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**ALL ALICES IN WONDERLAND: SOME CONSIDERATIONS
ON THE CRITICAL FORTUNE OF LEWIS CARROLL**

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**ALL ALICES IN WONDERLAND: SOME
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OF LEWIS CARROLL**

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For, you see, so many out-of-the-way things had happened lately that Alice had begun to think that very few things indeed were really impossible.

Lewis Carroll,
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

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RESUMO

“The Alice Books” é a maneira pela qual são conhecidos, em inglês, os livros que compõem o corpus de minha monografia, a saber *Através do Espelho e o que Alice Encontrou lá* (1871) e *Aventuras de Alice no País das Maravilhas* (1885). Esses dois livros vêm encantando as pessoas há diversas gerações, ao narrarem as aventuras de uma menina que visita mundos estranhos. Também exercem grande fascínio no campo dos estudos literários, em que estudiosos buscam encontrar os motivos para tamanha força de atração, de forma que a fortuna crítica de Lewis Carroll acabou por contabilizar um bom número de vertentes críticas ao longo dessas tantas décadas. Meu objetivo é traçar algumas considerações sobre os estudos críticos realizados acerca dos *Alice Books*, mapeando as principais linhas de análise, apontando sua relevância à época em que foram criadas e ressaltando aspectos em que tais leituras podem diferir das realizadas por novos leitores nossos contemporâneos. O trabalho se estrutura em duas seções. A primeira apresenta algumas vertentes clássicas de abordagem crítica às obras; e a segunda propõe uma interpretação relacionada ao conceito de modernidade líquida como metáfora para o tipo de sociedade em que nos inserimos hoje. O lastro teórico para a segunda seção se ampara na leitura da obra *Modernidade Líquida*, de Zygmunt Bauman, que utilizo para comparar valores e conceitos de nosso tempo com elementos apresentados nas duas obras de Carroll. Espero, com isso, contribuir para a busca de respostas sobre as razões pelas quais os *Alice Books* continuam a intrigar e fascinar tantos críticos e leitores, mesmo cento e quarenta anos após o início de suas publicações.

Palavras-chave: 1 Lewis Carroll; 2 *The Alice Books*; 3 Modernidade Líquida; 4 Crítica Literária.

ABSTRACT

“The Alice Books” is the traditional expression used to refer to my corpus, which consists of two books written by Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871), and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1885). These stories have exercised so much influence on people over the years that the adventures of the little girl who discovers different worlds continues to be revisited until today. The wish to understand the fascination the Alice Books exert on people from all places and ages has inspired critics to scrutinize them, so that a collection of diverse readings has been gathered over the decades. This monograph aims at casting a birds'-eye view upon some of the most remarkable trends among such studies, showing their relevance at the time they were written, as well as pointing some aspects in which previous views differ from the way the books may be read in our present time. The work is structured into two sections. The first presents a survey of some classical interpretations of the Alice Books, and the second proposes a reading of the books as metaphor for the liquid modernity we currently live in. The theoretical basis for the second section comes from Zygmunt Bauman's work *Liquid Modernity*, which helps me compare values and concepts that are considered typical of our epoch with elements presented in Carroll's books. I expect this monograph can provide some further answers as to why the Alice Books continue intriguing critics and reader even after 140 years of their publication.

Key-Words: 1 Lewis Carroll; 2 *The Alice Books*; 3 *Liquid Modernity*; 4 Literary Criticism.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	09
1 READING ALICE OVER THE YEARS.....	12
2 ALICE MEETS THE 21st CENTURY.....	23
CONCLUSION.....	33
REFERENCES.....	36

INTRODUCTION

This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. 'I — I hardly know, sir, just at present — at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.'

Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

There are pieces of art which fascinate people even before these people have a direct contact with them. The connection established can be so strong that people feel sympathy for some characters which they know from movie adaptations, for example, but ignore their literary origin. The journey of the girl who falls down a rabbit-hole, finding a world which follows an inverse logic is, for granted, an example of the power literature has to fascinate and take us by the hand to discover many different perspectives of seeing life as it can be seen. Having being the subject of hundreds of movie adaptations throughout the years, Alice is a protagonist well-known in many different cultures, from the Western Disney version, with the blond-haired and blue-eyed girl, to the Japanese versions of the story in an *anime* style. Therefore, it is now quite difficult for one to know first the book and then the many movie adaptations. As in my case, when the fascination for Alice and her adventures preceded the reading of the books. It is likely that my first contact was the Disney version of the story. This same circumstance can also be found in characters such as Peter Pan, Sleeping Beauty and Snow White. One of the reasons for that is the fact that they are stories considered to be proper for children, and we met them so early in life that it becomes really difficult to remember when. You could say that these characters are part of people's imaginary in a way so strong that becomes impossible to identify if they had been acquired or if they give shape to what was previously already there. The case is different with other stories we meet later and where the first stage of contact involves our rational response. Ask a person who is not really familiar with literature who Alice is and you will find that practically everyone knows

the general line of the plot of at least one of the Alice Books. Ask about a character such as Hamlet, and you might get a more confusing answer.

Considering what has been said so far, the fact is that Alice has been with me for a long time before university. But then I finally met the book in my academic studies, in the second semester of my course, when a literature professor asked us to form groups and choose a book which was not included in the program, but which we considered important to read. I suggested *Alice in Wonderland* because I thought that, although everybody knew the character, no one had read the book. The presentation of this seminar was the beginning of my questions in relation to the book in an academic level: Why a story which is so well-known is so little read? Why are there so few studies about the Alice Books in Brazil? Why am I so interested in this story that has a young girl as protagonist, if I am not a young girl anymore? Is it a story for children? Is it really all about the ways of female puberty? Which is the symbolism hidden in the story which fascinates people from different countries and ages? As a reader, I have always had an artistic interest for readings about madness, and also for stories presenting a child as protagonist. Both carry this element of creativity in relation to the way the characters face life. Characters associated with madness collide into society's patterns because of their uncommon perspectives and, as a consequence, lose their right to be part of the group, and become isolated or ignored. A child, on the other hand, also displays different perspectives in relation to life; but, in this case, this is understood as part of the process of socialization which is going to integrate this child into the adult world. In addition to dealing with these two spheres, madness and childhood, the Alice Books also present this dream-like atmosphere which is a rare possibility for the ones who are not mad yet, and who are not children any more to face the world from a different and peculiar perspective. Many books have been about the adventures of a child in a different world. However, this specific piece of art, produced by Lewis Carroll two centuries ago, continues to grant people of various ages a possibility to hold a different logic to approach things, or rather, the same logic in an inverse and creative way.

