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### Girls in Wonderland: The Male Gaze, Disordered Eating, and Bad Women in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Spirited Away

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**Girls in Wonderland: The Male Gaze, Disordered Eating, and Bad Women in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Spirited Away***

An honors thesis presented to the  
Department of English,  
University at Albany, State University of New York,  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for graduation with Honors in English  
and  
graduation from The Honors College

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## Abstract

This project aims to examine gender as perpetuated in the “Wonderland” trope, paying specific attention to Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and Hayao Miyazaki’s *Spirited Away*. At the surface level, these works seem like they don’t have much in common—they come from different cultures, different time periods, and different social contexts. However, to say that these stories are too dissimilar to compare is simply incorrect as both deal with the transitional periods of young girls who are approaching adolescence. Because both stories contain an alternate world in which the main little girl character wanders into and journeys through, they can both be considered under a shared “Wonderland” genre. In this genre, I have noticed three main characteristics that are also present in other stories that contain a “Wonderland”: these stories are written by men about young girls, they contain moments in which food has some magical property or incites transformation, and a woman character is often depicted as the antagonist. Although my analysis will largely draw from girls’ studies, which is a lens of feminism that focuses on girls (from childhood to teenage years) rather than women, I will also incorporate ideas of the male gaze when considering at the male authors and extend my feminist lens to adult women as I examine the antagonists. In applying these critical approaches to my primary texts, I intend to discuss the implications of having an alternate world facilitate the growth of these young girls and how their gender might affect this development.

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## Introduction

From J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, to J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, fantasy is a sprawling genre that has been around for a long time and enjoyed by many. While some fantasy stories, such as Tolkien's, are firmly set in another world, others, like Rowling's, are set in a secondary—practically adjacent—world to our reality. The secondary world phenomenon as an element within children's literature seems to stem from Lewis Carroll's 1865 novel, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (which I will refer to as *Alice* going forward). As the title of the novel suggests, the story details Alice's journey within Wonderland—a whole different world itself, with talking animals and cards and nonsensical rules, yet still adjacent, as it is just a rabbit hole away. Filled with curiosity, fantasy, and nonsense, this story was a breath of fresh air during a time when children's stories largely consisted of moralistic tales meant to teach them how to behave. This tale showed that children's literature could explore imagination and wonder, rather than remaining solely didactic. Without Carroll's novel, the fantasy stories enjoyed by adults and children alike today—such as the *Chronicles of Narnia* and, as mentioned earlier, *Harry Potter*—may not exist, or at least may not be quite the same.

As *Alice* marks the movement toward the more imaginative use of the secondary world archetype in children's literature, when referring to these adjacent realms in other texts, I will call them "Wonderlands" with quotation marks to avoid confusion. With this archetype, it is important to note that it has earlier roots in fairytales and folklore before its use in children's fantasy. Stories of an "otherworld" of sorts have been common in ancient myths, as they have often been included as a land of the dead—the Underworld. With folktales, this otherworld tends to take on the form of a fairyland or a similar kind of vague, magical location. In looking at films that feature a secondary world, such as Jim Henson's *Labyrinth* (1986) or Guillermo del Toro's

*Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), we can see how that medium also makes use of these older folktale elements regarding "Wonderlands," as labyrinths are widely seen in ancient myths and legends, such as the Greek myth about Theseus and the Minotaur.

Because this trope has been widely used throughout children's literature as well as film, it would be impossible to write a cohesive analysis of it while also including all the stories that feature it in-depth. My analysis will comprise Carroll's novel *Alice* due to its contribution toward popularizing this trope in modern times, and Hayao Miyazaki's 2001 film *Spirited Away*, which will serve as a present-day example of the perpetuation of the "Wonderland" archetype.

Although this film was originally released in Japan, it has received international acclaim, having won the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature at the 75<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards ceremony. *Spirited Away* is the first and only foreign and hand-drawn animated film to receive this award to date. In 2017, *The New York Times* also released a list called "The 25 Best Films of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century So Far," naming *Spirited Away* as the second movie on the list (Dargis). Since both of these stories are known on an international scale, they serve to show how this trope within fantasy has a global appeal.

At the surface level, *Alice* and *Spirited Away* may seem like they do not have much in common, seeing as they come from different cultures, time periods, and social contexts. However, to say that these stories are too dissimilar to compare is simply incorrect; both deal with the transitional periods of young girls who are approaching adolescence. In these narratives, a young girl wanders into a world vastly different from her own reality, experiences different mishaps in that world, and returns having come to terms with her oncoming transition from childhood to adulthood. In looking at *Alice* and *Spirited Away* together, I plan to examine how the "Wonderlands" present in these stories facilitate growth and change in these young girls,

which cannot be done through the experience of reality alone. I am also aware of the many adaptations of Carroll's story in the film medium that I could have possibly considered in making the comparison to Miyazaki's movie. However, because *Spirited Away* is the original and only version of its own story (since it was not released so long ago in comparison to Carroll's), I am comparing it to the original *Alice*, so that I am relating one original text to another.

Though most people are generally aware of what the Wonderland in *Alice* consists of, since the story has been in the public consciousness since 1865, not nearly as many may be aware of *Spirited Away*'s "Wonderland." The world that the main protagonist, a young girl named Chihiro, and her parents wander into is not given a name, though it can be surmised that it is a spirit realm of some sort. Unlike Alice's Wonderland, which is an illogical place filled with talking animals and sentient cards, the spirit realm in Miyazaki's film is a place for gods and *yōkai*—which are supernatural monsters, demons, and spirits in Japanese folklore. Rather than having Chihiro venture throughout this realm, her time is largely spent in a bathhouse for these *yōkai* as she works to undo the spell cast upon her parents by the witch that runs it. Even with different residents and locations, these "Wonderlands" still serve a comparable purpose thematically—they are where the story principally takes place and where the protagonist undergoes a significant portion of their journey and development.

In this trope, I also found that the stories which feature a young female protagonist exhibit several noticeable patterns, which are outlined in the chapters ahead. The first chapter looks at the male creators behind these works—Carroll and Miyazaki. Like with other stories that feature the Wonderland trope—*The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, *Coraline*, *Labyrinth*, and *Pan's Labyrinth*, just to name a few—*Alice* and *Spirited Away* are texts that center around

young female protagonists and are written by men. Because of this commonality, this chapter considers the contexts under which these men write their stories. Some questions that are addressed are these: Who do they write these stories for? What are the implications of their writing about young girls? Why set these journeys outside of the real world? In looking at these male creators together, I discuss Laura Mulvey's idea of the male gaze and examine how the creators direct it, along with how the young girl characters challenge that gaze in unforeseen ways. For Carroll, reviewing his real-life interactions with young girls is necessary, as the nature of his relationships have long been contemplated by scholars. Not only that, but this chapter also introduces the idea of a "feminized" childhood in the Victorian Era and how that may shed light on moments in *Alice*. With Miyazaki, his views on the attitudes of children (specifically his own colleague's daughter) are important to consider when looking at his intent with the film. This intent indicates how the male gaze is enacted in this film not as a way to objectify, but rather to instruct young girls. Both of these texts demonstrate a male gaze, but how they use it in regard to their young female protagonists differs.

The second chapter covers a more magical element within this trope, as it pertains to the relationship between food and character transformation. Food and the act of eating generally has a big role in fiction, but within the Wonderland trope specifically, ingestion often acts as a means of physical or mental transformation. Though Alice's transformations are more physical and Chihiro's are more mental, both journeys through ingestion and transformation work toward helping the protagonists come to terms with the changes occurring around them and to their bodies as both will soon grow up. At first, to cope with these changes, both girls experience a disordered eating response, each of which I examine within the context of the time and culture from which these stories originate. This chapter also looks at these disordered eating responses

through the standpoint of girls' studies, which is a perspective of feminism that looks from the viewpoint of girls rather than adult women. Traditionally, when examining these works, scholars analyze these stories about young girls through the same lens they would view stories about women; however, even though girls eventually become women, it is important that the distinction between the demographics of women and young girls is made. In using girls' studies to look at the eating habits in these texts, the changing relationship these girls experience with food can thus be connected with their shifting identities as they get closer to adulthood.

The final chapter focuses on the adult female antagonists of *Alice* and *Spirited Away*, as these women hold great authority in their respective "Wonderlands." In many other stories centered around young female protagonists that feature the Wonderland trope, the main antagonist is also an adult woman. This section endeavors to analyze why this is the case in these two stories, paying close attention to the effect of this dynamic on the growth of the young girl protagonist during her adventures. In looking at how these women antagonists are often portrayed as a one-dimensional evil—as is the case with the Queen of Hearts in Carroll's novel—I also show how Yubaba, *Spirited Away*'s antagonist, complicates this idea of one-dimensionality in the "villain" figure. With *Alice*, the Queen of Hearts is barely present until the story nears its end; so, despite her power and authority, her interactions with Alice are fairly minimal. As the Queen of Hearts is one of the few other females in the story, the implications of Carroll having so few female characters that only get a couple of interactions with Alice must be examined. On the other hand, Yubaba's presence in Miyazaki's film is felt throughout the story, as she is the one who turned Chihiro's parents into pigs and puts Chihiro through all of the hardships she goes through while in the spirit realm. Because of this, the viewer and Chihiro

come to see more complexity behind her character, so she is not relegated simply to a role of petty evil.

Under the vast genre of children's fantasy, there are a variety of tropes that have been prevalent—the Wonderland trope being one of them. Within this trope, there has been a pattern of stories that center around young female protagonists also having been written by men, that contain elements of ingestion that leads to transformation, and that feature adult women as the main antagonists. By looking at *Alice* and *Spirited Away* together, we can see how the patterns in this trope have transformed over the years and in a global context. This then sheds light on how these secondary worlds facilitate growth in their young female protagonists—sometimes in ways that empower, and sometimes in ways that restrict.

## Chapter 1: Men Writing Girls

Within the “Wonderland” trope, a noticeable trend is that these texts are often written by adult men about young girls. This phenomenon occurs both in the past and present day—from stories like L. Frank Baum’s *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), which follows the adventures of a young girl named Dorothy in the land of Oz, to Neil Gaiman’s *Coraline* (2002), which centers around a little girl named Coraline and her time between the real world and the Other World. *Alice* and *Spirited Away* are further examples of this opposite gendered author trend within the trope, with *Alice* being the origin of the “Wonderland” trope and *Spirited Away* being a present-day example of how it has evolved in a modern (as well as international) context. Both stories center around the journey of a young girl who has wandered into an alternate world, and both are written by adult males. In examining these two stories and authors, I am not looking to attribute intentionality for why they have written these tales, but rather to analyze the implications of men writing young girls in the “Wonderland” context.

A dimension necessary to consider while looking at the implications of men writing girls is the concept of the male gaze—the visual pleasure of the male viewer, whether he is the creator, an audience member, or a character in the story. This term was originally coined by British feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey in her essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” where she describes the male gaze as deriving from patriarchal ideologies that place men in active roles within stories while women are relegated to simply being there for viewing pleasure. Mulvey finds “women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*” (839). While Mulvey notes this objectifying male gaze in live-action cinema, her construct may also be applied to animation as well as literature. With *Alice* specifically, the gaze

is not really present via a male character, but rather through the narrative that the male author creates and some of the illustrations that accompany it, as will be examined in this chapter.

