Dossier: Social Markers of Difference, Social Movements, and Creative Economy

I make my destiny: an analysis of the social marker of gender in the film *Alice in Wonderland*

Eu faço meu destino: uma análise do marcador social de gênero no filme Alice no País das Maravilhas

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ABSTRACT

The article analyzed the representation of women in Tim Burton's film *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) through the scene where the protagonist, Alice, receives a marriage proposal. The aim was to understand how the social marker of gender operates in this narrative from the producer's perspective and what the underlying message of the plot is for contemporary times. To achieve this, Textual Analysis and Image Analysis were applied as methodologies, both studied within Film Analysis. The analysis focused on the positioning of the character Alice in the scene observed. In this work, it was possible to observe that the social marker of gender appears in the way women are depicted as subordinate and tasked with becoming homemakers, prioritizing the needs of others over their own interests — something that the protagonist, Alice, disrupts throughout her journey.

Keywords: Social markers of difference. Gender. Cinema. Alice in Wonderland. Film analysis.

RESUMO

O artigo analisa a representação da mulher no filme Alice no País das Maravilhas *(2010), de Tim Burton, por meio da cena do pedido de casamento recebido por Alice. O objetivo é entender como o marcador social de gênero atua nessa narrativa e qual a mensagem oculta no enredo para os dias atuais. Para isso, foram aplicadas como metodologia a Análise Textual e a Análise da Imagem, ambas estudadas pela Análise Fílmica. Como categorias de análise, foi observado o posicionamento da personagem na cena. No filme, nota-se que o marcador de gênero surge na forma como a mulher é subordinada e destinada a se tornar dona do lar, colocando os desejos alheios à frente dos seus, algo que a protagonista Alice interrompe ao longo de sua jornada.*

Palavras-chave: Marcadores sociais da diferença. Gênero. Cinema. Alice no País das Maravilhas. Análise fílmica.

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INTRODUCTION

Entertainment has the potential to shape public perception, as the media provides content that often seeks to influence attitudes and consumption behaviors, particularly through audiovisual formats. According to Kellner (2001, p. 11), "the public can resist dominant meanings and messages, create their own interpretations, and develop their own ways of engaging with mass culture." In this context, *Alice in Wonderland*, released in 2010, offers audiences, especially female viewers, a unique opportunity to interpret and relate to the themes presented in the story. This is particularly significant as the narrative addresses issues that resonate with women, allowing communication to foster a sense of connection and identification.

In Tim Burton's film, Alice (portrayed by Mia Wasikowska) is depicted as a young woman caught between two worlds. She grapples with the challenges of real life while also embarking on the mission of saving Wonderland from the oppressive rule of the Red Queen. The heroine's journey centers around her quest to discover her own identity, free from the influence of others dictating how she should live her life.

The discussion surrounding Alice's role in the narrative highlights how the protagonist overcomes situations that challenge her courage and self-confidence. This article, a segment of the final course research, examines Alice's experience in the real world, particularly her obligation to accept an arranged marriage. In the Victorian Era, marriage was viewed as the ultimate "happy ending" for English society, especially among the bourgeoisie, who regarded it as a key mechanism for social stability and well-being. In this context, a woman married to a royal man was expected to be happy, socially respected, and serve as a model of family life, with the husband as the head of the household. The wife's role was primarily to bear children, and the children themselves were seen as a symbol of a stable union filled with social privileges (Zolin, 2010; Fabrício, 2015; Lopes, 1986).

To understand how marriage holds different significance for men and women, it is essential to consider gender as a social marker of difference. According to Zamboni (2014), gender plays a crucial role in shaping much of an individual's identity. The concept of social markers of difference is rooted in power dynamics and political hierarchies, where those deemed inferior or unworthy of occupying certain spaces are excluded from a pattern that benefits those in positions of power (Zamboni, 2014).

Accordingly, Mello and Gonçalves (2010, p. 3) point out that:

> These classification systems based on "social markers of difference" are social constructions that predate our birth — we did not create them — and they are articulated in ways that produce greater or lesser inclusion/exclusion, depending on how much they confront hegemonic social identities. Therefore, our position on the social map depends on our positions within the classification systems (stratification), what we represent (social roles), and the type of control exercised over us.