This monograph presents my journey as a grown-up person into Alice's Wonderland. There are different responses to this piece of fiction from the point where I am now, and some of them will be contemplated in this study. The first section focuses on the various readings the story has received through time, as an overview of the reception of the book at different periods. Starting with the impact among Victorian contemporaries, and then passing to the reading of the story as belonging to the realm of children literature; showing how differently Alice can be presented in various readings, and the consequences to the ideas we form about

the character. The second section concentrates on the contemporary connections we can make as 21st Century readers. My approach to the symbolism in the books relate to our perceptions as inhabitants of the (mad) world we live in. To deal with this section of the work, I choose to use Zygmunt Bauman's considerations about the liquid times we all live in nowadays. The final conclusion of my Alice trip reaches for what is timeless in the story and respects our attachment to wonderland.

For purposes of this monograph, the use of the term 'Alice Books' refer to the set of two books which brings Alice as protagonist: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871).

1 READING ALICE OVER THE YEARS

It is likely that Alice Liddell had no idea what the consequences of asking Charles Lutwidge Dodgson to tell her and her sister a story would be. As we know, in that golden afternoon, in 1862, one of the best-known stories of all times was created, which continues to fascinate both children and adults. As Cohen says, “Next to the Bible and Shakespeare, they [the Alice Books] are the books most widely and most frequently translated and quoted.” (COHEN, p.134) A hint that people continue interested about Alice’s adventures is that they ask and comment things and even feel happy when you tell them you are studying this story. The same may not happen with other literary master pieces which are more distant from the heart of the common reader.

This positive reaction people show when talking about The Alice Books today is not fully diverse from the feedback people gave in 1865 — when the first book was released. Many reviews appeared at the time, “bringing almost unconditional praise.”(COHEN, p. 131) Even Carroll’s friends sent him letters telling about the impact the book had in their lives. Henry Kingsley wrote,

Many thanks for your charming little book...I received it in bed in the morning, and in spite of threats and persuasions, in bed I stayed until I had read every word of it. I could pay you no higher compliment...than confessing that I could not stop reading...till I had finished it. The fancy of the whole thing is delicious...Your versifications a gift, I envy you very much. (COHEN, 1995, p. 130)¹

In 1872, when *Through the Looking-Glass* was released, Carroll’s image as a writer of nonsense was definitely consolidated. Having the two books being widely read, the critics started trying to explain them, although Carroll had said that the “why” of these books could not be put into words (COHEN, 135). Cohen points the question which could motivate the critics in order to pay attention to Carroll’s production,

¹ The letter, without date, written by Kingsley is in the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

What are they all about, they ask, and why so universally successful? What is the key to their enchantment, why are they so entertaining and yet so enigmatic? What charm enables them to transcend language as well as national and temporal differences and win their way into the hearts of young and old everywhere and always? (COHEN, 1995, p.135)

The answers to such questions have been pursued by many critics along all these years. Despite the fact that a part of these studies can be considered absurd by now, they are important to understand the way The Alice Books are taken by us today. It is pertinent to stress that the reviews of the books are inescapably connected with the views and beliefs held at the time when they were written. With Reception Theory, I believe the reader has the power to concretize the literary works, making implicit connections, filling gaps, drawing inferences which are going to be responsible for simple letters being together as a piece of art. (EAGLETON, 1983, p.76) Clearly, the way in which the reader is going to use to complete the texts depends a lot on the time he/she faces. Cohen's questions help us to concentrate on the fact that although the question about the books can be the same, the way people think about the answers, and even the connection between them, will be totally different. Italo Calvino (1993) says that a classic book can be defined as the one which never stops conveying what it has to say. This means, in Carroll's case, that the books never ceased to communicate with their audiences, even if they say different things for different people in different historical times. That is how the examination of different moments in the development of Carroll's critical fortune proves so rewarding. In order to find out how our present reading of the Alice Books was formed, let us follow the White Rabbit down the hole too and plunge into the different nonsense world of Wonderland.

As previously mentioned, from the moment the first Alice Book was published, people showed great interest in the story. Critics realized that that book was different from other stories. The fact that this innovation attracted people of all ages is remarkable. However, Victorian criticism is markedly impressionistic; actually it could not be shaped in any other way, because in those times literary criticism did not exist as a scientific practice with a set of regulations. As a consequence, many reviewers considered the Alice Books merely as nonsense and pun exercises intended for the amusement of children, and therefore unworthy of serious analysis. Thus, comments about the singularity of this story appear soon after its release, showing the impact of the book in the commentator's point of view,

It is not with no mere book that we have to deal here ...It would be difficult to over-estimate the value of the store of hearty and healthy fun laid up for whole generations of young people by Mr. Lewis Carroll and Mr. John Tenniel in the two books. (COHEN, 1995, p.133)²

It is not difficult to understand why people were so fascinated about the books. Before Carroll, literature read for children had a very strong moralizing character. A story would be considered good if it taught what was right or wrong, considering what society would expect from people. And this was the case of books intended not just for children. Let us remember that the invention of childhood is a consequence of modern time and that as well as children used to work as adults in Victorian and older time, they were both submitted in general to the same readings. (KEHL, 2006) In this sense, books were strong instruments to shape civilized behaviour. Of course, this does not mean that all characters in a story would obey the law, but that the ones who did not would suffer terrible consequences. One example is the fairy tale “The Red Shoes”, by Hans Christian Andersen, published in April 7th, 1845 (twenty years before *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*.) In this narrative, a vain girl always goes to the church wearing a pair of red shoes, without worrying about the service. When her adoptive mother becomes sick, she prefers to go to a party than taking care of her. After meeting a soldier in there, she loses control of her shoes which are stuck to her feet and start to dance all the time. Then, an angel appears and condemns her to dance even after her death. She ends up asking an executioner to chop off her feet. We have here an example of a story which is meant to teach children about the importance of doing the right thing, and the consequences of not doing it. A story as this reminds us of how distant we are from some concepts which would be part of their society and, also, related to the purposes of literature. In view of that, Andersen’s tale could be considered a moralizing force at that time. Considering our 21st pattern, this tale could be considered cruel, traumatic and inadequate for children. Even adults could feel shocked with the solution found to solve the problem.