When discussing the male gaze in my primary texts, the fact that Lewis Carroll and Hayao Miyazaki are writing with children in mind is an important element to factor in. Mulvey's discussion of the male gaze considers films like Hitchcock's *Vertigo* and Sternberg's *Morocco*— basically, movies that were likely not made with child consumers at the forefront of the creators' minds. On the other hand, *Alice* and *Spirited Away* are generally marked as children's stories, as both feature child-aged main characters and lack “adult” content, and the author/director were creating their respective works with specific children on their minds. In order to look at this from a “girl”—rather than woman—perspective, my analysis of the male gaze's relation to these works will also draw from girls' studies scholar Catherine Driscoll, whose book on feminine adolescence includes a section that looks at the connection between the girl viewer and the girl on the screen/page, thus complicating Mulvey's idea of men as the sole, intended viewers. In doing so, I intend to examine how the male author/director's figurative “gaze” may be challenged by the girl character and viewer.

Whereas Miyazaki's film seems to have a clearer message to girls in showing Chihiro's own growth as being what young girls should also mirror, that is not really the case with Carroll's story. *Alice* seems to center less so on internal character growth, and more on the aspects of wonder and whimsy that the main little girl character encounters. Not only that, but despite the differences in the focuses of the texts, both narratives grapple with the loss of childhood through nightmarish imagery as these young girls travel through their particular “Wonderland.” This imagery displays how the male gaze works through the creators of these stories. The stress that Alice experiences as she constantly changes size portrays Carroll's gaze

by the punishment he doles out to her for growing; meanwhile, the trauma Chihiro undergoes as she is thrust into a seemingly terrifying world with monstrous characters demonstrates Miyazaki's gaze by forcing Chihiro to adapt to and overcome this world because she would otherwise remain trapped within it. Both texts seem to tap into a similar concept discussed in girls' studies as well—as Elline Lipkin writes, “Throughout much literature on girlhood, this theme reverberates: the loss of a powerful, confident, fearless childhood self, and the assumption of [...] the sense of a diminished vision of their potential” (28). At the beginning of their stories, both Alice and Chihiro experience this loss of childhood self as they endure their “Wonderlands” and the trauma that unfolds. Through this, Carroll mourns the loss of childhood as Alice will eventually grow up, but Miyazaki instead celebrates Chihiro's oncoming development into a more mature human being.

The story of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* began as a tale Carroll told to three young girls—the Liddell sisters—with whom he often spent time. Of the three sisters, the particular story he told that would become *Alice* centered around the then-ten-year-old Alice Liddell. The girls loved the story, and it was eventually published with illustrations by John Tenniel. Because of Carroll's connection to these young girls—as well as a number of other young children—his intentions in his relationships with these youths have been questioned, many considering that Carroll may have been a pedophile (Woolf). It is not my goal to argue for or against the possibility of Carroll being sexually attracted to little girls, largely because there is little actual evidence to prove it either way. Even so, Carroll was certainly fascinated by young girls, for they were the subjects of his photography as well as his fictional tales. Though one might immediately jump to the conclusion that this is a pedophilic tendency on his behalf, it is also necessary to consider an argument brought up by Catherine Robson in *Men in Wonderland*;

rather than attributing Carroll's fascination with the young girl subject matter to pedophilia, Robson also considers the Victorian implications of his focus on little girls.

Robson describes authors like Carroll during the Victorian era as “exhibit[ing] in various ways this male myth of feminized origin” (3). This notion is based off of the Victorian belief that early childhood was a feminine time in one's life since women were the ones mainly taking care of children and the vulnerability of a young child, no matter the gender, was thought of in a feminized manner (Robson 4). During this era, young girls and boys were often indistinguishable from each other since both were dressed in frocks, further perpetuating this notion of a “feminized” childhood. However, Robson goes a step beyond the visually evident, looking at the “passionate investment in nineteenth-century writings that both insist that perfect childhood is always exemplified by a little girl, and that, despite the logical and biological impossibilities of the stance, lament a man's lost girlhood” (Robson 5). Because male authors such as Carroll, who came from middle and upper-class backgrounds, more apparently experienced a point of “breeching” (where they would go from wearing the frocks of early childhood to the trousers that would mark them as boys growing into men), this distinction between the feminine origin and masculine adulthood is even more exemplified to them (Robson 8). In this way, Robson is not attempting to erase any possible pedophilic desire that these men may or may not have had, but rather considers what else their obsessions with childhood might mean. So, instead of just being a possible preoccupation with young girls, it may also extend to a desire on behalf of the male author to return to his own “feminine” childhood.

With Robson's argument in mind, and with the knowledge that Carroll seemed fixated on the innocence and purity of young girls during his lifetime, the *Alice* text seems to emphasize the wonder of childhood, but not without its more frightening moments. Some of these instances are

also accompanied by illustrations, furthering the sense of discomfort that both Alice and Carroll have with Wonderland and the changes that Alice's body undergoes. Toward the beginning of the story, when Alice transforms after ingesting the cake that has the words "EAT ME" written on it in currants, she begins to grow. Rather than having her body parts grow in a similar, simultaneous manner, Alice notices that her head grows away from her body first: "Now I'm opening out like the largest telescope that ever was! Good-bye, feet!" (Carroll 23). This scene is accompanied by an illustration, showing Alice's regularly proportioned body, but with an exaggeratedly long neck. With the idea that ingesting food can lead to some kind of transformation, a sense of wonder is brought about, since objects that were ordinary in the real world now have magical—or at least immediately transformative—properties in Wonderland. However, accompanied by that wonder is the horrifying effect it has on her physical form, and paired with the illustration of the unbalanced growth, this wonder turns nightmarish. This is the only image the reader gets of Alice during mid-growth, and it displays the horrific nature of it that is not wholly conveyed in the text by itself.

In the following chapter, Alice is so unhappy with how she has grown that she cries enough for her tears to flood the hallway. She shrinks again because of a fan she picked up, but in doing so, she is plunged into her own pool of tears. This scene is also accompanied by an illustration of Alice, where she is neck deep in the pool, one of her arms lashing out with her mouth and eyes wide open. Whereas the previous scene had a disturbing quality because of the disproportionate nature of Alice's growth, this image is nightmarish not only because of the implication that Alice might drown, but also because of the fact that she was the one to cause this in the first place. Alice's discomfort with growing physically was already demonstrated in the last scene's illustration, and here, she punishes herself for it, as the dreamer of this dream. She

fears changing in size, and her childhood confidence in herself is waning (as will be examined in the following chapter), so it as though by nearly drowning herself, she—and by extension, the male author—are punishing her for growing out of her child form.

This idea of punishment correlates with the concept of the male gaze, as it relates to Carroll as the male author. As previously noted, Carroll had an interest in young girls, both as companions and as subjects in art. In a letter, he writes, “I had rather not have an adult figure (which always looks to me rather in need of drapery): a girl of about 12 is my ideal of beauty *in form*” (qtd. in Silver 79). This statement is fascinating because, though it seems to only say that Carroll views girls on the verge of puberty as being the most beautiful, it is also notable that he states “[he’d] rather not have an adult figure,” suggesting his revulsion to the adult female form as well as possibly meaning that he himself would also like to revert back to his “feminine” childhood. His words serve as a way to explain this near torture he puts Alice through as she grows. The changes her body undergoes in this early portion of the story and the nightmarish quality that comes about through the imagery provided partially by the text, and further realized by the illustrations, conveys Carroll’s distaste for Alice growing out of his ideal form of beauty and his possible distaste for his own position as an adult. Carroll’s gaze can be perceived in the text through the “punishment” Alice experiences as a result of her growing.

Even with this gaze being exerted upon her, Alice never becomes a passive object of it. For one, in Tenniel’s illustrations, Alice’s agency is indicated in her attire, as the clothes she wears, according to fashion historian Elizabeth Ewing, “are unrestricting” (qtd. in Monden 269). It is notable that in the text itself, Carroll never describes in detail what Alice wears, but the illustrations, even with their more disturbing nature at times, depict her in unrestrictive, practical

attire (for the time period) as she goes on her adventures. Despite the restriction Carroll attempts to force upon her, a viewer of these illustrations can see that Alice is not passive.

Further, Alice's active nature can be seen through how she reacts to the "punishment" Carroll enacts upon her. Driscoll finds that in the male gaze discourse "Woman is presumed by such film theory to be the object of the camera's vision and of dominant narrative conventions" (227). While Alice is the subject of the text/illustrations, she never becomes an object under the gaze of others, but instead remains active. Though Alice does become frustrated by the mishaps she faces, she never outright expresses fear or terror despite the nightmarish imagery that occurs visually for the reader as they look at the illustrations. When Alice grows disproportionately tall, she goes on "planning to herself how she would manage" (Carroll 23) putting shoes on her feet. Not only that, but when it's possible she may drown in her own sea of tears, she dwells on that possibility only briefly before she decides to speak with a nearby mouse to see if it knows the way out (28). Carroll's active gaze is challenged by Alice's lack of passivity, for even when he attempts to punish her for her growth, she keeps a level head and figures a way out.

The illustrations and scenes discussed are nightmarish when broken down (even if Alice does not necessarily react to them as such), and thus make it seem odd that this is the kind of story Carroll would employ as a way to reconnect with his lost childhood. However, when looking at the story's conclusion, this implication does seem to come to fruition. Rather than having the narrative continue to follow Alice here, it switches to considering her older, presumably adult, sister. Her sister remains sitting under the tree where Alice had been napping, thinking over the "strange creatures of her little sister's dream" (Carroll 143). Despite dismissing Alice earlier—after Alice spoke about the dream, her sister told her to "run in to your tea: it's getting late" (Carroll 142)—the sister acknowledges to herself the dullness of reality as she

partially believes herself to be in Wonderland when she rethinks Alice's tale. In the final paragraph, the sister imagines Alice as an adult, gathering young children around her and telling them odd stories, like her Wonderland dream. Robson notes, "the sister's saccharine celebration of Alice's 'simple and loving heart' certainly rings false to those of us who have enjoyed our heroine's various displays of curiosity, timorousness, tactlessness, snobbery, petulance, self-aggrandizement, and downright bad temper in the preceding twelve chapters" (148). Even so, this projected image of Alice's future mimics that of Carroll's own reality at the time; he, like the potential future Alice, had little children around him often and told them strange tales, one being about the Wonderland Alice experiences in this story. In doing so, he, like this Alice, is possibly recalling his "own child-life, and the happy summer days" (Carroll 144). Thus, Carroll projects his gaze upon Alice through the frightening imagery that occurs when she grows larger, thereby attempting to use her as a representation of his ideal girl as well as his own "feminized" childhood. Even though Alice challenges Carroll's ideal through her lack of passivity, Carroll's reflection upon his own childhood remains evident, as does an aversion toward the adult female form.

Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* was also aimed toward a particular young girl. Though, rather than telling the story to that little girl first, and then eventually refining and publishing it, like Carroll, the film is made with this girl, among many other young girls, in mind. According to Susan Napier:

But the director also wanted to send a message to Chihiro's generation, or more specifically, to the ten-year-old daughter of a colleague. With characteristic forcefulness, in a discussion of the film Miyazaki referred to this girl and her friends as "dullards." Their pursuits increasingly alarmed him. The director long bemoaned the fact that so few children played outside anymore. [...] Overall, Miyazaki hated the waves of apathy and indifference emanating from the young "dullards" around him. It is not surprising that the path to redemption taken by *Spirited Away*'s ten-year-old heroine leads through hard

physical labor, self-discipline, acceptance of and kindness to others, and a willingness to take on challenges. (*Miyazakiworld* 201)

Whereas Carroll's story's original intent was to pass the time during a boat ride on a rainy summer day, Miyazaki's intent was to inspire action within his youthful audience. "Dullard" definitely seems like a harsh way to refer to these children, especially when looking at how the narrative in *Alice* often refers to the young female protagonist as "poor Alice" (Carroll 9), "poor little thing" (12), and "wise little Alice" (9). Carroll takes on a more endearing tone toward the young girl, perhaps because he was close to the child he had in mind, whereas Miyazaki is tough on the girls he references in real life; he also never coddles Chihiro in the film, putting her through traumatic experiences because, within her, she has the ability to overcome the adversity she faces, even if she does not know it yet. The differences in the creators' demeanors toward their protagonists/real-girls results from different intents—as mentioned earlier, it seems that Carroll was writing more so to explore childhood wonder and mourn the loss of innocence that comes with growing up, while Miyazaki was writing to advocate for maturity and leaving one's childishness behind.

