FALLING DOWN IN ORDER TO GROW UP: TWO WOMEN'S JOURNEYS FROM UN-DOMESTICATION TO DOMESTICATION IN FANTASY FICTION

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ABSTRACT

In this article, following the convention adopted in *The annotated Alice* (Gardner 2000), the authors refer to the combined volume of Lewis Carroll's works – entitled *Alice in Wonderland* – which includes *Alice's adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the looking-glass* – as 'the *Alice* texts'. In the *Alice* texts, Alice is presented as a Victorian female protagonist who has to 'fall down' in order to 'grow up'. This is also true of Yvaine in Neil Gaiman's Victorian-based novel,

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Stardust (1999). Both protagonists experience 'falling down', which also carries the symbolic weight of being an act of submission – falling into a subordinate state. In looking at the significance of the opposing movements up and down as indicative of a specific process of female domestication, postmodern and poststructuralist theory explains how this binary opposition fulfils a specific didactic function in Victorian and Victorian-based fairy tale narratives. Historical approaches to Victorian society also demonstrate the submissive role assigned to women in Victorian society. While 'un-domestication' is rejected in favour of domestic submission in Carroll's and Gaiman's narratives, 'un-domestication' results in the liberation of their central female protagonists in the filmic re-visionings, *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), directed by Tim Burton, and *Stardust* (2007), directed by Matthew Vaughn.

Keywords: Victorian literature, fairy tales, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Stardust*, falling down, growing up, domestication, submission

1. INTRODUCTION

In Lewis Carroll's *Alice* texts[1] (first published in 1897), Alice is presented as a Victorian female protagonist who has to 'fall down' in order to 'grow up'. This is also true of Yvaine in Neil Gaiman's Victorian-based novel, *Stardust* (first published in 1999). 'Falling down', for both protagonists, carries the symbolic weight of being an act of submission – falling into a subordinate state. While this action seems to detach these characters from Victorian social expectation, the downward motion also indicates that the initial liberation from their original state of being, experienced in an imaginary world, is nothing more than an illusion imbued with the expectation of submission.

In scrutinising both the literal acts and the symbolic values attached to specific movements within these two narratives, the up and down patterns are observed as typical of the Victorian girl's growth into maturity, and indicative of the social expectation attached to this process of 'growing up'. This is supported by Linton (whose essay was first published in 1868) who highlights not only the expectations of Victorian girlhood, but also anticipates the rise of a new, less domesticated girl. She criticises the rise of such a 'Girl' by praising 'the old time … when English girls were content to be what God and nature had made them' (Linton 1883, 2), and condemns 'the modern English girl' who is not 'tender, loving, retiring or domestic' (Linton 1883, 6).

Linton is not the only critic to comment on, and praise the domestic nature of, the Victorian woman. Much has been written about Victorian women, most notably by Altick (1973, 54) and Petrie (2000, 184), who specify that they must be innocent and passive. Alice and Yvaine are adorned in the uniform of the innocent, passive Victorian girl and woman, respectively. Curiosity and defiance, while initially

presented in these characters, are soon quashed by an environment that over-indulges these 'un-domestic' qualities, resulting in both Alice and Yvaine being placed in physical danger. The 'un-domesticated', unpredictable spaces that both protagonists fall down into are presented as hostile and uncomfortable. Wonderland is a place of madness and chaos under the regulation of the Queen of Hearts – who thus epitomises irrational female authority – while the actions of the Lord of Stormhold require and result in Yvaine being dislodged from her place in the night sky. Both female protagonists' discomfort in being displaced leads them to desire a return to the balance of order. Alice achieves this by returning to the world above or back through the looking-glass, while Yvaine chooses to marry the heir to Stormhold and relinquish her celestial importance. In both instances, the domestic space is accepted and the 'un-domestic' space is rejected. For the purpose of this article, 'domestication' is the process that guides a woman into acceptance of her role in the home, while 'un-domestication' is the means of embracing freedom beyond the confines of the domestic.

