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Mix & Match

Hibridismo e Transmedialidade

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I. Alice Beyond Wonderland: Transmedia, Hybridity, and Intersemiotic Play in Contemporary Adaptations of a Children's Classic

Anna Kérchy[*]

1. Transmediation: Adaptation as Hybridization

According to its dictionary definition "hybrid" and "hybridity" may refer to:

> 1: an offspring of two animals or plants of different races, breeds, varieties, or species;
> 2: a person whose background is a blend of multiple diverse cultures or traditions;
> 3a: something heterogeneous in origin or composition; 3b: something that has several different types of components performing essentially the same functions. (Merriam Webster Online, 2020)

While the term originates from biology and botany, it has been widely employed across a variety of academic disciplines ranging from linguistics to postcolonial theory and multicultural studies. I wish to argue here that the notion of hybridity also resonates well with adaptation and transmedia studies by virtue of offering a fine metaphor for describing the complex interconnection of the original source-text and its revisionary revisiting(s).

Hybridity means a mixture of distinct entities into a new whole that seems to somehow transcend the sum of its parts. This is the exact case with adaptations where the original and rewrite(s) are layered on each other in a palimpsestic manner, creating a dynamic web of overlapping meanings which complement but also possibly contradict one another. The surplus sense in the fusion of multiple texts comes from the metafictional and even metamedial significations fuelled by the interaction of the

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original artwork and its 'repetition with a difference' in the adaptation – that enters into a dialogue with all the other adaptations of the source text on its turn. The point of this recognition is that the same story can be told in multiple manners, and that "art is derived from other art, stories are born of other stories" (Hutcheon, 2006: 2). Thus, adaptations necessarily invite a multifocal perspective from their ideal readers, who will perform a comparative interpretation of the source- and the target- text(s), interfacing the familiarity of the old text with the innovativeness of the new one. As Linda Hutcheon highlights, any adaptation is "repetition without replication," either driven by "the urge to consume and erase the memory of the adapted text or to call it into question" or desiring "to pay tribute to it by copying" (Hutcheon, 2006: 7). An oscillation between these two opposing motivations is also likely to emerge, as the adaptation must preserve the recognisability of the original but also lay claim on its uniqueness, its independent meaningfulness, and enjoyability on its own right.

Mapping the relationship of the original and the revision in terms of hybridization, and regarding the adaptation as a heterogeneous fusion of complementary-contradictory entities, offers a convincing argument against fidelity criticism's (McFarlane, 1996: 164) conservative rejection of any adaptation that is deemed inauthentic on grounds of lacking an adequate degree of similarity/truthfulness to the original. Embracing the idea of *adaptation as hybridization* does away with the subaltern, hierarchical positioning of the source and target texts. It acknowledges the latter as an autonomous creative product nested in a web of ever proliferating adaptations across a variety of media; and proposes a more dynamic model of adaptation as intersemiotic translation.

Linda Hutcheon uses Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin's term "remediation" to describe adaptation as a form of refashioning a text from one medium to another, "translating in the form of intersemiotic transpositions from one sign system (for example words) to another (for example, images)" (Hutcheon, 2006: 16). According to Bolter and Grusin, dominant media forms might be changing over time (the popularity of the book is replaced first by radio, TV, cinema, and then the internet), yet old and new media stay in constant dialogue with each other, shaping, replacing, reproducing, and reflecting on each other. Hence, the experience of the real and the fictional world are conjoint by "the experience of the medium"

(1999; 71). Certainly, Bolter and Grusin's (1999) contention update for the digital age Marshall McLuhan's idea that "the content of any medium is always another medium" (8). However, in their view "hypermediacy" (the foregrounding of mediality) and "transparent immediacy" (making the audience forget about the medium and give in to the illusion by the willing suspension of disbelief) exist side by side as equally valid remediation techniques, making the reader/spectator balance between alienation from and immersion within the fantasy world during a highly ambiguous, hybrid experience. (We can think of 3D CGI cinematic adaptations of fantasy novels – from *Alice in Wonderland* to *Jurassic Park* — where an immersive psychic experience granted by the hyperrealistic simulation of what has never been (transparent immediacy) conjoins with the alienating corporeal experience of the plastic glasses we must wear to enhance our vision by technological means (hypermediacy)).

Throughout the postmillennial phenomenon of "transmediation," as defined by Henry Jenkins (2007), an easily recognisable, canonical fictional universe (like Alice's Wonderland that will be the subject of my analysis) expands beyond the pages of the print and paper book, and moves onto a wide variety of media – the movie screen, the theatre stage, the puppet show, but also computer games, music videos, fashion ads, tie-in products, and ever so prolific online fanfiction and fan art – allowing old analogue and new digital media platforms to interact with each other. As a par excellence post-postmodernist variety of adaptation, transmediation transcends the original/remake binary, the hypotext/hypertext hierarchy (Stam, 1992: 213), and relies on a multitude of hypotexts, paratexts, and adoptions in a many media forms instead of one single particular source-text. Verbal, visual, acoustic, kinetic, digital media regimes of representation interact throughout the co-production of an increasingly elaborate fantasy realm, while strategically combining narrative persistence's predictability and material variation's surprise effects.