The male gaze given off by the director, rather than being one of discomfort with growing girls as is the case with Carroll, appears to instead be judgmental of the young girls he deems lazy. Here, however, this male gaze concept is complicated—as stated by James Bloom, who further explores the concept of the male gaze in *Reading the Male Gaze in Literature and Culture*, "In mass entertainment as in elite cultural marketplaces such performances address sexually mixed audiences and not only the male gazer, the masculine commander, Mulvey postulated" (41). Essentially, the male audience member is not the only one being considered when visuals are being produced; this is especially applicable to Miyazaki's film, as he has written it with young girls in mind, and having become a household name in Japan before this

film even came out, he realizes the reach his stories have. So, the gaze exerted by Miyazaki is one with the intention of instructing viewers—specifically, young girl viewers—on how to transform from being a “dullard” to being more empathetic and mature. Though, as is the case with Alice, Chihiro is also not a passive character onto which this gaze can be enacted upon.

Much of what Chihiro experiences in her “Wonderland” is traumatic: her parents turn into pigs right before her eyes; she herself almost disappears; she faces-off with the cannibalistic No Face; and much more. Based on Napier’s analysis, this trauma she endures is what is meant to transform her from a young “dullard” into a mature young girl. Although Miyazaki has said that he does not use his art as a way to process his own trauma, Napier finds that in Miyazaki’s films, “Children in particular become the agents of change and reassurance in his work, experiencing and processing trauma but also transcending calamity by working to ameliorate it” (*Miyazakiworld* 14). So even though Miyazaki may not explicitly process his own life’s trauma in his work, his films have children—particularly young girls—facing off against and learning to overcome trauma of their own.

I intend to only focus on the implications of Chihiro as a young female protagonist written by a man, but it is also notable that a large portion of Miyazaki’s oeuvre centers on female protagonists. In regard to the male leads featured in his films, Napier brings up the point that many of them experience some sort of curse, referencing Haku as being the example of this pattern in *Spirited Away* (*Miyazakiworld* 6). But it is also interesting to consider the androgynous nature of Haku—and Chihiro—as brought up in Montserrat Rifa-Valls’ analysis of the film. This is especially interesting because the girls of Miyazaki’s other films are often distinctly feminine; for example, in *Kiki’s Delivery Service*, the girl protagonist Kiki is visually feminine, always wearing a dress and a bow in her hair, and she often refers to herself as a girl or young lady. The

choice to render Chihiro and Haku in an androgynous manner must be intentional, especially when considering the Japanese idea of the “*shōjo*”. This term is largely translated to mean “girl,” and originates from the late eighteen-hundreds to indicate the time between childhood and marriage for a young female (Monden 266). In discussing the *shōjo*, Monden indicates the potential for the *shōjo* as a fashion aesthetic to either act as a construction imposed by men onto women or as a medium through which girls/women can show their agency and creativeness (266); however, this can be extended to Chihiro in her identity as part of the *shōjo* age group and the implications of Miyazaki representing her in a more androgynous manner. Monden notes that the *shōjo* is often considered asexual or pure but does not necessarily escape the objectifying male gaze (273). So, even though Miyazaki exerts his own gaze in his judgment of young girls, he purposely eliminates the possible objectification of Chihiro in presenting her androgynously.

Rifa-Valls includes not only her own examination of the movie, but also that of her girlfriend, Marta, and references some of Napier’s own study. Marta notes: “Haku could be a girl too. Both—Haku and Chihiro—are quite similar [...] It isn’t obvious that she’s a girl; she has no obvious signs of class; what marks her more is her way of thinking and not her physical appearance—going against the grain...” (qtd. in Rifa-Valls 96). Whereas Alice is constantly referred to as a little girl by Carroll’s narrative, the nature of film represents this visually rather than directly. So while the audience sees that Chihiro is indeed a child, she is not so much relegated to simply being a little girl; her brave actions (facing the stink spirit, saving Haku, luring No-Face out of the bath house, confronting Yubaba, and saving her parents) present her as this figure that has faced adversity and can tackle her problems back home as well. In this way, she does not take on the role of the passive female meant to be gazed upon, but rather, an active agent in progressing the film’s narrative and a hero in her own right. And even though Haku,

who seems to be male but also appears in an androgynous way, aids her in her journey, he is never the “strong male hero,” but instead a supportive companion.

As with *Alice*, this film also contains some frightful imagery that brings a nightmarish nature to “Wonderland.” However, these images have less to do with discomfort in relation to growing up (as is the case in *Alice*) and perhaps more to do with the theme of trauma that Napier discusses. According to Miyazaki in regard to trauma, “If you ask whether the scars can be healed, no, these are things that must be endured. There is no healing... you just have to endure” (qtd. in Napier, *Miyazakiworld* 5). In this way, the nightmarish imagery in the film works as a way to exemplify the trauma Chihiro undergoes with this experience and show how much she has grown as a person by the end of the film. These kinds of images are present the moment Chihiro and her parents enter the spirit realm; they come in through an abandoned theme park, and the building they enter through is riddled with notable cracks in the walls and paint eroding from its outside. Chihiro and her parents are dwarfed by this looming, decaying structure, and Chihiro looks up at it fearfully as the wind makes it seem like the building is moving. As they enter further into this realm, the park is still, silent, and seemingly empty. While Chihiro is frightened by this place, her parents are charmed by it—her mother even comments, “Oh, what a beautiful place! We should’ve brought our lunch. Then we could have had a picnic” (00:06:49).

The dystopic turn continues as night falls, and Chihiro, who had wandered away from her parents, now goes to find them. Dark silhouettes populate the shops, and then Chihiro discovers that her parents have turned to pigs. Chihiro runs away, and screams for her parents, in shock from their new form, and more shadowy figures fill the streets. Chihiro runs to the river and curls into a ball, the trauma of all that has happened making her hope to herself that it is all a dream. Viewing this scene solely through the male gaze might put Chihiro’s terror on display to promote

something symbolic, as Mulvey notes that “what counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents” (809); but because Miyazaki directs this film with his young girl audience in mind, the audience views this trauma *through* Chihiro, rather than merely looking on as it happens to her. For example, when Chihiro runs to the river and discovers that she can see the lights of the approaching boat through her hands, since her body begins to disappear, the film shows Chihiro looking at her hands and then switches to a first-person perspective of Chihiro’s hands as though the audience were Chihiro herself looking at them. Chihiro’s trauma is not used as spectacle, and the audience is placed directly in her shoes, viewing through her gaze.

From the frightful imagery of this “Wonderland” to the trauma that Chihiro faces having witnessed her parents become pigs, thus leaving her alone in this unfamiliar realm, it would be simple for her to just give up and fade away; her body even already plans to do just that. Nonetheless, with the aid of Haku and the kindness of other denizens of the bathhouse (Kamaji and Lin, for example), Chihiro endures this new world and perseveres. As Emerson notes, “Although she begins her journey frightened and resistant, Chihiro is motivated by the need to recover her parents—initially a selfish wish to be taken care of, but soon transformed into a determination to save them from their magically-induced swinehood” (141). Not only does she have her parents to sort out, but she is also concerned for Haku and is the only one who can take care of No-Face, since she lets him into the bathhouse in the first place. While Chihiro certainly takes on an active role in the narrative, in transforming from “dullard” to Miyazaki’s ideal of how young girls should act, she appears to take on the often female-gendered role of caretaker, as she has to be the one to help all these characters, otherwise it will not get done. Chihiro seems to fulfill the Japanese ideal for women where “a good woman is still expected to think of others before herself...” (Hansen 53). Though, Miyazaki avoids restricting her to this position, as the

film does not frame it as women's work; rather, since Haku, Lin, and Kamaji have helped Chihiro along her journey, she sees the need to help them in turn by lifting Haku's curse and luring No Face out of the bathhouse. Even in taking on this traditionally female role of caretaker, Chihiro continues to express agency in her actions.

Toward the end of the film, when Chihiro is once again faced with nightmarish imagery—this time in the form of No-Face, who has consumed some of the bathhouse's denizens—rather than shrinking away from it fearfully, she faces it head-on. One of the bathhouse workers says that “Yubaba can't hold [No-Face] off much longer,” so Chihiro goes in to help. As they approach the room that Yubaba and No-Face are in, the audience gets a view of the sliding door that hides them, which has a large, monstrous face imprinted upon it, perhaps alluding to No-Face's own monstrous form. This view of the door is also notable because, again, the audience sees it through the eyes of Chihiro, since the film goes from a shot of Chihiro looking at the door, to then showing it from the angle at which she would be looking at it. Through this door, an irritated No-Face can be heard demanding Chihiro's presence as dishes clatter. Chihiro is ushered toward the room, her eyes wide, indicating some fearfulness, but she does not back down or cry. Once Chihiro is inside, she is dwarfed by the large room, filled with broken plates, upturned furniture, and more monstrous faces depicted on the walls. The camera pans over to No-Face's large, idle form, further emphasizing how small Chihiro is in comparison. No-Face's stomach rumbles, and drool coats the edges of his large mouth. Chihiro just sits and watches him as he fruitlessly offers her food and gold, no longer looking scared, but calm. Even when No-Face's hands extend toward and around her neck, she remains calm, and even states that she wants to leave because she has other important things to attend to (like

saving Haku and her parents). And finally, she offers No-Face the magic green dumpling, which will expel all that he has eaten from his body.

Here, Chihiro exemplifies how much she has grown from the start of this adventure. At the beginning, she was uncertain and fearful, crying as frightful events took place around her, and nearly giving up on finding a solution. But toward the end, she becomes confident and calm, stating that which she must do and not letting fear get the best of her. When she faces the terrifying form of No-Face after he has eaten some of the bathhouse's workers, the audience looks at him with her, rather than merely watching as she faces him. Viewers witness these terrifying encounters with Chihiro, whether it be from her perspective or just over her shoulder, as though standing there with her. As Driscoll notes in an examination of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* that can also apply here, "An analysis of the fight scenes indicates that... we mostly watch Buffy from slightly to one side of the action" (233). Similarly, in *Spirited Away*, the audience often views situations with Chihiro or slightly away from her, thus focusing on her as the locus through which the narrative is carried. The gaze here is not aimed at Chihiro, but at her actions—her direct role in the narrative. Without this adventure, Lipkin's statement on girlhood and how young girls lose confidence and the sight of their potential as they reach puberty and adulthood no longer holds true for Chihiro. In this realm, she was able to see just how powerful she truly is and regain the confidence of childhood even as she matured emotionally and will eventually mature physically. Although Miyazaki enacts an instructive gaze through Chihiro's transformation from "dullard," her androgynous appearance and active role in the narrative resist any sort of objectifying male gaze.

This essay is not meant to speak for all the examples of "Wonderland" stories with girls as protagonists that were written by men, but it does dive into possible implications of the trend.