When Lewis Carroll publishes his books for children, he happens to disregard the current moralizing tradition that can be traced back to the 6th Century B.C, the time of Aesop’s fables, for one thing. A lot of Carroll’s success in writing for children could be exactly due to the possibility of making children live adventures in a different world, without pretending to be the totally virtuous, and not attaching a moral ending to punish the main character’s

² This comment appeared in the newspaper *The Athenaeum* on December 16th, 1871. The second book had been released just some weeks before.

inadequate behaviour. What is more, in *Alice in Wonderland*, Carroll creates a character which plays with the established concept of finding a moral in everything. Observe how Alice interacts with the Duchess, who is always trying to find the moral of everything,

She had quite forgotten the Duchess by this time, and was a little startled when she heard her voice close to her ear. 'You're thinking about something, my dear, and that makes you forget to talk. I can't tell you just now what the moral of that is, but I shall remember it in a bit.'

'Perhaps it hasn't one,' Alice ventured to remark.

'Tut, tut, child!' said the Duchess. 'Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it.' And she squeezed herself up closer to Alice's side as she spoke. (CARROLL, 1987, p.120)

Alice's comment in this passage shows exactly the effect of Carroll's book, pointing that literature can provide many more effects than simply working as a guideline to the consequences of not following the rules. Reading in order to find just the moral of everything is equal to living just acting and thinking the way you are expected to, without any possibility of creativity or of using your imagination. Carroll is a master in this sense, showing that a great book is worth reading more than once because it will have much more to give us rather than a sound moral basis to be followed.

Although this fact gives us one of the possible reasons for the success of *Alice in Wonderland* among 19th century children, it does not enlighten us as to why the book remains so popular with 21st century children. During Lewis Carroll's time, children were raised under very repressive circumstances, and had to find creative ways to use and develop their imagination. Besides, if we compare Alice's story to Charles Perrault's version for *Little Red Riding Hood*³, which was the popular version at the time, we see that for those little ones, who used to see tragic ends everywhere, Alice's adventures end very well because she comes back to the security of her warm normal reality after everything is done. Our young people nowadays, however, are not familiar with these kinds of narrative in which a person will suffer the worst consequences due to his or her actions. On the contrary, there is a common practice of protecting children from topics which are not considered appropriate for them, such as violence, death, madness, smoking, suffering, and so on. Needless to say, a common 21st century child would be horrified with seeing the protagonist of a story having her feet

³ Differently from the version children are familiar with today, in Perrault's version, which appeared in the 17th century, there is not a happy ending, and both the grandmother and the granddaughter are eaten by the wolf.

chopped off or even dying. For children of our time, even Carroll's books can cause some nightmares, due to the fact that Alice's trajectory has more disturbing situations than comforting ones.

Here I present three imagetic instances of such cases. According to Durand, every thought we have, rational or intuitive, has its origin in images which bring symbolic elements. Thus, the imaginary is understood as the center of human abilities in order to transcend. These images are not passive, as it was thought, but active and dynamic. Therefore, they move beyond what is said and that is why their analysis is essential to understand the way the narratives are presented. (DURAND, 1997) With regard to the Alice Books, the first one I am going to discuss relates to the image of the fall. Alice's fall brings us the claustrophobic experience of being arrested in a hole, and the frenzied effort to escape, without knowing whether we will manage to at the end or not. The effect of the falling sensation is usually presented in a not positive way. The first fall we passed through is our birth which makes us lose the coziness of our mother's womb. Jung (1964, p.50) tells us that people who have too high opinion about themselves, or who make plans out of proportion, often have dreams about falling. He explains us that,

The dream compensates for the deficiencies of their personalities, and at the same time it warns them of the danger in their present course. If the warnings of the dream are disregarded, real accidents may take their place. The victim may fall downstairs or may have a motor accident. (JUNG, 1964, p.50)

Therefore, the falling appears as an unwanted element even in dreams. When we fall, we feel we are inferior in relation to others, and this is the lesson the unconscious try to teach the ones who have difficult in realizing that. Alice brings elements of both: those who consider themselves superior and from the ones who consider themselves inferior. The first one is exemplified for the scene in which Alice says she cannot be Mabel because she knows "all kinds of things, and she, oh, she knows such very little!" (CARROLL, 1987, p.37). The opposite is shown when the White Rabbit talks to Alice like she was his maid, being rude and impolite. Alice is so afraid that she just follows his orders, " 'Run home this moment, and fetch me a pair of gloves and a fan! Quick, now!' And Alice was so much frightened that she ran off at once in the direction it pointed to, without trying to explain the mistake that it had made." (CARROLL, 1987, p.56)

The second distressing notion regards Loneliness. Considering the two books, the only reference we find for Alice's family is her sister. And this sister does not represent a big support to Alice's personality as they do not seem to be very attuned with each other's worries or preferences. The first chapter of *Alice in Wonderland* shows that our protagonist is absolutely not interested in her sister's reading, or activities. During her journey, Alice does not mention her family. The closer references we have for family and love are the ones about her cat, Dinah. If we consider other lost children's stories, we can see that their homes are seen as cozy places in which there is a loving family waiting for them. The picture from home is so well established that it fills us readers with hope of seeing the child back. In Alice's situation, without this strong reference, we are not sure she would feel more comfortable at home, even if she is not able to establish any close relationship in Wonderland, either. Loneliness is a characteristic of this protagonist, independently from where she is placed.⁴

The third element to be discussed is Cruelty, a characteristic not exclusive from the people in Wonderland. Alice has it in her when she mentions animals which like eating mice when talking exactly to a mouse. Still, when she kicks Bill out of the chimney, hurting the animal, she does not feel any regret. In Wonderland, we have the cruelty of the Queen of Hearts, with her famous command "Off with the head!". The Duchess is also worth remembering, with her baby pig. She does not make many efforts to make it stop crying, and eventually throws it away. Animal cruelty also appears during the croquet game with the Queen, in which headlong flamingoes are forced to beat hedgehogs in order to entertain the monarch.

These images evoke factors which are not expected to be found in books intended for children, as we conceive them nowadays. *Alice in Wonderland* does not fit in our concepts about Literature for Children because it explores experiences which go very deep into psychological and emotional processes related to human development. This does not mean that Victorian children would not recognize these aspects, only that they would be more used to finding them in Literature, in even higher doses than the ones produced by Carroll. Alice's misfortunes were light in comparison to others they had grown accustomed to.

