and <i>Alice: Madness Returns</i>	47
<i>American McGee’s Alice</i>	48
<i>Alice: Madness Returns</i>	53
Alice’s Evidence: A Conclusion	61
Works Cited	65
Appendix A: The Master’s Project’s Relevance for Work as a Teacher with a Master’s Degree	69

“At least the place I've landed is somewhat familiar.”

– Alice Liddell (McGee, *Alice: Madness Returns* “Chapter 1”)

Down the Rabbit-Hole: An Introduction

More than 150 years have passed since the release of Lewis Carroll's first novel about Alice and Wonderland, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, in 1865, but the works of Carroll remain part of the popular cultural landscape. Interestingly, the continued presence of Carroll's Alice and Wonderland in popular culture is not purely contingent on *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its 1871 sequel *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (hereafter *Adventures* and *Looking-Glass* respectively). Classic pieces of children's literature such as these novels are frequently given new life through various adaptations and these new takes on Carroll's novels help keep the 'Alice in Wonderland' narrative prominent in the public imagination, even if they contain diversions from Carroll's novels. The two novels about Alice have a long history of adaptation, most likely starting in 1890 with Carroll's adaptation of his own work, *The Nursery "Alice"*, a shorter retelling of the first novel aimed at a younger audience of "[c]hildren aged from [n]ought to [f]ive" (Carroll, *The Nursery "Alice"* n.p.). From that point on, a myriad of different adaptations in a wide range of mediums started appearing. Literary adaptations can be found already at the turn of the nineteenth century with Anna M. Richardson's 1895 novel *A New Alice in the Old Wonderland* and J. C. Gorham's 1905 retelling *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland Retold in Words of One Syllable*, and they continue to appear in recent times with adaptations such as Marissa Meyer's 2016 novel *Heartless* and Christina Henry's series *The Chronicles of Alice*, where the first novel, *Alice*, was published in 2015 and the latest release in the series, *Looking Glass*, was published in 2020.

The medium of film has also been a very popular form for Carroll adaptations, starting with the silent film adaptation *Alice in Wonderland* in 1903 by directors Cecil Hepworth and Percy Stow. Since then, film adaptations of Carroll's novels have been released regularly, with the 1951 Walt Disney Productions film, *Alice in Wonderland*, perhaps being the most well-known. Recent film adaptations include the Walt Disney Pictures produced *Alice in Wonderland*, directed by Tim Burton, from 2010 and its sequel *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, directed by James Bobin, from 2016, and ABC's television series *Once Upon a Time in Wonderland*, which aired from 2013 until 2014. Carroll's novels have also been adapted into other mediums such as stage productions, art, and music – Henry Savile Clarke, Walter Slaughter and Aubrey Hopwood's 1886 musical pantomime *Alice in Wonderland*, Salvador Dalí's 1969 illustrations for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, and

Jefferson Airplane's 1967 song "White Rabbit" being examples of these mediums, respectively.

It is not only adapters and an audience looking for narrative entertainment that have shown continuous interest in Carroll's novels about Alice and Wonderland, but the novels have also garnered much interest from academics and literary critics. Areas of recent academic interest and exploration of adaptations of Carroll's novels seem to be drawn towards film adaptations in particular, or adaptations' treatment of Alice's character. In "Changing Media of Enchantment: Tracking the Transition from Verbal to Visual Nonsense in Tim Burton's Cinematic Adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland*" for instance, Anna Kérchy discusses the shift from a textual medium to a visual medium and its effects on the portrayal of nonsense, while Mark Sinker surveys key films and illustration that have brought Carroll's Alice's character to life in "Alice Through the Lens". Kamilla Elliott's "Adaptation as Compendium: Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland*", uses Burton's film to discuss the increasingly common type of film adaptation that is constructed as a pastiche of other cultural productions in terms of narrative. Elliott also discusses effects of CGI on the portrayal of nonsense and the link between the film's colonialism and Disney's business ventures in China. Regarding Alice's character, Finn-Henning Johannessen's Master's thesis *Alice in Wonderland: Development of Alice's Identity within Adaptations* discusses the development of Alice's identity in three adaptations compared to Carroll's novels, while Catherine Siemann's "'But I'm grown up now': Alice in the Twenty-First Century" discuss the sexualisation of Alice and Wonderland, her focus being on the character of Alice as presented in a handful modern interpretations of Carroll's novels.

As seen in these examples of recent readings and explorations of adaptations, Wonderland itself tends to be either be regarded only in terms of being the narrative's backdrop or being focused on only in terms of technical elements such as the use of CGI or issues brought about by changing the medium. For this reason, this thesis aims to bring Wonderland to the forefront, as Wonderland is almost as important as Alice herself to the pop-cultural perception of Carroll's novels. Wonderland as the dreamy and surreal setting of a child's daydream is often transformed in one way or another in adaptations of Carroll's work to fit new and different aesthetics or narratives. As noted by Siemann, these recent, twenty-first century, adaptations of Carroll's *Adventures* and *Looking-Glass* novels have tended to be darker than the source texts, often featuring "violence, insanity, and sexual threat[s]" (175). She argues that this darkness stems from critical readings of Carroll's novels

that have emphasised the darker aspects of the novels since the twentieth century and that the adaptations of Carroll's novels followed this same trend (Siemann 177). This darkening of Wonderland has its roots in earlier academic interpretations of the novels linking them to drugs, interpretations relying on psychology, and discussions about the nature of Carroll's interest in underage girls (Siemann 177-178). With aesthetic and narrative changes being common in recent adaptations, it seems likely that these changes will impact how Wonderland is portrayed in modern adaptations of Carroll's novels.

To explore this link between narrative changes and representations of Wonderland in adaptations, this thesis will analyse narrative and thematic connections between the narrative and the environment of Wonderland in Carroll's novels, Nick Willing's television film 2009 adaptation *Alice*, and American McGee's 2000 videogame adaptation *American McGee's Alice* and its 2011 sequel *Alice: Madness Returns*. Using these adaptations, the aim of this thesis is to examine how the new narratives in modern 'new narrative adaptations' of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* change the environments of Wonderland. Additionally, this thesis will also touch on how adaptations may carry traces of earlier adaptations and interpretations, in this case in their visual representation, that even if linked to the new narrative might have originated elsewhere.

When choosing the new narrative adaptations of Carroll's *Adventures* and *Looking-Glass*, it was a conscious decision to look at adaptations made after the novels had entered the public domain as that means that the adaptations will avoid potential interference and influence from the original author, his estate, or other copyright holders that could put restrictions on the adaptation. The adapters may still experience restrictions, interference, and influence from other parties such as their own publishers, editors, producers, creative collaborators, etc., which may be as invasive as that of a copyright holder, but these are likely to have other interests, such as marketability, compared to a copyright holder, who might be more concerned with areas such as fidelity and character interpretation. It was also decided that the adaptations explored in this thesis should be modern adaptations, here meaning released after 1999, as well as not being adaptations of adaptations. Furthermore, it was decided to explore transmedia adaptations, as they are common, especially recently, and the mediums chosen for exploration were film and videogames as they represent some of the most popular narrative entertainment outside of novels. The film, Willing's *Alice*, was chosen as it has no ties to the Walt Disney Company, thus not complicating the film's status as an

adaptation Carroll's novels, by being perceived as a live-action adaptation of Disney's *Alice in Wonderland*. Similarly, McGee's *American McGee's Alice* and its sequel *Alice: Madness Returns* were chosen as they are the highest profile videogames released fitting the aforementioned criteria.

Additionally, these adaptations have two similarities that make them interesting to examine together: their intended audience and their depictions of Alice. Both adaptations have an older intended audience than Carroll's novels, as the film is intended for teens and older, and the videogames are intended for adults. They also both depict Alice as older and dark-haired, which is likely influenced by the historical Alice Liddell. This is contrary to the common depiction of Alice as a blonde, which likely originated in the coloured versions of Tenniel's illustrations in Carroll's *The Nursery "Alice"* and was later popularised by the Disney adaptation *Alice in Wonderland*. This change in depiction signifies a conscious move away from the common cultural ideas of both Alice and Wonderland in these adaptations.

The first chapter of this thesis, 'Narratives in Wonderland: Originals and Adaptations', gives brief overviews of the narratives of Carroll's novels, *Alice*, *American McGee's Alice* and *Alice: Madness Returns*. Chapter Two, 'The Pool of Theory', introduces the theories used to analyse how a new narrative changes the environment of Wonderland in the chosen adaptations. Yvonne Griggs's categorisation of adaptation is used as the foundation for creating the new term 'new narrative adaptation', while José Ángel García Landa's concept of how the perception of a classic work is influenced by its popular readings and interpretations anchors the existence of a perceived 'Alice in Wonderland' narrative that incorporates more than just Carroll's novels. Theories relating to ecocriticism form the basis for the analysis of Wonderland's environment, and the framework deployed leans on Pippa Marland's general overview of the discipline, Don Mitchell's identification of the connection between the environment its authors, and Karin Lesnik-Oberstein's identification of the connection between children and nature. Chapter Three, 'It's My Own Invention': Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*', analyses the connections between the narrative and Wonderland's environment in the original novels. The fourth chapter, 'The Garden of Adaptations: The Influence of Other Adaptations', builds on Landa's concept of the perceived identity of the 'Alice in Wonderland' story and shows how other works and ideas may have influenced Willing and McGee and their adaptations of Carroll's novels. The fifth and sixth chapters, 'A Mad Tea-Party: Nick Willing's *Alice*' and 'The Queen and the Dollmaker: American

McGee's *American McGee's Alice* and *Alice: Madness Returns*', analyse the connections between the narrative and Wonderland's environment in Willing's film adaptation and McGee's videogame adaptations, respectively.

Narratives in Wonderland: Originals and Adaptations

Original Novels: Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*

The story of Alice and her Wonderland originates from two of Carroll's novels: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* from 1865 and the sequel *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* from 1871. The first novel tells the story of Alice as she follows the White Rabbit down a rabbit-hole that leads to a hall in which a small door leads to a beautiful garden. The novel follows Alice's adventures through Wonderland as she attempts to get to the beautiful garden. When she arrives in this garden, she meets the Queen of Hearts. Alice's time in Wonderland ends with a trial for some stolen tarts when she wakes up from dreaming (Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass [A&LG]* 7-126). The sequel novel tells the story of Alice as she walks through a looking-glass into the Looking-glass House and country, implied to be Wonderland by the closing poem. Here, Alice ends up as a pawn in a gigantic chess game that stretches across the country. The novel follows Alice's adventures as she moves along the board to become a queen piece. As queen, Alice takes part in a dinner party, but the party turns rowdy, and Alice wakes up from dreaming back in her house (Carroll, *A&LG* 127-272).

Film Adaptation: Nick Willing's *Alice*

Alice is a 2009 television film written and directed by Nick Willing. The film originally aired on television as a two-part mini-series ("Watch Alice Online | Season 1"). The film contains elements of adventure, comedy, drama, fantasy, romance, and science fiction. The Wonderland of Willing's *Alice* is implied to be the Wonderland portrayed in Carroll's novels, but evolved for 150 years. *Alice's* Wonderland is ruled by the Queen of Hearts, who controls the population through the sale of special teas with drug-like effects. These teas are created by harvesting emotions from humans from the real world, referred to as Oysters, and they alter the drinker's emotions to match the emotions the humans felt at the time of harvest. The film follows Alice Hamilton, an adult martial arts instructor, as she finds herself in Wonderland after following the kidnappers of her boyfriend, Jack Chase, who is later revealed to be Jack Heart – the Jack of Hearts. In Wonderland, Alice finds herself in reluctant cooperation with Hatter and a resistance movement, the Resistance, as it revealed that the ring Jack attempted to propose to her with at the start of the film contains the Stone of Wonderland which controls the Looking-Glass. The Looking-Glass is what allows for

passage between Wonderland and Earth. As the film progresses, Alice grows closer to Hatter and meets more characters from the source material. She also discovers that her missing father has been kidnapped and brainwashed into working for the Queen of Hearts, draining and distilling emotions from kidnapped Oysters, as well as keeping them dormant. The film ends with Alice's father sacrificing himself to save Alice, which allows Alice and the Resistance, including Jack Heart, to free the Oysters and overthrow the Queen of Hearts. Jack Heart becomes king and proposes to Alice once more, but she turns him down. Alice instead chooses to return to Earth where only one hour has passed since she left, despite spending several days in Wonderland. At the end of the film, it is revealed that Hatter followed her to Earth, and they reunite. It is implied that they will have a romantic relationship through a kiss (Willing, *Alice*).