Because of the Victorian era context that Carroll was writing in, the *Alice* text has implications related to discomfort with growing up and the desire to return to a sense of childhood wonder. Carroll's decision to have this story be experienced through the adventures of a young girl call back both to his original intended audience—the Liddell sisters—and possibly to his own childhood, as Victorian childhood was considered a “feminine” time in one's life despite the person's actual gender. The nightmarish occurrences in Wonderland, as well as the disturbing contortions done to Alice's form during her journey, reflect Carroll's discomfort with his own male adulthood as well as his preoccupation with young girls as the essence of pure and innocent childhood. Even with Carroll's desire to enact his gaze upon Alice, she maintains a sense of agency as she never becomes a passive object in the story but remains curious and active in her journey. Though Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* also centers around a young girl—as does many of his other films—she does not necessarily act as a conduit for the director's possible desires and self. Rather, her journey is meant to encourage action in what Miyazaki considers a lazy, ignorant society and promote relying on and being there for others. The early depictions of trauma in the film work to show the theme's necessity in life and how young girls (and people in general) are able to withstand and persist in spite of it, as shown in later parts of the movie as Chihiro faces off against No-Face and Yubaba. Even so, Miyazaki still enacts a male gaze (even if it is not the *objectifying* male gaze) in his instruction of girls to not be “dullards” as seen through Chihiro's transformation from spoiled child to mature young girl. The implications of these men writing young girls differ, but the setting of “Wonderland” as a place to work through trauma related to growing up is quite similar.

## Chapter 2: Ingestion & Transformation

Just as eating and drinking plays a large role in day-to-day human life, it also has an important role in “Wonderland” literature. In Neil Gaiman’s *Coraline*, when Coraline finds the Other World and meets her Other Mother and Father, she enjoys a family dinner with them that brings her further comfort than she had in the real world. In this dinner scene, she eats delicious food (contrasted to the bland food she ate back home) and has a joyful time with these Other Parents, who even present her with a “Welcome Home” cake, solidifying her early feelings of belonging in her “Wonderland” before it reveals its more terrifying side. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, when Harry and the other first years arrive at Hogwarts, they begin feasting before even being sorted into their houses. Not only that, but some foods take on more magical properties, like Polyjuice potion that can transform the drinker into someone—or something—else or chocolate frogs, which is chocolate made to look and act like a frog. These are only a couple of examples, but ideas of food and consumption are fairly common in the “Wonderland” genre.

This trope of consumption stems from early fairytales and folklore, which often contain some sort of eating-related theme. According to Jane Garry and Hasan El-Shamy, the authors of *Archetypes and Motifs in Folklore and Literature: A Handbook*, “In the earliest stories, the locale is the lower world, or land of the dead; later stories tend to be set in a more vague otherworld, such as fairyland” (104). So, while the stories of today and the recent past are hazier in their precise “Wonderland” setting, folktales from ancient times began with using the underworld as their alternate world setting. These lands go by what Garry and El-Shamy categorize as a “You are what you eat” classification, in that “to eat the food of a spirit is to partake of the spirit’s nature” (106). In this way, eating the food of these worlds meant that a person was renouncing

their human nature, thus meaning they could no longer return to the human world, as was the case with Persephone in Greek mythology, for example. This “renunciation of human nature” and “you are what you eat” categorization are actually points still present in the “Wonderland” genre, which I will get into more deeply as I analyze the consumption pattern in this chapter.

As with other texts in the “Wonderland” genre, food is also a crucial component of both *Alice* and *Spirited Away*; in both stories, ingestion often leads to an immediate transformation, which then effects how the transformed character interacts with “Wonderland.” In the *Harry Potter* example, there are obvious foods that do this like the magical potion I mentioned, but in the “Wonderlands” of *Alice* and *Spirited Away*, it is often what a reader/viewer might consider normal—or at least, innocuous-looking—food that leads to transformation. In *Alice*, the titular main character is usually the one ingesting and physically transforming in the narrative; meanwhile in *Spirited Away*, it is the side characters that experience bodily transformation after eating, while the protagonist, Chihiro, seems to instead transform mentally after ingestion. Even with these differences, the ingestion of food and the physical or mental transformation thereafter acts as a method for the protagonists to come to terms with the changes around them as well as with their bodies since both will eventually grow up.

Upon entering “Wonderland,” both young female protagonists experience a disordered eating response as they cope with their new environments. This disordered eating is of particular interest because it is these stories about young girls that feature them—though indirectly—and eating disorders, from the Victorian era to now, largely affect girls and women (Lipkin 51). According to cultural studies scholar Deborah Lupton, “food and eating... [are] intensely emotional experiences that are intertwined with embodied sensations and strong feelings... central to individuals’ subjectivity and their sense of distinction from others” (qtd. in Avakian &

Haber 16). In this statement, Lupton is arguing that the person that an individual becomes is largely suggested through the food they consume and the emotional response enmeshed in that eating experience. The point Lupton makes is relevant to Alice and Chihiro because of the relationship between ingestion and transformation in these stories. Not only that, but throughout history, women have held a central role in the preparation and distribution of food, and that, paired with how eating disorders more often affect women, brings a gendered association to the eating practices in these stories. Food and identity are connected specifically in the way that food is consumed and the emotions that accompany that consumption. In these “Wonderlands,” the food ingested harks back to the real world, and, through its magical properties, represents the shifting identities of these growing girls.

In *Alice*, ingestion and transformation in Wonderland start as soon as she enters, though her consumption is not done out of hunger. After falling down the rabbit hole, Alice comes across a long hallway of locked doors, save for a tiny one. She then finds a bottle with the words “DRINK ME” printed on a label around the bottle’s neck, and promptly does so after briefly determining that it is not poisonous. Here, she does not drink because she is thirsty, but because there are no other options readily available for her to move forward. Immediately after ingesting the contents, Alice shrinks to a size small enough to enter the passage, but remains in the hallway, for “she felt a little nervous” (Carroll 18) about whether or not she would continue to get smaller. Rather than continuing through the small door, she returns to where she found the bottle to retrieve a key to the garden area, but realizes she left it on the table, which is now much taller than she is, so she cannot reach it. Under the table, she finds a cake with the words “EAT ME” on it, which makes her grow much taller than her original size. In this example, rather than

eating because she is hungry, Alice eats for the purpose of utility in a world she does not yet understand.

Alice's response to food and growth in this part of the story is related to the disordered eating reactions understood in Girls' Studies, specifically in regard to body image. As stated by Driscoll, "Most feminist responses to eating disorders focus on anorexia, which constitutes an excellent allegory for the disappearance of self often assigned to feminine adolescence" (249). Though, in this situation, it is clear that Alice's response to her new environment and transformation is indeed not an anorexic one. Instead, the disordered eating behavior she exhibits is akin to binge eating; during this process of shrinking and growing, Alice experiences anxiety, which leads her to eating more. As Lipkin notes, eating disorders are often accompanied by "a sense of 'body dysmorphic syndrome'—the sense that one's own body is distorted..." (51). When Alice is unable to reach the key like she could have when she was larger, she starts crying, so this emotional response comes as a result of her sudden transformation since her body has changed to a form unsuitable to the world around her. After eating the cake, nothing immediately happens, which causes her to "anxiously [say] to herself 'Which way? Which way?', holding her hand on top of her head to feel which way it was growing" (Carroll 19). Though her initial ingestion of the bottled drink was done out of curiosity, eating the cake was done out of utility purposes and as an emotional response due to a newly distorted body image, as demonstrated through the fretful thoughts that Alice has after eating it.

Additionally, when looking at *Alice* through the lens of disordered eating, it is crucial to note that Victorian England had not yet developed an understanding of what precisely eating disorders were. Cases of disordered eating that might today have been diagnosed as anorexia nervosa were either written off as "extraordinary fasting case[s]" (Silver 2) or diagnosed as

chlorosis/anemia. In fact, much of the children's literature of that era actually saw the denial of appetite and the limiting of food intake as actions worthy of admiration in girls, for these behaviors were connected to femininity (Silver 52). Because the Victorian ideal of femininity meant that a woman should be "spiritual, non-sexual, and self-disciplined" (Silver 3), a fair portion of children's literature sought to incite these characteristics within the female children that read them.

Carina Garland, who views the *Alice* stories as a manifestation of Carroll's desire for passivity in young girls, finds that "the male author doesn't acknowledge the heroine's hunger and has her consume without appetite, this being an attempt to maintain her purity by separating her appetite and consumption" (28). What Garland takes note of here is how Alice ingests foods like the drink labeled "DRINK ME" and the cake labeled "EAT ME" without expressing actual hunger for either of those objects. With the Victorian context in mind, this notion of Carroll taking appetite away from consumption to maintain a sense of purity in Alice seems accurate because denying one's own appetite aligned with that ideal of femininity. Further, Carroll was "notably disgusted by a ravenous appetite in his many female child friends" (Garland 26), which may also be a result of the time Carroll lived in, since, as noted before, an appetite was not a "feminine" trait. However, it should also be understood that other British novels from the nineteenth century "often obscure the material side of eating linked to bodily appetite [...]" (qtd. in Lee 489). In other words, Alice's lack of evident appetite was not viewed as uncommon since other texts at the time also barely indicated hunger in relation to eating, whether the subject be male or female. But the fact that Alice *consumes* a lot (especially in comparison to other female characters of her time), remains at odds with the Victorian ideals of femininity.

According to English novelist E. M. Forester, “food in fiction is mainly social, it draws characters together...” (qtd. in Lee 489). Just as food draws people together in real life, whether that be enjoying a meal with friends or eating with one’s family at the dinner table, this quotation brings attention to the social aspect of food within Wonderland—and how Alice is cut off from it. This very early example of eating in the story is done in isolation since Alice is alone in the hallway, and she has no knowledge of the social order in Wonderland because she has only just entered it. She eats cake, as she has done in the real world, but in this estranged setting, she does so through tears and with the hope of changing herself. So, if food is indeed social, the fact that she is alone indicates her loss of a social basis, which then plays into the identity crisis she begins to undergo.

Toward the middle of the story, Alice learns to control her transforming size by regulating what and how she ingests. Upon meeting the Caterpillar, Alice vocalizes the identity crisis she is experiencing:

“Who are *you*?” said the Caterpillar.

This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, “I-I hardly know, Sir, just at the 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 55)

This statement draws an interesting connection between Alice’s sense of self and how that relates to the food she consumes, since that is what transforms her size. Alice’s continuous physical changes, compounded with her lack of a social basis in this “Wonderland,” lead her to a sort of self-examination. As Nina Auerbach says, Alice “[senses] that the mystery of her surroundings is the mystery of her identity” (33). Although Alice has been eating similar food to what she would have eaten back in her Victorian England world, her emotional experience with this food has shifted because of the effect it has on transforming her body, and therefore gives her a sense of a

distorted identity as well. As in her exchange with the Caterpillar, she no longer knows who she is because she does not respond to food in the same way that she did in the real world.

The Caterpillar then gives her a mushroom and tells her, “one side will make you grow taller, and the other side will make you grow shorter” (Carroll 61). This information does not exactly tell Alice which side does what, meaning that some trial and error is necessary in determining that fact. While Garland sees this as “[denying] her knowledge and therefore any control over what she consumes and the changes her body undertakes as a result of this eating,” (32), this could also be interpreted as simply letting Alice figure this out on her own. To outright tell her which side makes her taller and which makes her shorter is to just give her the answer, but a young child needs to learn that the world will not just tell her what she wants to know; it is something that she sometimes needs to find for herself. And, while Alice does learn how to gain control over how she transforms, this is not done with ease.