In "transmedia storytelling" adaptations enter into an intermedial conversation with one another, while reiterating, revising, challenging, and enhancing the source text and each other alike, in complex ways. In *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide,* Jenkins defines transmedia storytelling as a narrative that "unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text (retelling, adaptation, extension) making a

distinct and valuable contribution to the whole" (2007: 95), each complementing the storyworld with a new, increasingly interactive dimension or layer to the storyworld. If adaptation means the retelling of a story in a different medium, transmedia storytelling relies on how adaptations interact with one another. It is meant to encourage interpreters to dive deeper into the multi-layered meanings of the source-text through "additive comprehension." Transmedia "extensions" provide extra insight into characters, motifs, and plotline, gaps are filled, unknown aspects of the imaginary world are mapped out in sequels, prequels, revisions, homages, adding by a greater sense of realism or, on the contrary, by augmenting fantastic effects.

The aim is to maximalise audience engagement by toying with our insatiable curiosity, to turn the storyworld more immersive by revealing new pieces of information, new potentialities, new "what if" scenarios which invite us to revise our understanding of the familiar-yet-strange fictional reality as a whole. Extensions may create different points of entry for different audience segments to expand the potential market for an artwork; and they also often adopt the "crossover" (Beckett, 2008) fictional form or family adventure genre to target dual audiences including both adults and children. Another tendency is to blur the distinction between consumers and producers, and to create the new audience of "prosumers" (Manovich, 2009) who can appreciate the original but also customize it to their own liking hence actively taking part in the (re)creation of meanings. Enhanced interactivity, collective co-authorship, and communal experience instantly shareable on global multimedia platforms are buzzwords of today's participatory culture's most popular transmedia storytelling forms: fanfiction, cosplay, and multiplayer online computer games. Fans create expansions, rewrites, alternative versions of fictional reality by relying on the original source text just as much as they gain inspiration from other rewrites and expansions. Transmedia storytelling revolves around an immersive, interactive entertainment experience for knowing readers that allows for a communal expansion of the storyworld through multimedial hybridization.

My aim in the following is to map the multiple forms adaptation can take in terms of hybridization, remediation, and transmediation in immediately contemporary creative repurposings of Lewis Carroll's Victorian nonsense fairy-tale fantasies about Alice's adventures in Wonderland and

through the Looking-Glass. Before turning to the scrutinisation of the interconnection of old and new media in postmillennial Alice revisions, I wish to demonstrate how the hybrid narrative quality of this timeless children's literary classic accounts for its adaptogenic quality that justifies future generations' enduring desire to update the story to their own times. Succeeding chapters focus on this revisionary intent manifested in a dizzying proliferation of Wonderland adaptations across a variety of media platforms.

2. *Alice in Wonderland* as a Hybrid Text with an Adaptogenic Quality

Carroll's Alice tales can be easily associated with "narrative hybridization" and "dialogic imagination" Mikhail Bakhtin regarded as defining features of the novelistic genre. In the Bakhtinian view, novels' hybridization consists of the juxtaposition of multiple linguistic registers, incompatible idioms, and kaleidoscopic perspectives within the same semiotic space. It allows different languages to "interanimate" and "illuminate" each other while undermining monological authoritative masternarratives, and tackling the codes and limits of representability. A novel "embraces, ingests, and devours other genres" while still maintaining its status as a novel. Novels also play with intertextuality (foregrounding the relation between utterances), heteroglossia (acknowledging the primacy of context over text), and polyglossia (disclosing the hybrid nature of any literary work and language per se). Bakhtin connects the polyphonic mixture of heterogeneous voices to the topsy-turvy realm of carnivalesque festivities distinguished by temporal, spatial, and discursive confusion throughout the subversive substitution of the ordinary with the unusual, surprising, and grotesque.

Carrol's Alice tales constitute a stunningly hybrid generic mixture while it remains the first children's novel without any didactic, moralizing agenda, driven only by the agenda to make young readers laugh and "think for themselves" (Zipes, 1987: 73). Via a curious, proto-postmodernist mode of adaptation, the Alice tales repeat a variety of genres while subverting the very traditions they evoke.

The talking animals, miraculous metamorphoses, and the journey into an enchanted realm with rules of functioning radically different from our

usual consensus-reality clearly evoke the fairy-tale form. Yet with a twist, the narrative patterns of the genre are fully neglected transforming the stories into anti-tales. (There are no moral guidelines, no clear distinction between protagonists and antagonists, no magic helpers, and no genuine "happily ever after"). Both tales are portal quest fantasies, where Alice passes through magical entrances – a rabbit hole and a mirror, respectively in the two volumes – to discover fantasy worlds. Yet the little heroine has no real appetite for quest and all she desires throughout her adventures is to get back home. The tales can be interpreted as *Bildungsromans* tackling the traumas of growing up in a fictional form (the ups and downs of psychological maturation are reflected in the physical shapeshiftings). Yet instead of the linear teleological structure of the coming-of-age story, they adopt an episodic structure made up of interchangeable dream fragments. The tales evoke the *Künstlerroman* tradition in so far as Alice becomes a storyteller upon returning to her waking life who will entertain future generations with reminiscences of her adventures. Yet she is a dreamer dreamt into being by Carroll, whose adult male voice often disrupts with ironic metacommentaries the little girl focaliser's sleeptalking, hence her agency is considered as dubious by some critics. (Kincaid, 1973)