Thus, when individuals are placed into categories with which they do not identify, they are restricted from living in alignment with their own beliefs and thoughts. Within a discourse of domination, those who wield authority establish the rules, and compliance is often equated with being deemed sensible or worthy.

It is noteworthy that the term "social markers of difference" originated from academic observation when researchers recognized the need to examine issues related to race, gender, sexuality, and religion. However, even before this academic focus, various social movements advocating for struggle and representation, such as unions and feminist groups, played a significant role. Thus, to establish these markers as a legitimate area of academic study, it was crucial for individuals in vulnerable positions to value their voices and actively fight for their rights, publicly advocating for the collective good (Zamboni, 2014).

According to Zamboni (2014), it is not possible to specify the exact types or number of social markers, as all forms of identifying and classifying individuals with particular characteristics are collectively considered in this analysis. Zamboni explains that the way people relate to each other and assimilate knowledge promotes an exchange of experiences, which can influence others to varying degrees. This implies that the worldview of one group may align with that of another if both exist within a shared environment, encompassing similar thoughts, beliefs, ideologies, and so forth.

This construction of identity outlined by the social merchants of difference aligns with the purpose of cinema, as, according to Bernardet (2008), cinema has become a vehicle for disseminating numerous social issues. In this context, the research explores how cinema, as a cultural medium, facilitates reflection on social movements, even if presented in an anachronistic manner.

Given that gender is the central theme of this study, it is essential to clarify its role as a social marker of difference. Gender extends beyond an individual's biological characteristics, encompassing the identification of behaviors and personal interests. In other words, it reflects how a person identifies and defines themselves as a human being.

The debate around gender is extensive and complex, as it also encompasses the concept of "place of speech." According to Djamila Ribeiro (2019, p. 89), "thinking about place of speech would be breaking with the silence instituted for those who have been subalternized," meaning that those who experience oppression and discrimination should have the right to speak rather than merely listen. Indeed, there is no one better suited to discuss a subject than someone who has lived it firsthand.

When addressing gender issues, the concept of "place of speech" clarifies that when individuals position themselves socially and express aspects such as their sexual orientation, especially if it deviates from heteronormative standards, they are often judged by those who claim the authority to define what is socially acceptable. Furthermore, the concept of gender exposes the social construction of masculinity and femininity, which is rooted in hierarchical structures and the dominance of one over the other (Miguel; Biroli, 2014).

It can be inferred that Tim Burton, in adapting Lewis Carroll's original book published in 1865, intentionally included scenes such as the wedding to guide viewers toward a critical understanding of the societal norms of 19th-century England. Furthermore, these scenes suggest that the gender marker continues to influence contemporary society. In this context, the research focuses on Hamish's marriage proposal to Alice (from minutes 3 to 12). This analysis revealed that the gender marker is prominently represented in Burton's film, as it portrays power dynamics that favor the male gender and its imposition on the female gender. This is evident in the portrayal of Alice, a woman chosen to take on the responsibilities of the home, abandon her personal aspirations, and live according to the conditions imposed by her husband.

In light of the above, this study focused on gender inequality issues presented in the film *Alice in Wonderland* (2010). Using Film Analysis (Penafria, 2009) and complemented by Still Image Analysis (Mendes, 2019), the research examined the dialogues and the marriage proposal scene. The objective was to observe how the social marker of gender is represented in this particular episode, within the context of 19th-century British society. Additionally, the study aimed to explore how this marker transcends the historical period of the plot and resonates with contemporary society.

It is essential to recognize that when analyzing an audiovisual work, it must be considered that the production aims to reflect the society of the period it represents. Therefore, the work often addresses the thoughts, behaviors, and experiences of that time through its characters, costumes, and settings. However, the director, exercising artistic freedom, may use this historical representation to contextualize the current societal scenario in which the work is created. In this sense:

> [...] there are two interchangeable dimensions in the History-Cinema relationship: the historical reading of the film, in which the film is taken as a direct historical testimony of contemporary society, and the cinematic reading of history, in which films that address historical themes or figures offer an interpretation of the past, creating a parallel historical consciousness to History, but outside the analytical perspective inherent to it (Macedo; Mongelli, 2009, p. 20).