Prominent fairy tale critic, Jack Zipes, sees the return from 'un-domestication' to domestication as a means of self-preservation, referring to Sigmund Freud's observations about the connection between 'heimlich' and 'unheimlich', terms which are variously translated as 'familiar'/'unfamiliar' or 'canny'/'uncanny' (Gray 2013). In Zipes' (n.d., para. 2) view, the 'unheimlich' creates emotional instability that can only be resolved by returning to the 'heimlich'. Although Freud and Zipes emphasise the *heimlich/unheimlich* dynamic in children's growth to maturity, critics have not explored how the domestic and 'un-domestic' spaces interact with women's socialisation in the Victorian era.

The focus falls on Alice and Yvaine in the article because they are both situated in and influenced by domestic and 'un-domestic' spaces within Victorian and Victorian-based fairy tales. They are shown eventually to conform, if somewhat reluctantly, to Victorian prescripts of gender socialisation within Carroll's and Gaiman's narratives. Gaiman's *Stardust* is of particular interest because it demonstrates the enduring need within patriarchal society to domesticate the female. The research presented here, reaffirms the prevalence of this trend within twentieth century fantasy narratives, as well as the filmic re-visionings of these texts.[2]

We begin our exploration of the influence of domestic and 'un-domestic' spaces on Victorian women's socialisation by considering the Victorian fairy tale narrative and its purpose in educating female readers into accepting their domestic roles. Following from that, the article looks more closely at movement within the *Alice* texts and *Stardust*, drawing on the work of Julia Kristeva in demonstrating how movement in fairy tales is anchored to their social contexts. Victorian and Victorian-based fairy tales inscribe an awareness of a patriarchal order that relegates women to positions of submission in relation to masculine dominance, as noted by Talairach-Vielmas (2007).

Drawing on Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction, we scrutinise how the binary opposition of domestication and 'un-domestication' feeds into female submission versus male dominance in Victorian society. This theoretical foundation supports an analysis of the *Alice* texts and *Stardust* as representing 'un-domestication-becoming-domestication', and their filmic re-visionings as representing 'un-domestication-as-liberation'.

2. MOVEMENT IN VICTORIAN FAIRY TALES – ABOVE, BETWEEN AND BELOW

Fairy tales present the reader with an array of movement that can best be described as multi-directional – from Alice falling down the rabbit-hole and into Wonderland or Yvaine tumbling down from the sky into Faerie, to Dorothy going up the funnel of a tornado and crash-landing in Oz. Movement up and down, and the corresponding vertical levels of perception – above, below and between – gain specific relevance in fairy tales, primarily because they represent symbolic thresholds upon which the central protagonists teeter. In addition, class oppositions – defined and delineated by the space a person occupies in relation to others, so that, for instance, a king or ruler is spatially located above the 'lower' classes – are also present between a lowly servant girl and her saviour prince; between a young curious girl-child and a despotic queen; and between an ageless fallen star and an aging and desperate witch. Such spatio-temporal and class elements that underpin fairy tales and their function are founded upon the legacy of Jungian archetypes and the intrigue of the quest narrative, which both influenced the development of the fairy tale. Because archetypes connect the individual quest to 'the collective unconscious' (Jung 2014, 42), elevating the personal to the mythological, spatial symbols gain exaggerated importance because of their applicability to the collective.

Victorian fairy tales gained popularity, not only for their entertainment value, but also served a greater didactic purpose. The primary readership for such narratives in Victorian times were young women or girls who could be assumed to invest in the 'happily ever after' outcome. Seifert (1996, 9) observes that 'it was at once a genre that women could appropriate without threatening male literary figures and a form that enabled them to defend and perpetuate their own locus of cultural authority'. The patriarchal ideologies upon which these tales are founded ultimately educate the primary female readership by presenting them with a formulaic structure. According to the formula, a female character journeys away from a familiar space and time, guiding her towards an experience of discomfort due to the unpredictability of unfamiliar worlds, and creating a need within these characters, fed by the author's intentions, to return to the space and time of 'home' – designed, defined and delineated as the safe and predictable space of the domestic.