The discussion of the first moment related to the reception of the Alice Books then stresses three major points. The first is that, for them, Carroll's work represents something new, in the sense that they were totally different from the traditional stories for children of

⁴ There is a 1985 movie version of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* which gives the character a family waiting for her. In this version, Alice is much sweeter than we find her to be when reading the books.

that time. The second is that, although much pleased with the novelty, critics did not take Carroll very seriously as an author. Maybe the fact that he has so many other sources of interest may also account for that. Besides writing, under the pen-name of Lewis Carroll, Dodgson was also a university professor, a mathematician, an Anglican reverend and a photographer. And the third point stressed lies in the fact that the perception of the 19th and 21st century readers, regardless of their being children or adults, is different in many respects.

The next stage to be highlighted in Carroll's critical fortune begins some time after Carroll's death, in 1898, when Sigmund Freud's theories started to attract people's attention and interest, after the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in 1899. Freud's ideas opened the scenery to a new field of studies, Psychoanalysis, which spread into other territories, reaching Literary Studies in the form of psychoanalytical approaches to Literature. Not only the work has been dissected in all possible forms (especially during the second half of the 20th Century), but also all sorts of connections were established connecting what happens within that fictional universe with aspects of the life of its author (WOOLF, 2010).

The personality of Dodgson/Carroll has aspects of mystery in it. Raised in that repressive and moralistic environment, he was the only boy in a family with eight sisters. He had many young girls as friends, instead of male companions. As a grown-up, we would often mention his interest in children; he would stammer; he would take pictures of young girls posing as adults. If we consider his books, the strongest characters are always women, in contrast with silly feeble male figures. If subjected to Freudian interpretations, the sexual imagery presented evokes the presence of elements such as keys, holes, doors, looks, changes in size. After the 1960's, with an increasing interest in preventing and discussing issues as sexual or moral harassment, the image of the lovely Victorian reverend turned into the image of a demented lascivious pedophile to many. For a while, some interpretations seemed more interested in speculating about the nature of the author's involvement with children than in analyzing the stories. Jenny Woolf brings one example of these analyses,

According to Goldschmidt's posthumous psychoanalysis, falling down the rabbit hole was not a literary device to get the fictional Alice into another world, but was a symbol of the sexually-frustrated Carroll wishing to have sex with the real Alice. The door with the golden key was no longer a simple means of getting her into the garden, but a symbol of coitus. It was obvious to Goldschmidt (although not necessarily to anyone else) that Alice's growing and shrinking meant that she represented a tumescent and detumescent penis. (WOOLF, 2009, p.142)

Clearly, this view could be criticized by both Carroll's and Freud's studies nowadays. Examining a book with the purpose of showing that the author might have been consciously or unconsciously perverted today would affront all the years of literary studies evolution. Even so, it is a fact that this kind of view contributed a lot to the myth of Carroll as an abnormal man. The Alice Books' imagery is very heavy, and loaded with sexual references. But then, what Victorian novel is not, from *Wuthering Heights* to *The Strange Case of Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde*? Carroll's affection for girls was scrutinized in all possible ways, each page of his diaries perused and even the pages torn out contributed to feed the mystery. Woolf calls this a 'snowball effect', "in which an idea – in this case, Carroll as perverted – gains a moment of its own and begins to seem self-evidently true". (WOOLF, 2009, p.143) Even in our days we find people who have never had the experience of reading Carroll, but they are ready to support such conceptions because they became part of Lewis Carroll's myth. One nasty by-product of the psychoanalytical era, unfortunately, is that we developed a bad habit of criticizing people or attitudes we do not like by diagnosing them in Freudian terms. In the case of Lewis, the interest lies in finding out what was on his mind while he was writing (a riddle which could only be solved in a Spiritualist scéance.) A common belief for 21st century people is that he might have been under the effect of drugs when he created the story. It seems as if some critics would be deeply disappointed with the possibility of the stories having been written by a person who was socially adjusted to his stern repressive time and who simply meant to tell some children a story, one afternoon, on a boat on the River Thames.

Goldschmidt either did not know, or else simply disregarded, the fact that Carroll's impromptu stories usually wove in themes or incidents that were particularly relevant to his audience at the time. Perhaps Alice had joked that she might like to scramble down a rabbit hole that day. Perhaps she had tripped in a rabbit hole and fallen over. Nobody knows, and still nobody knows which of the ideas in his story arose from Carroll's own mind, and which arose from casual remarks from those around him, or incidents which had befallen them that day. (WOOLF, 2010, p.142-143)

After this period in which the author's life interfered so much with the reading of the story, there came a moment in which new possibilities started to be considered. One of them is the possibility that Alice's journey through Wonderland and through the Looking-Glass can

be read as a metaphor for the puberty process. This vision first appears in James R. Kincaid's essay *Alice's Invasion of Wonderland* (1973), which understands the main character's growing up and shrinking process as a child's attempt to get familiar with a world different from the childhood one. This reading points out that, during her passing through Wonderland, we can see that Alice matures because, at the end of her story, she is much more confident as she starts to confront the characters. This could be taken as a symbol for the achievement of a contact with the adulthood world. Kincaid's (1973) interpretation proposes that,

The first point to make in relation to this complexity is that Alice is, as we have said, both child and adult - and a person in transition. She is not only the steady innocent but the adolescent continually asking, 'Who in the world am I?' and the corrupt adult as well. She wants desperately to grow up - and in one dark sense she already has. Even when she appears most childlike, she is attacked for the betrayal to come. (KINCAID, 1973, p. 93)

On the one hand, Kincaid defends that Alice is a complex character, who cannot be identified with just one human phase. On the other, he brings this idea that she wants to grow up. Two words in the quotation above are very strong: "desperately", and "corrupt". They seem to point back to the medieval concept that associates childhood with "innocence" and adulthood with "corruption." I wonder if these associations are still valid today. However, according to Kincaid, Alice is earnestly anxious to achieve her goals which are related to the elements she finds in Wonderland and through the Looking-Glass. For instance, when she sees the White Rabbit, her aim is to follow him and not seeing her sister reading that dull book. After falling down the Rabbit Hole, she reaches a beautiful garden. Arriving there, she seems to settle her new goal, which is the purpose she will keep during all her journey in Wonderland. In the Looking-Glass, she has the objective of becoming a queen, from the beginning of her contact with the chess pieces. Thus, we cannot say that *growing-up* is Alice's goal, since she refers to the necessity of growing or shrinking, according to her needs, as essential moves, so that she may reach her goal. That is to say, if she has to grow up to achieve something, she will do that; but, conversely, if she has to shrink, she will do that, too. Alice never thinks about consequences, unless thinking about them may help her to get what she aims at. The passage below reveals both the fact that Alice is in transition, and that she can see positive and negative points in growing up, indicating that she is not so keen on getting older as Kincaid proposes.