Video Game Adaptations: American McGee's *Alice* Game Series

American McGee's Alice is a 2000 video game directed by American McGee and developed by Rogue Entertainment for Electronic Arts. McGee also directed the sequel *Alice: Madness Returns*, which was released in 2011 and was developed by Spicy Horse for Electronic Arts. A third game in the series, *Alice: Asylum* – a prequel to *American McGee's Alice*, is currently in early stages of pre-production and therefore does not feature in this thesis (“American McGee is creating Games”). McGee has also produced two short films released under the name *Alice: Otherlands* in 2015, which takes place after *Alice: Madness Returns*. They are not featured in this discussion as they take place in the Wonderlands of Jules Verne and Richard Wagner and not Alice's Wonderland.

Set after the events of Carroll's novels, McGee's games follow the same Alice character and therefore position themselves as non-canonical sequels to the source material. However, McGee's games are significantly darker visually, in tone, and narratively compared to Carroll's novels. Within the games the player plays as the character of Alice Liddell. The first game in the series, *American McGee's Alice*, opens with a flashback to a fire in the childhood family home of Alice, who is shown to be the only survivor. She is then seen several years older when she is catatonic in an asylum. One of the doctors bring her old rabbit toy and the toy calls for help, there by calling Alice to Wonderland. Wonderland in McGee's games exists in Alice's imagination and is reflective of Alice's state of mind and her mental health. The Wonderland Alice finds herself in is darker than the one from her previous adventures due to the rule of the Queen of Hearts. As Alice works her way through Wonderland to defeat the Queen of Hearts with the help of various characters, she comes to

understand that the twisted Wonderland she finds herself in is the result of her survivor's guilt and the loss of sanity following the fire in her home. The game ends with Alice defeating the Queen of Hearts, thereby restoring Wonderland to its former glory. In the real world Alice is seen conscious and leaving Rutledge Asylum with regained sanity (McGee, *American McGee's Alice* [AMA]).

The sequel game, *Alice: Madness Returns*, is set about a year after the first game. Alice is now living under the care of Dr Angus Bumby in an orphanage, despite being in her late teens. Dr Bumby also attempts to treat Alice to help her move on from the struggles she has suffered due to the fire in her family home. This game switches between the real world and Wonderland as Alice drifts in and out of consciousness in various situations. In Wonderland, she discovers that it is under the threat of a large polluting train, and that many of her memories are missing. Throughout the game Alice recovers her memories and discovers that the fire in her family home was not an accident, but a way for Dr Bumby to cover up his implied rape and murder of Alice's older sister Elizabeth 'Lizzie' Liddell. She also learns and must accept that she has been a silent witness to Dr Bumby grooming the orphans in his care to become prostitutes and victims of abuse, even if she did not fully realise it at the time. The game comes to an end with Alice pushing Dr Bumby in front of an oncoming train in the real world as she defeats the Dollmaker, his counterpart, in Wonderland. The game ends on a bittersweet note as after the defeat of Dr Bumby, the real world and Wonderland have become merged for Alice (McGee, *Alice: Madness Returns* [A:MR]).

The Pool of Theory

‘New Narrative Adaptations’

To describe the type of adaptations examined in this thesis I have created the term ‘new narrative adaptations’. The term is meant to signify that the defining feature of these adaptations is the new narrative regardless of the type of new narrative it is, e.g., whether it is a sequel or re-write. Additionally, they also keep various major elements such as characters, settings, and/or plot points from the source material, establishing an explicit and direct link to the source material. Using the term ‘new narrative adaptation’ as a category for a type of adaptations is inspired by Yvonne Griggs categorisation of adaptations in her book *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Adaptation Studies* where she categorises adaptations into three main categories: ‘classic’ treatment, re-vision, and radical re-think (Griggs 12).

The ‘classic’ treatment adaptations commonly aim to be perceived as the source material but in a different medium and is typically novel to film adaptations (Griggs). They are primarily concerned with having a high level of perceived fidelity to their source material and are therefore likely to retain as many elements from the source material as possible such as structure, character, and themes (Griggs 27-28, 91). Contrastingly, re-visioned adaptations approach their source material from new angles, e.g., changing the narrative viewpoint, narrative structure, characters, or settings, to engage with it in a way that challenges or questions the source material’s themes and ideologies or even creates new ones (Griggs 7-8, 10-11, 105, 218-219). Lastly, radical re-think adaptations constitute a definite move away from their source material with less of a direct relationship to it. They still invoke the source material through elements such as narrative, characters, and/or titles (Griggs 11, 58-59, 116). Due to the transformation of the source material these adaptations can also be labelled as appropriations (Griggs 58-59, 233-234).

A ‘new narrative adaptation’ is perhaps closest to re-visioned adaptations in Griggs categorisations due to having a direct link to their source material. An example of an adaptation of Carroll that features a new narrative but lacks the direct link to its source material is Neil Gaiman’s *Coraline*. *Coraline* has much in common with *Adventures* and *Looking-Glass* such as a young female protagonist, a fantastical world separate to reality, and a talking cat (Carroll; Gaiman). Even though there is no direct link in *Coraline* tying it to Carroll’s novels, the similarities still invoke enough of them to be classified as a radical re-think but not a ‘new narrative adaptation’.

The adaptations of Carroll's *Adventures* and *Looking-Glass* that are examined in this thesis are new narrative adaptations as they feature new narratives with established direct links to Carroll's novels. The adaptations have direct links to Carroll by using existing characters and the setting of Wonderland. The new narratives come in the form of what happens to Alice and Wonderland when she suffers and processes trauma after the events of Carroll's novels in McGee's *Alice* videogame series, and a romance-meets-family drama-meets-adventure set in a Wonderland that has evolved for about 150 years in Willing's *Alice*.

Adaptation and External Influences

José Ángel García Landa argues that “adaptation[s] should be seen as having, by definition, a different agenda from the original (aesthetically and ideologically speaking), even if a reuse of the original is included in that agenda” (Landa 182). Landa argues that differences can be just as relevant or interesting as similarities in the examination of adaptations (Landa 182). Elaborating further, Landa highlights G.H. Mead's and H. Blumer's concept of symbolic interactionism, which while originating in social studies, Landa argues is also relevant for literary, translation and adaptation studies. Symbolic interactionism is the idea that meaning does not originate “in the object or in the mind, but in a social process of interaction” (Landa 187). When symbolic interactionism is used to study literature, the object becomes a source text whose meaning is made up of interaction. This means that the meaning is not restricted to the text itself or a single reader as the meaning is remade every time the text is read or used through interpretation and social interaction (Blumer qtd. in Landa 187; Landa 187). This is particularly interesting in the context of adaptations, as the source text gets remade in different contexts which may change the perceived meaning of the work.

Building on this, Landa argues that adaptations of classic works are not only affected by the critical reception of the source work, and what the work was, but also what the work has become through “an intertextual complex of criticism, of attitudes towards the historical period it is set in, etc.” (Landa 189). Landa also argues that adaptations and critical readings may bring out valuable elements of the original work, which retroactively may create an invisible virtual dimension of the text of which the original work may only appear as one possible expression, maybe even an imperfect expression of that virtual dimension of the text (Landa 189). In other words, adaptations and critical readings may create an idea of what a certain work is that even the original work may be measured against. For Carroll's novels, this means that there exists an idea of the ‘Alice in Wonderland’ narrative that is not based solely on them, but also other popular versions or readings of them.

Ecocriticism

As this thesis aims to explore environments in literature, concepts from ecocriticism will be central in the close readings of the environments of the different Wonderlands. Ecocriticism is an umbrella term for critical approaches to literature that explore the representation of relationships between the human and the non-human, primarily focusing on anxieties of humanity's destructive impact on the biosphere (Marland 1507). Examples of the destructive impact of humanity includes acts such as pollution and deforestation (Marland 1515-1516). Furthermore, within ecocriticism there are also disciplines that focus more on how environments have been constructed and their relationships to dominant ideologies within society such as ecofeminism and post-colonial ecocriticism, which are concerned with topics such as the representation of gender, and race, respectively, in environments (Marland 1513-1515). In this thesis the concept of environments being able to represent ideologies and being linked to narrative themes forms the core concept as it aims to explore connections between environments and new narratives in adaptations.

Authors of the Environment

Landscapes and environments are not just in the background of whatever is happening without any effect on the people there. Landscapes are 'read' by inhabitants and visitors affecting their understanding of the place and changing their behaviour to suit the environment. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that landscapes are in part produced by a culture and that what the producers intend is not necessarily how the landscape will be used by its users (Mitchell 120-122). Don Mitchell argues that landscapes are 'authored' both in the sense that they may have been made by hands and minds, as well as that of being representative of different people, classes, and myths (121-122). As an example of how landscapes can be representative of ideology and power relations, Mitchell suggests that one can look at how gender is represented in public places. He concludes that masculine gender expressions tend to dominate, by pointing out that there is a lack of statues of feminine figures in public places and if there are any, they are highly idealised from a masculine perspective. This reinforces masculine ideals and ideologies regarding femininity and women's place in society (Mitchell 125-126). A further example used is that of suburbia and how it can reflect women's place in the work force. The separation of home and business, placing the home in a suburb, emphasises the privatisation of home life as well as women's place in the home rather than a business (Mitchell 126-129). Furthermore, Mitchell underlines that while everyone reads a landscape, not everyone has an equal part in authoring

it. As such the landscapes reflect only the values of its authors and is thus able to act in regulatory ways to enforce the ideologies of those in power (Mitchell 139-144).

In the case of literature and fiction, the settings and landscapes are of course authored in a literal understanding of the word. However, the idea of the landscape being ‘authored’ by certain people or classes is still applicable, as the environments the narratives take place in may reflect real-life environments and/or have ties to certain people or classes in the narrative. This is particularly true of fantasy literature. An example of this can be found in J.R.R. Tolkien’s writings related to Middle Earth, such as *The Hobbit*. Here the different races show different cultural aspects and housing preferences which affects the environments they create (Tolkien). Another example is J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series, where there are clear distinctions between the environments of muggles and wizards originating in wizards going into hiding and having access to magic. This can be seen in instances such as enchanted wizard tents that are bigger inside than they are outside, as opposed to muggle structures that are the size they appear (Rowling). These examples highlight an important aspect of the environment in fantasy narratives, as they help create believable cultures, and customs, as well as an internal logic. Since these landscapes are literally authored, it can be assumed that the landscapes are mostly deliberate, and authors may use these deliberate landscapes in literature to accentuate themes related to the plot, worldbuilding, and foreshadowing, to mention examples.

Children and Nature

Karin Lesnik-Oberstein argues that there are few ideas in Western culture that are as connected and intertwined as the ideas of nature and the child (208). This is seen in the books deemed appropriate for children, and Lesnik-Oberstein claims that “[i]t would not be an exaggeration to state that, on average, at least two-thirds of the books [in a children’s bookshop] are in some form or another linked with nature and the environment, and – specifically and most importantly – with animals” (208). The child and nature are viewed as connected through the idea of them representing values and ideas such as the essential, the unconstructed, the primeval, the original, the uncontaminated and being above and beyond man (Lesnik-Oberstein 210). This connection between the child and nature may act as protection from questioning, change and analysis, but Lesnik-Oberstein argues that the connection makes children’s literature a great source for studying ideas about nature (210-216).