The rite of passage – a process of separation, initiation and return that is noted in the journeys of fairy tale heroes – aligns with Campbell's 'monomyth' (2004, 28). The *Alice* texts and *Stardust* broadly follow the structure of this rite of passage. However, what distinguishes their journey from the typical masculine representations of the heroic journey (Campbell [1949] 2004) is their purpose in returning. As fairy tale characters, they overcome the obstacles encountered in the worlds below so that they can return to domestic spaces. As Campbell (2004, 35) writes: 'the hero of the fairy tale achieves a domestic, microcosmic triumph'. The female characters' adventures are the means through which young girls in Victorian England could integrate into domestic spaces through domestication.

The fairy tale presents the Victorian girl-child with two opposite scenarios. One is the product of order presented as the domestic, and the other is the product of chaos presented as the 'un-domestic'. Despite the illusion of choice, female characters are encouraged to return, time and again, to the safer option of the domestic, where women are kept in positions of subservience by authors acting as agents of social expectation. Talairach-Vielmas (2007, 6) notes that the

> Victorian woman was also girdled by discourses to define her … [which] led them to become merchandise themselves – thereby confining them within a role as reflectors of male power … Victorian fairy tales and sensation novels explore this insolubly paradoxical terrain, where women oscillate between subject and object.

Whether as a protagonist within a male-authored narrative, or as an object within a male-prescribed social hierarchy, it seems that any narrative journey, even if it appears to liberate the female protagonist, ultimately defaults to affirming male dominance.

The central argument of this article is that up is down in relation to the girl-child's becoming. In other words, to grow up, and fully assimilate into the expectations of domestic rank, she must fall down and occupy a submissive position in relation to the authority of a patriarchal order.

This emphasis on the domestic or 'fallen down' state establishes an intertextual link between Alice, in the *Alice* texts, and Yvaine, in *Stardust*. In order to better reinforce this intertextual connection between *Alice in Wonderland*, as a Victorian fantasy text, and postmodern responses to Victorian fantasy in the *Alice* texts and *Stardust*, respectively, it is necessary to unpack the implications of 'falling down' on structural, semiotic and sociocultural levels.

3. PERSPECTIVES ON THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Postmodern and poststructuralist theory can illuminate how the binary opposition between domestication and 'un-domestication' fulfils a specific didactic function in Victorian and Victorian-based fairy tale narratives. Historical approaches to Victorian society reinforce the submissive role assigned to women in Victorian times.

The spatio-temporal framework through which Alice and Yvaine are read, as well as their connection to Victorian society, derives from Kristeva (1969, 145), as articulated in her model of horizontal and vertical coordinates shown in Figure 1.

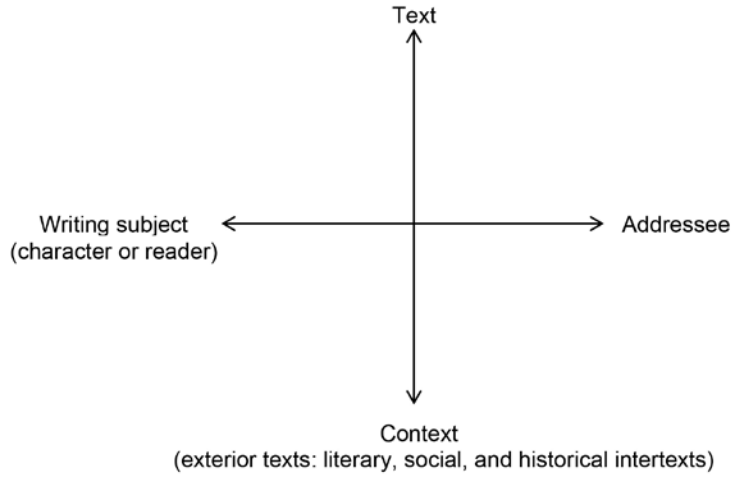

Figure 1: Kristeva's horizontal and vertical coordinates (Friedman 1996, 112)