‘But then,’ thought Alice, ‘shall I never get any older than I am now? That’ll be a comfort, one way — never to be an old woman — but then — always to have lessons to learn! Oh, I shouldn’t like that!’
 ‘Oh, you foolish Alice!’ she answered herself. ‘How can you learn lessons in here? Why, there’s hardly room for you, and no room at all for any lesson-books!’ (CARROLL, 1987, p.59)

Afterwards, Kincaid will add that it is possible to find a final change in the way Alice is connected to Wonderland. In his point of view, there has been a process in which the result approached her to an adult perspective.

By the end of *Alice in Wonderland*, though, most of this ambivalence disappears and Alice establishes herself clearly as an adult, ironically pretty much at home at the grotesque trial and "quite pleased to find that she knew the name of nearly everything [in the courtroom] (KINCAID, 1973, p. 94)

It strikes me that every time we acquire a different kind of experience, we learn from it. We could say that continuing to learn is the main purpose of continuing to live. This is part of the constant process of being a human being. Even so, it does not mean that we became adults. A child is, most of the times, even more open to learning than an adult, because it is intrigued to understand the way the world around her/him is organized. In the previous quote by Carroll, we find an association between having lessons to do and being a child. At that moment, Alice says to herself that there is no way to learn any lessons in there. However, this is not what we see. Her experience in there shows exactly the opposite. Differently from her school lessons, which she cannot even remember, what she learns in Wonderland is going to make a difference in her. Alice’s lesson for us is exactly that we always have more to learn. If you have learned a lot, this does not mean that you have no more to learn, or that you have already become an adult. She gets more confident at the end of the trip to Wonderland, but we know that there is still more to learn through the Looking-Glass.

Alice is constantly trying to understand this new world. Still, at the end of the story she does not grasp very well the way things are organized in there. This could be considered evidence that she is not an adult yet. At the same time, we cannot say, either, that being an adult guarantees we understand the rules of the game. Alice has a hard time trying to associate the system she finds there with the one she knows from home, and this effort does not happen only because she is a child.

Alice cannot understand this world, however, and ironically complains that the creatures are too easily offended. They instinctively recognize Alice as an enemy and ridicule her most elementary concerns. (KINCAID, 1973, p. 97)

This confusing world is not exclusive of Wonderland. We have many things in our world which are hard even for adults to understand. In this sense, Wonderland and the Looking-Glass are not really different from the complicated systems we find in our lives. The question is ‘how would a child, or an adult, live in a no-rule universe?’ At the beginning, it might be funny, but, in the course of time, one would probably suffer with the lack of parameter for any action. Still, we must also recognize that it is not a universe without logic, it is a universe with a different logic from ours. Needless to say, a child (or an adult) would feel unhappy in playing a game in which there is always the same person who wins — the Queen — which is exactly the rule there.

There are, of course, several other possible approaches besides the ones mentioned here. This selection was based on the idea of bringing into discussion the studies which have somehow contributed to form the current ideas we have about the books and about the author, as they present themselves to our current day’s imaginary. In a way or another, they are all relevant to the progress of Carroll’s studies so far. In the next section we will concentrate on some present-day readings, trying to connect Carroll’s masterpieces to the reality of readers from the 21st century.

2 ALICE MEETS THE 21st CENTURY

The previous section deals on some among the many possibilities were found to read the Alice Books. These different readings are, among other things, the result of the pursuit to find how much a book reveals about the time in which it was conceived and the views the author, the critics and the readers of that time share. In this perspective, books that have been written long ago can still be interesting because they propose questions which fit to us in a way that is timeless, as if they were written by our contemporaries. This does not mean that those authors were futuristic, but it means that their books are open to new readings which can contemplate elements which we considered of our own time. The considerations presented in this section are based on a reading which focuses on the connections between Alice's journey and the world in which we live today. It is based on the fact that if so many different versions of the Alice Books can be found today, and sell so well, and if the stories are being translated into many varied media, this means that the books have something to say to people who inhabit the world as it is organized today. Here I will address the discussion of the Alice Books through the metaphors proposed by Zygmunt Bauman in the work *Liquid Modernity*. Bauman considers the social changes which took place in the last decades in an analogy to the chemistry of the melting and liquidification of previously solid elements, as referring to the weight of the traditional institutions and the faith in them. Since the individual does not have the old solid faith in institutions to regulate their lives anymore, they must be adaptable and flexible to fit the world's new features, which is as changeable and fast as the speed and the malleability of liquids. The first aspect of the Alice Books which comes to my mind as related to this metaphor of liquid modernity relates to the fall we have when our protagonist starts her journey, in both books. In Wonderland, her fall allows her to be in contact with all elements she can see during it. It seems as if Alice has become liquid and flows through everything with a speed and coverage totally different from the ones a solid would have. When describing how different solids are from liquids, Bauman says,

In a sense, solids cancel time; for liquids, on the contrary, it is mostly time that matters. When describing solids, one may ignore time altogether; in describing fluids, to leave time out of account would be a grievous mistake. Descriptions of fluids are all snapshots, and they need a date at the bottom of the picture. (BAUMAN, p.2)

Regarding Carroll's procedure to define Alice's fall, we can see that the way time is perceived by the protagonist is emphasized, and a key element for the experience of that process. Alice is more like a liquid for which time is essential in order to define who and how she is.

Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly, for she had plenty of time as she went down to look about her, and to wonder what was going to happen next. (CARROLL, 1987, p.26)

Another characteristic which connects the girl to liquid elements is the mobility which allows them to "emerge unscathed" from the meeting with solids, "while the solids they have met, if they stay solid, are changed – get moist or drenched." (BAUMAN, p.2) Below, we have a description of Alice after touching the ground where we can check she continues exactly the same physically.

[...] down she came upon a heap of sticks and dry leaves, and the fall was over. Alice was not a bit hurt, and she jumped on to her feet in a moment [...] (CARROLL, 1987, p.29)

In *Through the Looking-Glass*, we have an even clearer connection between Alice's entrance in that reality and the metaphor of liquid modernity: Alice can cross a mirror, which is a solid reference, and is now presented clearly as a solid which melts before her eyes.