Once she leaves the Caterpillar, she ingests a bit of the mushroom, and her neck grows high up into the trees, where a Pigeon then mistakes her for a serpent. During this exchange, Alice must once again explain her identity, still with uncertainty:

“But I’m not a serpent, I tell you!” said Alice. “I’m a—I’m a—”  
“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 remembered the number of changes she had gone through, that day. (Carroll 62-63)

Whereas with the Caterpillar, Alice could not put her own identity into words, here she defines herself as a “little girl” to the disbelieving Pigeon. The fact that the pigeon believes that Alice is a serpent also interestingly plays into the “renunciation of human nature” idea from past myths and folklore. By eating the food of Wonderland and transforming as she does, Alice, in a way, has renounced her human nature to navigate this world. Instead, she becomes a sort of denizen of

Wonderland as she continues to consume the food she finds within it. In addition, the Pigeon confusing Alice for a serpent also references the Old Testament eating taboo in which Eve is tempted by the serpent with an apple from the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden. Though Alice is called a serpent, she parallels Eve's act of eating the apple to gain knowledge through her own act of eating the mushroom to gain mastery over her transformation. When looking at these tabus with the idea that food is a social element in fiction, it can be understood that the more she eats in this world, the more of a social stake she has within it that estranges her to her original world.

After this assertion of her identity, Alice then tries nibbling on the mushroom again, and eventually restores herself to her original height. Finally back to her "little girl" size, the narration notes that "it felt strange at first" (Carroll 63); Alice has become so used to transforming—to being uncomfortable with herself—that returning to normal becomes an estranged way of being. This is further magnified by the fact that, right after reaching her original size, Alice immediately transforms herself again so that she is small enough to enter a tiny house she comes across. While her disordered eating had once been done frantically as a way to figure out how to get around Wonderland, with her "distorted" body image being a symptom of that, Alice has now gained control over herself by learning how to influence her transformation through managing her consumption, thus beginning to recover her sense of self.

Managing her own consumption can be viewed as either restrictive—in that, like the Victorian ideal of femininity, Alice has learned self-discipline—or as empowering—for she has now gained control over herself, no longer transforming in ways that frighten her. Because of this duality, it can be argued that Carroll, as a result of living in the Victorian Era, might have meant this achieved control over consumption in a restrictive way, but, despite his possible

intentions, this message can still be viewed as a form of empowerment for Alice. Anna Krugovoy Silver finds, “Carroll’s work underscores the ambivalence about maturing women that Victorian culture shares with the victims of anorexia nervosa: significantly, the best food that Alice finds in Wonderland is the mushroom, which allows her to *control* the changes in her body and, theoretically, can be used to keep her from getting any larger” (75). In this way, the mushroom can signify restriction, but also empowerment; while Alice can keep herself from growing larger (and can make herself smaller—which she does), she does not limit herself to only becoming small, or even staying at her original size, as displayed in the trial about the missing tarts.

During the trial scene toward the end of the story, Alice loses control of her transforming body again, but really, her actions and changing form at this point actually show that she has accepted her transforming figure and obtained a further understanding of herself. At the start of the trial, Alice feels “a very curious sensation” (Carroll 129) and realizes that without having eaten anything to cause this, she has begun to slowly grow bigger again. While the denizens of Wonderland view this as a negative occurrence—the Dormouse wishes Alice “wouldn’t squeeze so” (Carroll 129) as she grows in such a “ridiculous fashion” (129) and the King of Hearts cites a made up rule that “All persons more than a mile high [are] to leave the court” (137)—Alice appears to gain courage with her increasing size. When the Queen finds Alice guilty of stealing the tarts and sentences her to a beheading, Alice does not back down. By this point, she has “grown to her full size” (Carroll 140) and refuses to acknowledge the verdict, for the Queen and her guards are “nothing but a pack of cards” (140). Because Alice begins transforming without the aid of food, it is evident that this is due to the fact that she herself is now in control. She continues to grow as she becomes further annoyed with the senseless proceedings, and she draws

confidence from her “full size” as she directly challenges the Queen—the most powerful figure in Wonderland. Auerbach observes, “Perhaps the final verdict would tell Alice who she is at last, but if it did, Wonderland would threaten to overwhelm her. Before it comes, she ‘grows’; the parts of her nature rush back together... she gives a ‘little scream, half of fright and half of anger,’ and wakes up” (41). Because Alice is the dreamer that created Wonderland, she really does not need the final verdict, since it is her mind that made it up. So, upon waking up, though Alice may not consciously be aware of who she is, the knowledge of her own identity (her sense of self) is certainly within.

Similar to the Victorian era, modern-day Japan also views a controlled appetite as a part of their construction of ideal femininity. Japan’s structure of femininity is based largely on the physical form and “shares common basic expressions with eating disorders...” (Hansen 56). Gitte Marianne Hansen, whose article discusses eating disorders and their connection to femininity in contemporary Japan, notes that like Japanese femininity, eating disorders “require an extreme tolerance of pain and hunger, self-control and self-submission” (52). These ideas are further perpetuated by the dieting and exercise industries, which encourage weight-loss through magazines, advertisements, and even computer games that reward successful weight loss (Hansen 53). Women and girls are also encouraged to tolerate pain for a “feminine” physical appearance in that TV segments give advice on how to deal with wearing uncomfortable, fashionable shoes, rather than critiquing the fashion industry for producing such painful footwear in the first place (Hansen 54). To achieve the ideal of femininity in Japan, women and girls are thus taught that they must deny their appetites and endure pain. In navigating this ideal, one can easily fall into disordered eating, which Chihiro nearly exhibits at the beginning of *Spirited Away*.

Like in *Alice*, ingestion and transformation begin as soon as Chihiro and her parents enter the spirit realm in *Spirited Away*. As they explore the abandoned theme park, the trio happen upon an empty restaurant with piles of food. While Chihiro's parents are eager to eat and promptly do so, Chihiro seems to sense that something is wrong and refrains from ingesting the food. Whereas Alice's initial reaction upon entering her "Wonderland" was to eat, Chihiro, upon seeing food that is unaccounted for, abstains from consuming it, thus becoming "a literal manifestation of anorexia" (Napier, *Miyazakiworld* 207). According to Hansen, "The onset (not the cause) of eating disorders or self-harm often occurs in tandem with social change... such as receiving a negative comment from a close acquaintance or moving from one environment to another, like we see Chihiro and her parents do in the opening scenes of [*Spirited Away*]" (57). Chihiro experiences double the social change, for not only are she and her family supposed to be moving to a new area, but they also wander into an alternate world that they do not yet understand, and this situation is only the beginning of Chihiro's journey within it.

As her parents gorge themselves on the food meant for the spirits, they transform into pigs. The viewer does not witness the actual transformation as the parents undergo it, but instead experience the shock with Chihiro as she finds them again after Haku warns her to leave this realm. When she sees that they are still eating at the abandoned restaurant, she begs them to stop, pulling on her father's shoulder. When he turns his head toward her, his pig face is revealed, and the non-diegetic music in this scene takes on a more ominous sound. Chihiro retracts her hands with a sharp intake of breath and a horrified expression, and her pig-turned parents continue to stuff themselves, showing no recognition of their own daughter. A notable part of this scene is not only the astonishment on Chihiro's face as she sees that her parents are now pigs, but also the disgust that briefly takes over her expression when her pig-father knocks dishes onto the ground

to reach for more food. When a spirit behind the counter smacks the father away with a spatula, knocking him to the ground, Chihiro backs into a wooden column, screaming and utterly terrified. As she finally runs away, this sequence with her parents ends with a close up of her pig-father's face, covered in food and dripping saliva, squealing after her as she runs off. In gorging themselves, the food here symbolizes her parents' obsession with excess. Toward the start of the film, when seeing that the town they are moving to is in a rural area, Chihiro's mother's first observation is that she will "have to go to the next town to shop" (00:00:27); Napier also observes that "Chihiro's father [drives] a flashy new Audi and [boasts] of his cash and credit cards as he obliviously gobbles vast quantities of food at the mysterious restaurant" (*Miyazakiworld* 200). The gluttonous behavior they exhibit through overindulging in the spirits' food and transforming into pigs thus parallels their greed back in the real world.

Even though Chihiro ingests nothing, she is also transforming, for her own body begins to gradually disappear. Though Chihiro's parents are a lost cause at the moment, she can still regain corporeality through eating a berry that Haku offers her; while the berry will help, Chihiro still struggles against it before finally ingesting it and reverting back to her normal, tangible self. As Hansen says, "Just as food and eating are dangerous elements in Chihiro's world, food and feeling hungry are considered dirty, polluting and dangerous by both anorexics and bulimics [...] By rejecting food, anorexics feel clean and in control" (59). With this eating disorder line of thought, it makes sense that Chihiro would reject that which might help her, both based on her recent traumatic experience with food in this "Wonderland" and because of the anorexic view of food as "dangerous." To avoid transforming into a pig like her parents, Chihiro would refuse to eat, even if it meant completely disappearing. However, in examining this anorexic behavior in Chihiro, it is necessary to observe that she does not refuse to eat because she wants to be thin;

rather, she refuses because of the danger she senses and has seen firsthand in the food of the spirit realm. Hansen notes, though, that “a conscious desire to be thin is not the universal motivator driving Japanese women towards eating disorders” (63), so the fact that Chihiro never focuses on thinness does not negate this anorexia metaphor.

Just as food in this “Wonderland” can be dangerous, some food can also bring about a sense of healing or safety following its ingestion. When Haku takes Chihiro to visit her parents in a pig pen outside of the bathhouse, he tells her that her parents, now in their pig form, “don’t remember being human” (00:48:11), so it is up to Chihiro to remember who they are. This is interesting because Chihiro, now renamed “Sen” as a worker at the bathhouse, does not remember her own name until Haku reminds her. In entering this “Wonderland” and assimilating to the rules, Chihiro has renounced her original identity and must recover it in order to leave; according to Haku, who has long forgotten his own name, Yubaba controls those that work under her by taking their names, so Chihiro must maintain her own sense of self to eventually escape. Chihiro’s own identity is in crisis, as was the case with Alice’s.

Following this conversation, Haku offers her onigiri (rice balls) that he put a spell on “so it’ll give [Chihiro] back [her] strength” (00:49:30). Playing into the anorexia metaphor once again, Chihiro at first refuses, likely remembering what happened to her parents since she was just visiting them in the pig pen. However, with some coaxing, Chihiro takes a small, hesitant bite into it, swallows, and then takes bigger, heartier bites before tears begin to fall from her eyes as she quickly finishes the onigiri. She takes a break to outright weep, and when Haku offers her the other two onigiri, she does not need to be persuaded into eating them; this time, she grabs both, and takes large bites between her sobs. After this scene, Chihiro is shown working hard in the bathhouse, thus indicating that the food has indeed given her strength. Napier states:

At its most basic, the onigiri is clearly linked with home and, specifically, with the mother: rice is a staple part of the obentō or lunch box every Japanese child brings to school every day, and onigiri are particularly popular on family picnics and school expeditions. As Anne Allison points out, the obentō is not simply sustenance but an important cultural construct evocative of a mother's love for and efforts on behalf of her young child. We remember Chihiro's lack of nurturance from her real mother, whose only response to Chihiro's reaching for her in the tunnel is to admonish her not to "cling". ("Matter Out of Place" 307)

As mentioned in the above quotation, it is visually represented early on that Chihiro's parents are quite emotionally neglectful of their daughter. By using a nostalgic food (to the Japanese audience) like onigiri, which is associated with the image of a nurturing mother, to show Chihiro gaining mental fortitude, the film shows how even with the dangerous elements found in this "Wonderland," there is something positive to be gained from it for Chihiro. In this case, that positive element found is the "proper nurturance" (Napier, "Matter Out of Place" 307) that Chihiro was not receiving in the real world from her parents.