The two axes in Kristeva's diagram inform a good structural understanding of the upward and downward movements that are experienced by Alice and Yvaine. The vertical axis in this model is especially significant because it highlights the discursive and social methods of socialising a girl-child into assenting to a specific social role. The 'context' grounds the girl-child, as a 'text,' in her submissiveness. So, it is no coincidence that vertical movement, particularly 'falling down', is used, not only to connote submersion by social expectation, but also as a metaphor for domestication. The inverse is true of the girl-child who liberates herself from the grounding of 'context'. The 'text' that moves up and away from 'context', is liberated from social expectation, and actively engages in a mode of 'becoming' through 'un-domestication'. Woolf (1966) and Poovey (1995) both note that such a mode of 'becoming' counteracts a patriarchal order that demands domestic submission. Poovey (1995, 124) observes that

> a woman's reproductive capacity is her most salient feature, that this biological capacity makes her naturally self-sacrificing and domestic, and that her more delicate nervous and physiological constitution makes her more susceptible both to her own emotions and to the influence of others.

'Un-domestication' is, therefore, not only undesirable within the prescripts of Victorian patriarchy, but also unnatural. Woolf (1966) refutes the notion that

domesticity is natural in her essay, 'Professions for women', noting that women must separate themselves from patriarchy in order to dissolve the influence of 'Self' upon 'Other', thereby preserving the woman's true, 'un-domesticated' state.[3] Woolf (1966, 286) perceives domestication as a threat to women's creativity:

> I turned upon her and caught her [the Angel in the House] by the throat. I did my best to kill her. My excuse, if I were to be had up in a court of law, would be that I acted in self-defense. Had I not killed her she would have killed me.

Woolf and Poovey's observations are supported by more recent critics in the field of gender socialisation in children's literature, Jacqueline Rose and Lissa Paul. In Rose's (1984, 29) revolutionary text, she compares the child/adult dynamic to the power inequality between the coloniser and the colonised, where the adventures that characterise literature for children may be seen to be 'the inheritors of a fully colonialist concept of development, and a highly specific conception of the child'. The child can, therefore, be seen as a colonised 'text' on which adult prescription is imprinted. For the girl-child, this adult-imprinting is given an extra dimension in that, in a patriarchal society, growing up will ultimately require submission to masculine authority. Rose's analysis is taken one step further by Paul, who sees the goal of educating the girl-child, through various forms of masculine-prescribed sociocultural ritual and literary forms, as a central point of departure for both feminist and children's literature critics. Paul (in Hunt 1987, 150) states that

> the forms of physical, economic, and linguistic entrapment that feminist critics have been revealing in women's literature match the images of entrapment in children's literature … After all, the nineteenth century … corresponds to 'The Golden Age of Children's Literature', to the age of Lewis Carroll … and to the age when traditional folktales and fairy tales were gathered up into the children's literature canon.

Paul's insights also shed light on Gaiman's choice of both a nineteenth-century setting for his novel, and Yvaine's trajectory towards domestication.

In the article, we will demonstrate how the filmic re-visionings of Carroll's and Gaiman's novels facilitate the 'killing' of commonly held beliefs concerning women's need to embrace domesticity, offering a counter-movement that enables both Alice and Yvaine to move towards 'un-domestication' by forging their own path. This is symptomatic of shifts in social perception of woman's roles and a gradual dawning of respect for woman's agency within a twenty-first-century cultural context.

First, it is necessary to scrutinise what is meant by 'un-domestication', 'domestication' and their dialectical relationship. In order to do this, we will employ a deconstructive reading, drawn from Derrida's ([1978] 2005) work on binary oppositions.[4] Deconstruction is sceptical of 'central presence' (Derrida 2005, 353) and, therefore, meaning-generation is influenced by 'a system of differences' (Derrida 2005, 354), rather than being drawn from a single point of origin.

Derrida's theory of deconstruction can fruitfully be applied to the dynamic between 'domestication' and 'un-domestication'. Derrida (1981, 41–42) describes this dynamic as follows:

> One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment. To overlook this phase of overturning is to forget the conflictual and subordinating structure of opposition.