And certainly the glass was beginning to melt away, just like a bright silvery mist. In another moment Alice was through the glass, and had jumped lightly down into the Looking-glass room. (CARROLL, 1987, p.184)

In this contrasting dreamlike atmosphere, references to time also appear when Alice realizes how different the clock is when looking from that new perspective. Time here presents a more dynamic attitude, represented by the old man who can grin at her. This new concept of time required in *Liquid Modernity* is totally diverse from the static one we can find

in Alice's house (where the passage to the Looking-glass room is) and also from the one required in the old Victorian times of *Solid Modernity*.

[...] but all the rest was as different as possible. For instance, the pictures on the wall next to the fire seemed to be all alive, and the very clock on the chimney-piece (you know you can only see the back of it in the Looking-glass) had got the face of a little old man, and grinned at her. (CARROLL, 1987, p.186)

Another strong relation between the protagonist and the time is expressed by the impossibility of defining who she is at the moment she is asked, which appears clearer in the dialogue with the caterpillar first,

'Who are you?' said the Caterpillar. This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, 'I - hardly know, Sir, just at present - at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.' (CARROLL, 1987, p.67)

And second, when talking to the Pigeon,

'Well! What are you?' said the Pigeon. 'I can see you're trying to invent something!' 'I -I'm a little girl,' said Alice, rather doubtfully, as she had gone through, that day. (CARROLL, 1987, p.76)

It is easy to identify with this impossibility of defining who we are. When we are asked questions as the ones Alice has been submitted to, the answer does not come easily, and it is common that we refer to what we do instead of who we are. Like Alice, in our era we cannot feel properly defined unless we explain what we do at present and take into account the essentiality of time because, as liquids, we are always changing. And the evidence that we are somewhat aware about this process is exactly this difficulty in answering common questions such as *who we are*.

What all these features of fluids amount to, in simple language, is that liquids, unlike solids, cannot easily hold their shape. Fluids, so to speak, neither fix space nor bind time. While solids have clear spatial dimensions but neutralize the impact, and thus downgrade the significance, of time (effectively resist its flow or render it irrelevant),

fluids do not keep to any shape for long and are constantly ready (and prone) to change it; and so for them it is the flow of time that counts, more than the space they happen to occupy: that space, after all, they fill but 'for a moment'. In a sense, solids cancel time; for liquids, on the contrary, it is mostly time that matters. (BAUMAN, p.2)

After dealing on such analogies between the beginning of Alice's adventures and Bauman's liquid metaphor, I would like to mention the first characteristic in Alice which I realized could be seen as a perfect mirror for our society: Loneliness. During her journey through Wonderland and Looking-Glass, we can easily realize that Alice does not develop any solid relationship with any other character. She is passing through there as a liquid which will possibly not leave any mark on the ground after a while. Alice meets many characters, but none of them will make her feel as comfortable as she could be if she finds a place which could be as agreeable as a house can be. She feels the loneliness of being in a place which brings discomfort to her all the time, many times due to the indifference of most characters to her. Let us take a dialogue between Alice and the March Hare as example.

'Have some wine,' the March Hare said in an encouraging tone. Alice looked all round the table, but there was nothing on it but tea. 'I don't see any wine,' she remarked.
 'There isn't any,' said the March Hare.
 'Then it wasn't very civil of you to offer it,' said Alice angrily.
 'It wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited,' said the March Hare. (CARROLL, 1987, p.94)

For Alice, it is really easy to get in touch with many characters through her path. In the same way, in our 21st century, it is very easy to get in contact with many people, as Alice does, but it is getting harder and harder to establish a true and consistent relationship with classmates, colleagues and people we find on the way. Even the technological resources and facilities for us to contact many people, such as social networks, sometimes seem to make more difficult for us to talk to the bone and flesh creatures who inhabit our own homes. In liquid times, relationships are becoming faster and more superficial. As Bauman puts it "there is no prospect of re-embeddedness at the end of the road taken by (now chronically) disembedded individuals." (p.34) In the first section, we mentioned the absence of references to her house and family, except for her indifferent sister, which emphasizes Alice's solitude. We cannot affirm there is really a place where she could feel less alone and more comfortable.

We wonder if even in relation to her family she could be considered a disembedded individual. Personally, I believe there is an increasing feeling of non-belonging within 21st century family members, which I relate to Alice and her ignored and invisible family. And I can feel that in our contemporary world as well, where the over-valuation of objects such as computers and televisions, or cellphones, disqualify the significance of older concepts connected with family and tradition. Today it is getting more and more uncommon to find a family where people meet and talk without having a computer or a television or the internet turned on around them. In relation to Alice, we see that the references to her cat appear to be more intense than the references to her family, even if we consider we are dealing with a 19th century girl. In the quotation below we see how attached the girl is to her cat, and, as a contrast, how distant she seems to be from her family. They are referred to as ‘they’ and the cat is referred to as “you”, as she refers to something they cannot forget to do for her cat.

‘Dinah’ll miss me very much tonight, I should think!’ [Dinah is the cat.] ‘I hope they’ll remember her saucer of milk at tea-time. Dinah, my dear! I wish you were down here with me!’ (CARROLL, 1987, p.28)

Due to the fact that Alice is disregarded by the characters in general, and seems to have the same attitude towards them, we start to ask ourselves why the girl does not just try to return home. But, as I said, we cannot affirm she could find a really more positive atmosphere in there. Moreover, Alice always has an objective in mind when walking through different places. In Wonderland, she wants to find the beautiful garden, and inside the Looking-Glass she wants to become a queen. Her certainty about her objectives makes her feel busy and confident about the necessity of continuing in that place, dealing with the most unthinkable situations. When stuck inside the White Rabbit’s house, because she is bigger than the doors and windows, Alice thinks of home,

‘It was much pleasanter at home,’ thought poor Alice, ‘When one wasn’t always growing larger and smaller, and being ordered about by mice and rabbit. I almost wish I hadn’t gone down that rabbit-hole – and yet – and yet – it’s rather curious, you know, this sort of life!’ (CARROLL, 1987, p.58)

We feel that Alice almost desires to return to her house, but she is curious about the new place, and knows there is something else she has not achieved yet in there. However, when she achieves these goals, they do not bring her the satisfaction we would expect. It is as if obtaining what she wants is just the starting pointing for wanting something else. To my way of thinking, this belief in her goal also relates to a feature from our form of modernity, which makes things always new and different. To Bauman,

