

## The Authentic Alice and the Wrong Alice: The Different Messages between Lewis Carroll's Novel Tim Burton's Movie Adaptions

Tim Burton's film, *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), is seen as a sequel of Lewis Carroll's original novel in the nineteenth century, *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland*. In Burton's film, he sets that Alice is a nineteen-year-old girl, and she backs to Wonderland, which is called Underland in this film, again. It seems that the director has created another Alice in his film. Like Dormouse in the film, she argues constantly that Alice is not the right one. Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) seems to create another Alice and express the feminist power, which is the same as Lewis Carroll's Alice's *Adventure in Wonderland*, yet the image has been reversed into a kind of masculinization symbol. Unlike Carroll's version, this film is like a journey that Alice becomes maturity and show feminine power rather than a journey for puberty so that she can figure out a solution of her teenage crisis in reality.

It is said that Tim Burton's film shares some similarities with Carroll's novel; however, some differences, namely Alice's age and the setting of the film, arouse people to question whether she is the right Alice or not. Both historical backgrounds are in the nineteenth century, Victorian era, in London. Most characters are the same, but characters' personalities are quite different. Carroll's Alice is a talkative,

boisterous and full of curiosity girl. Burton would like to create another Alice in his film; he says that "she's a very annoying, odd little girl [in Lewis Carroll's novel]. I wanted to make her into a character I could identify with: quiet, internal, not comfortable in her own skin, not quite knowing how to deal with things, being both young and having an old soul" (Turrell). In addition, both the director and the screenwriter, Linda Woolverton, have said that it is a different Alice, for "This is not a film version of the Alice books, but a film that uses significant characters borrowed from the Alice books to create a new story and continuation of the Alice books" (Susina 181). Burton borrows some materials from Carroll and illustrates another story.

Underland, which differs from Wonderland, is a symbol of subconscious.

Subconscious is a mixture of reality and dream. Subconscious is "using symbols and metaphors, your subconscious mind communicates with you through dreams, providing you with these analogies to help you process certain situations or events.

You may look up the meaning of these symbols" (Jangid n.p.). In Carroll's novel, Alice falls into Wonderland, which can refer to a dream; in contrast with it, Burton's sets the world where Alice falls into is called Underland. It is much darker and violent than Wonderland, and it refers to subconscious, which means a mixture of dream and

reality. It is apparent that characters whom Burton's Alice meets in Underland can correspond to her friends to relatives in reality in London. Since Burton's Alice has to face her teenager crisis, such as her marriage, she enters into her subconscious; then she can empower herself in the real world to move on her crisis. It might make audiences confuse because Burton interweaves reality and dream. In the beginning of the film, Hamish can see caterpillar. It seems that Underland exists. Tweedledee and Tweedledum represent her friends, twin sisters; Red Queen is like Hamish's mother; Knave of Hearts is similar to elder sister's husband. In Burton's film, Alice feels confused about whether Underland is a dream or not. She tries many times to prove that she can wake up from her dream. The way that she examines whether it is dream or not makes herself feel painful. However, no matter she gives herself a pinch or is hurt by the Bandersnatch, she feels painful. She starts to believe that it is a real world and follows the prophecy to kill Jabberwocky. When Alice comes back from Underland, time does not pass. It is like a dream. Interweaving reality and dream, Burton replaces Wonderland to Underland so that Alice can enter her subconscious.

The prominent and significant goal of the journey in Underland is a process of maturity. Burton creates a nineteenth-year-old Alice, who is different from Carroll's

seven-year-girl Alice, to illustrate feminine power. Both Carroll's Alice and Burton's try to break the norm of Victorian era. Carroll uses "the satire on the social conventions, manners and etiquette of the Victorian era, which is represented through the bizarre conversations and situations with Wonderland creatures in which Alice gets involved" (Huici). People in Victorian era are asked to have a good manner. Carroll creates Wonderland, a nonsense world, to contrast with the real world. Alice goes to Wonderland alone. Her bravery and curiosity not only find her identity but also break the norm of Victorian era. For example, Carroll's Alice not only argue with King and Queen in Wonderland but also tired of caring the baby to indicate the abandoned woman's basic responsibility, maternity. Burton's Alice enters to Underland alone as well. However, the journey in Underland is not just for her identity anymore, but for another mission – to kill Jabberwocky in Underland. In Burton's film, it is apparent for audiences to find that there are more violent scenes than Carroll's novel. Burton's Alice faces some violent scenes and she is forced to fight for the habitants in Underland. Violent scenes are necessary parts in this film. In the way of maturity, it means that she must enter into adult world. In words, it represents that the world would not be innocent anymore. Therefore, the setting of

Underland is dark and gloomy. Burton would like to create a heroine who conquers all plights that she meets in Underland and wears an armor of knight. When Alice comes to Underland, she is questioned by Dormouse again and again. Habitants in Underland would like to find the right Alice. However, Alice does not know whether she is the right one whom they are looking for. After she sees the prophecy which she is destined to fulfill – to kill Jabberwocky, she thinks that she is not the right one.