By the poems embedded in the prose narratives, Carroll even reiterates the didactic educational content meant to socialize his era's children along repressive Victorian codes of conduct and moral values (diligence, piety, submissiveness). Yet his parodic rewritings clearly criticize black pedagogy, mindless rote learning, and the silencing of youngsters. In his tales, albeit Alice is constantly mocked by adult figures, she is eventually gifted with the potential to become Queen, and hence gain verbal agency. The Alice tales embrace the paradoxical genre of a science fantasy in an age of epistemological crisis, fictionalizing anxieties related to Darwin's emerging evolutionary theory, and new technological inventions such as photography or the railways; mingle real life references with mathematical abstraction and pure fabulation. Carroll's nonsense fantasies fuse language philosophical commentary on the necessity of misunderstanding and the impossibility of meaninglessness, on the ludic and disciplinary aspects of discourse with socio-cultural criticism of monarchy, bourgeois hypocrisy, and short-sighted common sense, all turned topsy-turvy in delusional dreamworlds. The often tongue-in-cheek juxtaposition of numerous

apparently incompatible genres creates a carnivalesque polyphony of discourses fused within the popular novelistic form.

The ambiguity of the stories is heightened by the fact that they present a private story to a particular child (to entertain the dean's daughter, Alice Liddell) but are also coupled with public allusions to life at Oxford University and Victorian Britain at large (meticulously catalogued in the exciting footnotes of Martin Gardner's *Annotated Alice*). Out of the complex layers of significations, some meanings are more accessible to child readers (like the infantile play with sounds, the lulling nursery rhymes, or the visual humour of the picture book), while others can only be decoded by adults (like the Gothic death jokes and the existential philosophical insights). It is the task of each creative adaptation to decide which layer of meaning will be activated, foregrounded, or intertextually/intermedially connected in the new retelling/revisioning that updates the original message for succeeding generations.

The heterogeneous generic mixture's narrative hybridity might be a potential reason for the extreme adaptogenic quality of the Alice tales, as a multitude of stories, voices, perspectives emerge within this two volume book. However, narrative hybridity can also be tracked in the author's structural organization of the Alice universe. Carroll most likely recognized the "hyperadapticity" (Leitch, 2016: 12) of his storyworld, because he produced many versions of his tale, polishing, modifying, and expanding the fictional universe he invented; and hence established himself as an authentic forerunner of transmedia storytelling. As Zoe Jaques and Eugene Giddens' publication history of the Alice book (2013) neatly records, the adventure story about the little girl falling down the rabbit hole into a perplexing Wonderland was the subject of multiple remediations even within Carroll's lifetime.

The initial oral performance of the tale improvised on July 4th 1862 on a rowing trip to entertain Alice and her sisters gained a year later a handwritten form in the gift book manuscript of *Alice's Adventures Underground*. Complemented by extra chapters and rhymes, and exchanging Carroll's amateur sketches for celebrated Punch cartoonist John Tenniel's more skilful illustrations, the book was published in 1865 by Macmillan under the title we are familiar with today: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The adventures continued in 1872 in a sequel called *Through the Looking-Glass*

and what Alice Found There, and in the same year were adapted to the theatrical stage in a musical play directed by Henry Savile Clark as a family entertainment piece. Carroll created for pre-readers *Nursery Alice* (1890) (fig. 1), an abbreviated edition with colour illustrations and rhetorical devices reminiscent of oral storytelling, hence an enhanced interactive potential captivating for the very young, but he also kept more mature audiences targeting them with a literary critical commentary on his work in the essay entitled "Alice on the Stage" (1887) and musical adaptations of some verse of *Looking-Glass* composed by William Boyd in collaboration with the author. Alice moved beyond the pages of the book in Carroll's logical games published under the title "Puzzles from Wonderland" in *Aunt Judy's Magazine* and was reincarnated in collectible objects of various tie-in merchandise, including a Looking Glass biscuit tin and a Wonderland postage stamp case. As Jan Susina contends, Carroll was a real "marketing genius of the Alice industry who capitalized on his initial success for more than twenty-five years" (Susina, 2010: 61). He supervised closely all intersemiotic translations of his book – Tenniel's illustrations, Savile Clark's stage play, and Boyd's music – to guarantee the authenticity of the 'Aliceous atmosphere' he called into being.

52   THE NURSERY "ALICE."

Let's try if we can make out all the twelve.
You know there ought to be twelve to make up

Figura 1 [1]

Several factors guarantee the easy adaptability of the Alice stories. First of all, there is no precise verbal description of Alice's look. Carroll only mentions minor details that she has small hands, black shoes, and a skirt; so there is plenty of freedom for reinterpretations of her character. The most iconic markers on Tenniel's famous, first illustrations of Alice are minimal vestimentary items: striped stockings, a pinafore with an apron, and, in the second volume, a hairband that later became popular as the fashion accessory called the Alice band.