This contextualization is crucial for understanding this study, as the analyzed work portrays Victorian society's views on marriage. From Tim Burton's perspective, it not only addresses the decision to marry during that period but also highlights the ongoing oppression faced by women today, marked by the expectation that marriage is a necessary condition for happiness and the formation of a socially accepted family.

WOMEN AS A SOCIAL MARKER

In patriarchal societies, women were often labeled as being in service. This was the expectation for women in 19th-century England, also known as the Victorian Era. Under the rule of Queen Victoria, British society saw women primarily as individuals

who were meant to submit to household chores and family care. As a result, the social role of women as being in service was reinforced, with obedience to the husband, meekness, docility, and attention to clothing and posture being regarded as key virtues (Fabrício, 2015).

According to Zolin (2010), the Victorian Era was characterized by female indoctrination and discrimination, as women had no rights to intellectual property or the freedom to make decisions. Consequently, their social, financial, romantic, and other forms of independence were unthinkable. Additionally, women were subjected to arranged marriages, where families in British high society made agreements between their members. In these arrangements, the father, as the head of the family, often promised his daughter in marriage, frequently without her consent.

Throughout history, women have been confronted with the necessity of fighting for their rights, highlighting how society has created and maintained social roles assigned to the male and female genders in a binary manner.[1] The concept of social roles is based on the principle that society categorizes what is deemed appropriate for each gender. According to Goffman (2011), the social role is closely linked to how a person presents themselves, adopting a certain personality and allowing themselves to be represented in everyday life through characteristics that define their social identity. This identity, however, is not always recognized or valued, as the conservative patriarchal society seeks to limit the diverse forms of representation that individuals can experience.

Goffman (1988) further encourages reflection on what is deemed appropriate for women as a social standard, through the concept of stigma. As the author points out, stigma refers to the way society attributes prejudices to individuals, imposing characteristics that limit who they are or what they can become. As a result, individuals who do not conform to the established norms are often categorized as deviant and discredited. This concept is also tied to patriarchal and conservative societies, which reflect colonial thinking, where men are seen as the dominant gender and positioned as authority figures, while women are presented as beings destined to fulfill domestic roles.

Given the above and considering the current social context, it can be concluded that, in contemporary times, women are still stigmatized and associated with traditional social roles of mother, housewife, and wife. "Women have ovaries, a uterus; these are the unique conditions that enclose them in their subjectivity" (Beauvoir, 1970, p. 10). The ability of women to generate life confines them within the social context as their primary purpose. "The female organism, subjugating women to the reproductive function, would be one of the foundations on which women's subordination has been built" (Franchetto *et al*., 1981, p. 20).

To clarify the marker studied in this research — gender —, it is essential to consider the perspective of feminist authors. They argue that the application of this

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1   The term "gender" goes beyond the male and female binary. The acronym LGBTQIAPN+ reflects diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, including trans, *travestis*, and non-binary individuals, emphasizing the need to encompass all forms of human expression and representation.

concept reinforces a sexist and hierarchical structure in the social context, placing men in a position of superiority over women. From a post-structuralist perspective, Butler (2018, p. 54) states that "[...] gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory structure, which crystallizes over time to produce the appearance of a substance, of a natural class of being." In addressing performativity, the stereotype based on biological gender and binary differentiation helps maintain a system that ascribes to men and women behavior patterns considered inherent to their personalities.

Strathern (2006) and Scott (1986) share a similar perspective, concluding that categorizing individuals by gender labels reinforces the perception that men and women possess distinct individualities in social life. Therefore, when society classifies individuals by gender, it strengthens oppression, domination, and power, often perpetuated by the masculine, while automatically excluding other beings. This conflict, arising from resistance to gender classification, can only be understood through the study of history, as it clearly demonstrates how men have gained greater space and prominence in all spheres of social life (Beauvoir, 1970).

Women have been labeled as being at the service of this domination, as "in the case of women, there is no feminine model *per se*; women are what men are not" (Monteiro, 1998, p. 13). This supports Beauvoir's (1970) assertion that women are the "other" of men, that is, privileges and rights are granted to the male gender, while women are left with only the remnants of their condition as the shadow cast by the male mirror.