Derrida (1981, 41) discourages the idea of 'peaceful co-existence' between oppositions, acknowledging that oppositions exist, and that specific moral value is assigned to the first and second terms in the opposition. Domestication and 'un-domestication' demonstrate this dynamic. The axis upon which these oppositions teeter are the ideologies upon which the processes of domestication gain acceptance and the rebellion against such a process, leading to 'un-domestication', is rejected. The 'un-domestic' state was reserved for Victorian men. Ranum (2009, 242) quotes John Tosh, who observes, in support of this state of affairs, that '[b]ecoming a man involved detaching oneself from the home and its feminine comforts'.

Several ideological mechanisms within Victorian society conspired to move the girl-child towards the goal of domestication. The traditional Victorian fairy tale was such a mechanism, as it offered the girl-child an either/or choice – either she becomes a damsel in distress, or an evil stepmother or queen. These two options caricature the roles available to women in the Victorian era. The damsel in distress is presented as more desirable in her state of domestic bliss, whereas the evil stepmother or queen is punished for her desire to be 'un-domestic'.

Traditional fairy tales, which reached the height of their popularity in the Victorian period, followed a linear progression signposted by the 'Once upon a time' and 'Happily ever after' narrative bookends. Of particular concern to feminists, this 'Happily ever after' destination is ultimately the beginning of the central female protagonist's domestic role as wife and mother. Dreams of a world beyond what is expected are invalidated as the products of a curious mind that must be tamed and their adventures relegated to disbelief. For the Victorian girl-child, this process, and its inevitable terminus, was justified by the Freudian mindset of 'Anatomy is Destiny' (1976, 320), and Coventry Patmore's poem 'The angel in the house' (1854). Freud's disregard for women as cultivators of their own destiny is borne out in his statement, implying that women's biological deficiencies justify their inferiority. Engler (2014, 53) points out that '[i]n Freud's theory, women come across as deficient men' and that his 'view of women reflected the male chauvinistic position of the time'. This would imply that a female's lack can only be compensated for through union with the male. On a poetic level, this sentiment is echoed when Patmore (2003, Book I, Canto IX) writes in 'The wife's tragedy': 'Man must be pleased; but him to please/ Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf/Of his condoled necessities/She casts her best,

she flings herself'. The wife's purpose to please her husband casts her down into submission, and reinforces expectation, and this expectation shackles her to him – his 'sin was hers' (Patmore 2003, Book I, Canto IX).

Victorian women were assigned to the space of the home – their veritable prison founded upon an absolute patriarchally-prescribed duty of submission. As Altick (1973, 54) states:

> [W]oman was inferior to a man in all ways except the unique one that counted most (to man): her femininity. Her place was in the home, on a veritable pedestal if one could be afforded, and emphatically not in the world of affairs.

Here Altick identifies domestication as the goal of femininity. The Victorian girl-child was effectively journeying away from selfhood towards the sacrifices required to assume her place as an ideal, objectified 'Other'. Woolf (1966, 285) critiques Patmore's poem when she writes:

> She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed daily. If there was a chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it ... Above all, she was pure.

As previously mentioned, although Woolf (1966, 286) later declares that this Victorian 'Angel in the House' ideal must be killed, she highlights purity as the highest quality of the domesticated Victorian woman – the quality that the girl-child should always aspire to in order to achieve success as a devoted wife and mother. This quality implies that, as a grown woman, she must present herself as being as innocent as a child. Petrie (2000, 184) elaborates:

> [Victorian] girls of this class … must not only be innocent but also give the outward impression of being innocent. White muslin, typical of virginal purity, clothes many a heroine, with delicate shades of blue and pink next in popularity. The stamp of masculine approval was placed upon ignorance of the world, meekness, lack of opinions, general helplessness and weakness; in short, recognition of female inferiority to the male.