With this mental transformation, Chihiro becomes an agent for the expulsion of corruption found in other characters, particularly in No Face. In the words of Napier: "No Face is Chihiro's opposite. The creature goes from a virtually bodiless spectral presence to a gigantic monster of consumption... he then becomes an emblem of bulimia, vomiting what he has ingested" (*Miyazakiworld* 207). The reason for No Face's over-consumption seems to be his feelings of intense loneliness; the first few times the viewer sees No Face, he is always off by himself, isolated from the other inhabitants of the spirit realm, and partially transparent. Not only that, but No Face acknowledges his own aloneness when Chihiro asks him if he has any friends or family he can return to rather than terrorizing the bathhouse; he says, "No, no. I'm lonely. I'm lonely" (01:33:38). Whereas Chihiro has learned that there can be comfort in eating, for that is what made her tangible again and gave her the strength to carry on after the trauma of the beginning of the movie, No Face takes this comfort to the extreme, consuming to fill his inner

emptiness and transforming into a monster in the process. Like with Chihiro's parents, consuming for the wrong reasons has negative transformative effects.

As noted with *Alice*, food in fiction—and especially in “Wonderland”—also serves a social purpose. Alice eating alone when she first entered Wonderland symbolized her loss of social basis, for she did not understand anything about the world she had entered. Chihiro, on the other hand, has been shown eating in the company of others (Haku, mostly, but also Lin), thus conveying that Chihiro has discovered a new social basis as she performs her role within the bathhouse. In regard to No Face, his cannibalistic tendencies often occur in isolation, but he eats the “normal” food while surrounded by the bathhouse denizens. With his situation, it is necessary to note that while he eats this food, he is being served or gawked at, so he is not enjoying a meal with friends or family but gorging himself among people he has no real connection with. When No Face exhibits his cannibalistic side in front of the bathhouse workers, their attempts to woo him into giving them more gold turn into serving him so that he is appeased and does not eat them as well. In this case, No Face is a prime example of the “you are what you eat” categorization derived from folklore. As he feasts on the denizens of the bathhouse, he takes in their greed, demanding more food and attention, especially from Chihiro.

Hansen finds that “Chihiro's confrontation with the bathhouse intruder [No Face] can likewise be understood as a war against appetite and desire that she heroically wins by making [No Face] regurgitate the massive amounts of food it has consumed” (63). Rather than viewing this as an all-out “war against appetite,” this seems more like a battle against over-consumption and the monstrous form that results from it. Chihiro's character does not advocate against eating, despite her anorexic reaction in the beginning portion of the film. There are multiple moments in the film where she takes comfort in food, such as the example I provided where Haku gives her

the onigiri. The point here for Chihiro is to expel this corrupted form that No Face has taken on, which can only be done through making him eat the bad-tasting dumpling that she received from the “stink spirit.” This causes him to regurgitate all the food he consumed as a way to fill the lonely void within him and also makes him leave the bathhouse. Just as entering the bathhouse required Chihiro to leave behind her original identity and become Sen, being in the bathhouse has caused No Face to abandon his original quiet, phantom form and become a monster.

Chihiro has also caused Haku to regurgitate something he has eaten, for that object was quite literally a curse. In the case with Haku, Chihiro banished a corrupted food object from his body, thus inciting a positive change since he was no longer affected by the object’s curse, which made it so he was under the control of Yubaba, who placed the curse on him in the first place. In vomiting up the cursed seal, Haku was freed, and thus able to regain his own identity, as indicated later in the film, when Chihiro helps him remember his true name. Giving No Face and Haku the magic dumpling promotes the notion that certain foods, like the onigiri, are necessary for a positive metamorphosis. As Napier says, “The message is obvious: it is through swallowing unpleasant medicine rather than indiscriminate gorging that the characters can develop and change” (“Matter Out of Place” 306).

Although ingestion and transformation play out in different ways in *Alice* and *Spirited Away*, both have a similar effect on the identities of the young female protagonists. For Alice, her identity becomes distorted as her body changes, as can be seen in the anxiety she exhibits in these transformations as well as how the creatures of Wonderland react to her body. Because Alice is the creator of Wonderland since it is her dream that unfolds in the story, the frightened and negative reactions of its inhabitants are extensions of how she views her own body and the changes it undergoes. Only through controlling her own growth without the aid of constant

ingestion does Alice finally seem to draw courage and strength from within, despite her “distorted” form. In Chihiro’s case, her identity is literally taken from her, but through the measured consumption of food, she maintains mental fortitude, which allows her to remember her true self and uncover the original selves of other characters within the story. Chihiro nearly disappears out of fear of food, but in coming to understand that the danger is in over-consumption and not necessarily in the food itself, her relationship with eating improves, and she, like Alice, draws courage from within. Alice’s transformations are very physical, reflecting the Victorian Era’s discomfort with the changing female form and how she overcomes that. Chihiro’s transformation is much more psychological as she finds emotional support through the social links she forms in her “Wonderland,” which she could not obtain through her neglectful parents. The changing relationship that these girls experience with food in “Wonderland” aligns with their shifting identities as girls that are growing up. In understanding how ingestion affects them both physically and emotionally, the anxieties they have concerning social and physical change are worked through and overcome in these alternate realms.

### Chapter 3: Female Antagonists in “Wonderland”

While young girls are often the protagonists of stories featuring the “Wonderland” trope, adult women are often the antagonists they face off against in these tales. For instance, the figure that causes trouble for Dorothy on her journey in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is the Wicked Witch of the West, who is determined that she neither reach Oz, nor return home to Kansas; in *Coraline*, the Other Mother takes on the form of Coraline’s real mother in her attempts to devour Coraline’s life and imprison her soul, thus allowing her to carry on living and doing the same to other children; and the main antagonistic figure in the first Narnia book, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, is the tyrannical White Witch, who has cast a spell that keeps the world in an endless winter and is prophesized to be overthrown by the Pevensie children. Each of these examples shows a woman in a position of great, practically one-dimensional evil—but also that of immense power above any other figure in that “Wonderland.”

Because this chapter will focus on the adult female antagonists’ link to the young girl protagonists, expanding from just a girls’ studies angle to a feminist approach is essential to this analysis. The fact that these protagonists are not women *yet* but will eventually develop into women illuminates how young girls are prepared for their future “feminine” position in patriarchal societies. According to Tyson’s analysis of the classic fairytales *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Cinderella*, “In all three tales, the main female characters are stereotyped as either ‘good girls’ (gentle, submissive, virginal, angelic) or ‘bad girls’ (violent, aggressive, worldly, monstrous). These characterizations imply that if a woman does not accept her patriarchal gender role, then the only role left for her is that of a monster” (88). Though Alice and Chihiro cannot be said to fall under the “good girl” stereotype that Tyson discusses, the antagonists of their stories—the Queen of Hearts and Yubaba—certainly perform the “bad girl”

stereotype to some degree. This causes tension between the portrayal of these antagonists as simplistic evildoers and the fact that they are also significantly powerful beings in their worlds. While they are characterized as the malicious obstacle the young girl protagonist must overcome, these women are also clearly shown as holding the most authority in their respective “Wonderlands.” Because authority is considered a masculine trait in the context of the patriarchy, it is of interest that these women have obtained such powerful roles.

Here, it is necessary to reiterate the notion of the ideal Victorian girl, especially in regard to how this relates to the presence of the female antagonist in *Alice*. According to Driscoll, the ideal Victorian girl was one that was “innocent, gentle, and self-sacrificing” (qtd. in 36); intriguingly enough, these same characteristics fall under the “good girl” category that Tyson discusses in her feminist analysis of fairy tales. With this in mind, the Queen of Hearts embodies basically the opposite of this ideal, as she fits under the “bad girl” stereotype. For one, the Queen of Hearts is an adult woman, thus already making it impossible for her to fulfill this ideal; as Silver notes from Deborah Gorham’s study of Victorian girlhood, “because the middle- and upper-class Victorian woman was supposed to retain aspects of childishness into maturity, the Victorian girl was theoretically already an ideal woman” (52). So, as a full-grown woman, the Queen of Hearts is already excluded from consideration for this ideal, since Alice, a young girl, already falls into it. With the Queen as the major obstacle Alice must face, this antagonism speaks to a deeper fear of growing up, as in doing so, Alice will no longer fit this ideal. In this way, the Queen’s role as antagonist is furthered by her complete unconformity to the real-life ideal at the time and how her adulthood also shows that Alice too will grow up eventually.

While I will mainly be discussing the Queen of Hearts for *Alice*, looking at the character of the Duchess whom Alice encounters before her main antagonist appears, is necessary.

Although the Duchess does not hold the same power in Wonderland as the Queen, her violent, tyrannical behavior gives the reader an early glimpse of what the Queen, the only other woman figure we encounter in this world, is also like. Alice encounters the Duchess after following a Fish-Footman who delivers the Duchess's invitation for the Queen's croquet game to her Frog-Footman. In this scene, Alice enters the home—more particularly, the kitchen—of the Duchess, and Cătălina Bălinișteanu notes, “The domestic sphere is derided...” (72); Alice finds that the air is filled with smoke and pepper, the Duchess and her cook start flinging pots and pans at one another, and the Duchess even throws her own child at Alice. Judith Bloomingdale observes that this encounter is a part of Alice's progression toward womanhood and becoming more maternal, as she “rescues the Duchess's rejected baby” (Little 198) after it is thrown; though, Judith Little, who views Alice as going against the domestic sphere, disagrees—as do I—because in this situation, the child is lobbed at her, giving her little choice other than to catch it. Not only that, but upon realizing that the baby she holds is actually a pig, Alice thinks to herself that some children she knows back in the real world “might do very well as pigs” (Carroll 73), which is not a very maternal thought.

Though, to focus more on the Duchess, not only does the derision of the domestic realm display this contempt toward the patriarchal world, and thus seem to align her with the antagonistic role of the Queen, but so does the violence she demonstrates. When the cook begins flinging the pots and pans at the Duchess, and Alice intervenes to speak to the Duchess, the Duchess says, “chop off her head!” (Carroll 71). She says this long before the reader witnesses the Queen infamously shouting this order or hears of the Queen saying it through the gossip of her subjects. Additionally, because this interaction takes place within the household, which both in history in general, but also specifically in the Victorian Era, is considered the woman's realm,

the Duchess is placed as the most powerful figure in this scene, as is the Queen as the monarch of Wonderland. Alice's first encounter with the Duchess character provides a preview of the "bad girl" archetype that will also be shown in the Queen of Hearts later on, as the Duchess takes on violent behavior within her household, even going as far as to throw her own child. This is not necessarily contrasted with a "good girl" protagonist, as Alice is also neither gentle nor angelic, but nevertheless, the Duchess and Queen remain unsympathetic "bad girls."

Immediately upon meeting the Queen, Alice witnesses her hostile, tyrannical behavior and her performance of the "bad girl" stereotype. When Alice finally makes it to the garden she has been trying to reach, she comes across the Queen's croquet grounds, where a procession of royals gathers for a game. The Queen asks Alice her name and the name of the nearby gardeners, to which Alice says, "How should *I* know [...] It's no business of *mine*." (Carroll 93). In response to this, the Queen screams, "Off with her head!" (93). Already, the "bad girl" nature of this antagonist is exhibited: her violent/aggressive personality comes through her immediate jump to demanding an execution simply because Alice spoke out against her; as the Queen, she also represents the worldly aspect Tyson describes in these "bad girls," since she is the ruler of this world, thus meaning she interacts with the subjects and dignitaries from other lands (the procession does include other Kings and Queens), making her worldly; and the monstrous aspect that Tyson mentions is shown through the description of the Queen as she calls for Alice's decapitation—Carroll compares her glare to "a wild beast" (93).

