

Valeiras Fernández, Andrea. *Sigue siendo la hora del té: El País de las Maravillas en la cultura popular*. Universitat de València, 2024. 218 páginas

Darío Camaño Barreiro (dario.camano@udc.es)

 0009-0005-3726-0177

Universidade da Coruña

Sigue siendo la hora del té: El País de las Maravillas en la cultura popular, by Andrea Valeiras Fernández, published in 2024 by the Universitat de València (UV), provides a thorough account of the many reimaginings across different media of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and its characters across time and up to the present day. The book provides a detailed review listing and explaining every reimagining of the *Alice* narrative imaginable, from theatre and cinema to fashion and marketing. This comprehensive study highlights the enduring influence of Carroll's work on global popular culture, offering a nuanced analysis of how Alice has permeated virtually every aspect of contemporary media and consumer culture.

Valeiras Fernández structures her study into ten chapters, beginning with theoretical foundations (Chapters 1-3; 17-50) and historical context (Chapter 4; 51-68), followed by medium-specific analyses— theatre and opera (Chapter 5, 69-78), cinema (Chapter 6, 79-124), other audiovisual media (Chapter 7, 125-140), and merchandising (Chapter 8, 141-154). The concluding chapters examine broader cultural influence (Chapter 9, 155-186), and present some final reflections (Chapter 10, 187-192). Following this progression, the author thoroughly examines *Alice's* evolution across disciplines.

The publication of this volume arrives at a time when Carroll's classic continues to inspire new adaptations, remakes, and re-interpretations across the globe, making it a particularly timely contribution to the field of cultural studies. Valeiras Fernández's meticulous research demonstrates not only *Alice's* persistence in cultural memory but also its remarkable adaptability to changing social contexts and technological developments.

This review will focus on two main aspects: the extent to which Valeiras Fernández's literature review engages with existing scholarship

on the topic, and the ways in which it offers innovative insights into the reception of the novel and its numerous cultural offshoots. Moreover, certain particularly innovative sections of the volume will be examined, such as the study of *Alice* in television, comic books, manga, and video games—or, as Valeiras Fernández classes them, “other media” (125–140)—as well as the enthralling account that the researcher provides of all the merchandising stemming from Carroll’s most iconic character (141–183). The extension of this analysis succeeds at highlighting the remarkable adaptability of Carroll’s original narrative across different cultural contexts and media formats.

In considering the distinctive features of Valeiras Fernández’s 2024 volume in relation to earlier publications, it is worth noting that numerous studies have explored the cultural impact of *Alice in Wonderland* at both micro and macro levels. For example, a substantial body of scholarship has examined the imagery and iconography associated with *Alice* (for instance, Bandera Gallego, 2014; González Vera, 2011), as well as its psychology (e.g. Barker, 2024; Pollare, 2024; Schilder, 1938). *Alice*’s cultural impact has even reached architectural studies (although not included in Valeiras Fernández’s book, Houghton, 2003 is a good example of the versatility of this classic). What sets this specific research work apart is its ambitious scope and its ability to synthesize diverse perspectives into a consistent narrative about *Alice*’s cultural evolution.

The body of research surrounding *Alice in Wonderland* is extraordinarily vast, spanning multiple disciplines and methodological approaches. Valeiras Fernández acknowledges this extensive bibliography while adding her own unique perspective to the ongoing academic conversation. Regardless of the field of study, it appears that someone, somewhere, has already explored its connection to Carroll’s narrative. One of the most notable strengths of *Sigue siendo la hora del té* lies in its extensive compilation—not only of numerous iterations of *Alice*, but also of publications in which *Alice in Wonderland* serves as a point of reference for fields as diverse as art, architecture, mathematics, forensic science, and a wide array of other, often unexpectedly related, disciplines.

This comprehensive-compilation approach serves a crucial function in the current academic landscape, where specialization often leads

to the fragmentation of knowledge. By bringing together different interpretations and applications of Carroll's work, Valeiras Fernández creates valuable connections between seemingly disparate fields. This interdisciplinary perspective reveals how deeply embedded Alice has become in our collective cultural consciousness, transcending the boundaries between high and low culture, between academic discourse and popular entertainment.

Valeiras Fernández offers the most comprehensive account to date of the novel's reception across a range of formats—some of them, unexpected—, which is where its innovation lies. As mentioned above, the classification that the author draws to organize the contents of the volume (theatre and opera, cinema, other media, merchandising, etc.) gives us an idea of the wide range of cultural byproducts that she has examined for this review. In this regard, the structure enables readers to trace the evolution of *Alice* across various media, while simultaneously revealing how the distinct characteristics of each medium have influenced the narrative's form and reception. Earlier chapters lay crucial groundwork for this. Chapters 1-3 (17-50) frame *Alice*'s status as both an academic and popular work, while Chapter 4 (51-68) provides the context for its Victorian influences before diving deep into the many different adaptations the novel has been subject to.