Secondly, the plotline resonates with the easily relatable, monomythical trope, "Everyman's journey." It represents both the universal human quest for the meaning in/of life, and the psychic turmoil related to growing pains, coming of age, ageing, and the coming to terms with our fallibility, vulnerabilities, and mortality, and the resulting longing for making connections, for understanding each other. Another major theme, metafantasy, a

[1]   John Tenniel – Illustration from *The Nursery Alice* (1890).

self-reflective commentary on the significant role attributed to imagination in surviving the difficulties of existence also holds a timeless, transcultural appeal.

Thirdly, adaptations are facilitated by the structural organisation of the two Alice books. The episodic structure allows for the exchange and even omitting of certain scenes without troubling the general sense of the story. The textual gaps in the storyline and the open ending create an aura of uncertainty particularly favourable for creative retellings. The idea of the fidelity to the original becomes meaningless because of the proliferations of the many variations conceived by the author himself.

Fourthly, Carroll's remarkable fictional universe is distinguished by a fantastic world building: his make-believe world abounds in easily recognizable, easily recyclable elements which hold a nearly memetic quality. These iconic components include teacups, playing cards, a weird tophat, a white rabbit, mushrooms, the drink-me-bottle, and a grin without a cat which all clearly evoke Wonderland and through their reiteration allow for the expansion of the familiar storyworld in surprising, different means.

A final adaptogenic aspect I wish to mention here is Carroll's strategic use of direct audience address that calls for readerly interaction and a communal realization of Alice's dreams with lines speaking beyond the pages of the book, pointing out to the extradiegetic universe to mingle it with the diegetic world with questions like "What do you think?" "What would you do in Alice's place?" This is a crucial question basically all the Alice adaptations toy with, be they sentimental, didactic, subversive, experimental, political, or parodic to use Carolyn Sigler's (1997) classification of alternative Alices.

In the following my aim is to explore how Carrollian leitmotifs gain different reformulations in creative revisions which strategically mix old and new media forms, balancing between demythologization and re-enchantment to create a genuinely hybrid Wonderland experience. I shall organize my chapters along the lines of Katherine Blake's taxonomy of Alice character types surfacing in adaptations of the Wonderland universe, and introduce examples for playful *Heiterkeit* Alice, aggressive Malice Alice, and victimized Alice. (see Blake, 1974)

3. Playful *Heiterkeit* Alice in a Postmodern Puzzle Picturebook

Carroll's Alice books have been designed from the very beginning as picturebooks in which the unique book experience is grounded in the intermedial dialogue of text and image which can complement but also challenge and contradict one another. The narrative showcases the limits of verbal representation by pointing out of the text towards the image ("If you don't know what a Gryphon is, take a look at the picture"). Elsewhere, the illustrations augment the nonsensical nature of the wordplay involved in the trademark Carrollian neologisms and portmanteaux. (Tenniel's illustration of the monstrous Jabberwock is a response to the impossible challenge of visually translating the unspeakable.) Due to Carroll's cunning book design, the book becomes an object the reader can actually play with while she is actively involved in the making of the story. (The reader has to turn the page to make Alice cross to the other side of the Looking Glass, or to make the Cheshire Cat disappear leaving only its grin behind, or to make the Queen transform into a Kitten.)

One can assume that no authentic full book experience will be provided by any text of the Alice stories published without illustrations or any wordless visual adaptations which reduce Alice's story to the pictorial register. Still 'text only' e-book versions and 'picture only' baby board books or artbooks of Alice in Wonderland are popular today. The latter have a wide international audience because the condensation of the well-known story into images eliminates the linguistic difficulties. Some picturebook adaptations of Carroll's classics are genuinely worthy of scholarly attention because of their aesthetic value or their usefulness in pedagogical practices as stimulators of discussions with pre-readers.

Anne Laval's *Tales from Wonderland* is part of the Storybox series that invites us reimagine classical fairy tales and fantasy stories via the unique genre of vertically structured, wordless puzzle picturebook. First of all, it appeals to the visual literacy and the ludic instinct of pre-readers or child-minded adults. The subtitle "It is my turn to tell a story" also suggests that the aim is the raising of emerging storytellers. I would like to argue that despite the lack of words Laval's adaptation of *Alice* is not a silent

picturebook but a mixed-media hybrid of verbal and visual storytelling that treads in the footsteps of Carroll's initial narrative composition and book design.

Figura 2[2]

Tales from Wonderland (fig. 2) is composed of twenty postcard sized puzzle pieces with images on both sides of each card. You can connect these together and create a three meters long story. The unusually long horizontal spread of the line of puzzle pieces joint together highlights the spatial dimension of the original story. It evokes the trespassing into an unknown realm involved in the portal quest fantasy's fall down the rabbit hole and passage through the looking glass, but also the spatial mobility of Alice's numerous shapeshiftings. Moreover, the portals depicted in the puzzle pieces permit the reader-player to modify the story at her own whim, facilitating Alice's transition to another fantasy realm or physical form incompatible with the one she inhabited before.