[there is a] gradual collapse and swift decline of early modern illusion: of the belief that there is an end to the road along which we proceed, an attainable telos of historical change, a state of perfection to be reached tomorrow, next year or next millennium, some sort of good society, just society and conflict-free society in all or some of its many postulated aspects. (BAUMAN, p.29)

It is really difficult for us to establish where our steps are going to lead us. More than that, it is difficult to know if they are going to lead us anywhere. We do not have any guarantee that if we study making all efforts, for example, we will succeed in life. We know that the inverse logic, of not studying, can be – and many times it is – true. Surely it does not mean that we do not establish goals for our life, but it is common to see that what we get is different from what we anticipate, or it is very close to that, but it does not mean so much for us as imagined. About Alice, it seems we, as readers, get more excited than her when she finally finds the beautiful garden. It is as if we put our expectations too to that moment, but we finish not knowing how important that element really was for her. Differently from other passages of the book, in which we have access to Alice's reactions, thoughts and feelings, here we just can see a simple description of Alice's entrance in the garden.

Then she set to work nibbling at the mushroom (she had kept a piece of it in her pocket) till she was about a foot high: then she walked down the little passage: and then – she found herself at last in the beautiful garden, among the bright flower-beds and the cool fountains. (CARROLL, 1987, p.104)

Personally I believe that the feeling we have while reading this passage is very similar to the ones we have in real life when we achieve some goals. It is common that we expect so much of certain plans, that when we achieve the results we feel somehow frustrated because things are not exactly what we thought they would be. It is as if we live our lives in pursuit of something which would complete ourselves, and this does not occur. As for Alice, we expect

her to give us many more details about that meaningful moment than she does, she simply does not share them with the reader, or they do not mean so much to her as we feel they would mean to us. It seems as if we cannot appreciate the beauty of the garden because, when Alice arrives there, it is not as important to her as it once was. The garden is not what she really wants anymore. And we cannot get really upset about this frustration because we know we are very much like her in this sense.

Another element which renews the sensation of frustration is the presence of too many possibilities. We suffer with this in both worlds, the fictional and non-fictional ones. Things seem to lose their value because of this feeling that if we do not achieve our goals that really does not matter because there are so many other roads to follow. Bauman says,

In such a world, little is predetermined, even less irrevocable. Few defeats are final, few if any mishaps irreversible; yet no victory is ultimate either. For the possibilities to remain infinite, none may be allowed to petrify into everlasting reality. They had better stay liquid and fluid and have a 'use-by' date attached, lest they render the remaining opportunities off-limits and nip the future adventure in the bud. (BAUMAN, p.62)

It seems to me that we can choose the way we are going to face life: as an optimist or a pessimist. The first ones will feel less frustrated in our world because they will see that there are many other things we can experience in our lives beyond our first or major objectives. On the other hand, the pessimists tend to elude themselves as if they were in a solid modernity, in which not achieving something might destabilize the whole structure. This is the case when we see, for instance, young people not studying hard so as to become a competent professional afterwards, or people losing their jobs because they do not have the ability to perform their duties well; or a surgeon killing the patient because he does not know what to do to save him; or an engineering delivering a bridge which will fall within some years. Some instances of lack of stability seem to work better in fictional wonderful works as the Alice Books than in the row of actions and consequences that seem to rule the course of social and personal lives. As for Alice, she is predicting to find many out-of-way things in there because very quickly she creates the rule of a liquid modernity to herself, which brings her into many unbelievable kinds of adventure. Let us analyze the scene in which Alice finds a box with a small cake inside,

She ate a little bit, and said anxiously to herself ‘Which way? Which way?’ holding her hand on the top of her head to feel which way it was growing; and she was quite surprised to find that she remained the same size. To be sure, this is what generally happens when one eats cake; but Alice had got so much into the way of expecting nothing but out-of-the-way things to happen, that it seemed quite dull and stupid for life to go on in the common way. (CARROLL, 1987, p.33)

Eating or drinking in Wonderland and continuing the same size is as absurd as sleeping in the age of liquid modernity and waking up in the times of solid modernity again. The variety of options in our time reminds us of many characteristics presented by Carroll. We are also constantly in the process of learning to move in a place where the physical laws are unstable. We try to establish rules for what is going to happen next, but we know an unpredictable element is likely to come and interfere with things. And this forces us to agree with Bauman that everything is so fluid and so difficult to control. For Alice, her life in that new reality “becomes an infinite collection of possibilities” (BAUMAN, p.61); and so does ours. According to Taliaferro and Olson,

The mixture of insanity and nonsense that is witnessed by a sane and sensible protagonist causes the reader – like Alice – to develop more of a curiosity about what is coming rather than a drive to understand everything that is happening. Often the need to understand something acts as a prelude to controlling it. In the Alice stories, however, curiosity, rather than control, is the condition for appreciating the humor inherent in Carroll’s nonsense worlds. (TALIAFERRO & OLSON, 2010, p.191)

This technique of causing the same effect on both the main character and the reader can be pointed as one of the reasons why the readers are so attached to the books. It is impossible to stop reading them before we discover what the next adventure is or what Alice is going to do in order to solve her last misfortune, commonly related to not having the appropriate size to fulfill something.

Considering the fact that Alice’s capacity of changing size is recognized as a strong reference when talking about the book, I started considering the ways in which the concepts about size are presented nowadays. As previously pointed, Alice’s growth cannot be simply taken as only a reference to psychological or sexual maturation because Alice grows or shrinks according to her necessities. This is not a fixed solid process which cannot be reversed

depending on what she wants. And this idea of a non-permanent process approaches Alice to the metaphor of *liquid modernity* one more time.

The managerial equivalent of liposuction has become the paramount stratagem of managerial art: slimming, downsizing, phasing out, closing down or selling out some units because they are not effective enough and some others because it is cheaper to let them fight for survival on their own than to undertake the burdensome, time-taxing managerial supervision, are this new art's principal applications. (BAUMAN, p.122)

It is easier to realize how fast these conceptions change today when we think about computers and technological equipment which keep having their size reduced as an answer to the market demand. Computers, some decades ago, would demand huge buildings to exist. Now they can fit the palm of one's hand. Also, they have become important elements in the change of concepts connected to time and space. Virtual reality can do without them. We can reach any part of the world with Google Earth; we can visit any museum from our home, for free; we can buy practically anything from any shop in the world.