In regard to this monstrous aspect under the "bad girl" stereotype, this representation of the Queen is taken further in the images that accompany the story. John Tenniel's illustrations that depict the Queen constantly portray her with a scowl and a heavily shadowed, masculine face. With the example of the royal procession in the Queen's croquet grounds, this is especially

apparent since the Queen is illustrated next to other royal card characters (Carroll 94). Whereas the Queen is shown with shadowed eyes and a scowl, the other figures around her (all of which are men, save for Alice, but her face cannot be seen) have unshadowed features and calmer expressions. This contrast is also especially noticeable during the trial scene; another illustration puts the King of Hearts and the Queen right next to each other, furthering the distinction between the two. While the King has a more simplistic, cartoonish face, the Queen's features are more detailed, and of course, angrier. According to Garland, "the Queen of Hearts mirrors, in many ways, the British Queen Victoria, with John Tenniel's illustrations bearing a particular resemblance to her" (29). Perhaps, in adding further detail to the Queen's features than any other character, this is done to draw a connection to the real-world ruler and the Wonderland ruler as both hold immense power in patriarchal worlds.

In an article that looks at the anti-feminist elements of *Alice*, the author, Flair Donglai Shi, argues that Alice's demonstration of unfeminine characteristics does not automatically mean that Carroll was a feminist, but rather shows his aversion to adult women and his belief that growing up leads to the corruption of girlhood. Looking at the Queen of Hearts, scholars typically think of her as representing "the authoritarianism that rules Wonderland and symbolizes the paternalistic, dictating way Victorian adults would treat their children in reality" (Shi 187); on the other hand, Shi finds that this interpretation should be challenged, as Alice remains fixed in the rationality of the real-world, never completely letting herself become free from it within the nonsensical nature of Wonderland (188). Shi says, "the antagonism between Alice and the adult women in [*Alice*] can be read as the male author's simultaneously pedophilic and misogynistic attempt to defend his sexual desire towards the innocence of girlhood against the perceived corruptive influence of adult womanhood" (189). As discussed in Chapter 1, there is

no actual evidence of pedophilic tendencies in Carroll, and he did have connections to adult women, as some of his letters suggest “he had a keen interest in women” (Woolf). Though, Carroll also states in his letters that girls—not women—are his ideal form (Silver 79); so there is certainly tension between the women of Wonderland and young Alice, as these women are “bad girls” that go against patriarchal values, while Alice, though not a “good girl,” is still a young girl, thus still able to fit this patriarchal ideal. These adult women come off as monstrous, for they no longer retain the features of girlhood, fitting neither Carroll’s nor Victorian society’s ideal.

Even with the intimidating authority that the Queen of Hearts exudes, the absence of any actual harm to those she demands executed must also be discussed. One example that sticks out is when the Queen orders for the execution of all the subjects that annoy her during the game of croquet. By the end, “all the players, except the King, the Queen, and Alice, were in custody and under sentence of execution” (Carroll 106). Once the Queen decides to have Alice meet the Mock Turtle, the King pardons every person that was to be executed after the Queen has walked off. Even though it is clear that the Queen exerts great power in this world, this scene seems to suggest an undermining of her power. Though the King has been portrayed as the meeker and weaker ruler, he goes behind her back to pardon these creatures; while his gesture can apply to his fear of her, since he does do this when she is not there, this also shows that he can override her rule, since he can pardon them. In the words of Tyson:

In all three tales, the ‘bad girls’—the wicked queen in ‘Snow White,’ the wicked fairy in ‘Sleeping Beauty,’ and the wicked stepmother and stepsisters in ‘Cinderella’—are also vain, petty, and jealous, infuriated because they are not as beautiful as the main character or, in the case of the wicked fairy, because she wasn’t invited to a royal celebration. Such motivations imply that even when women are evil, their concerns are trivial. (88)

In this same way, the Queen of Hearts is in a bad mood because of her competitiveness in the croquet game, thus exhibiting, like these other woman antagonists, trivial concerns that present her in an evil one-dimensional light. So, while the King seems justified in his actions, the Queen always seems irrational in her own due to her petty reasoning.

With the portrayal of the Queen of Hearts as trivial and violent, yet also authoritative, what does that mean for Alice, as she witnesses this woman in power? Because much of Alice's journey has been facilitated without the influence of the Queen, for her main concern has been her own size changes as she ingests and transforms in Wonderland, she has, in a sense, gained mastery over herself before encountering this woman. For one, her instinct to react to the Queen's question about who the gardeners are with the impolite response of "How should *I* know?" already shows that unlike the inhabitants of Wonderland, she does not fear this woman, despite her status as monarch. Alice also recognizes, more than once, that the royals and their retinue are just "a pack of cards" (Carroll 66, 187). So, rather than viewing the Queen as an authority figure, or even a role model, she sees her as merely a card, thus unthreatening to her as she reaches the end of her journey. When she finally speaks out against the Queen and the proceedings during the trial scene, her outburst is not done out of anger, but out of frustration over the Queen's petty behavior and the nonsense proceedings. Because the Queen takes no part in the overall shaping of Alice in this world, and Alice already recognizes her petty, tyrannical behavior for what it is, this young girl protagonist remains uncorrupted by the nature of the world of the adult woman antagonist. Despite Alice's size changes, she never actually grows up in the story, and she does not learn much from these monstrous women; because of this lack of growth, she remains in girlhood, and the tension between adult woman and young girl never gets resolved, since Alice wakes up from her dream before that can ever happen.

Like the Queen of Hearts, Yubaba takes on the role of the grown woman antagonist in Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*. According to Noriko Reider, who examines the Japanese folk symbols present in the film:

Many critics have pointed out the similarity between Yubaba and the Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland*. Indeed, Andō Masahi, the art director of *Spirited Away*, states, "In our previous project, ... Yubaba... was drawn as a grotesque character, the kind that might appear in the illustrations of *Alice in Wonderland*." Yubaba's appearance and demeanor, the very way she commands her minion workforce, is reminiscent of Lewis Carroll's Queen of Hearts character. (11)

While Yubaba does take on aspects of the "bad girl" stereotype that align her with the Queen of Hearts, unlike that character, she is represented more complexly; meanwhile, the Queen of Hearts and the other adult women antagonists mentioned briefly throughout this chapter are portrayed as petty and more one-dimensional. Yubaba does not really exhibit any violence in her behavior, whereas the Queen of Hearts appears to scream about chopping someone's head off in every scene she is a part of in Carroll's story. Though, as seen in Yubaba's first encounter with Chihiro, her character does have an aggressive dimension. When the boiler man, Kamaji, refuses to hire Chihiro, she must then go directly to Yubaba to obtain a job. Just as she grasps the door handle that leads to Yubaba's office, the knocker on the door, which greatly resembles Yubaba's face, says, "Aren't you even going to knock? You're the most pathetic little girl I've ever seen." (00:35:00). Despite insulting her, she still allows the doors to open for Chihiro and casts a spell to make Chihiro come forward after she hesitates. This spell practically flings Chihiro into Yubaba's office, leading her to faceplant onto her carpeted floor.

When Chihiro asks about being given a job, Yubaba casts another spell that zips Chihiro's lips so she can finish her paperwork; she then tries to frighten Chihiro by suggesting she might turn her into a pig like her parents, or a lump of coal, and then unzips her lips to see if Chihiro will disclose who helped her get as far as she did in the bathhouse. Chihiro again

requests a job, which enrages Yubaba, causing papers and other objects to fly off of her desk, and her voice briefly changes to a deeper, more sinister one. Yubaba flies across the room and lands directly in front of Chihiro, pounding a sharp finger into the young girl's stomach as she calls her a "lazy, spoiled crybaby" (00:37:54) and threatens to give her the worst job available and work her to death. Before she can further intimidate Chihiro, her infant son starts crying, and Yubaba's demeanor changes from scary witch woman to doting mother as she coos at her child to get him to calm down. Chihiro again requests a job, and finally, Yubaba agrees.

Although Yubaba figuratively stands in Chihiro's way as she tries to prevent her from getting a job and is the one who turned her parents into pigs, her villainy is not done out of pettiness or just for the sake of being evil. Rather, as Yubaba mentions in this scene, the food that her parents ate was meant for the spirits, so she punished them for taking what was not theirs in the first place. Even the aggression she displays in trying to scare Chihiro away is thwarted by the fact that her baby son lives in the next room over, so when she comforts him, Chihiro—and the viewers of the film—can directly watch, thus seeing that this antagonistic nature she originally exhibited is not all there is to her. Reider also brings up the connections between Yubaba and the Japanese folk figure known as a yamauba—a mountain witch. Like the yamauba, Yubaba is depicted as an old woman, has supernatural abilities, and (despite being older) has a baby son (Reider 11-12). Although yamauba are mountain-dwellers while Yubaba resides in the bathhouse, Reider says that "mountains are often the entry-point to the realm where the *oni* and *yōkai* live... Likewise, the environment of Yubaba's bathhouse is a locus of the other world where all the supernatural beings come to relax and unwind" (14). Further, Yubaba's location at the top floor of the bathhouse reflects the hierarchal nature of Japanese society, thus architecturally showing her as the commander of operations in the bathhouse, with all her

employees beneath her (Reider 14). As Napier notes, “The fact that it is ruled by a woman who resides at the top of the bathhouse hints at links to the matriarchal culture of early Japan...” (“Matter Out of Place” 300). So, like the Queen of Hearts and these other female antagonists, she is in fact the most powerful figure in her “Wonderland;” even so, her antagonistic behavior is not represented as evil, but is shown more complexly than that of other female antagonists featured in the Wonderland trope.

In Ando Satoshi’s article, which traces some of the similarities between *Spirited Away* and *Alice* as stories about girls coming of age, he discusses how Yubaba can be viewed as a sort of mother figure to Chihiro. Satoshi states, “Masashi Shimizu (2001) points out that this is a process of Chihiro’s death and rebirth, and that Yubaba, an avaricious witch and manager of the bath-house, fills the role of her mother for her rebirth. Here the spoilt child Chihiro dies and is led to be reborn as a devoted and loving adolescent through performing her duties” (26). Whereas Victorian culture put an emphasis on the retention of childish innocence into adulthood, here more importance is placed on maturing beyond childishness as Chihiro is put to work. Although Yubaba is largely driven by profits, her character does not do evil simply for the sake of it. This is especially notable when the stink spirit comes to the bathhouse; the sludge-covered entity disrupts the workings of the bathhouse as employees scramble to prepare for its arrival, and Yubaba gives this particular client to Chihiro, which will be the first spirit she has ever bathed while on the job. Evidently a gross task, as the spirit’s stench is visually underscored through characters covering their noses and their hair standing on edge, the fact that Yubaba assigns this job to Chihiro does speak to her role as the story’s antagonist. Even so, while Chihiro deals with the brunt of the stink spirit’s sludge and stench, Yubaba does not completely leave her to her own devices. Rather, when Chihiro calls out that she thinks there is a thorn in the

stink spirit's side, Yubaba literally leaps in to help, recruiting the rest of the bathhouse staff to also make an effort in getting the thorn out. At first, having Chihiro be the one to deal with the stink spirit does seem like a way to "haze the newbie" in a sense, but as Satoshi brings up in this notion of Yubaba as the mother overseeing Chihiro's rebirth, this can also be viewed as a difficult task given to Chihiro for the purpose of her overcoming it. Especially because Yubaba suspects that this stink spirit is not normal (and he indeed turns out to be a river god), this task is given more as a trial in the sense of a sort of, as Emerson puts it, heroic "quest" (142), instead of just a task given for the purpose of showing Yubaba as a one-dimensional antagonistic figure. Through this trial, Chihiro proves herself as a hard worker, and Yubaba and the other bathhouse workers pitch in to help her see the task through.