While none of the adaptations examined in this thesis could be classified as children's entertainment, with the ratings of Mature for the videogames, and age 12 for the miniseries, the adaptations both retain and break with the elements of the idea of the connection between the child and nature. As Carroll's *Adventures* is among the books Lesnik-Oberstein lists as examples of children's literature where there is a connection between the child and nature, which elements are retained, challenged or discarded can be viewed as a way for the adaptations to differentiate themselves from the novels they are adapting (209).

'It's My Own Invention': Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, and What Alice Found There

The descriptions of the environment in Carroll's *Adventures* and *Looking-Glass* are generally brief and largely functional, not featuring intricate and detailed descriptions of the environment that Alice finds herself in. This can for instance be seen in Carroll's description of the pool of tears in *Adventures*, where he writes that "there was a large pool all around her, about four inches deep and reaching half down the hall" and the Duchess's kitchen which is described as: "a large kitchen, which was full of smoke from one end to the other: the Duchess was sitting on a three-legged stool in the middle, nursing a baby; the cook was leaning over the fire, stirring a large cauldron which seemed to be full of soup" (Carroll, *A&LG* 24, 61). In *Looking-Glass*, the same type of description can be seen in that a part of a garden is described as having "a large flower-bed, with a border of daisies, and a willow-tree growing in the middle" and the portrayal of a shop, where Alice is described to be "in a little dark shop, leaning with her elbows on the counter, and opposite to her was an Old Sheep, sitting in an arm-chair knitting" (Carroll, *A&LG* 154, 199). This type of descriptions gives the readers a sense of space as they give an overview of the environment relevant to the narrative, but by leaving out details such as colours and specific items, they also invite the readers to fill in those blanks using their own imagination. This means that the readers are largely able to project their own interpretations of Wonderland's environment onto Carroll's work. However, as the novels originally featured illustration by Sir John Tenniel, these also likely factor into the readers' interpretations.

The setting and environment are important to Carroll's *Adventures* and *Looking-Glass*, in terms of establishing both the atmosphere and the narrative. Narratively, Alice has a specific geographical goal in both novels: a beautiful garden in *Adventures* and the other side of the giant chessboard in *Looking-Glass*. Furthermore, at the core of the novels' narratives are Alice's travels through the environment of Wonderland, and her interactions with it and its inhabitants (Carroll, *A&LG*). Atmospherically, the environment is important in establishing the surreal, whimsical, dreamlike, and nonsensical quality of Wonderland itself, as well as furthering the whimsical and dreamlike quality of the two narratives. In the narrative of *Adventures*, Alice changes size multiple times. Comparing the size of Alice to her environment creates an atmosphere of surrealness which in turn emphasises the non-

reality of Wonderland. Examples of this can be found when Alice grows large inside a house and finds “her head pressing against the ceiling” and has to “put one arm out the window, and one foot up the chimney” (Carroll 41-42). Alice also finds a doorway in a tree leading to the first hallway in *Adventures* which emphasises the surreal quality of Wonderland’s nature (Carroll, *A&LG* 79-80). In *Looking-Glass*, one of the ways the dreamlike aspect of Wonderland is highlighted is by having the environment and setting of the narrative change suddenly, mimicking how dreams can be experienced as fragments rather than coherent narratives (Lewis). In some instances, Alice is aware of the sudden changes, such as when she attempts to walk towards the Red Queen: “[t]o her surprise, [Alice] lost sight of [the Red Queen] in a moment, and found herself walking in at the front-door again”, while in another instance the change just happens as Alice goes from jumping over a brook to sitting in a train carriage without any immediate comment or explanation (Carroll, *A&LG* 157, 166). The creation of a dreamlike and whimsical atmosphere and setting is important to Carroll’s novels as it emphasises and enhances the surreal narrative of the story. As both the world and narratives of Carroll’s novels are whimsical, there is a cohesion between them that allows the readers to suspend their disbelief.

While this thesis focuses on Wonderland’s environment, it is important to note that in *Looking-Glass* there is a direct link between the real world and Wonderland. This link is established as Alice walks up to the looking-glass in the real world and comments to Kitty that “the room you can see through the glass – that’s just the same as our drawing-room, only the things go the other way” (Carroll, *A&LG* 141). The connection between the real world and Wonderland is further emphasised when Alice enters the Wonderland through the looking-glass and checks the fireplace for a fire to “find that there was a real one, blazing away as brightly as the one she left behind” (Carroll, *A&LG* 143). However, it is quickly made clear that Wonderland is not simply a mirror image of the real world as Alice notices that “what could be seen from the [real world room] was quite common and uninteresting, but that all the rest was as different as possible. For instance, the pictures on the wall next to the fire seemed to be all alive” (Carroll, *A&LG* 143). The link between the real world and Wonderland is once again emphasised at the end of the novel. Once Alice has woken up in the real world, she is described as having “hunted among the chessmen on the table till she had found the Red Queen [...] and put the kitten and the Queen to look at each other” and accusing Kitty of having turned into the chess piece, “‘Now Kitty!’ she cried [...]. ‘Confess that was what you turned into!’” (Carroll, *A&LG* 269).

The Wonderland portrayed in the two novels both share similarities and display differences, which could suggest that the readers either get to experience different parts of the same Wonderland as different places appear in the two novel or that it might be two different Wonderlands altogether. Tenniel's illustrations suggest, through the clarification of Hatta being the same character as the Hatter, that the Wonderland in both novels is likely to be the same Wonderland, as the Hatter appears to be an inhabitant of Wonderland in both novels (Carroll, *A&LG* 225; Carroll). The main feature of the environment that the two have in common is that large parts of Wonderland appear to be covered in woods. The relative locations of the environments Alice visits within Wonderland in *Adventures*, is not subject to much attention, other than the fact that they all appear as Alice follows the White Rabbit and makes her way towards the garden she saw through the small door at the beginning of the novel. This stands in contrast to the Wonderland that appears in *Looking-Glass*, where the various settings are very much rooted in their relation to each other as parts of a country shaped as a chessboard. A further difference is the apparent scale of Wonderland: the first novel features a couple of woods, a few houses, and the Queen of Heart's garden and court while the second novel features multiple woods, the looking-glass house, some fields, a shop with a river, a train, a town, and a castle, suggesting that a larger area is explored in *Looking-Glass* than in *Adventures* (Carroll, *A&LG*).

The Wonderland in Carroll's novels is implied to be a creation of Alice's imagination as at the end of each novel, Alice wakes from a dream in the real world, suggesting that her trip to Wonderland was a part of those dreams (Carroll, *A&LG* 123, 269). Within the narrative of Carroll's novels Alice's mind can therefore be viewed as the overall author of Wonderland, including the landscapes, in terms of Mitchell's use of the term 'author'. However, due to the way the narrative unfolds, and the small amount of time spent in the real world in the novels, for the most part there are limited ties between Wonderland and Alice's control over it (Carroll, *A&LG*). There are minor exceptions to this, such as the Looking-glass House, which starts out as a mirror image of Alice's house (Carroll, *A&LG* 141-143). Mirror images have multiple different meanings associated with them such as reflection of truth, warped reflections, vanity, and hidden truths. Narratively the Looking-glass House acts as a soft transition from the real world to Wonderland, as the mirrored house, a somewhat familiar but mirrored area, serves as the entryway to Wonderland, an unfamiliar area. As an environment the Looking-glass House is both whimsical, surreal, and unsettling, since it is a mirrored version of the house Alice is in at the beginning of the novel. Within the narrative of

Carroll's novel, the depiction of the Looking-glass House suggests that Wonderland might be a reflection of some sort, and this is furthered by the mirrored appearance of the house itself and items such as books (Carroll, *A&LG* 143, 148-149). Wonderland starting as a reflection could signal different ideas about Wonderland depending on how the idea of mirror images is interpreted. It could suggest that Wonderland is a reflection of how Alice perceives the world, that Wonderland is a warped reflection of the world Alice lives in, or that Wonderland does not exist, as the images in a mirror are not an existing space, simply a reflection of a real space.

Approaching Wonderland from the perspective that Wonderland is its own entity and Alice's primary role is being a visitor, it is possible to see connections between the landscape and the inhabitants. Large parts of both novels take place in nature, more specifically in woods, emphasising the natural over the constructed or industrial (Carroll, *A&LG*). In *Adventures*, when Alice does encounter houses, it tends to be only one at a time as opposed to a city or suburb (Carroll, *A&LG*). This falls in line with Lesnik-Oberstein's argument that children and nature are linked in Western children's literature, since the environment portrayed in the narrative of *Adventures* is largely based in nature (208). In the same novel, the reader witnesses the Queen literally authoring the environment, as she decides the colour of the roses in her garden (Carroll, *A&LG* 81-82). However, due to the whimsical nature of the novel's plot, the question of who authors various aspects of the environment is not a prominent concern, except for the fear the Queen of Hearts exerts over the other inhabitants of Wonderland if they do not keep to her wishes.

The environment in *Looking-Glass* comes across as more purposeful than that of *Adventures*, due to the fact that the plot centres on the chess move of getting a pawn to the other side of the board to promote it to a queen. The part of Wonderland which Alice spends this novel in, is a country sized chessboard with brooks and hedges separating the different squares (Carroll, *A&LG* 159). It is never clarified if the environmental chessboard is a natural occurrence in Wonderland or made by someone. If it is not a natural occurrence, then it can be assumed that the environment was made for the purpose and aesthetic of a game of chess. Through the pieces used on a chessboard, the game of chess could allude to royalty and the upper classes. Furthermore, it could also suggest rules, logic, and order as chess is a game with strict rules. This, of course, offers a contrast to the generally whimsical and surreal Wonderland. The Wonderland in *Looking-Glass* appears to be more structured with its carriage – implied to be a part of a train, shop, and city, than the Wonderland in *Adventures*

(Carroll, *A&LG*). The difference between the two novels could suggest that Wonderland to a certain degree mirrors the industrial progress of the real world. The encroaching industrialisation on the nature of Wonderland could also signify Alice getting older when read from the perspective of Lesnik-Oberstein's argument of the link between children and nature in literature.

Overall, the authors of Wonderland's environment are not very prominent in Carroll's novels. This comes as a likely consequence of Carroll's focus on elements other than world building, such as plot and linguistics. Within the plot of the novels, Wonderland acts as an escapist fantasy world filled with nonsense, whimsy, and surrealism. Therefore, it seems fitting that many of the elements of Wonderland's environment do not have clear authors, as part of the idea and appeal of Wonderland seems to be its lack of a strict logic. However, this aspect also makes Wonderland a very malleable concept that can fit into many different narratives, as is seen in the very different portrayals of Wonderland found in adaptations discussed hereafter.

The Garden of Adaptations: The Influence of Other Adaptations

It is important to acknowledge the adaptations of Carroll's novels examined in this thesis have not been created under circumstances where they are only influenced by their authors' interpretation of the source material. Carroll's *Adventures* and *Looking-Glass* are popular works of literature that is can be assumed most people living in Anglophone or Anglophone-influenced cultures know something about, even if they have not read Carroll's novels themselves. This means they fit into Landa's concept of works whose general perception have been shaped by adaptations and critiques (Landa 189). Particularly important to the general perception of this 'Alice in Wonderland' narrative are Sir John Tenniel's illustrations and Disney's film *Alice in Wonderland*. Whether Tenniel's illustrations can be viewed as truly separate from Carroll's novels is debatable, but for the purpose of this thesis they are viewed as closely linked but separate. Due to their importance to the general perception of the 'Alice in Wonderland' narrative, these adaptations will be treated as additional reference points, meaning that if their influence shows up in an adaptation it is not considered a new addition, but rather an adaptation of established convention.