Stereotypes associated with the female gender have also been perpetuated and transmitted through cultural products. Smelik (1999) discusses how Hollywood films from the 1960s used stereotypes to reflect the social role of women. These films often depicted women in supporting roles, romanticized as mothers and wives. Over time, they began to be portrayed as sexual objects of desire and male satisfaction, as seen in the works of director Alfred Hitchcock, who introduced sensual characters to challenge the Hollywood standards that had previously represented women as modest, homely figures (Marques; Weinmann, 2019).

It is important to remember that the role of women in cinema was historically conditioned by the dominance of the male gender, with all the focus and protagonism centered on male characters.

> The structural narrative of traditional cinema establishes the male character as active and powerful: he is the agent around whom the dramatic action unfolds and the visual is organized. The female character is passive and powerless: she is the object of the man's desire. (Smelik, 1999, p. 353)

Zwier (2012) offers important insights into how cinema shapes the social role of women throughout its narratives: "All the work falls on the male character. Once again, this promotes a patriarchal agenda in which women are taught to be stagnant, to question themselves, and to wait for a man to appear to lead them" (Zwier, 2012, p. 115). Furthermore, Santos (2021, p. 28) states that "whether sexualized or

sanctified — depending on the plot of each work — women find themselves limited to roles that condition their existence to dependence on a man."

For many years, cinema represented women through the lens of female inferiority and male dominance. However, in contemporary times, it is evident that this scenario has evolved, as demonstrated by the subject of this study, which features a female protagonist who challenges the standards of the time depicted in the film. The protagonist of *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) questions various societal norms, from rejecting the expectation to wear long stockings to opposing the notion of an arranged marriage, even though it was widely encouraged by the Victorian society, in which the story is set.

ALICE IN BURTON'S COUNTRY: MARRIAGE AS A RUPTURE OF EXPECTATIONS

Alice in Wonderland (2010) showcases Tim Burton's distinctive style. The eccentricity of the characters, the visual impact of the scenes, and the dialogues that drive the narrative reflect the director's approach to reinterpreting an existing work with a modern flair. Despite the film being inspired by a book from 1865, Burton's treatment of the material gives the audiovisual product a contemporary appeal that captivates audiences today.

Tim Burton's Alice is portrayed as a 19-year-old girl who finds herself in an arranged marriage, compelled to accept the situation for the economic benefit of the families involved. In just a few minutes of the narrative, the protagonist realizes that the world being offered to her is far too small compared to the vast possibilities she wishes to explore. In 19th-century English society, arranged marriages were commonplace, often viewed as business transactions. The romantic love associated with contemporary marriage is an idealization that emerged during the Modern Era (Toledo, 2013). It was uncommon for women to reject such unions, as the patriarch had the authority to make decisions, and if a daughter was expected to marry for the "greater good," it was simply accepted as necessary (Lerner, 2019).

According to Lerner (2019, p. 290), "women themselves became a resource acquired by men as much as the lands acquired by them. Women were exchanged or bought in marriages for the benefit of their families." What Alice did not anticipate was that the marriage proposal would serve as the perfect opportunity for her to embark on a journey of self-discovery.

When analyzing this adaptation, it is important to consider that the marriage proposal scene does not appear in Carroll's original book (2002). One must then question whether this inclusion reflects feminist struggles or, as Januário (2021) terms it, "market feminism." This concept refers to a mercantilist logic in which feminist discourses, which have gained media attention, are co-opted to create a version of feminism that is commodified for consumption. Januário highlights concerns that this process may dilute feminist agendas in favor of profit. For the author, this is one of the ways advertising appropriates the cause, transforming it into a marketable product to enhance its commercial position.

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In the wedding scene, aware that her freedom would be restricted, Alice refuses Hamish's proposal. A woman with desires for freedom and a personal pursuit of her own interests, free from social interference, was not the ideal for a Victorian marriage, as going against the patriarchal authority of the family head was unacceptable (Costa, 2013). Therefore, it can be inferred that Tim Burton intended to convey a message through this scene, highlighting not only the oppression of women in British society, which forced them to accept marriages against their will, but also a modern reinterpretation. By doing so, Burton underscores the idea that women are the masters of their own destiny, challenging and breaking away from the patriarchal system.