Laval's pictorial retelling uses easily recognisable figures in unusual contexts. Alice is a blonde little girl in a blue dress who wanders in a metropolitan city space and an enchanted forest like realm on the two sides of the cards. The White Rabbit emerges as a hot dog vendor in sneakers,

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2   Anne Laval's *Tales from Wonderland*.

the Cheshire Cat becomes a cunning taxi driver, the Red Queen drives a pink limo and lives on the top floor of a skyscraper. We can recognize the emblematic imagery and plot references including the holes to fall in, the tea to drink, the flamingos, and the cakes that make you grow and shrink. According to Thomas Leitch, these bits are to be held responsible for the hyper-adaptability of the Carrollian Wonderland universe. Alice's adventures function as "collections of individually memorable microtexts that themselves seem designed for further intermedial transmission and media transfer." These minimal metonymical markers of Alice's dreamworld are "like Richard Dawkins' selfish memes, they are endowed with a longevity, fecundity, and coping fidelity that maximize their chances for survival" in succeeding adaptations. (Leitch, 2016: 16)

Although the puzzle picture book is fully enjoyable on its own right, the familiarity with the original source-text increases the entertainment value. You will reach the richest layers of meanings if you can transpose the initial story-version and your rewrite on top of each other. For example, moving from the enchanted forest to the metropolitan cityspace is more fun if you are aware of the urban setting's incompatibility with the original Alice books' dream realms.

Certainly, the fragmentation of the story into puzzle pieces evokes the original sequential episodic structure of the Alice tales. The puzzle book transcends the conventions of the linear storytelling tradition by allowing for a proliferation of alternate endings, multiple parallel universes, and visual signs scattered on the cards which allow you to connect it with multiple cards, allowing for a wide array of story-twists. There is one starting piece and three end pieces, granting six alternate endings and thirty-two pictures to fill out the story in between.

Laval's storybox offers an interactive storytelling experience: parents and children can make up the storyline together or revise each other's versions. In a Carrollian vein, the point is to encourage audience interaction and to invite readers turned into spectators and players to talk about the wordless images. Therefore, instead of a silent book product this is indeed a dialogic book toy. The ludic quality of the storytelling is enhanced by visual clues scattered in the background of individual images with the help of which we can also add extra bits, twists, and episodes to the storyline via the additive comprehension characteristic of transmedia prosumer

products. As GeekDad's 2019 review on his blog (in yet another audience generated transmedia intertext) suggests, storybox puzzle books grant a fine means to encourage children to tell a story or teach them about story structure in a playful way, making you communally ponder about "What happens if your story doesn't have a middle or if you put the end before the beginning? Can you tell a story backwards?" This is "all great fun for budding storytellers."

Joining the puzzle pieces together is also a corporeal experience, reminding us how tactility is a significant element in Carroll's storytelling. While in the original Victorian book design, readers had to turn the pages of the book to make things happen and make the plot proceed, here you must flip the puzzle cards, swap them, connect them, while possibly discussing your choices with fellow fantasists. Thus, in a metaphorical sense you are holding hands with the person you are co-authoring the story with. This haptic mode of visuality, whereby spectatorship is immediately conjoint with the sensation of touching appears elsewhere in the transmedia web of Wonderland adaptations, like in Czech puppeteer Svankmajer's surrealist stop-motion animation film (1987), Robert Sabuda's pop-up picturebook (2003), or Meg McLaughlin and Jason Alexander's touch and feel and sparkle board book (2009), just to mention a few examples. (see Kérchy, 2016)

4. Agressive Malice Alice and Remediation in a YA horror novel inspired by a computer game

Christina Henry's *Alice* (2015) is a young adult novel (fig.3) of the splatter punk horror genre. Alice is a troubled, amnesiac figure who must face dark secrets from her past in order to mature from traumatised child to empowered survivor and active author of her destiny. Her aggressive belligerence is part of her infantile regressive behaviour resulting from her "fatal trip down the rabbit hole." The novel fits in the long line of contemporary Wonderland stories inspired by Carroll's classic in which Alice becomes the saviour of a cursed land by defeating the monstrous Jabberwock who represents her inner demons.

Figura 3[3]

This idea of Alice as a Jeanne d'Arc-like femme-enfant action heroine – who appears in Tim Burton's 2010 3D CGI live action family adventure movie *Alice in Wonderland* (fig. 4) and American McGee's 2000/ 2014 Alice first person shooter computer game alike – can be traced back to John Tenniel's original Victorian illustration of Alice's alter-ego, the frail figure of the beamish boy knight fighting the Jabberwock (fig. 5), a metapicture of the interpreter's struggle with nonsensical meaninglessness. (see Hancher) Hence, Henry's novel is an exciting remediation because it is just as much indebted to a 19th century engraving as to a 21st century PC game. It pays homage to both old and new media adaptations of Alice via the transmedia storytelling technique of drilling deeper into ambiguous meanings of the source texts which are both "copies of the original".

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3   Cover of Chistina Henry novel.