As a consequence, we start treating anything solid about us, including the people who live with us, or even our own physical body, as a distraction to the activity we are focused on at the moment. It is difficult to foresee what will come from that. Either we are making a terrible mistake, or we will eventually find a way of living without bodies.

Certainly fiction will deal with the outcome of our real life before anything concrete emerges, as has always been the case. Ezra Pound says that very clearly when he presents the artists as the "antennae of the race" (POUND, 1987, p. 81). And this is, in brief, what I have to say about Lewis Carroll as a writer. From the heart of Victorian solidity, Carroll has this tremendous insight about what will derive from that excessive clinging to rules and stern practices. Carroll foresees that (as always happens) the wheel will eventually come full circle and people will head towards a new system which is the precise reverse mirror-image of the former one. With exactly the same excesses and faults, but in the contrary / symmetrical way. Lewis Carroll is presenting us, in a fictional aesthetical construct, the preview of the world we live in, and which Bauman will describe in his theory. Carroll, as an artist, presents the image. Bauman, as a theorist, reads the symbol. And I, in my TCC, in the fashion of a critic, am supposed to establish the connection. But I believe Ezra Pound's words express my meaning in a more complete way:

A nation which neglects the perceptions of its artists declines. After a while it ceases to act, and merely survives. There is probably no use in telling this to people who can't see it without being told.

Artists and poets undoubtedly get excited and "over-excited" about things long before the general public.

Before deciding whether a man is a fool or a good artist, it would be well to ask, not only "is he excited unduly?", but: "does he see something we don't?" Is his curious behavior due to his feeling an oncoming earthquake, or smelling a forest fire which we do not yet feel or smell? (POUND, 1987, pp. 82-83)

CONCLUSION

*Sift your reasons well, and
make sure they prove your
conclusions.*

Lewis Carroll, *Symbolic Logic*

There is no doubt the Alice Books have still many things to tell us. That is to say we still feel these books are familiar to us as they continue intriguing and triggering our creativity into new possibilities of reading and adapting them. The little girl who cries when things do not go right is so connected to our times that the understanding of her journey is fluid and variable, as our own time is. The study presented here has exactly the purpose of showing how the study of these books has flowed along the years and how important it is to consider a possibility for our *Liquid Modernity* to open new ways in the interpretation of them as long as we interpret our own time with different eyes.

The first section of this monograph brought the classical main interpretations of the books, which continue always valid and make our interest about them continue always increasing. As it is easier for a critic study to become old-fashioned than a literary piece of art, we could see that they brought many contribution at the time they were produced, even influencing current studies, but they are not enough anymore to explain the reception the books have today, nor even the full length of the relations which are established with 21st century readers. When I took these studies in consideration, I could analyze their merits and limitation as related to the way the books are presented nowadays. I realized the books could have some purposes for the readers when they were written which do not apply these days. The books continue always the same, but we, readers, change our perspectives all the time. That is why it is impossible to consider that, from the 19th century to the 21st, readers will continue to read the books in the same way. Doing that would mean that certain books do not tell us anything anymore, because they are stuck in a context we no longer identify with.

The second section of this monograph brings the Alice Books in reference with the world we live now. The fact that Alice as a character continues famous among people from different ages and countries means that there is something in her which is very close to our way of perceiving the world. My answer here is that Alice lives adventures in her journey

really close to an adventure she could live in our time. The rules she finds there, which seem to be changing all the time, even before she manages to adapt, are not different from the systematics of a world in which we feel insecure all the time about when, how, and where things are going to change. When we see Alice down the rabbit hole, part of us is there with her, trying to achieve our goal in a world which seems not to have a clearly and trustful logic pattern. As Alice, we feel many times we are lost in a place where people do not have the attitudes we could expect from them. Therefore, we have to learn and evaluate in order to control these unexpected elements. At the same time, we know deeply that controlling liquids is impossible, because they change according to the container they are placed in. But the adventure continues anyway.

With reference to the questions I asked myself about when I started to work with the Alice Books, some of them were not clearly addressed in this monograph. A reason for that is that when we are really intrigued about a piece of art, we usually do not have just one question in mind, but we know that a serious research has to be well-defined and clear cut in its purposes, focusing on just what is relevant to the answer we are trying to find. However, when we are trying to focus on the main point, we do not forget the other also important questions which surround the main topic. Because of that, we mature our hypothesis about them even if they are not being focused. After writing this study, then, I would answer my first questions in a totally different way from the one I would use if I had not had this writing exercise. My first question was related to the reason why the books are so well liked and, at the same time, so little read. I would now say the second is possibly a consequence of the first, because as people feel they know the story and characters so well, the curiosity which could promote the reading leads few readers to the proper literary works. This hypothesis is also related to the second question which is about the few studies that can be found in Brazil. If few people read them, few people are going to study them, too. Another explanation I could think due to the development of this monograph is the prejudice the books can suffer because of their connection to Children Literature. We have seen here that many elements presented in the books really contrast with what is considered appropriate for a 21st century child. Moreover, this study shows that there are many possibilities in reading these books, which can explore inherent characteristics of a human being, regardless of age. With respect to the question I am more emotionally involved with, that is why this book is so important to me, I just have tentative answers. I would say I feel as these books change while I change. Obviously, a book does not change along the years, but I do believe the way they connect to us and the feelings they arouse in us can change each time we reread them. The Alice Books

are like that for me. They change each time I read them again and make me surprise with something I have not realized before, even knowing the summary of the story by heart. I have always asked myself what my answer for the common question in interviews about “what book we would take to a desert island” would be. As an addicted to reading, some time ago I would choose a very big book which I would take some time before finishing. Today I would surely take the Alice Books with me, which are the ones that make me feel different each time I read. They make me interested in starting a new adventure in them soon after finishing reading them again.

On the whole, I do not think I am alone in the journey to Alice’s adventures. All Alices in Wonderland are us, who have felt interested in these stories at least once in our lives. All Alices include those who know the main character and her story, but who have never had any contact with the books. All Alices are the ones who one day will discover how much they still had to know about Alice. All Alices are we who are in this crazy wonderful world trying to make sense of it, while it keeps changing and us too. As the White Rabbit shows, we are always late and Time is not going to wait for us. Modern time is not going to stop flowing. Let us join in Wonderland then. And continue living adventures through the power of Literature and of our Imagination.

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