Based on this, the research examines the social marker of gender in Burton's film, specifically through the marriage proposal scene (minutes 3 to 12), utilizing Film Analysis (Penafria, 2009) and the *Methodology for the Analysis of Fixed Images*, by André Melo Mendes (2019), as complementary frameworks.

Film Analysis as a methodological approach

According to Penafria (2009), there are four types of film analysis: text analysis, content analysis, poetic analysis, and image and sound analysis. In this research, text analysis and image analysis will be employed. Text analysis will focus on the dialogues of the characters central to the study, while image analysis will examine the frames that compose the structure of the scenes. To strengthen the theoretical framework for image analysis, the *Methodology for Still Image Analysis*, proposed by Mendes (2019), is also applied.

Penafria's (2009) reasoning, combined with Mendes' (2019) understanding, will serve as the foundation for the entire film analysis in this study, as this approach combines the objective interpretation of each frame with the interpretation of the analyst. Thus, both the explicit evidence of the scene, which represents its objective nature, and the critical understanding of the analyst, reflecting a synthetic nature, will be considered.

Alice ahead of her time: marriage as an unpleasant surprise

The quote "Arranged marriage was very common in the 19th century, when women generally had their marriages negotiated regardless of their wishes" (Leandro; Freire, 2018, p. 93) highlights the social norms of that era. During this period, it was common for women to be denied the right to make choices about their marriages, a theme also explored in the film *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) (Figure 1).

— *Does everyone know?*

— *It's why they've all come. This is your engagement party. Hamish will ask you under the gazebo. When you say "yes"…*

— *But I don't know if I want to marry Hamish.*

Source: Frame taken from the film *Alice in Wonderland* (2010).
Note: Timestamp: 07min30s and 07min41s.

Figure 1. Alice Kingsleigh disappointed upon learning of the marriage proposal.

Figure 1 depicts the moment when Alice learns that a proposal is imminent. Her sister, Margaret (played by Jemma Powell), emphasizes that everyone at the party already knows, yet the "bride" herself is caught by surprise. Not only was Alice unaware of the news, but she is also pressured into accepting the proposal. Margaret insists that Alice would say "yes," but Alice expresses uncertainty about marrying Hamish. In response, her sister dismisses her doubts, asserting that a lord would be the best option for Alice and urging her to consider the passage of time, so as not to grow old alone.

It is important to note that Alice was only 19 years old and had many aspirations. However, marriage was not one of them, it was not part of her plans. The dialogue between the sisters illustrates that, in Burton's film, the idealization of marriage is portrayed as an imposition: an unwanted and solitary consent that women were expected to bear, weighed down by the obligation to say "yes" for others and the burden of saying "no" to their own dreams. Alice symbolizes how women, particularly, endured psychological pressure. Society discriminated against young, unmarried women, valuing only those who accepted the role of "ladies of the household." For many, the best option was a forced marriage, and it was their families who benefitted from this arrangement.

Objectively, in Figure 1, Alice's facial expression serves as a point of tension in the plot. The close-up[2] shot is particularly notable, as it brings the audience closer to the protagonist's face, conveying her unhappiness and lack of interest in accepting Hamish's proposal. This interpretation is further supported by Mendes (2019), who refers to the "contextualization of the image in time and space."

For him, interpreting an image with consideration of history, art, and culture enables a more precise understanding, particularly since each historical period is defined by specific customs. However, this does not imply that these customs were ideal or acceptable. When analyzing an image in any context, such as in audiovisual media, it is essential to understand the historical, political, educational, social, and economic context of the Victorian Era. This understanding helps justify elements such as the construction of the script, costume choices, the setting, and other key aspects.

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2   A filming technique used to bring the audience closer to the characters' expressions, conveying a sense of intimacy.

By confronting the social reality of 19th-century England, Tim Burton conveys a contemporary message through the character of Alice: it is not wrong to feel discomfort about rejecting the choices of others or what is imposed by societal conventions. What can truly be harmful is agreeing with others' desires while neglecting to live the life one truly wants. Alice's facial expression (Figure 1) underscores how women were treated during the Victorian Era, as their wishes were often disregarded. What mattered most was making a good marriage, managing the household, and safeguarding the husband's reputation.