Within the context of Victorian literature, and its role in advocating innocence as a key descriptor of 'female inferiority' (Petrie 2000, 184), authors such as Patmore and Woolf highlight that submission to masculine regulation is equivalent to being pushed down. In Woolf's (2012, 79) *Mrs Dalloway*, the marriage of Lady Bradshaw is described in terms that confirm this:

> Fifteen years ago she had gone under. It was nothing you could put your finger on; there had been no scene, no snap; only the slow sinking, water-logged, of her will into his. Sweet was her smile, swift her submission …

In an interview about the relevance of fairy tales to children, Zipes supports a reading of fairy tales' didactic purpose. He explores this element when he comments on Freud's 'heimlich'/'unheimlich' opposition:

> In his essay on the uncanny, [Sigmund] Freud remarks that the word heimlich means that which is familiar and agreeable and also that which is concealed and kept out of sight, and he concludes that heimlich is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, unheimlich or uncanny … Freud argues that the uncanny or unfamiliar (unheimlich) brings us in closer touch with the familiar (heimlich) because it touches on emotional disturbances and returns us to repressed phases in our evolution … (Zipes n.d., para. 2).

Derrida and Zipes propose a model where the poles of binary oppositions perform a dance of 'one-must-give-way-to-another'. We see this process as typical of an older style of fantasy and fairy tale writing. The relationship between the two sides of the binary opposition present domestication as the ideal, in relation to the outcome of the female protagonist's journey, and 'un-domestication' as something to reject. Victorian narratives that prescribe this type of antagonistic relationship were used as a didactic tool to educate the girl-child into assuming a more demure role – the 'concealed' aspects of the 'heimlich' (Zipes n.d., para.2) alluding to the ideologies upon which domestication is founded. In postmodern fairy tales, the dominant/subordinate relationship between the 'domestic'/'heimlich' and the 'un-domestic'/'unheimlich' is destabilised. As Bacchilega and Rieder (2010, 25) note: 'Contemporary fairy tales, in both mainstream and eccentric texts, play out a multiplicity of "position takings" (Bourdieu 1985) that do not polarize ideological differences as they did during the 1970s but, rather, produce complex alignments and alliances'.

Although Gaiman's *Sandman* (1989–1996) and *American gods* (2001) may be seen as quintessentially postmodern in their fracturing of narrative conventions, *Stardust* offers a Victorian treatment of the central female protagonist that is less obtrusively postmodern, but plays with space and time in a similar manner to Eco's *The name of the rose* (1983). Gaiman's deployment of a Victorian social setting allows him to foreground aspects of gender socialisation – through the metaphor of upwards and downwards movement – which are familiar to readers of Victorian children's literature, and, in particular, Carroll's *Alice* texts. Through understanding domestication and 'un-domestication' as *potential* and constantly in flux, the development of characters like Alice and Yvaine, which seems set in stone in Carroll's and Gaiman's novels, can be undone. As demonstrated below, this flux comes to the fore when comparing the novels with their filmic re-visionings.

4. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

4.1. Alice in Wonderland

Carroll's *Alice* texts present the reader with a curious girl-child, adorned in Petrie's (2000, 184) 'uniform of purity'. Her fall down the rabbit-hole and movement through the looking-glass expose her purity to the carnivalesque. Wonderland represents an

'Other' realm in relation to Victorian England, but it also reflects the society that gave rise to it. Aspects of Wonderland, while familiar to Alice, do not make sense to her because of the complex social expectations attached to Victorian womanhood. She is encountering a point, in her own growing up, where her self-identity vacillates between her previous knowledge of herself as a Victorian child, and who she is yet to become as a Victorian woman. Alice demonstrates this in her encounter with the Caterpillar, noted as probably the most iconic declaration of the instability of identity in the text:

> '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 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.'
>
> 'What do you mean by that?' said the Caterpillar, sternly. 'Explain yourself!'
>
> 'I ca'n't [sic] explain *myself*, I'm afraid, Sir,' said Alice, 'because I'm not myself, you see' (Carroll 1992, 35, original emphasis).