Another important element of Yubaba's complexity is her identical twin sister, Zeniba. Because Zeniba looks exactly like Yubaba, even down to her attire and the rings she has adorning her fingers, she quite literally acts as her double, showing both the audience and Chihiro that there is more to Yubaba than her greed and prickly attitude. To further draw from Reider, "Yamauba is regularly portrayed in an unflattering manner, but one of yamauba's lesser-known traits is her nurturing character, often associated with motherhood" (12). In this sense, the way that Yubaba is portrayed—with her materialism and antagonistic ways—is the unflattering side of the yamauba, while Zeniba exhibits the yamauba's more motherly side (though this side is also hinted at in Yubaba, as shown when she comforts her baby son).

The contrast between Yubaba and Zeniba is apparent from the moment Chihiro meets Zeniba; Chihiro, No Face, Yubaba's baby (who has been transformed into a mouse), and Yubaba's harpy (which is now a small bug-like bird), by this point in the film, have traveled to Swamp Bottom to return the seal Haku stole from Zeniba and apologize on his behalf. When

they reach her doorway, it opens at their arrival, and Zeniba's soft, nurturing voice says, "Come in" (01:47:59). Interestingly, Chihiro and the audience hears Zeniba's voice before actually seeing that she looks exactly like Yubaba, so the first impression given off is not that she is Yubaba's identical twin and is thus probably similar to her sister in temperament, but rather that she is a kindly old woman unlike her sister. This notion is furthered by the fact that she offers Chihiro and company tea, and when the scene cuts forward to them all sitting at Zeniba's kitchen table, there are cakes and other treats present (01:49:38). Although Zeniba does not know how Chihiro can help Haku and her parents, she offers her advice—"Once you've met someone, you never really forget them. It just takes a while for your memories to return" (01:50:14)—and gives Chihiro time to think in the comfort of her cottage, while she and the others make Chihiro a sparkling hair tie. Not only that, but she also tells Chihiro to call her "granny," therefore solidifying this nurturing, motherly dimension in Zeniba and implying one within Yubaba.

After thinking things over at Zeniba's cottage, Chihiro realizes that the answers she was searching for were within her all along, as per Zeniba's advice. At the near end of her journey, Yubaba gives her one final trial in which she must discern which of the pigs in front of her are her parents. Whereas once Chihiro would tremble before Yubaba, intimidated by her demeanor and threats to turn her into coal, at this final trial, she stands confident, marching up to Yubaba and saying, "Okay, I'm ready" (01:56:45). Chihiro gained this confidence over the course of her journey in this "Wonderland" as she underwent different trials and tribulations—a lot of which were, like this last one, administered by Yubaba herself. So, not only has Yubaba been an antagonistic figure for Chihiro, but because of this antagonism, she has had a hand in facilitating the young girl's transformation. Once Chihiro met Zeniba and realized there was more to Yubaba than her rough exterior, she stops viewing Yubaba as this solely negative figure—she

even calls Yubaba “granny” to the latter’s surprise—and is now prepared to finally leave the spirit realm. Because she now comprehends this complexity, she “can address the pig puzzle calmly without emotional stress which could interfere with her intuition” (Emerson 143), and she passes, meaning she can finally leave. The spoiled child that Chihiro was upon entering this realm has transformed, with Yubaba’s guidance, into a more mature, hard-working, and empathetic person, that is now better prepared to face the real world.

Although both *Alice* and *Spirited Away* feature adult female antagonists who act as the highest authority figure in their particular “Wonderlands,” these antagonists carry out their roles in different ways. Fitting quite well under the “bad girl” stereotype that Tyson discusses, the Queen of Hearts is a tyrannical ruler portrayed in a further unflattering manner by both Carroll’s description of her and Tenniel’s illustrations, with the Duchess character foreshadowing her antagonism. The Queen’s role as a sort of “monster” in this narrative also points to the notion of the ideal Victorian girl, in that she can never fully achieve this ideal as an adult woman and is thus cast as the villain. Because she enters the story after Alice has gained mastery over herself by understanding how to control her transformations, her antagonistic role is more of a last irritant that Alice must deal with rather than an overarching obstacle throughout the narrative. Despite holding high authority over Wonderland as its ruler, she holds little influence over Alice, who is impolite to her upon their first meeting and ultimately defies her in the final trial. Even with this defiance, Alice wakes up before the real tension between adult woman and young girl can be resolved, thereby keeping her firmly in girlhood, uncorrupted by the influence of the monstrous Queen, an adult woman.

On the other hand, Yubaba, who seems to fulfill the “bad girl” stereotype at first, is actually a more multifaceted character. Her intimidation of Chihiro is undermined when she

comforts her crying son, as this motherly side also alludes to her connection to the Japanese folk character, the yamauba; despite making Chihiro bathe the stink spirit, she jumps in to help when Chihiro tries to get the thorn out of his side; and her identical twin sister, Zeniba, acts as her double by showing both the audience and Chihiro a more positive side to her character. Yubaba's presence is necessary in this story and in this "Wonderland" to facilitate the growth of Chihiro, because without the obstacles she sets up for her, Chihiro would not have learned how to grow in the face of adversity. In learning under this matriarch, Chihiro has become a more mature and caring person, which may not have been possible back in Japan's patriarchal reality. Therefore, when portrayed one-dimensionally, the adult female antagonist cannot really offer much in terms of development for the young girl protagonist, as seen in *Alice*; but when rendered in a complex manner, like Yubaba, the young girl protagonist has a chance to learn and grow from the obstacles she encounters.

## Conclusion

In writing this thesis, I set out to examine the Wonderland trope in the children's fantasy genre, specifically in how it pertains to stories that feature young female protagonists. To do this, I focus on Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, as this novel is responsible for the popularization of this trope, and Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*, since this film is a more recent example of the trope and has received universal acclaim. In each of my chapters, I examine different patterns within this trope, such as how these stories that feature young girls as protagonists are often written by men, how they show food or the act of ingesting as an action that can lead to transformation, and the fact that adult women are often the antagonists of these narratives. The trope's patterns have notably evolved from how they are featured in *Alice* to their more modern portrayal in *Spirited Away*.

With the first chapter, I use Mulvey's concept of the male gaze in cinema and apply it to Carroll's and Miyazaki's presence as the creators of these stories that focus on young girls. With Carroll, there are implications of discomfort with growing up, as he puts Alice through nightmarish situations, such as the distortions that her body undergoes during her journey. Understanding this through the male gaze and Robson's discussion of the "feminized" Victorian childhood, I find that Carroll's discomfort as enacted upon Alice likely comes from his own uneasiness concerning his male adulthood, as well as his distaste regarding the adult female form, since it represents the loss of young girlhood. Despite the discomfort he projects upon Alice, she never becomes a passive object of the gaze, as she actively participates in her journey by figuring her way out of the frightening situations she encounters. Meanwhile, Miyazaki's gaze does not occur out of the desire to preserve childhood, but rather to instruct and encourage action in what he considers an ignorant and unfeeling society. Chihiro resists a possibly

objectifying gaze through her androgynous presentation and the active role she takes in the narrative, even in the face of the trauma thrown at her. Although Chihiro does fulfill the traditionally feminine role of caretaker in being the one to help No Face and Haku, this is not shown as “women’s work,” but rather as how one should offer help to others and take help when it is offered. Although the implications of these gazes ultimately differ, both creators use their “Wonderland” settings as places to work through this trauma related to growing up.

Then, in the second chapter, I examine the relationship between ingestion and transformation, in regard to how it effects the identities of the young girl protagonists. Both Alice and Chihiro experience disordered eating as an emotional response to the environmental change they undergo. As Alice’s body becomes distorted after eating, her perception of her own identity becomes distorted as well, which is further perpetuated in how the creatures of Wonderland react to her. In finally gaining control over her growth, Alice becomes more secure in her identity and is able to use her size changes to her advantage. Unlike Alice, Chihiro eats nothing at first when she enters her “Wonderland,” and nearly disappears because of it, enacting an anorexic response. Once she understands that food can be a source of comfort—a sort of medicine for one’s soul—she then becomes an agent for the expulsion of corruption in the characters No Face and Haku, making them regurgitate malignant food through ingesting a bitter yet healing medicine. When Alice and Chihiro understand how ingestion effects them physically and emotionally, they are able to work through their anxieties surrounding their social and physical changes, and thus overcome them in “Wonderland.”

For the final chapter, I draw from Tyson’s fairytale analysis, examining her “bad girl” concept with regard to the adult female antagonists—the Queen of Hearts and Yubaba. As a petty and violent ruler, the Queen of Hearts fits pretty well under Tyson’s “bad girl” villain

archetype. The Queen's monstrous role makes sense, because she neither fits within Carroll's ideal girlhood nor under the Victorian Era's ideal woman, which was technically also a young girl since the perfect woman was to maintain childishness into adulthood. Because she is suited to neither of these patriarchal standards, Carroll portrays her as a shrill monster, and Alice does not learn much from her, for her introduction comes late in the story and her one-dimensionality does not offer much beyond her villainous role. Although Alice speaks out against the Queen in the end trial, she awakens from this dream before any real confrontation takes place, thus rendering Alice (and her girlhood) unaffected by the Queen (and adult womanhood).

While the Queen of Hearts remains one-dimensional, Yubaba, even in fulfilling the "bad girl" stereotype to some extent, has far more complexity and narrative influence. Her antagonistic antics are consistently undermined by the motherly tendencies she exhibits, which are further alluded to through her connection to the Japanese folk character, the yamauba. Yubaba's matriarchal character is necessary to the facilitation of Chihiro's growth into a more mature person. In finally recognizing Yubaba's complex nature by meeting her sister Zeniba, Chihiro and the audience come to recognize Yubaba's role as a mother—or grandmother—figure to Chihiro in this realm. When rendered one-dimensional, the adult female antagonist presents not much more than an obstacle for the young girl protagonist; but when her depiction is given complexity, this antagonist offers the protagonist a chance to grow and overcome, helping her reach maturity.

Altogether, the patterns under the Wonderland trope are the same, but how they are carried out in each text is different. Carroll's Alice is an active heroine, who becomes more self-assured by the end of the story; even so, Carroll's projection of his ideals concerning girlhood can still be found, providing a sort of restriction around Alice as she firmly remains a child.

Miyazaki's Chihiro is also an active protagonist in *Spirited Away*, becoming similarly more self-confident by the end of the film. While Miyazaki does project his idea of how young girls should act onto Chihiro, this projection does not stunt her growth; rather, it enables her to develop into a mature, empathetic person that is prepared for the obstacles she will face back in the real world. Both "Wonderlands" do facilitate the growth of their young female protagonists, but while Carroll's mourning of lost girlhood prevents Alice from completely transforming, Miyazaki's advocacy for maturity empowers Chihiro to reach her full potential.

Both *Alice* and *Spirited Away* are female bildungsroman, as they show the female coming of age experience. There are plenty of male examples of this in literature, as seen in Ancient Greece through *The Odyssey*'s Telemachus or in modern times through Luke Skywalker and Harry Potter. But with *Alice* and *Spirited Away*, as well as other fantasy stories featuring the Wonderland trope, there is a movement toward depicting female rites of passage rather than focusing on male ones. As my study lays out the patterns of the Wonderland trope in stories about girls, my findings extend the conversation of girls' studies to the fantasy context, since elements concerning men viewing girls, female body image, and the transition to adult womanhood are all present in these tales. My conclusion demonstrates that the transformations these girls experience, mental and physical alike, must be recognized and embraced for them to truly reach their coming of age.

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