Additional Reference Points

Upon their original release, Carroll's novels featured illustrations by Tenniel. The importance of Tenniel's illustration to the general perception of the 'Alice in Wonderland' narrative is easily seen the appearance of the Hatter. The Hatter is usually depicted wearing a top hat with a card where the price of the hat is written as 'In this style 10/6'. This is not mentioned in *Adventures*'s text, but Tenniel's illustration shows it (Carroll, *A&LG* 72). However, the card is drawn attention to in Carroll's own adaptation, *The Nursery "Alice"* (40). Furthermore, in *Looking-Glass*, the messenger named Hatta is shown to be the Hatter through Tenniel's illustrations only, as it is not explained in the text (Carroll, *A&LG* 225). While the illustrations tend to focus on characters, e.g., the White Rabbit during the trial scene, many of the illustrations feature the environment as backdrop, for instance Alice meeting Tweedledum and Tweedledee in the woods (Carroll, *A&LG* 110, 117). Tenniel's illustrations depicting Wonderland's environment mirror the functionality of Carroll's descriptions, though the visual medium occasionally provide more details. The illustrations either depict Carroll's words as written, e.g., a rose garden, or show the implicit setting of a scene, e.g., scenes set in the town (Carroll, *A&LG* 81, 225, 228). An illustration that is more detailed than Carroll's description is the one of the Sheep and her shop (Carroll, *A&LG* 199). Tenniel's renderings of the environments are rooted in realistic depictions, within Wonderland's surreal

framework, but there is one exception that sees Alice surrounded by drums (Carroll, *A&LG* 229). It is important to acknowledge that Tenniel's illustrations have some resemblance to Carroll's own illustrations of an early manuscript of the first novel called *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* (Carroll, *A&LG*; Carroll, *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*). This suggests that Carroll had specific ideas of how he wanted his novels illustrated and a direct influence on their visual identity.

As Tenniel's illustrations tend to focus on characters, his influence is not directly felt on this thesis. However, his illustrations show up in both Willing's and McGee's adaptations. In *Alice*, a young Alice has a copy of Carroll's book with a book sleeve featuring Tenniel's illustrations and the Jabberwock's design is based on Tenniel's illustration (Carroll, *A&LG* 150; Willing, *Alice* 00:59:16-01:00:43). In *American McGee's Alice* Tenniel's illustrations appear as paintings in Wonderland and versions of his illustrations modified to suit the new narrative featured in the game appear in a real-work book (McGee, *AMA* "Castling", "Heart of Darkness"). The appearance of Tenniel's illustrations as references to the original novels speaks to their importance to the perception of the 'Alice in Wonderland' narrative.



Figure 1-2: Stills from *Alice* at 01:16:27 & 00:59:24.

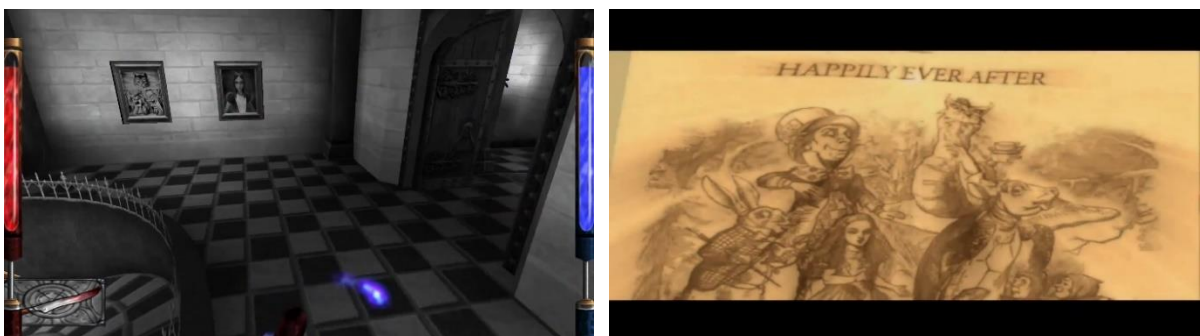


Figure 3-4: Stills from *American McGee's Alice* in the level "Castling" & ending cutscene from the level "Heart of Darkness".

The Walt Disney animated film adaptation, *Alice in Wonderland*, features the distinctive Disney style. The film uses cel animation, meaning that the background is an

unmoving painting on which the moving parts and characters are placed upon using transparent plastic cels (McCormick & Schillong). This separation between static and moving images gives *Alice in Wonderland* a dreamlike and surreal quality, as the background environments tends to be more illustrative than the animated characters. The Disney adaptation also bring surreal elements such as cartoon physics and bright, occasionally neon-like, colours to Wonderland's environment. To contrast these bright colours the film occasionally uses black and white areas. The surrealness of the environment is particularly pronounced in longer, non-stationary animated sequences. However, there are still instances of the environment being rooted in realism, such as the first Wonderland wood shown in the film. The film establishes 'Alice in Wonderland' conventions such as themed areas with the White Rabbit's house having rabbit-themed furniture, the Queen of Heart's labyrinth, and heart shaped decorations (*Alice in Wonderland*).

Willing's *Alice* directly references *Alice in Wonderland*, with a door in a tree trunk, a concept which is from *Adventures*, but the Cheshire Cat introducing it is from the Disney adaptation (*Alice in Wonderland*; Carroll, A&LG 79-80; Willing, *Alice* 01:14:30-01:16:06).



Figure 5: Still from *Alice in Wonderland* at 00:57:11.



Figure 6-7: Stills from *Alice* at 01:15:37 & 01:16:04.

American McGee's Alice and *Alice: Madness Returns* do not directly reference the Disney movie in its environment, but feature 'Alice in Wonderland' conventions established by it such as the labyrinth, the heart décor, and areas with specific themes.



Figure 8-9: Stills from *Alice in Wonderland* at 00:57:25 & *American McGee's Alice* in the level “Mystifying Madness”.



Figure 10-11: Stills from *Alice: Madness Returns* in the level “Chapter 4”.



Figure 12-13: Stills from *Alice in Wonderland* at 01:02:55 & 01:07:32.



Figure 14-15: Stills from *American McGee's Alice* in the level “Castle Keep” & *Alice: Madness Returns* in the level “Chapter 4”.



Figure 16: Still from *Alice in Wonderland* at 00:21:27.



Figure 17-18: Stills from *American McGee's Alice* in the levels “Pale Realm” & “About Face”.



Figure 19-20: Stills from *Alice: Madness Returns* in the levels “Chapter 2” & “Chapter 3”.

Other Influences

Landa argues that a work’s intertextual dimensions are made from links between the original work and its adaptations and interpretations (189). Therefore, the adaptations in this thesis are from a timeframe of just over a decade, between 2000 and 2011, as this ensures that the influences available will have been roughly the same for the adaptations examined. McGee appears to draw inspiration from goth and alternative subcultures, including the early works of film director Tim Burton, as the aesthetics of *American McGee's Alice*, and *Alice: Madness Returns* share features with them such as aesthetic darkness, edginess, and otherness. This is expressed in, for instance, Alice’s goth-like buckled boots, the steampunk elements, and former Nine Inch Nails member Chris Vrenna scoring *American McGee's Alice* and providing one piece of music for *Alice: Madness Returns* (McGee, AMA; McGee,

A:MR). Willing instead appears to draw from his own prior work. Prior to writing and directing *Alice*, Willing directed *Tin Man* in 2007, a similar darker take on a classic novel; *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum. This is likely to have influenced Willing's *Alice*. Furthermore, in 1999, Willing directed *Alice in Wonderland*, a TV-film adaptation of Carroll's novels, featuring a young dark-haired Alice, which may have influenced the choice of having another dark-haired Alice as the protagonist of *Alice*.

The influence of the 1988 film *Něco z Alenky*¹ written and directed by Jan Švankmajer is seen in both McGee's and Willing's adaptations. Unlike most adaptations of Carroll's novels, it only draws from one of the novels: *Adventures*. Švankmajer's adaptation of *Adventures* is narratively rather faithful, only omitting a few elements, most notably the Cheshire Cat. Despite the narrative faithfulness, the environments shown and the overall tone of *Něco z Alenky* is both darker and more ominous than Carroll's novel. This is achieved by using unsettling imagery such as taxidermy and decay (Švankmajer).

Due to Landa's argument that adaptations of a work also shape the perception of that work, this thesis will briefly examine how Švankmajer's film likely has influenced McGee's videogames and Willing's film as an example of how non-source material may also influence adaptations. The influence of Švankmajer on McGee's adaptations can be seen in character design and, more relevant for this thesis, environmental design. *Něco z Alenky* uses objects such as raw meat, taxidermy, toys, scissors, and preservation in its environmental design (Švankmajer). These objects are also heavily featured in the Dollhouse in Chapter 5 of *Alice: Madness Returns* (McGee, A:MR).

¹ Translation: *Something from Alice*. The English title of this film is *Alice*, but this thesis uses the original title to avoid confusion with Willing's 2009 adaptation of the same name.



Figure 21-22: Stills from *Něco z Alenky* at 00:47:46 & 00:42:23.



Figure 23-24: Stills from *Něco z Alenky* at 00:15:10 & 00:45:57.



Figure 25-26: Stills from *Něco z Alenky* at 00:30:54 & 1:23:03.

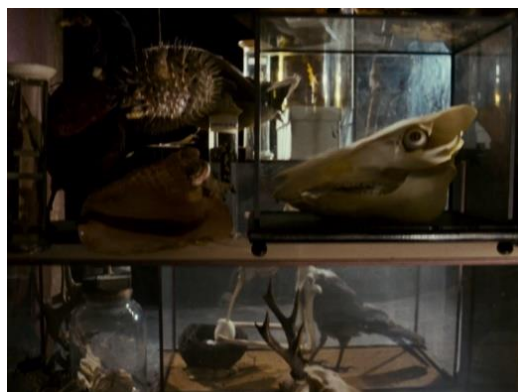


Figure 27-28: Stills from *Něco z Alenky* at 00:14:04 & 00:15:31.



Figure 29-36: Stills from *Alice: Madness Returns* in the level “Chapter 5”.

Furthermore, as Alice falls to Wonderland in *Alice: Madness Returns* the items around her are typical Wonderland objects but also broken doll parts, foreshadowing the villainous Dollmaker (McGee, *A:MR*). This is reminiscent of the foreshadowing contents of the shelves Alice passes as she enters Wonderland by a dumbwaiter-like lift in *Něco z Alenky* (Švankmajer).



Figure 37-38: Stills from *Něco z Alenky* at 00:13:38 & 00:15:28.



Figure 39-40: Stills from *Alice: Madness Returns* in the level “Chapter 1”.

The environment of Švankmajer’s Wonderland is generally in a state of decay, with almost every element of the environment showing signs of wear. In Willing’s *Alice*, the city is also in a state of decay which may have been influenced by Švankmajer’s film as it is used similarly in both films to darken the tone of the adaptations (Švankmajer; Willing, *Alice*).



Figure 41-42: Stills from *Něco z Alenky* at 00:42:34 & 00:48:49.



Figure 43-44: Stills from *Alice* at 00:19:19 & 00:36:51.

As the adaptations examined in this thesis were not all released in the same year, it is possible that they may have influenced each other. Since *American McGee's Alice* was released in 2000, it could have influenced *Alice* as that was released in 2009. More generally, *American McGee's Alice* is noted by Siemann as potentially the most influential recent adaptation of Carroll's novels (178). *American McGee's Alice's* sequel, *Alice: Madness Returns*, was released in 2011 and there is therefore no opportunity for it to influence *Alice*. Due to the short time between the release of *Alice* and *Alice: Madness Returns*, it is unlikely that *Alice* had any influence on *Alice: Madness Returns*. While *Alice: Madness Returns* was released in June 2011, pre-production had started in mid-2008, making it likely that development had reached a point where new influence would be limited by the time of *Alice's* premiere in December 2009 (Spicy Horse 9; "Watch Alice Online | Season 1"). Additionally, the development of *Alice: Madness Returns* largely took place in Asia, making the availability of *Alice* likely to be even later (Spicy Horse 7).