Figura 4[4] e Figura 5[5]

The novel is characterized by transmedia hybridity. It offers a mixture of a variety of genres: a dark fantasy set in a dystopic world, a difficult coming-of-age story with lots of bloodshed, violence, and gore inciting calculated corporeal reactions of the horror genre which facilitate audience involvement, and become mingled with a crime story of detection, a rape-and-revenge story, a trauma narrative, and confused remembrance typical of gothic novels. As the ominous blurb suggests, this is

> A mind-bending new novel inspired by the twisted and wondrous works of Lewis Carroll... / In a warren of crumbling buildings and desperate people called the Old City, there stands a hospital with cinderblock walls which echo the screams of the poor souls inside. In the hospital, there is a woman. Her hair, once blond, hangs in tangles down her back. She doesn't remember why she's in such a terrible place. Just a tea party long ago, and long ears, and blood... (Henry, 2015).

Henry's novel strategically plays with hesitation resulting from the gaps in one's knowledge. Readers learn about Alice's life-changing events from her sporadic flashbacks: a nice and naive girl of a wealthy family, she

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4   Tim Burton.

5   Tenniel Jabberwocky.

made the wrong choice to go celebrate her sixteenth birthday in the Old City where filth and criminals rule, and where girls tend to mysteriously disappear. After the unspeakable happened to her, she returned two weeks later, covered in blood and disfigured, alone, without her girlfriend, unable to recall what happened, mumbling the only word she could say: "the rabbit..." Her disgusted and despaired family sent her to a mental asylum where she has dwelt in a sort of suspended animation for years. In the novel's opening scene Alice notices that the madhouse is on fire and manages to escape with the assistance of an inmate residing in the neighbouring cell, called the Mad Hatcher, a ruthless murderer who uses an axe to get rid of his enemies. Hatcher becomes Alice's travel companion, friend, and potential love interest on their way to find and eliminate Alice's abusers and the monstrous Jabberwock who broke loose with the destruction of the madhouse.

Alice's struggle with her psychological problems, her nightmarish memory fragments, PTSD syndrome, and her initial incarceration in the madhouse very clearly resonate with Wonderland's PC game adaptations popular among young adult audiences today. *American McGee's Alice* (2000) and *Alice: Madness Returns* (2014) are first person shooter horror action-adventure computer games (fig. 6). Traumatized teenage Alice's mission is to flee the madhouse where she is confined because of her self-consuming remorse following the tragic death of her parents consumed by fire (whom she was unable to rescue because she was lost amidst her daydreamings). She must save herself and redeem Wonderland by revindicating the powers of her imagination.

Figura 6[6]

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6   McGee's Alice.

Alice's figure as a mentally deranged, violent action heroine provides an adolescent critique of the hypocritical, manipulative, abusive, adult world both in American McGee's Alice and Christina Henry's novel that can be considered as "screen-bleed" (Hanson, 2003: 47) transmediation of the PC game. Neither of the works present Alice as an idealised innocent heroine, but we still root for her in her fight against the evil, and never doubt that her antagonists, the cruel Red Queen, the monstrous Jabberwock, the clansman Caterpillar, or the rapist White Rabbit deserve their punishment. The leaders of the rival criminal gangs ruling the Old City in Henry's novel are morally corrupted versions of Carroll's original characters. The blood-thirsty mobster Mr Carpenter, the Walrus who kidnaps girls to mutilate or eat them up like an ogre, Cheshire, one of the last Magicians who could save the place from evil forces are referred to by computer game terminology as "bosses" – making the connection with McGee's *Alice* obvious for gamers. They also resonate with villain figures of fairy tales.

The fairy tale genre is easily adaptable to the medium of computer games and also heavily influential of contemporary Alice adaptations for the same reason grounded in the nature of the remediation process. As Cathlena Martin argues in her study on American McGee's *Alice* game, postmodern repurposings of fairy tales allow for an "interactivity enhanced by uniquely executable game worlds [storyworlds] whereby, through alter-nate ways of navigating the narrative, players [readers] can reinterpret the source text" (Martin, 2010: 134). Yet, as I have argued before, original Alice books are closer to anti-tales than traditional fairy stories in so far as they lack precisely the hero versus villain antagonism, the quest theme, or the happy ending that serves a moral pedagogical agenda. In that sense, Henry's novel like McGee's game offers a clever combination of fairy tale and anti-tale. The aim of Alice's heroic mission is to re-establish the status quo of social justice, but her madness turns her into a dubious, grey character, and troubles comfortable readerly identification.

This trouble is heightened in the computer game where you can also experience how it feels to die –and then in a new game resurrect – like Alice. When you lose a game and die in McGee's dark digital ludic realm, you wake in a mental hospital as if the previous adventures have been just a dream. The reality status of McGee's new media universe is authenticated, among other means, by Alice's owning a copy of Carroll's *Alice's Adventures*

In Wonderland illustrated by John Tenniel. Henry's remediation of McGee necessarily takes a stance on McGee's remediation of Carroll.