The examination of theatrical adaptations (Chapter 5) of Carroll's novel is particularly noteworthy, as it reveals how the physical constraints and possibilities of the stage have influenced interpretations of *Wonderland* throughout different eras. These theatrical renditions range from faithful Victorian productions (5.2, 71-73) to avant-garde experimental pieces that deconstruct the original narrative entirely (5.3, 74-78). Valeiras Fernández masterfully analyses how the staging challenges presented by Carroll's fantastical world have inspired creative solutions across different periods and theatrical traditions (e.g., the Royal Opera House ballet, p. 74).

The cinematic analysis presented in the volume (Chapter 6) spans from early silent film adaptations (6.1, 82-85) to modern computer-generated imagery (CGI) spectacles (6.4, 109-119), offering insights into how technological advances have shaped our visual understanding of *Wonderland*. This section provides a fascinating chronicle of how film technology and *Alice* have evolved together. From the earliest

silent adaptations, which relied heavily on theatrical conventions, to Tim Burton's CGI pageant, each iteration reflects not only changing aesthetic sensibilities but also developments in filmmaking technology.

Valeiras Fernández expertly connects these technological advances to the changing visual representation of *Wonderland* across different decades, demonstrating how the collective image of this fictional realm has been profoundly shaped by these films. Chapter 6 stands out as a major strength of the book. The author provides a fascinating chronicle, connecting the evolution of film technology to the shifting visual language of *Wonderland*.

The “other media” category (Chapter 7, 125-140) is arguably the most innovative one, though it is also the one where the researcher might have benefitted more from further developing her insights. A single paragraph (pp. 135-136) addresses three distinct manga adaptations of Carroll's novel—an area that offers considerable potential for cultural analysis and could have benefited from a more expansive and innovative discussion.

The text also exhibits a degree of imprecision in its treatment of certain adaptations as, for instance, *Pandora Hātsu* (also known as *Pandora Hearts*) (Mochizuki, 2005-2016), which is said to present the white rabbit as Oz, a young boy in love with Alice (136), while the reader is not really led to believe so anywhere in the story—there is one character, Jack, who does seem to be in love with Alice and who looks very similar to Oz, which could explain the author's mistake—. This mischaracterization points to a potential limitation in the methodology—the challenge of thoroughly analysing such a vast corpus of adaptations across multiple languages and cultural contexts. On the topic of this specific manga adaptation of the story, it is worth mentioning that it comprises many other interesting elements that could have been mentioned in *Sigue siendo la hora del té*. For example, the Cheshire Cat is a relevant character, later revealed to be a manifestation of Alice's former pet cat; another two characters also very clearly reference Carroll's Dormouse.

Despite that, Valeiras Fernández's analysis of Alice's self-presentation is particularly insightful—the clothes she wears, her attitude, and even her race are changed in these works to make her “more palatable to

the Japanese taste” (Nichols, qtd. in Valeiras Fernández 135). This observation opens important discussions about cultural adaptation and the universality of Carroll’s characters, while it also raises questions about the nature of cultural translation.

The transformation of Alice’s appearance and characterization across cultural boundaries represents one of the most fascinating aspects of the character’s enduring appeal. Valeiras Fernández briefly touches upon how different cultures have reshaped Alice to reflect their own aesthetic preferences and narrative traditions, although this aspect of the adaptation process could have benefited from a more thorough theoretical framing: How do these transformations relate to broader patterns of cultural appropriation and localization? What do they reveal about the essential qualities that make Alice recognizable across such diverse interpretations? These questions, while implicit in the text, could have been more explicitly addressed. While the study mentions early manga adaptations making Alice wear a kimono, the exploration of cultural translation aspects comes off as brief and superficial, without delving into why the changes were made or how they reflect specific Japanese cultural contexts or artistic movements.

In the “Other Media” section, the author also examines video game adaptations referencing *Alice*, and in this case, her analysis is notably more detailed. The comprehensive list of works that the author mentions in this section is extensive, although there are some notable exceptions, like the horror-adventure game *Alicemare* (Miwashiba, 2016), where Alice becomes the young Allen, a boy who loses his parents and ends up at a hospice, or the role-playing game *Wonderland No More* (Anderson *et al.*, 2011), which is available as well in printed book format and which takes place in a Wonderland tarnished with the years after Alice’s departure.