Some of *American McGee's Alice* influence on *Alice* is debatable as it is generally of a subtle character and could therefore be coincidental. The scene in *Alice* where Alice first enters Wonderland could be influenced by McGee's game. In the film, Alice falls through a

blue and orange vortex before landing on a grassy patch with flowers in a decayed, abandoned office building (Willing, *Alice* 00:11:08-00:11:42). This is reminiscent of the opening scene of *American McGee's Alice*, where Alice is seen falling through a blue vortex before landing on a grassy patch with glowing mushrooms on the outside of an industrial mining town (McGee, *AMA* "Dementia").



Figure 45-46: Stills from *American McGee's Alice* in the level "Dementia".



Figure 47-48: Stills from *Alice* at 00:11:13 & 00:11:37.

In Willing's film, Alice encounters a large mechanical metal scarab-like flying vehicle with steampunk-esque design, coloured in tones of silver and brown (Willing, *Alice*). This is likely influenced by *American McGee's Alice* as it also features mechanical bug-like flying objects. In the game, Alice encounters mechanical, metal ladybugs that appear massive due to her shrunken state for the duration of the area Wonderland Woods. The design of the ladybugs is heavily influenced by steampunk, and the bugs are made up of brown and red metal plating with silver accents (McGee, *AMA*).



Figure 49-50: Stills from *American McGee's Alice* in the level "Rolling Stones".



Figure 51-52: Stills from *Alice* at 00:16:50 & 00:57:22.

A Mad Tea-Party: Nick Willing's *Alice*

Being a for-television production, the visual portrayal of Wonderland in *Alice* is affected by the limitations, possibilities, and expectations of a professional for-television production. Since for-television productions usually have a limited monetary budget and a tight time-schedule, there is a limited amount of time dedicated to all phases of production. In *Alice*, this is observable in the use of generic forest sets, limited use of CGI, and animal characters such as Caterpillar being a human dressed in a costume evoking the appearance of a caterpillar (Willing, *Alice*).

The environment of the Wonderland in *Alice* can be divided into four main types or areas: uncultivated nature, the ancient Kingdom of the Knights, the city, and the Happy Hearts Casino. Using Mitchell's idea of the authored landscape, the different areas of Wonderland in *Alice* can reveal quite a lot about this adaptation's Wonderland. Firstly, the fact that there are distinct areas or types of environments suggests that there are different cultures or ideologies authoring the different landscapes. This is also reflected in *Alice*'s new narrative which features a resistance plot where the Resistance fights the rule of the Queen of Hearts and her loyalists on behalf of the average citizen (Willing, *Alice*). The distinct environments of Wonderland enhance the conflict-based narrative, as the different factions and their aesthetics are reflected in the visual representation of the environments. Though the uncultivated nature is not tied to a specific culture or author, the state of it can still tell us something about how all the inhabitants of Wonderland treat nature. The other areas are all tied to certain cultures and authors: the Kingdom of Knights is linked to the former rulers of Wonderland; the knights, the city is linked to the average citizens of Wonderland as well as the current ruler of Wonderland, and the Happy Hearts Casino is linked to the Queen of Hearts, her followers, and the card families.

That the uncultivated nature in *Alice*'s Wonderland lacks a specific author as the nature is without any trace of industry or the extraction of natural resources is an interesting aspect in itself. Furthermore, the uncultivated nature is shown to be uninhabited by civilised species with the only emphasised inhabitant being the Jabberwock, which is portrayed as a beast-like creature in this adaptation. The lack of cultivation, industry and natural resource extractions suggest that the nature is largely untouched, suggesting a society that is completely urbanised and without dependence on natural resources. The uncultivated nature stands in stark contrast to the brutalist inspired aesthetics of the city and the Happy Hearts

Casino, and the chess themed Kingdom of the Knights, creating a clear distinction between nature and civilisations. This is fitting, as this is narratively presented as a Wonderland that has evolved for roughly 150 years. The Wonderland of *Alice* appears not to have the need of natural resources, as suggested by the uncultivated nature, and is no longer rooted in nature like the Wonderland of Carroll's novels, where much of the narrative takes place in woods (Carroll; Willing, *Alice*).

The uncultivated nature in *Alice* is distinctly North American as it consists mostly of North American forest, plains, mountains, and a lake or part of a sea (Willing, *Alice*). This contrasts with the nature of Wonderland in Carroll's novels, which while not distinctly British, is not implied to be anything other than British as Alice assumes that whatever is true of English environments must be true of Wonderland's environments (Carroll, *A&LG* 27). That nature in *Alice* is reminiscent of North American nature is likely as a consequence of the adaptation being a North American production with a limited budget, shooting in North America, specifically in British Columbia, Canada ("Alice (TV Mini-Series 2009) – Filming & Production"). However, the North American-ness of the nature is suitable as the real-world setting of this adaptation is a city in North America² as opposed to the United Kingdom like in Carroll's novels. The connection between the environment of Wonderland and the real world makes the transition between them smoother, as it makes Wonderland appear as an alternate take of the same environment left behind in the real-world. Furthermore, the vastness of the North American nature is also suited to the bigger new narrative presented in *Alice*, where Alice looks for her disappeared almost-fiancé, discovers her missing father, has a romantic subplot with the Hatter, and joins the Resistance in their fight against the Queen of Hearts. This stands in contrast to the arguably simpler narrative of Alice looking for the Queen of Hearts's garden and playing a gigantic game of chess, where she is promoted from being a pawn to a queen in Carroll's novels (Carroll, *A&LG*; Willing, *Alice*).

² Vancouver, Canada going by visible street sign for Homer St.



Figure 53-54: Stills from *Alice* at 00:57:14 & 00:58:24.



Figure 55-56: Stills from *Alice* at 01:18:48 & 02:33:38.

Furthermore, the nature is largely non-surreal and non-whimsical, with the exception of a few instances such as a single shot with a massive mushroom in the background and a scene featuring a tree trunk with a door (Willing, *Alice*). While this is likely due to a limited budget, it does affect the overall atmosphere of *Wonderland*. In this instance the lack of surreal elements helps emphasise the uncultivated-ness or untouched-ness of the nature: in addition to being untouched within the narrative, nature is also minimally touched in post-production by special effects.

The Kingdom of the Knights is shown to be an ancient city that is no longer inhabited. The culture that authored it, the Knights, are extinct at the time of *Alice*'s narrative, with the exception of the White Knight. The city is shown to be vast and is located somewhere in the uncultivated nature. The buildings in the kingdom are made of white stone, shaped as chess pieces, though some are more conventionally shaped. Due to being abandoned and their age, the buildings appear worn and overgrown with green vegetation (Willing, *Alice*). That an ancient conquered and currently uninhabited city is allowed to continue to exist only to decay suggest some interesting ideas about how *Wonderland* is run by the Queen of Hearts and her court. The decay of the Kingdom of Knights suggests that struggles of power in *Wonderland* have little to do with resources as the Kingdom being left to decay is not in the interest of gaining resources. The fact that it is left to decay also shows a lack of interest in the

preservation of history as the city is simply left to fade. This decay of the past ties into the Queen of Hearts's status as the main antagonist of the narrative in *Alice*, since the protagonist, Alice, is keeping the past alive as she refuses to give up the hope of finding her father despite him disappearing many years ago.



Figure 57-58: Stills from *Alice* at 01:08:50 & 01:09:40.

The architecture inspired by white chess pieces found in the Kingdom of the Knights is in stark contrast to the angular, brutalist-inspired architecture of the city and the Happy Hearts Casino (Willing, *Alice*). The white stone and curves of the architecture in Kingdom of the Knights suggests that the aesthetics, and thereby ideology, according to Mitchell, stood in opposition to the Queen of Hearts and her rule. This strengthens the impression of their hostility, which is a part of history by the time the narrative takes place. Most of the time spent in the Kingdom of Knights in *Alice*'s narrative is spent in the ruins of the throne room. The only remnants of the throne room are the throne itself and the skeleton of the king sitting on it. This, together with the fact that the city is allowed to decay as opposed to being completely destroyed, plays into the fact that one of the persons belonging to this culture, Charlie the White Knight, is still alive. The Knights were not successfully wiped out, thus the Kingdom and the throne room still stands even if in a neglected and decayed state.

Most Wonderland's inhabitants appear to live in an unnamed city as this is where we consistently see them. The city is first shown from inside a building which resembles an abandoned, overgrown, and flooded corporate office building. Both this building and the city itself are shown to be unrealistically tall, with bridges between the buildings. All the buildings in the city have aged and worn exteriors in muted neutral colours. The state of the building's interiors varies, with some having decaying interiors as well, such as Hatter's Tea Shop, while others have well-preserved interiors, such as the Great Library, which is occupied by a resistance movement (Willing, *Alice*). The worn and decaying city suggests that the city is being neglected by both its inhabitants and those in power, the Heart family.

That the neglect stems from those in power is emphasised by the fact that the interiors that are well preserved are those that are occupied by people working against the current regime. The decaying city also provides a sharp contrast to the well-kept Happy Hearts Casino, creating a visual class divide between the rulers and the general population. The divide between classes can be linked to the narrative about an upper class pushing drugs, in this case ‘teas’, to keep the lower classes subdued. As the ‘teas’ of *Alice* are mood changers, there is a sense of artificiality associated with them. This plays into the contrast between the city’s surreal brutalist appearance and the uncultivated nature that surrounds it, as it suggests a separation of society and nature.

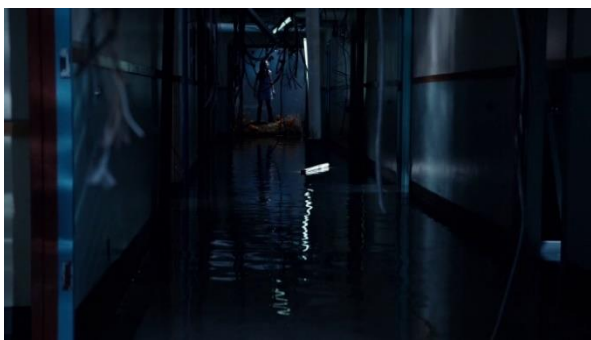


Figure 59-60: Stills from *Alice* at 00:11:37 & 00:17:13.



Figure 61-62: Stills from *Alice* at 00:17:22 & 00:32:41.



Figure 63-64: Stills from *Alice* at 00:20:13 & 00:37:53.

The city is shown to be incredibly vertical, with a shape similar to two triangles balancing on their points or an hourglass. Despite its verticality, there is water in the city in the form of water ducts that recall Roman aqueducts. The buildings appear as very tall versions of buildings typically found in large North American cities such as brownstone and commercial buildings made of brick and concrete. The way these buildings are slotted together and the shapes they create are reminiscent of brutalist architecture, with its emphasis on grey concrete and sharp, defined angles (Willing, *Alice*). The North Americanness of the buildings in the city tie into the North Americanness of the uncultivated nature and furthers the previously mentioned link between the real world and Wonderland. The city's angular, brutalist silhouette of two pyramids is similar to the Happy Hearts Casino upside down pyramid shape and brutalist inspired house of cards architecture. The similarity in silhouette suggests a connection between the two, which is fitting as the Happy Hearts Casino is the building housing the rulers of Wonderland.

The Happy Hearts Casino has multiple functions: it acts as the Queen of Hearts's castle, a laboratory, and a casino (Willing, *Alice*). As the building is the Queen of Hearts's castle, it can be assumed that the Queen of Hearts and her supporters are the authors of the building in Mitchell's sense of the term. The Happy Hearts Casino's structure draws from brutalist architecture and it is built to look like it is made of concrete playing cards, except for the topmost level which is just made of concrete. The concrete playing cards makes the building look like a card house in the shape of an upside-down pyramid (Willing, *Alice*). The playing card details of the Happy Hearts Casino's exterior, signal that the authoring and inhabiting characters are based on playing cards. The top of the building has animated signs in a heart shape and signs with 'Happy Hearts Casino' and 'living the dream' written on them. The colours of the signs are reds, yellows, and oranges (Willing, *Alice*). This creates associations to Las Vegas, casinos, and gambling culture in general. One implication of this is that the drug-like teas are essential to the Queen of Hearts's rule, as it emphasises the casino part of the Happy Heart Casino where the emotions for the teas are harvested. With its brutalist inspired architecture the Happy Hearts Casino is in striking contrast to the uncultivated nature by a lake or part of the sea opposite the unnamed city. The sharp contrast between the Happy Hearts Casino and the nature emphasises the divide between nature and society that is seen throughout Willing's *Alice*.