The general fluidity of identity that pervades Wonderland takes on an added dimension when we consider Alice as a female protagonist in the process of 'becoming'. This relates to Alice's sense of empowerment and disempowerment. While Alice attains limited power through relegating the Queen of Hearts' soldiers to mere playing cards (Carroll 1992, 97), and the Red and White Queen to chess pieces (Carroll 1992, 113), her sense of empowerment is immediately removed when she is thrust back into Victorian society and her adventures are dismissed as dreams. In Carroll's texts, domestication is achieved at the cost of Alice disconnecting her adventures in Wonderland from reality, labelling them as the opposite of reality – a dream. Through this disconnection, the 'un-domestication' she experiences in Wonderland is usurped in favour of an acceptance of the real: that is, the social order that prescribes domination over women. In *Alice's adventures in Wonderland*, Alice's sister reinforces the dynamic between domestication and 'un-domestication' when she muses about Alice's dream. While Carroll allows Alice to 'keep, through all her riper years, the simple and loving heart of her childhood' (Carroll 1992, 99), she must eventually relinquish her victory over the Queen of Hearts and the Red and White Queens in Wonderland to a time 'long ago' (Carroll 1992, 99). This interpretation belies the argument that the *Alice* texts empower the main protagonist. Lloyd (2010, 9) describes Alice as: '[p]lucky, undaunted, and impervious to the dangers that may lie in Wonderland, Alice is a curious, empowered seven-year-old girl eager to delve into a new world she chooses to enter'. While this may be true of the Alice we meet in Wonderland, it is not true of Alice once she returns to 'reality' and the expectations of Victorian women.

In dreaming of the world of Wonderland that Alice tells her about, Alice's sister colonises Alice's dream and transforms it into expectation that Alice will grow

up and conform to gender norms. She is no longer listening to Alice's dream, as indicated in her confession that 'she seemed to listen' (Carroll 1992, 98), but is now re-representing it within the boundaries of social convention. Alice has been relegated to the role of passive narrator of her dream to future generations. In her sister's dream, a grown-up Alice retains the purity and innocence of a child, aligned with the selfless, maternal, domestic role society expected women to assume, as Woolf (1966, 285) describes. Alice's sister's dream represents a microcosm of a larger Victorian social expectation of women. The reader understands that Alice will not attempt further adventures, but will meekly slot into the role that has been pre-ordained for her within Victorian society.

4.2. *Stardust*

In Gaiman's *Stardust* (1999), Yvaine, adorned in her starry garment, fair and immortal, is knocked from the night sky into the realm of Faerie. This exposes her to sinister forces and an irrevocable change in her fortunes. Most of these forces are bent on claiming her heart and the immortality it promises.

Like Alice, Yvaine's initial description presents her as the embodiment of innocence: 'Her hair was so fair it was almost white, her dress was of blue silk which shimmered in the candlelight. She glittered as she sat there' (Gaiman 1999, 81).

Yvaine's blonde hair and blue dress reference tropes of girlish innocence that were prevalent in Victorian society (Petrie 2000, 184). However, within a few paragraphs, she takes on another quality – that of the broken and enslaved.

Tristran Thorne[5] desires to pursue and capture the fallen star because of his infatuation with Victoria – he believes it is the object that will win her heart. The promise that Tristran makes to Victoria to retrieve the fallen star, as an act of devotion, is reminiscent of the colonial exploits of the Victorian Age. Indeed, the name 'Victoria' evokes the queen of the British Imperial Age, and Tristran effectively assumes the role of explorer and coloniser of the unknown world of Faerie, over which he will eventually rule. Tristran's reference to the lands he will visit and the prizes he will bring back for Victoria directly cite all the countries explored and colonised for Queen Victoria and England (Gaiman 1999, 36–37).

In falling from the sky above to the world below, breaking her leg in the process, Yvaine loses her independence and nature as a star. Tristran claims her as his prize, transforming her into an object of his desire. He effectively becomes her coloniser who has claimed the fallen, broken star in the name of (Queen) Victoria, and imposes his order upon her – initially by urging her to sleep at night, a time when, according to her nature, she does not sleep, but rather shines (Gaiman 1999, 81–82). In this way, Tristran typifies patriarchal domination and objectification of women.