The video game adaptations deserve particular attention for their interactive nature, which allows players to not merely observe but actively participate in the various interpretations of *Wonderland*. This transformation from passive readers to active participants represents perhaps the most significant evolution in how audiences engage with Carroll’s creation. The games mentioned range from faithful adaptations to radical reimaginings, where each one offers unique perspectives on what it means to “fall down the rabbit hole” in the digital age.

This chapter represents one of the book's most significant and original contributions. By going beyond traditional media (i.e., film, theatre) and into manga, comics, and video games, Valeiras Fernández manages to expand the map of *Alice's* cultural territory. Her inclusion of these formats is highly valuable. The detailed examination of video game adaptations is especially insightful. Valeiras Fernández highlights the paradigm shift these represent—the move from passive consumption to active participation in *Wonderland*—which is arguably one of the most transformative developments in the story's reception.

In Chapter 8, Valeiras Fernández provides a section devoted to the different merchandising created for or around *Alice in Wonderland*. It is, of course, impossible to provide an exhaustive survey of all existing products, as their number likely surpasses what can readily be conceived. Still, it is fascinating to know that Carroll's character has been used to sell almost anything, from office supplies to kitchenware, makeup and, of course, games and toys.

This section catalogues merchandise across subchapters: books (8.1, 141-144), homeware (8.2, 145-146), stationery (8.3, 147), toys (8.4, 148-150), fashion (8.5, 151) and others (8.6, 152-154). While necessarily selective, this cataloguing of Alice-branded merchandise is both interesting and valuable, demonstrating the prevalence of Carroll's characters in consumer culture. However, it remains mainly descriptive, and does not apply a critical lens, with minimal exploration of the implications of this commodification: How does mass merchandising shape the public perception of *Wonderland*? Are there tensions between Carroll's original vision for the story and its modern corporate exploitation?

All in all, *Sigue siendo la hora del té* stands as what is probably a landmark study in the field of cultural adaptation and reception theory of *Alice in Wonderland*, offering great value to both scholars and enthusiasts. Valeiras Fernández's work distinguishes itself through its ambitious interdisciplinary scope, studying adaptations across theatre, cinema, manga, video games, and merchandising into a cohesive narrative—an accomplishment unmatched by earlier studies in terms of scope and detail. Its originality lies especially in exploring less-known areas, particularly interactive media (e.g., video games) and non-Western reimaginations (e.g., Japanese manga).

While certain sections might benefit from a deeper analysis, particularly in the treatment of manga adaptations, Valeiras Fernández has authored an invaluable resource for understanding how *Alice in Wonderland* has maintained its cultural relevance across time, media, and national boundaries. The volume's comprehensive approach to documenting *Alice's* cultural footprint not only provides a thorough account of existing adaptations but also offers a framework for understanding how classic literature may evolve and remain relevant in an ever-changing cultural landscape. Scholars will undoubtedly find this work an essential starting point for their own investigations into the enduring influence of Carroll's story, even as new adaptations continue to emerge.

Works Cited

- Alicemare*. Directed by Miwashiba, Playism, 2016.
- Bandera Gallego, Clotilde. *Lenguaje icónico y visual: retórica de las ilustraciones de Alicia en el País de las Maravillas*. 2014. Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, PhD dissertation.
- Barker, Holly. "The Tutor Pages: The Neurological Disorders in *Alice in Wonderland*." *Neuroscience News*, Jan. 2018, <https://neurosciencenews.com/alice-wonderland-neurology-8307/>. Accessed 10 Dec. 2024.
- Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Macmillan, 1865.
- González Vera, María del Pilar. "Translating Images: The Impact of the Image on the Translation of Disney's *Alice in Wonderland* into Spanish." *Miscelánea: A Journal of English and American Studies*, vol. 43, 2011, pp. 33-53.
- Houghton, Adele. *Spatializing Alice, en passant*. 2003, Rice University, Master's thesis. dspace.rice.edu, 2003.
- Mochizuki, Jun. *Pandora Hâtsu*. Square Enix, 2005-2016.
- Pollare, Katrina. "The Psychology within *Alice in Wonderland*." *The Odyssey*, Jun. 2016, <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/psychology-within-alice-wonderland>. Accessed 10 Dec. 2024.
- Schilder, Paul. "Psychoanalytic Remarks on *Alice in Wonderland* and Lewis Carroll." *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, vol. 87, no. 2, 1938, pp. 159-168, doi:10.1097/00005053-193802000-00004.

Wonderland No More. Directed by Kevin L. Anderson, Lansing D. Tryon, and Jordan Peacock, Triple Ace Games, 2011.