Figure 65-66: Stills from *Alice* at 01:35:27 & 00:31:44.



Figure 67-68: Stills from *Alice* at 01:33:04 & 00:30:01.



Figure 69-70: Stills from *Alice* at 00:33:38 & 00:40:39.

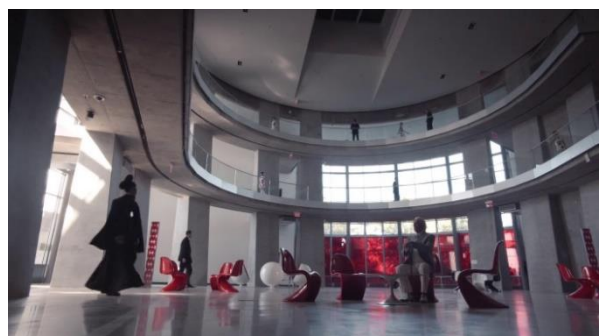


Figure 71-72: Stills from *Alice* at 02:44:32 & 00:29:44.

While the interior of the Happy Hearts Casino is varied, depending on the rooms' use, the overall theme is retrofuturism, specifically 60s and 70s futurism. The prominent colours are red, white and black, and prominent textures include glossy plastic, metal, concrete and

carpet (Willing, *Alice*). The interior colour choices reflect playing cards, emphasising that playing card suit families run the building, while the retrofuturism suggests wealth and emphasises further progress. Again, the Heart family position as rulers, members of the upper class, and developers of the drug-like teas are in focus. Additionally, the retrofuturism is from eras in which brutalist architecture was popular, which creates a coherent interior and exterior look and feel for the Happy Hearts Casino (“Brutalist Architecture: What is Brutalism?”). The interior and exterior drawing on styles popular in the 60s and 70s also ties into the film’s plot surrounding the drug-like teas, as those decades are often associated with drugs and recreational drug use in popular culture (Robinson).

Overall, the environment in *Alice* emphasises the separation of nature and society, as the nature is left uncultivated and the buildings of the city and the Happy Hearts Casino appear as if airlifted in. The Kingdom of the Knights is overtaken by nature, which is suitable: it is no longer inhabited and is placed in contrast to the current ruler of Wonderland, the Queen of Hearts. Furthermore, all of Wonderland’s environment shows decay and general apathy towards preservation which connects to *Alice*’s subplot revolving around how drugs in the form of emotional teas, apathy, and instant gratification can be used to control a population. The emotional tea, while harvested, is presented as somewhat artificial due to the distillation process in a laboratory, which ties into the environment’s distinction between nature and society. That much of the environment shows signs of neglect and decay ties into the emotional arch of the film: Alice coming to terms with her feelings of abandonment caused by her missing father.

The clear thematic connections between the environment and plotlines in *Alice* contrast with the environment in Carroll’s novels where it tends to be a part of the plot or is simply meant to excite wonder. Furthermore, the environment in Willing’s *Alice* also tends to have clear authors, unlike Carroll’s novels in which there does not tend to be a clear author. That the environment in *Alice* has distinct authors helps turn the surrealness of Wonderland darker as it implies a distinct purpose to the impossibly tall and decayed buildings in the city. On the other hand, the lack of distinct authors of environment in Carroll’s novels helps further the idea of fantasy, escapism, and wonder as it creates an environment that feels fleeting and ungrounded. The more distinctly authored environment of *Alice* sets itself apart from Carroll’s novels by turning the whimsy and surrealism of the Wonderland of the novels to something significantly darker by implying more of a purpose behind the oddities of Wonderland through the intent of the authors of the environment.

Willing's *Alice* is aimed at an older audience than Carroll's novels; the film earned a rating of 12 years and over. This shift away from a children's narrative to a narrative aimed at audience of teens and older persons is reflected in the narrative itself and its themes. Karin Lesnik-Oberstein argues that Western children's literature is linked to nature and uses Carroll's *Wonderland* as an example of this link (Lesnik-Oberstein 209). Therefore, the environmental portrayal of a separation between nature and society in *Alice* fits with Lesnik-Oberstein's concept of nature being linked to children as the older Alice featured in *Alice* experiences a Wonderland where there is a separation of nature and society. The environment of Willing's *Alice*, therefore, reflects the changes that the new narrative makes in its adaptation of Carroll's stories.

The Queen and the Dollmaker: American McGee's *American McGee's Alice* and *Alice: Madness Returns*

The two games in McGee's *Alice* game series, *American McGee's Alice* and *Alice: Madness Returns*, are linear games, meaning the narrative told is linear with limited impact from the player's input, which is typical of videogame adaptations (Flanagan 442-443). Furthermore, regarding videogame adaptations, Kevin M. Flanagan identifies four areas of videogame studies relevant to adaptation studies: adapting virtual worlds, porting, linguistic and cultural translation, and modding (Flanagan 443-444). Of these, the adaptation of virtual worlds is the area relevant to this thesis. As narrative videogame adaptations face the challenge of being an interactive version of the work it adapts, it cannot simply rely on the narrative, characters, and environment as described but must make certain changes to work within the medium of videogames. Furthermore, videogames have a broad range of established genres. As videogame adaptations exist within these genres, they create a compromise or intersection between them and the work it adapts (Flanagan 445). Both *American McGee's Alice* and *Alice: Madness Returns* have 3D-platformer as a part of their videogame genre classification, which is expressed as an environment that is challenging to traverse as the player moves from platform to platform or area to area. While this is due to genre convention, it also suits the general whimsicality and surreal aesthetic of Wonderland, as well as the idea of a broken Wonderland as presented in these games.

American McGee's Alice, and *Alice: Madness Returns*, were made about a decade apart. This means that great technological advances were made in the time between the two releases. While cosmetic advances such as graphics, texture resolution, and increased number of polygons in various models are perhaps the most noticeable, advances in areas such as game physics also affect the environment. This is for instance seen in the large distances between platforms as Alice can do triple jumps and float through the air in *Alice: Madness Returns*. Both games show great care in their environmental designs. As the Wonderland of the *Alice* game series is affected by Alice's mental health, Wonderland appears differently in the two games due to the variance in Alice's mental state. However, certain areas of Wonderland appear in both games, such as Hatter's Domain in "Chapter 1" of *Alice: Madness Returns* and in the area Behind the Looking Glass in *American McGee's Alice* (McGee, *AMA*; McGee, *A:MR*).



Figure 73-74: Stills from *American McGee's Alice* in the level “About Face” & *Alice: Madness Returns* in the level “Chapter 1”.

American McGee's Alice

The gameplay of *American McGee's Alice* takes place entirely within Wonderland. The loading screen between levels features a map with named areas, each consisting of several named levels, that fill in as the player progresses in the game. The map not only helps the player keep track of their progress but also creates an easily comprehensible geography of Wonderland. This is further emphasised by Alice occasionally backtracking to reach a new area that previously was unreachable (McGee, *AMA*).



Figure 75: Full map loading screen from *American McGee's Alice* loading the level “Heart of Darkness”.

The different areas of Wonderland in *American McGee's Alice* are all distinct, with their own defining characteristics. For instance, the Village of the Doomed is an off-kilter mining village and mining shaft, while the Land of Fire and Brimstone is a barren mountain with rivers and pools of lava, and a Victorian brick house (McGee, *AMA*).



Figure 76-77: Stills from *American McGee's Alice* in the levels "Pandemonium" & "Burning Curiosity".

The Wonderland of *American McGee's Alice* shows a reliance on logic which contrasts with Carroll's Wonderland's whimsy and surrealism. However, the Wonderland of *American McGee's Alice* still has whimsical and surreal elements such as the floating pocket watches in the sky in the area Behind the Looking Glass. The logic of this Wonderland is expressed in several different ways. As Alice travels through Wonderland, she occasionally must backtrack to reach certain areas due to their location. This can be seen in the crossroads-like level "Caterpillar's Plot" in Wonderland Woods and the levels "Fortress of Doors" and "Skool Daze" in the area Fortress of Doors (McGee, *AMA*). Wonderland's reliance on logic is also expressed through Alice's interaction with the insect-based characters. While the insect-based characters of the Wonderland Woods area appear oversized, something that arguably gives the environment a whimsical and surreal quality, this is due to Alice being shrunk. This lends a grounded-ness to the oversized forest and its inhabitants. Furthermore, throughout Wonderland there can be found varying degrees of mechanical machinery that all share the same colour palette and steampunk aesthetic. The aesthetic consistency suggest that the machinery share their origin, the Mad Hatter. It also hints at an alliance between the Mad Hatter and the Queen of Hearts, as his machinery can be found in all areas of Wonderland including the Queen's castle. The depiction of the Queen of Hearts's power is also rooted in realism as she has her army and other loyalists placed throughout Wonderland to preserve order, further grounding Wonderland in logic (McGee, *AMA*).



Figure 78: Still from *American McGee's Alice* in the level "Fungiferous Flora".



Figure 79-80: Stills from *American McGee's Alice* in the levels "Beyond the Wall" & "Crazed Clockwork".

This somewhat realistic, if internal, logic grounds Wonderland in a way that is not necessarily expected for interpretations of Wonderland. This more grounded Wonderland emphasises the darkness of *American McGee's Alice's* new narrative as it shows that the violence and destruction is not meaningless, but intentional. The violence and destruction in Wonderland gain meaning through the game's narrative as they become representations of the guilt Alice must overcome to regain her physical and mental health, which in the real world will mean waking up from her coma and being released from Rutledge Asylum (McGee, *AMA*). Additionally, the logical Wonderland can be interpreted as protection against the guilt Alice feels since logic can be viewed as the opposite of emotion. Emotion is important for Alice to process her feeling of guilt, as she breaks down crying when faced with it. That said, it is worth noting that Wonderland does not become more whimsical once Alice regains her mental and physical health at the end of the game.

Throughout Wonderland there can be found large tentacles emerging from the environments (McGee, *AMA*). They belong to the Queen of Hearts, who in her true form is a large fleshy and tentacled monster (McGee, *AMA* "Heart of Darkness"). As extensions of the Queen, the tentacles represent her influence in all of Wonderland and as a representation of Alice's guilt they emphasise how Alice is completely overtaken by guilt. Similarly, Card

Guards are stationed in all of Wonderland and their rank increase as Alice gets closer to the Queen of Hearts. The Card Guards are ranked by suit, lowest to highest is clubs, diamonds, spades, and hearts. This ranking can also be used to track progress towards the Queen in Queen of Hearts Land and Queensland by looking at which symbol provides the primary imagery for the level. Furthermore, while Alice's enemies in the game have their native areas, e.g., Jabberspawn are native to the Land of Fire and Brimstone, and Automations are created Behind the Looking Glass, they do not only appear there which suggest that different enemies are working together. This is clearly seen in the areas belonging to the Queen of Hearts, where almost all of Alice's enemies in the game show up as guards, fighters, or soldier on the Queen's side, again emphasising her influence on all of Wonderland and thereby on Alice (McGee, *AMA*).



Figure 81-82: Stills from *American McGee's Alice* in the levels "Pandemonium" & "Fortress of Doors".



Figure 83-84: Stills from *American McGee's Alice* in the levels Castling & Caterpillar's Plot.