Caterpillar: “Who are you?”

Alice: “I thought we settled this. I’m Alice, but not that one.”

Caterpillar: “How do you know?”

Alice: “You said so yourself.”

Caterpillar: “I said you were not hardly Alice, but you’re much more her now. In fact, you’re almost Alice.”

(Tim Burton’s *Alice in Wonderland*)

Through the journey in Underland, Alice tries to identify herself. She is indicated by some scenes or characters, especially Mad Hatter. Mad Hatter is the one who believes that she is the right Alice, who just loses her “muchness.” All these things push Alice to memorize what her father has said to her and make her have confidence and bravery

to own a new identity or a new life.

Caterpillar: "I can't help you if you don't even know who  
you are, stupid girl."

Alice: "I'm not stupid. My name is Alice, I live in London.

I have a mother named Helen and sister named Margaret.

My father was Charles Kingsleigh. He had a vision that

stretched halfway around the world, and nothing could stop

him. I'm his daughter, Alice Kingsleigh."

Caterpillar: "Alice at last!"

(Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland*)

After she reaffirms her identity, she realizes that it is not a dream, but a memory of childhood. Killing Jabberwocky makes Alice changes because "She returns to the real world with a rejuvenated self-concept, her independence secur[ity] in light of a newly-embraced identity. 'This is my life,' she tells her older sister. 'I'll decide what to do with it'" (Caroline Leal and Elise Leal). She knows that she can do it if she believes in herself, and she is also aware that she can be her own master in life. She becomes mature in the end, and she knows how to face her crisis in real world.

It may be apparent that Burton's film should be seen as a feminine power because of Alice's alone and brave journey in Underland. However, "Burton's modern adaptation pushes Alice into traditional male roles, such as becoming a knight in shining armor and embarking on a career in the capitalist trade industry, to prove her worth" (Brink 3). In Brink's critic, he addresses that Alice's feminist power has been masculinized. He thinks that Alice kill Jabberwocky by wearing an armor of knight, yet armor is a symbol of masculinity. It seems that women still needs men's power to conquer plights. The other point of masculinity which he mentions in his critic is that Alice do business in the end. Business is a men's activity. This plot, in his opinion, indicates that she enters a world of masculinity. Brink's statement provides a different angle of this film. However, it may be more like another meaning in Burton's film. Since Burton's Alice wears an armor and hold to sword to kill Jabberwocky, she breaks the boundary between men and women and indicates that armor is not only the symbol of masculinity. In the end of the film, Alice choose to do business with her father's friend rather than follow her mother's will to marry someone whom she does not like. She is more insistent than the past Alice. She dares to voice for herself. The journey in Underland teaches her to insist and believe in herself. Therefore, she

becomes more confident and brave enough to challenge in men's world.

Consequently, although Tim Burton's film, *Alice in Wonderland*, is seen as a sequel of Carroll's novel, *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland*, Burton just borrows some elements from Carroll's novel to tell another story. Alice seems can be anyone because she is becoming in Underland, from hardly Alice, almost Alice to the right one. In addition, Underland is different from Wonderland. The former one refers to subconscious, and the latter one is a dream. Burton interweaves reality and dream to help Alice enter her subconscious to heard the voice in her deep mind in order to figure out how to deal with her problem in reality. In the end of the film, she becomes her own master of her life. It seems that the journey of Underland leads her to a new life. In Underland, she manifests six impossible things which her father has said in reality. Mad Hatter tells her that the best people are bonkers, and so is Alice. Both two things help Alice to be aware that she has potential power, and she dares to be what she wants to be even though she may be seen as a bonkers person. Alice knows that she can follow her mind in the end. Therefore, Alice can be anyone; anyone can be Alice. Tim Burton just uses the flame of Carroll's novel to address that the journey in Underland is a process to dare to be oneself and follow one's own mind.



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