This statement is proven by the words of Christiane Lopes:

> This issue of sexual inequality is important for the 19th century because, during the Victorian era, a process of individuation begins through which women become aware of their inferior position in relation to men, recognize all their sufferings as human beings, admit their contradictions, and become enraged, seeking a solution to their existential problem (Lopes, 1986, p. 1).

The author also discusses how the prevailing mindset of the time was rooted in the belief that women were dependent on men and were considered fragile. It was the image of femininity that contributed to the husband's success and earned him public respect. Additionally, the author reflects on the conditions in which women lived, as everything was socially imposed. Their purity had to be maintained at all times, and their primary responsibilities were managing the home and caring for the family. In other words, considerations of personal identity, career aspirations, or desired romantic relationships were not part of Victorian society.

In the marriage proposal scene, Margaret advises Alice to avoid three problems that, according to her, lead to women's unhappiness: growing old alone, upsetting her mother, and failing to achieve what she wants, which ultimately means not getting married. The Victorian lifestyle structure had a profound influence on women's thinking, making them feel "wrong" for not adhering to these three principles, which in practice, converged into one: forming a family. It is important to note that this family model followed the conservative norms of the time: the father, who dictated the rules; the mother, who was devoted to the home and her husband; and the children, who were expected to honor their parents and fulfill the family's plans, such as making a good marriage and starting a new family. A woman who did not conform to this standard would be socially excluded, as seen in the case of Aunt Imogene (played by Frances de la Tour) (Figure 2).

> — *You don't want to end up like Aunt Imogene. And you don't want to be a burden on Mother, do you?*
>
> — *No.*
>
> — *So you'll marry Hamish. You will be as happy as I am with Lowell, and your life will be perfect. It's already decided.*

Source: Frame taken from the film *Alice in Wonderland* (2010).
Note: Timestamp: 07min53s and 08min07s.

Figure 2. Aunt Imogene.

In Figure 2, Margaret uses the representation of her Aunt Imogene to illustrate to Alice that growing old alone would be equated with illness, as Imogene is portrayed in the film as a lonely woman waiting for her Prince Charming. Moreover, Margaret suggests that without a man by her side, Alice would become a burden to her family, since, during the Victorian Era, women who did not marry were socially condemned. This view stemmed from the belief that such women would continue to be both a social and financial burden to their families (Nelson, 2015).

It is important to understand that the Victorian woman was also a product of her Era, as her life, habits, behavior, and everything she was expected to be and to appear arose from standards imposed by society (Lima, 2018). In other words, women's decision-making power was conditioned by others, including other women, who, under the Victorian regime, learned that the best course for them was to submit to marriage. This is precisely what is striking in the dialogue, as Margaret asserts that Alice would indeed marry and confirms that this union had already been decided for her.

In observing Figure 2, it is possible to identify what Penafria (2009) refers to as "points of view," which encourages the analyst to examine the visual composition of the scene. This concept aligns directly with the studies of Mendes (2019), which are also applied in this analysis. In conducting an objective analysis, that is, describing the scene, it is evident that the viewer's gaze is directed toward Aunt Imogene, who is portrayed as the eccentric character in the film. Surrounding her are various couples engaged in conversation, and the scene is dominated by light tones, with darker shades highlighting the natural setting of the ceremony.

As a synthetic character, it can be concluded that Aunt Imogene leads a lonely life, a reality reflected in her facial expression. Despite being surrounded by a party, she remains isolated, with all other characters in the scene turning their backs to her. There is a table with two chairs, but the remaining seats are unoccupied. The long shot used in the filming plan[3] emphasizes the vastness of the scene and highlights the

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3   Its purpose is to give meaning to the scene by incorporating the human figure as a fundamental aspect of the storyline.

character, effectively conveying Aunt Imogene's loneliness. This visual choice serves to symbolize for Alice her potential future should she reject the marriage. Alice's facial expression during the scene further reinforces this idea, as she is depicted with an unhappy expression in most of the sequences leading up to the marriage proposal.