An interesting aspect of *American McGee's Alice's* Wonderland is the industrialisation of its environment. The industrialisation is somewhat subtle, but it is more prominent than the slight industrialisation of Carroll's Wonderland in *Looking-Glass*. The industrialisation of McGee's Wonderland is most obvious in the Village of the Doomed, areas controlled by the Mad Hatter: the level "Mirror Image" and the area Behind the Looking Glass, and areas belonging to the Queen of Hearts: Queen of Hearts Land and Queensland (McGee, *AMA*). As a mining town, Village of the Doomed is overseen by Card

Guards and the workers, Gnomes, are seen to be overworked and unhappy, with one of them expressing that “[their] spirits are crushed” and that “slavery and happiness do not dwell in the same house” (McGee, *AMA* “Dementia”). Furthermore, the Village of the Doomed has several pieces of machinery related to mining and production. With the Mad Hatter being the creator of the machinery found in Wonderland, the areas he or the Queen of Hearts control are filled with machinery. The Mad Hatter’s machinery is steam- and clockwork-based giving it a steampunk aesthetic that ties into his character (McGee, *AMA*).

The industrialisation of Wonderland is interesting for several different reasons. Taking place in the late 1800s, *American McGee’s Alice* is set during the second industrial revolution (Mokyr 1). Speaking about the sequel game McGee has expressed that everything in Wonderland originates in something Alice would be able to observe or learn about in the real world since Wonderland is created by her imagination (McGee qtd. in Bronmans). If McGee made *American McGee’s Alice* with the same mindset, it is likely that the industrialisation came about as something that Alice would have seen or heard about in the real world. As such the industrialisation of Wonderland ties it to the real world, which roots the timeless Wonderland to the Victorian era. Furthermore, the industrialisation also ties into the aforementioned internal logic of Wonderland as it grounds Wonderland in logic by providing a production centre in the Mad Hatter, whose creations which can be found throughout Wonderland.

The industrialisation of Wonderland in *American McGee’s Alice* can also be tied into the character of Alice being aged up and the more mature new narrative of this adaptation. Lesnik-Oberstein argues that children’s literature and nature is intertwined as there is a connection between the child and nature in Western literature (208-216). From this viewpoint, it becomes a logical step for Wonderland to have less untouched nature and become more industrialised as the narrative no longer centres around a child but is an interrogation of the feelings and psyche of its older protagonist. Furthermore, the industrialisation of *American McGee’s Alice’s* Wonderland is not complete, but partial. This is suitable as Alice is in her late teens, not quite yet an adult, and with unprocessed trauma tying her to her childhood. Additionally, while *American McGee’s Alice* is set in the Victorian era, more contemporary values could also have influenced the industrialisation of Wonderland. Contemporary anxieties about climate change caused by humans are often linked to pollution (Marland 1515-1516). Pollution can be linked to industry and production, which may in turn result in the industry and industrialisation being associated with the

antagonists of the narrative and nature with the protagonists. This is the case in *American McGee's Alice*.

Like in Carroll's novels, the Wonderland of *American McGee's Alice* can be understood to have both Alice and the inhabitants of Wonderland as authors of the environment in Mitchell's sense of the word. As the Wonderland of *American McGee's Alice* is part of Alice's imagination Wonderland is authored by Alice. However, within Wonderland the various inhabitants are portrayed as authors. This, combined with the link between Wonderland and Alice's mental health, suggests that the various inhabitant authors may be linked to different aspects of Alice personality and mental health. The Mad Hatter is shown to be working with the Queen of Hearts, imprisoning those that are not loyal to the Queen such as Gryphon (McGee, *AMA* "About Face", "Burning Curiosity", "Crazed Clockwork"). Thus, his aforementioned steampunk-inspired machinery found throughout Wonderland shows the influence of them. Additionally, the Queen's previously mentioned tentacles further emphasises her influence (McGee, *AMA*). Being enemies of Alice in the game, both the Mad Hatter and the Queen of Hearts represent aspects of Alice's mental health preventing her from overcoming her guilt and regaining her sanity.

Alice: Madness Returns

Alice: Madness Returns primarily takes place in Wonderland but interspersed throughout the game are shorter sections of the narrative taking place in the real world (McGee, *A:MR*). The focus of this thesis is Wonderland, but due to connections between the real world and Wonderland, real-world environments are touched upon when relevant. Similar to how *American McGee's Alice* is divided into areas, *Alice: Madness Returns* is divided into chapters, though these do not have named levels, only some named larger areas. Generally, the chapters consist of a real-world section, a shorter introductory Wonderland area, and a longer main Wonderland area, with "Chapter 5" and "Chapter 6" being the exceptions. "Chapter 5" consists of a memory-based hallucinated real-world section and one main Wonderland area, and "Chapter 6" switches between the real world and Wonderland as Alice makes her way through one area in Wonderland, the Infernal Train (McGee, *A:MR*).

In the first cutscene of *Alice: Madness Returns*, as blood and a tar-like substance, ruin, destroy the idyllic Wonderland scene Alice says: "Corruption! Pollution! It's killing me. Wonderland is destroyed! My mind is in ruins!" (McGee, *A:MR* "Chapter 1"). This comment explains the overarching environmental storytelling in the game: Wonderland represents

Alice's state of mind and there is something represented by the corruption and pollution trying to destroy her mind. As such the comment is also the basis for the narrative of *Alice: Madness Returns* where Alice's psychiatrist Dr Bumby is attempting to corrupt her memory and sanity.

Compared to the Wonderland of *American McGee's Alice*, the Wonderland of *Alice: Madness Returns* has a less obvious geography. There is no map and since Alice drifts in and out of consciousness and finds herself in a different area of Wonderland each time, the geography is fussy at best. Still, there are hints to a discernible geography, such as when Alice returns to Wonderland in "Chapter 3", the area Vale of Doom contains ruined elements of Vale of Tears and Hatter's Domain from "Chapter 1", and Deluded Depths from "Chapter 2" has stonework with Asian-looking dragon carvings, which are common features in the Mysterious East of "Chapter 3". This overlap of items and aesthetics suggested that these areas are in close proximity to each other (McGee, *A:MR*).



Figure 85-86: Stills from *Alice: Madness Returns* in the levels "Chapter 1" & "Chapter 3".



Figure 87-88: Stills from *Alice: Madness Returns* in the levels "Chapter 2" & "Chapter 3".

This change from a strict geography to a less defined one may be the result of the real-life narrative of the game being closer connected to the representation of Wonderland, as Wonderland's environment is related to the real world. Specific examples of this are seen in "Chapter 2", where prior to getting knocked out and waking up in Wonderland, Alice is rescued from a river, explores the docks and a storage building for ice and fish, and visits The

Mangled Mermaid, a bar and brothel run by her former nanny, Madam Sharpe. Alice wakes up in a cold part of Wonderland like the storage building and the underwater city is ship themed inspired by the dock. Carpenter and Walrus puts on a macabre cabaret-meets-burlesque show and slaughters oysters and fish which draws from the fish on the docks and The Mangled Mermaid. Further, the theatre the show takes place in is called Dreary Lane Theatre, referencing the real-life Theatre Royal, Drury Lane (McGee, *A:MR*).



Figure 89-94: Stills from *Alice: Madness Returns* in the level “Chapter 2”.

Other areas of Wonderland have similar ties between the real world and Wonderland. “Chapter 1” features the industrial London and the Wonderland area visited is the industrial Hatter’s Domain. “Chapter 3” shows the Chinatown area of London and Mr. Radcliffe’s house which is filled with Asian artifacts and a Wonderland featuring Western oriental ideas of the Far East. “Chapter 6” features a London haunted by the victims of Dr Bumby and a London underground train station, and the Infernal Train in Wonderland (McGee, *A:MR*).

The connections between the real world and Wonderland are less obvious in “Chapter 4” and “Chapter 5”, as they relate more to Alice’s knowledge and search for answers than the environment. “Chapter 4” shows Alice in gaol in London and provides the player with expositional information. The section of Wonderland shown in this chapter is a neglected and decaying Queensland, where she is asked to examine her own past by the past ruler of Wonderland, the Queen of Hearts, and observe what is happening around her. The line between the real world and Wonderland is significantly blurred in “Chapter 5”, as the real-world section is an hallucination of Alice’s time at Rutledge Asylum. The Asylum switches between a dirty, somewhat realistic, asylum, a pristinely white asylum, and bloodied versions of these. The hallucination confronts Alice with what has been done to her before she hallucinates the burning Liddell family home in a park which takes her to Wonderland (McGee, *A:MR*).

The area of Wonderland she is taken to is the Dollhouse, which can be divided into the above-ground area and the basement. Aesthetically, the Dollhouse relate to knowledge Alice has overlooked or forgotten and is about regain; that Dr Bumby has facilitated institutional abuse and is the one who abused and murdered her older sister. The Dollhouse’s above-ground area plays on the theme of creepy Victorian toys and dolls combined with gore and with images of eyes and sexual abuse: Alice must travel through the crotches and mouths of naked and broken baby dolls, as well as kill Doll Girl enemies by ruining their clothes to attack their vulnerable hearts. The basement area of the Dollhouse is in stark contrast to the above-ground area with its harmful and industrial elements such as metal nails, spikes, wiring, glass, meat, skeletons, taxidermy, warped anatomy drawings, and ceramics (McGee, *A:MR* “Chapter 5”). These visual themes accentuate the knowledge Alice discovers here, that Houndsditch Home for Wayward Youth acts as “training ground for prostitutes” and that “[her] mentor is an abuser and purveyor [of children]” which she has been witness to (McGee, *A:MR* “Chapter 5”).



Figure 95-100: Stills from *Alice: Madness Returns* in the level “Chapter 5”.

That the Wonderland of *Alice: Madness Returns* is perceived as more whimsical than that of its predecessor can be linked to their narrative differences. Whimsical elements in this Wonderland include Alice being able to breathe underwater, invisible platforms, and the Infernal Train being able to drive through the sky (McGee, *A:MR*). The of narrative *American McGee’s Alice* centres around Alice coming to terms with her feelings of guilt, while the narrative of *Alice: Madness Returns* focuses on Alice finding out the truth about the fatal fire in her childhood home and Dr Bumby (McGee, *AMA*; McGee, *A:MR*). The logical Wonderland of *American McGee’s Alice* hid the emotions Alice needed to confront, and the whimsy and horrors of *Alice: Madness Returns’s* Wonderland is the result of Dr Bumby trying to hide the truth that Alice seeks. Additionally, the close connection between the real world and Wonderland accentuates Alice’s loss of sanity, especially as Alice’s perception of the real world becomes increasingly influenced by hallucinations as the game progresses.

A major theme of *Alice: Madness Returns* is Alice’s lack of control, sanity, and missing memories and the narrative is about Alice’s attempt to regain these. The Wonderland of this adaptation is explicitly tied to Alice’s imagination and mental health. This is expressed in the opening cutscene where Dr Bumby asks Alice to “[l]et the new Wonderland emerge” and then at the end of the game he admits that he has been attempting to turn her into “a raving delusional beauty, with no memory of the past, or no sense of the future” at the end of the game (McGee, *A:MR* “Chapter 1”, “Chapter 6”). Dr Bumby’s ‘new Wonderland’ is made of a tar-like substance, ruin, and broken doll parts. Alice claims this is killing her, creating an early suspicion of Dr Bumby’s intentions with Alice (McGee, *A:MR* “Chapter 1”). Throughout the game ruin is seen to be destroying and polluting Wonderland, as well as becoming increasingly larger enemies. Ruin is shown to be spewing from a large churchlike train, the Infernal Train, as it travels through the skies of Wonderland and the orifices of the Dollmaker, Dr Bumby’s avatar in Wonderland (McGee, *A:MR*). When Alice asks the Queen of Hearts: “The destruction of Wonderland, is the destruction of me?”, the Queen answers: “Indeed! And vice-versa” (McGee, *A:MR* “Chapter 4”). Thus, the game’s real-world narrative of Dr Bumby trying to erase Alice’s memories and sanity is directly linked to the environmental destruction of Wonderland.