Furthermore, the fairy-tale references in Henry's novel also create a paradoxical, perplexing effect because they move us away from the safety of childhood innocence. *Hansel and Gretel's* story is evoked as Alice and Hatcher leave dead bodies behind them as breadcrumbs. The *Beauty and the Beast* allusion reminds of YA horror romance saga Twilight's interspecies abusive romance as well as Angela Carter's feminist fairy-tale rewritings where Beauty eventually turns out to be beastly herself. Perhaps the most disturbing fairy-tale reference is the one to *Sleeping Beauty*: Henry's *Alice* falls into a trauma-induced coma when she is sixteen and wakes up ten years later in the body of a twenty-six-year-old woman. Arrested development is a major theme of Carroll's classic in which Alice's shapeshifting, shrinkings and growings fictionalise Victorian anxieties: Darwin's idea of degeneration, photographic technology's miniaturisation, and the fear of children's losing innocence with their coming of age. However, Alice's inability to age in Henry's novel also reflects on contemporary adaptations' preference of adult Alice figures. Henry's *Alice* – inspired both by a 19th century Victorian fairy-tale fantasy novel and a 21st century computer game – stages the mutually motivational coexistence of old and new media. On waking up from her coma, Alice simultaneously identifies both with her old and new self. She is no longer a girl, but she does not know yet how to become a woman. She is in search of who she really is. In that sense, she enacts the major dilemma of all adaptations: how to remain recognisable (preserve connections with the past) and reinvent one's individuality (point towards the future in a new, original way).

5. Victimized Angst Alice and Transmedia Storytelling in a Coming of Age Story

Cathy Cassidy's *Looking Glass Girl* (2015) provides a par excellence example for the inherently transmedia quality of 21st century junior fiction children's book. Like Christina Henry's novel, published in the same year, it traces a mixed-genre trauma narrative that focuses on the maturation of vulnerable victim into self-confident survivor, yet in a more realistic setting. In line with the generic conventions of the coming age narrative, Cassidy's

Bildungsroman addresses young adult audiences by dealing with real-life problems typical of teenage years, including conflicts with parents, identity crisis, the clash of individual desires and social expectations, peer pressure, first love, and betrayal by friends. As a junior fiction novel aimed at girls between nine and fourteen it tackles edgy topics but in a less violent, horrific manner.

Cassidy's realistic framework ties in with the genre of the school novel in the tradition of Tom Browne and Harry Potter. Alice is a shy teen who plays a lead role in the school play adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland*, and who grows apart from her best friends. She suffers from solitude and bullying, up until a fatal accident, when she is pushed down the stairs at a sleepover fancy dress party of a Wonderland theme. She is hospitalised with serious injuries, and a concussion. Every other chapter traces her subconscious monologue in coma, as she is trying to wake up but cannot, since her body keeps still to preserve energy for self-cure. This pathological version of sleep paralysis allows for her psychological healing, as she is trying to come to terms with the betrayal by her friends, her first kiss, first love, jealousy, a simultaneous yearning for collective belonging and for finding an individual self-identity.

The italicised coma chapters include Alice's stream of consciousness in a waking coma coupled by glimpses of a vague experience of reality. Whatever is actually happening around her, fleeting impressions of visitors coming in and going out of the hospital room, are filtered through the *Alice in Wonderland* theme. The head of the girl gang, the queen bee of school, Alice's main bully takes the fantasy form of the Red Queen, the boy Alice likes appears in the guise of the Mad Hatter, her friends appear as the Dormouse and the March Hare, while her memory associates the stumbling down the stairs with the fictional Alice's fall down the rabbit hole. Arrested development, suspended animation fictionalised as a prolonged plummeting down the rabbit hole is a major leitmotif of the text.

At the end of the novel Alice finally wakes up from her coma, and becomes best friends with her remorseful bully. It is part of the healing process that she can forgive the ones who hurt her, and as a reward for her kindness she can self-confidently walk back to school while holding hands with her new boyfriend, the Mad Hatter. She also turns suddenly from loser into a popular girl who knows how to apply make-up, where to

sit in the cafeteria, and who claims the right to decide over the social value or worthlessness of her peers in the microcosm of school. Although online teen audience reactions find this ending uplifting, adult readers may judge this finale disillusioning because of its reinforcement of normative values and its failure to trace the psychological development of characters. The problem is that we do not really know if the young heroine's behaviour is a tongue-in cheek mimicry of the expected girlish behaviour or if hers is an authentic assimilation taken seriously.

Cassidy's adaptation enacts major deviations from Carroll's original source text. In Carroll Alice remains a curious, solitary adventuress, she respects differences and tolerates the otherness of all the nonsensical creatures, while in Cassidy she survives by becoming similar to those who aggressively marginalise and repress differences. Carroll's literary nonsense is uncompromisingly non-didactic, crazy, anarchic, absurd, and grotesque, whereas Cassidy's finale is closer to a romantic make-over movie genre, where by the end the Ugly Duckling turns into a beautiful swan by complying with social norms. In Cassidy, Wonderland is place where Alice dwells during her coma, and she wants to return to reality. (This evokes the Disney animation adaptation of *Alice*, where she is crying because she wants to return home.) Quite on the contrary, in Carroll, Alice's return to Victorian reality's waking life means an ambiguous questioning of her agency: as a girl child she is a lesser citizen but preserves some of her dream powers due to her storytelling skills acquired precisely by courtesy of her travel to Wonderland.