In the continuation of the scene, Alice, upon realizing that her aunt was not mentally well, suggests that she should see a doctor. The societal isolation of women without a husband led to Aunt Imogene being labeled as crazy. Silva (2022) examined the Victorian Era through literary works and concluded that, during this period, women were often portrayed as insane for disobeying their husbands or pursuing their own ambitions. "The idea of the angel of the home began to be propagated as the perfect archetype of a virtuous woman. Anyone who behaved in a way that deviated from this model was considered crazy and transgressive" (Silva, 2022, p. 22).

Finally, the viewer is presented with the scene of Hamish's (played by Leo Bill) marriage proposal to Alice (Figures 3 and 4). In each of the scenes where the character realizes she will be proposed to, Burton portrays the young woman as sad and hopeless, reflecting the fact that her freedom is being stripped away.

— *Alice Kingsleigh, will you be my wife?*

— *Well, everyone expects me to, and you're a lord. My face won't last, and I don't want to end up like... But this is happening so quickly.*

Source: Frame taken from the film *Alice in Wonderland* (2010).
Note: Timestamp: 11min13s and 11min45s.

— *She left me standing there, without an answer.*

Source: Frame taken from the film *Alice in Wonderland* (2010).
Note: Timestamp: 1h37min01s and 1h37min03s.

Alice's expression in Figure 3 provides an implicit response to the question posed by Hamish. While the question is brief and direct, it is far from simple from the perspective of the "bride." Upon interpretation, it becomes clear that Alice already

Figure 3. Hamish Ascot proposing to Alice Kingsleigh.

Figure 4. Alice Kingsleigh chasing the White Rabbit.

knows her answer. She certainly does not want to marry Hamish, nor is she sure she ever wants to marry at all. The image, along with the sequence of the scene, plays a crucial role in a deeper analysis of the true emotional undercurrent conveyed. It is important to note that image analysis in this context involves selecting specific frames to understand and interpret the feelings and ideas expressed throughout the scene, thus reflecting the inherent flow of videos or moving images (Mendes, 2019).

Objectively, the viewer observes Hamish kneeling and holding Alice's hands, a traditional gesture, formalized by society, for proposing marriage. Subjectively, the low-angle shot (*contra-plongée*[4]) stands out as the primary filming technique, emphasizing Alice's elevated position relative to Hamish, suggesting that the choice to accept or reject the proposal was entirely hers. Additionally, her gaze avoids his, implying a level of dissatisfaction so profound that she cannot bring herself to look him in the eye. Her expression conveys that this was not where she wanted to be.

In this scene sequence, the audience witnesses Alice's response to everyone present at the ceremony. She echoes her sister Margaret's remarks: the assertion that marrying a lord was her best option and that growing old alone would lead to a fate like that of Aunt Imogene. However, it is crucial to note that Alice had no certainty about what her future held; what she did know was her right to pursue her own path. Once again, freedom surfaces as a pivotal theme in the narrative, as the protagonist holds firm in her belief that others' choices cannot define her story.

Psychologically and emotionally, Alice was led to believe that declining a marriage proposal would be her worst possible fate. She lacked the time to consider what would truly be best for her, yet she recognized that her boundaries were being disregarded, as events unfolded too quickly, pushing her toward an unprepared and undesired commitment.

In the following scenes, Hamish remains on his knees, stunned and unable to comprehend his rejection. Subjectively, this moment may evoke a sense of euphoria

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4   The *contre-plongée* shot refers to a camera angle where the subject is filmed from below, looking upward. This framing gives a sense of power or growth to the character being viewed from below. In contrast, the *plongée* (or high-angle) shot captures the subject from above, looking downward.

in the audience, as it represents a positive triumph: the young woman, once seemingly condemned to a life of loneliness without a man, has left behind the one who believed he was beyond rejection.

The subsequent frame (Figure 4) reveals Alice's "no," and, in an analytical sense, she is seen running through the garden. However, in a synthetic analysis, although it may seem that she runs only to catch up with the White Rabbit,[5] her action, in addition to publicly stating her "no" to Hamish, clearly affirms her "yes" to her own life. This shows the viewer that it is okay not to follow the impulses of others, as something far greater was destined for her. Thanks to her courage in breaking societal norms, Alice was able to achieve what her heart truly desired: freedom and self-discovery.