Figure 101-102: Stills from *Alice: Madness Returns* in the levels “Chapter 1” & “Chapter 3”.

The authorship, in Mitchell’s sense of the word, of *Alice: Madness Returns*’s Wonderland is interesting as the struggle between two different authors is both visible and intrinsic to the narrative. Wonderland in its natural state is implied to represent a healthy-minded Alice, as the destruction of Wonderland represents the destruction of Alice herself. The destruction is presented as a consequence of Dr Bumby’s treatment of Alice. Dr Bumby’s treatment aims to silence Alice by turning her into a delusional sex worker by erasing her memories as she knows he raped and murdered her sister. As previously mentioned, Dr Bumby also grooms the children in his care for sexual abuse, which is reflected in his Wonderland avatar, the Dollmaker. The Dollmaker appears as an oversized

Dr Bumby with Frankenstein-like scars and stitching, ruin oozing from his eyes and mouth, long sharp nails, doll heads on his hands, and hands that are connected to puppeteer strings. Linked by the ruin's origin in him, the destruction of Wonderland ties into the Dollmaker turning the Insane Children, representations of the orphans in his care, as well as Alice into dolls, Wonderland's representation of sex workers (McGee, *A:MR*).



Figure 103-104: Stills from *Alice: Madness Returns* in the levels “Chapter 5” & “Chapter 3”.

The sexualisation of Wonderland in *Alice: Madness Returns* is not present in *American McGee's Alice*, suggesting that it originates in Dr Bumby's involvement with Alice (McGee, *AMA*; McGee *A:MR*). This is supported by Alice expressing a disinterest in sex when she is rescued from the river and her rescuer expresses that he wants to have intercourse with her as it “comes natural like”, to which she replies “[n]ot natural to me, get away!” (McGee, *A:MR* “Chapter 2”). This might not reflect Alice's true feelings towards sex as it is a distressing situation, but it is still noteworthy as it suggests that Wonderland is not sexualised due to Alice's interests and desires. Wonderland is sexualised both in terms of characters and the environment. Character-based sexualisation can be seen in for instance the aforementioned Doll Girl enemy and the sexual undertones of the Dollmaker's attacks, which consist of pinching, slapping, nail scraping, grabbing, and spitting while grabbing two pillars as well as having vulnerable spots on a long tongue (McGee, *A:MR* “Chapter 5”, “Chapter 6”). Environmental-based sexualisation is most overt in “Chapter 5”, in the Dollhouse, which is the Dollmaker's domain and therefore under widespread influence of Dr Bumby. The imagery of this environment is littered with bloodied beds, naked and broken dolls, meat, and constricting wires. In the Mysterious East in “Chapter 3”, there are sad-looking statues of geishas in a state of undress who occasionally cry tears of blood. As Alice progresses through the area, the geishas get ant-heads and their posture become more confident (McGee, *A:MR* “Chapter 3”). The sexualisation of Wonderland is representative of Dr Bumby's invasive influence on Alice and stands in contrast to the non-sexualised Wonderland Alice is shown to

have imagined in the first game, where perhaps the only part of the environment with the potential to be read as sexualising is the Queen of Hearts's tentacles.

As mentioned, Dr Bumby's influence on Alice's mental health is also seen in the destruction of Wonderland caused by polluting ruin. Throughout Wonderland there are frequent occurrences of pools and streams of ruin as well as enemies made of ruin. As the ruin originates in the Dollmaker, it is representative of Dr Bumby's attempts to destroy Alice's memory and sanity (McGee, *A:MR*). That Dr Bumby's corruption of Alice's memories manifests as a polluting force in Wonderland's environment can be linked to anxieties regarding the destructive impact of humans on the environment, and thus the pollution has villainous connotations separately from its connection to Dr Bumby (Marland). While industrialisation is not heavily featured throughout the Wonderland of *Alice: Madness Returns*, it is prominent in Hatter's Domain in "Chapter 1". Here, the March Hare and Dormouse have taken over Hatter Industries and use the means of production to attack Alice and the Mad Hatter, thereby maintain the villainous status of industrialisation, if on a smaller scale (McGee, *A:MR* "Chapter 1"). Furthermore, pollution can be an outcome of industrialisation and therefore the villainous force of industrialisation is present throughout the game. The maintained status of industry and pollution as villainous fits with Lesnik-Oberstein's argument that nature and children are linked. Like in *American McGee's Alice*, Alice is no longer a child in *Alice: Madness Returns*, so Wonderland is marked by industry. The industry being representative of a move away from nature and therefore childhood.



Figure 105-106: Stills from *Alice: Madness Returns* in the level "Chapter 1".

Alice's Evidence: A Conclusion

Carroll's two novels about Alice and Wonderland, *Adventures* and *Looking-Glass*, have enjoyed a continuous presence and popularity in popular culture, which can be seen in the frequent releases of adaptations of them. Among these are adaptations that take the characters and setting of Carroll's novels to tell a new story. In this thesis, I have defined this type of adaptation as 'new narrative adaptations', a type of adaptation whose defining feature is that it tells a new narrative, but also keeps major identifiable elements of its source material and therefore has an explicit link to it. This type of adaptation has been central to this thesis's discussion of how new narratives in modern 'new narrative adaptations' of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* change the environments of Wonderland.

While the main focus of this thesis has been to discuss the connections between the narratives and the environments the narrative takes place in, it has also briefly discussed Landa's concept of the general perception of a text. According to Landa, this perception of what a specific classic text is will change over time as people are influenced by various critical readings and adaptations of that work, thereby creating an idea of what the work is through this dimension of interpretations of the work, as opposed to the work itself being what defines the perception of what it is. In the case of Carroll's novels, Tenniel's illustrations and the animated Disney film *Alice in Wonderland* have been particularly important to the perception of what the 'Alice in Wonderland' narrative is and how its setting appears. This discussion of how prior adaptations may have shaped the adaptations in this thesis is important, as it shows that while certain elements of Wonderland's environment may have links to their new narratives, they may already have been established as a common feature in or originate from prior adaptations. As was discussed, one example of this is Švankmajer's *Něco z Alenky* using aesthetic themes such as decay, preservation, and taxidermy in its environment, and these themes also show up in *Alice* and *Alice: Madness Returns* where they have connections the narratives of these adaptations, though it is possible that their inclusion was inspired by Švankmajer's adaptation.

Analysing the connections between the narratives and the Wonderlands they take place in was aided by theories originating in ecocriticism, particularly Mitchell's concept of environments reflecting the ideologies of the authors of that environment and Lesnik-Oberstein's argument that the child and nature is inherently linked in Western literature.

Lesnik-Oberstein uses Carroll's *Adventures* as an example of the connection between children and nature, and it is therefore interesting that the Wonderlands of Willing's *Alice* and McGee's *American McGee's Alice* show Wonderlands that emphasise a seemingly post-industrial society and an actively industrialised society respectively, which can be linked to the narrative's older Alice protagonist. Though less pronounced in *Alice: Madness Returns*, the industrialisation is still present. The emphasis is instead on pollution, which can be associated with industrialisation and thereby continuing the characterisation of Wonderland as industrialised from *American McGee's Alice*, albeit in a different manner. Furthermore, there is more emphasis on the authors of the environments of Wonderland in the adaptations than in Carroll's novels. In the adaptations, the authorship of the environment is used to convey the influence of the adaptations' antagonists. In *Alice*, the Queen of Hearts's rule is shown through brutalist-inspired architecture that clashes with the architecture of the former rulers. Additionally, the 60s and 70s retrofuturism associated with the Queen's interiors also connects to the drug-related plot of the narrative. In *American McGee's Alice*, the rule of the Queen of Hearts and her alliance with the Mad Hatter is shown through the spread of steampunk-inspired machinery created by the Mad Hatter being positioned throughout Wonderland, and the Queen's tentacles emerging from the environment also show her influence. The destruction and pollution Wonderland suffers in *Alice: Madness Returns* is directly tied to the antagonist, the Dollmaker in Wonderland and Dr Bumby in the real world, as the polluting ruin is seen to be emerging from him and falling from his Infernal Train. Furthermore, the sexualisation of Wonderland's environment can be directly linked to the crimes of Dr Bumby in reality. An interesting consequence of this connection between authors and the environment, is that the Wonderlands of the new narrative adaptations appear less whimsical than the original Wonderland of Carroll's novels. The de-emphasised whimsicality of Wonderland furthers the darker tone of these adaptations, as the ties between the narratives and the settings show that the violence and oppression is purposeful and not accidental. These changes also create a distance through contrast between the adaptations and Carroll's original novels, establishing the adaptations as their own story with their own identity.

Areas of interest for further studies regarding adaptational changes to the environment in adaptations of Carroll's *Adventures* and *Looking-Glass* featuring a new narrative could be to expand the timeframe of the adaptations. This would allow for the study of the development of how Wonderland is portrayed over time, which could potentially be linked to

environmental anxieties of the time in which they were made, e.g., nuclear destruction or pollution. Another way to expand on this study would be to study adaptations of Carroll's novels with a larger age range of intended audience, as the adaptations featured in this thesis are intended for a teenage or older audience, and examine whether the narratives and environments intended for different age groups emphasise different aspects of Carroll's tale, e.g., whimsy, surrealness, or horror. As Wonderland is a fantasy environment and thus more malleable than a realistic setting, it could also be interesting to examine adaptational changes to the environment in adaptations of a work that is set in the real world, e.g., Thomas Harris's series of novels about Dr Hannibal Lecter³ and its adaptations that feature a new narrative: parts of the television series *Hannibal* (2013-2015) developed by Bryan Fuller and the television series *Clarice* (2021-present) created by Alex Kurtzman and Jenny Lumet.

As both this thesis and the potential for further exploration of the connections between new narratives and the environment show, there is much that can be garnered from the exploration of adaptational changes to the environments in new narrative adaptations. The exploration of Wonderland's environment in the new narrative adaptations *Alice*, *American McGee's Alice*, and *Alice: Madness Returns* has shown that representations of the environment in a narrative can have connections to the narrative's themes and plotlines, and in the case of adaptations, it can also create a distinction from the source material as the environment is transformed to fit the new narrative.

³ *Red Dragon* (1981), *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988), *Hannibal* (1999), and *Hannibal Rising* (2006)

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Appendix A: The Master's Project's Relevance for Work as a Teacher with a Master's Degree

The ideas and concepts I have explored in this thesis are relevant for the teaching profession in several different ways. I have explored works aimed at ages I will teach English to as Lewis Carroll's novels are aimed at children, Nick Willing's *Alice* is aimed at teens, and even though American McGee's game series is aimed at a mature audience, Norwegian Videregående students are part of their intended audience. Furthermore, as a language teacher I am supposed to help further students' understanding of literature and how to analyse it, which will be easier if I am able to foster an interest in reading. I think it is important to acknowledge that not all students become interested in literature and language through literature considered to be classics or highbrow culture, even if they might enjoy them at a later point in their life. However, most students tend to be interested in at least one of the following: films, television, videogames, and bestselling novels. As a teacher, it would be a waste to not use this to my advantage and incorporate these into my teaching by showing that these can be analysed and discussed in the same way as classic novels, allowing the students to improve their analytical skills prior to eventually analysing classics.

Currently adaptations are extremely popular, with many films and television series being based on novels. The popularity of adaptations should be taken advantage of by teachers and be used to teach comparative analysis as opposed to shun the idea of adaptations as a lesser version of an original work. Furthermore, this gets rid of the issue of students only watching film adaptations of their assigned reading, as they now must compare the adaptation to the original.

Additionally, using a broad range of texts creates more accessible starting points for students who might struggle with reading, providing them with the opportunity to show analytical skills related to film and videogames, such as deconstructing camera shots in film or piecing together fragmented pieces of information in videogames. This analytical knowledge can then be transferred to the analysis of literature through the demonstration of how this is related to the use of literary devices, such as narrative viewpoint and non-chronological or fragmented storytelling.