Yet, despite the above shortcomings, Cassidy's novel still can be considered an interesting rewrite of Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, because of the complex hybridity of the narrative. As for generic hybridity, the novel combines the trauma narrative that reflects on the reality of school bullying and the coming of age story that tackles difficulties of love and friendship, and then fuses these realistic writerly modes with the retelling of a familiar fairy-tale fantasy children's classic. Hybridity also emerges in the postmodernist narratological feat enacted in Cassidy's experimental writing that plays with a multiplicity of perspectives in the coma chapters where unconscious Alice is lost in her Wonderland, while the other characters continue their lives, and urge her to come back to a reality that she witnesses and reimagines in a distorted way in her coma-induced dreams. However, the

most interesting aspect of *Looking Glass Girl*'s hibridity surfaces in its strategic transmediation that reveals how the *Alice in Wonderland* theme works on multiple, overlapping, platforms of popular cultural entertainment.

Cassidy performs transmedia storytelling. The analogue reading experience of her print-and-paper books is enhanced by bonus digital contents in the regularly updated online realm of the author's website (www.cathycassidy.com). The website is targeting a wide readership: it offers educational material and pedagogical aid for teachers, a discussion forum for youngsters, and visual extensions available in the form of colourful illustrations and book promotional videos also available on other social media platfoms like Youtube and Facebook.

Via an other mode of transmediation, Cassidy's paratextual addendums to her novel complement the verbal narrative with further medial and sensorial dimensions. The final pages of the book include recipes of the Wonderland cakes the girls make at the sleep over theme party, as well as a set list of the songs her future boyfriend (the Mad Hatter of her dreams) compiles for Alice on a mixtape he gifts her. Hence, the dimensions of musical and gustatory experience are complementing the pleasures of the storyworld brought into being in the written text. These bodily sensations make an integral part of the original Carrollian dream realm too. Literary nonsense foregrounds the acoustic qualities of language (allowing the sound to precede the sense!), while Alice's cake that alternately makes her shrink and grow, and the drink-me-bottle with its unidentifiably flavoured potion (that combines the taste of toffee, roast turkey, cherry tart, custard, and pineapple) are iconic markers of Alice's curious identity (de)construction. Cassidy's cake recipe and song list in a way pay tribute to these corporeal dimensions of the Carrollian Wonderland experience, but their singularity resides in the fact that they are strategically meant to augment audience interaction and create a communal book experience (that goes way beyond the confines of a reading experience...)

Young readers – an audience primarily composed of teen girls – of *Looking Glass Girl* will not only bake the cake described at the end of the novel, but they will also make sure to create selfies of themselves posing with the cupcakes they made or/and the book that made them to venture on culinary adventures, and post these photographic self-portraits on popular social media platforms. Moreover, they will add hastags with Cassidy's

name, the novel's title, and Alice in Wonderland references to contribute to the building of a fan community of prosumers. The adaptation is distanced from the original as Lewis Carroll's name never features among the hashtags. Readers become co-authoring amateur artists creatively reimagining their favourite fictional reality in a wide range of media: one can spot on Instagram handmade jewellery, DIY costumes, and even nailpolish patterns inspired by Cassidy's *Looking Glass Girl*. Alice has ventured way beyond Wonderland, and there is nothing to stop them.

6. In Place of Conclusion

In the above, I have tried to demonstrate that unified transmedia experience always entails an illuminating diversity instead of homogeneity because each media "adds a new cultural layer, supporting more diverse ways of communicating, thinking, feeling, and creating than existed before." Dislocated in a heterogeneous network of meanings each media "disrupts old patterns, requiring us collectively and individually to actively work through what roles different forms of media are going to play in or lives" (Clinton, Jenkins, McWilliams, 2013: 11), in what ways they are going to mediate reality while foregrounding interactivity, intermediality and connectivity, and how "new technologies extend our senses outside us into the social world, [to make] new sense ratios occur among all of our senses in that particular culture" (McLuhan, 1994: 41).

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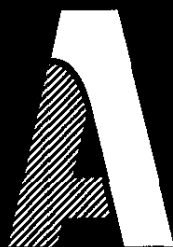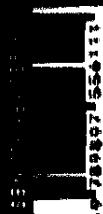
A expressão *intermedial turn*, através da qual Werner Wolf pretendeu expor à luz da nossa consciência crítica a dimensão intermedial do contemporâneo, não assinala tanto a existência de novos problemas no domínio do complexo discurso interartes da contemporaneidade, como a de novas possibilidades de representar esses mesmos problemas por meio da nossa inteligibilidade analítica. Como produto de um efeito de leitura ou, pelo contrário, enquanto realidade compositiva de incidência fenomenológica ou categorial, os estudos coligidos neste volume, consagrado à ponderação teórico-analítica dos conceitos de hibridismo e transmedialidade, promovem a indagação criteriosa de algumas inflexões do texto literário pela arte da performance, bem como dos limites da adaptação do texto literário ao cinema, procurando ainda problematizar os modos de relação instituídos por esses dois conceitos (hibridismo e transmedialidade) no universo interativo e no ramo subdisciplinar da literatura infantojuvenil.

rigues

ora

e Transmedialidade