Alice's choice notably reflects a contemporary stance on the actual limitations faced by women in the Victorian Era. In the narrative, it is clear that women had minimal or no right to make their own choices, with the repercussions of their actions impacting both themselves and their families. This aspect parallels the advances achieved by social and feminist movements, and it can be interpreted as a representation of market feminism (Januário, 2021). This term suggests an appropriation of feminist values by the film industry, serving as a strategy to attract audiences.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The dialogues and scenes analyzed in this study reveal the presence of gender as a social marker in *Alice in Wonderland* (2010). Through the examination of characters' dialogues and visual frames, it becomes evident that women in 19th-century English society faced numerous inequalities, particularly concerning marriage. The theoretical framework supporting this research highlights that women of this period were not only subjected to various forms of violence but were also repressed and compelled to conform to a pattern of male dominance for the benefit of the families involved in marriage alliances.

This study demonstrates that the social marker of gender manifested in the following feminine aspects: arranged marriage, solitary aging, and the right to freedom. These dimensions share the commonality that women were reprimanded and regarded as inferior to men. Additionally, the analysis reveals that the social role of women in the 19th century was conditioned by the social role of men, as everything of value was attributed to the male gender, while the female gender was relegated to obedience, conformity to societal norms, and the suppression of freedom. Women were raised with the understanding that marriage, children, and domestic duties were the only commitments deserving their full attention and that they should strive to satisfy their husbands. In contrast, men were allowed to display their privileges, power, and infidelities without facing societal repercussions.

It can also be inferred that Tim Burton's work not only sought to depict British standards of the 19th century but also served as a representation of contemporary society, particularly the reality of women. As discussed in the analysis, several issues highlighted

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5   The first character in the film who appears to Alice in real life and ultimately drives her to discover Wonderland.

in the filmmaker's plot remain present in the 21st century. Women must assert their place more forcefully, as if they have no right to be heard, while society continually attempts to silence them. It is never enough for women to simply be who they are.

By portraying English society, Burton drew public attention to issues that are often overlooked. For instance, he suggested that female independence must be earned daily, and that women need to constantly fight to prove their worth. In contemporary times, many women still lack the right to make their own decisions and are rarely asked about their desires. Society has conditioned them to think in this way, fostering a sense of powerlessness. However, many Alices continue to use oppression as a catalyst to create their own Wonderland.

Tim Burton created a work that transcends the mere representation of the Victorian Era. The scenes depicting Alice's wedding are filled with symbols and hidden messages. This is the brilliance of Burton's audiovisual approach: it allows the true meaning of the work to be interpreted by the viewer. Even without any prior knowledge of the Victorian Era, anyone watching the film can recognize that Alice is dissatisfied with the world offered to her, as sacrificing everything she desired was not part of her plan. By placing a 19-year-old female protagonist in a 19th-century English setting, the director enables women in contemporary society to feel represented. Furthermore, they come to understand that oppression and sexism have persisted for years, continuing to haunt history, yet it is possible to resist and challenge these forces.

Tim Burton, while contextualizing the scenario of the time, did not overlook the importance of women asserting themselves in the present. Alice is the character who demonstrates that women cannot remain silent. She is the one who defied unquestionable values and principles, refusing to allow her story to have an ending that would satisfy everyone but herself. Alice not only broke societal patterns but also showed that it is acceptable to say "no" without fear, and to pursue happiness and self-discovery along the way.

Finally, it is hoped that this research will be expanded so that all forms of inequality, such as those addressed in this study, are not normalized, but instead gain visibility and become subjects of discussion across all spheres of society. It is also hoped that each reader, upon understanding that indifference harms and diminishes the will to fight for what truly matters, will contribute to building a better world, one in which all people have the right to be and feel free. After all, there is no value in striving for a more just and inclusive society if the changes necessary for this do not begin within each individual.

In the work analyzed here, only one character was able to express the desire for independence, potentially resonating with many women who may feel repressed by society in terms of their attire, choices in love, and professional life.

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