Like many Victorian women, Yvaine's distress is caused by her eventual saviour, Tristran, and, by extension, the bloodline to which he belongs. The rivalry

for Stormhold, signalled by the dying Lord of Stormhold throwing the stone into the air initiates Yvaine's fall:

> 'To the one that retrieves the stone, which is the Power of Stormhold, I leave my blessing, and the Mastership of Stormhold and all its dominions,' said the eighty-first lord, his voice losing power as he spoke, until once again it was the creak of an old, old man, like the wind blowing through an abandoned house.
>
> The brothers, living and dead, stared at the stone. It fell upwards into the sky until it was lost to sight.
>
> 'And should we capture eagles and harness them, to drag us into the heavens?' asked Tertius, puzzled and annoyed.
>
> His father said nothing. The last of the daylight faded, and the stars hung above them, uncountable in their glory.
>
> One star fell. (Gaiman 1999, 49)

This scene creates a telling dichotomy. Yvaine's fall initiates a series of events that culminate in the adult Tristran's becoming Lord of Stormhold. As the stone, which is described by the dying lord as embodying the 'Power of Stormhold' (Gaiman 1999, 49), rises into the air, the star falls. The stone (the symbol of male authority) may be construed as a masculine force dislodging the feminine from her natural place – in this case, the star's position in the night sky.

The oxymoron 'fell upwards' (Gaiman 1999, 49) is an arresting and unusual collocation. The stone, as a symbol of authority, cannot embody a submissive stance, and is therefore not associated with low-ness. Instead, the desire and authority of the dying Lord of Stormhold propels it upwards. This, in turn, may be contrasted with the movement of the star, Yvaine. Although she occupies a position in the heavens above the worlds of Victorian England and Faerie, a space that transcends the patriarchal world below, her authority is usurped when the stone knocks her down from the sky. In this act, mortal masculine authority forces an immortal feminine element to submit. This event destabilises the narrative's certainty in universal law as Yvaine's absolute authority, as a star, gives way to the masculine desire for power.

Unlike Alice, who leaves Wonderland to return to Victorian England, Yvaine does not return to domestication in the sky. For her, domestication is part of remaining below in Faerie. Her disempowered condition is portrayed in her initial enslavement by Tristran, her leg broken, her ability to function as a star diminishing and even usurped by patriarchal time. As Slabbert (2009, 71) notes:

> The traditional subservience of the female to the male hero is underplayed by Tristran's use of a delicate silver chain, suggestive of jewellery, but yet a tool which entraps her and forces her submission. The presence of the chain and the suggestion of male dominance are ironically emphasized by Yvaine's inability to escape; even without the chain, she has broken her leg.

Later, Yvaine is more officially required to submit to her husband, Tristran, and to his rule as Lord of Stormhold through marriage – which she willingly chooses (Gaiman 1999, 166), thereby relinquishing her authentic nature. After his passing, she becomes the custodian of his kingdom, a position that prohibits her access to the night skies:

> They say that each night, when the duties of state permit, she climbs, on foot, and limps, alone, to the highest peak of the palace, where she stands for hour after hour, seeming not to notice the cold peak winds. She says nothing at all, but simply stares upward into the dark sky and watches, with sad eyes, the slow dance of the infinite stars. (Gaiman 1999, 194)

The strong sense of melancholy conveyed by this passage is an index of Yvaine's entrapment within the confines of a terrestrial space. Unlike Alice, Yvaine moves downwards from 'un-domestication' to domestication and, because this is the dominant expectation of women in Victorian society, Gaiman (1999, 194) denies her access to her natural 'un-domesticated' state, despite her longing to return above, as narrated in the Epilogue.

Ultimately, Alice and Yvaine's journeys in Carroll's and Gaiman's novels indicate that 'un-domestication' cannot find acceptance in a society that relegates women to the domestic.

5. FILMIC SUBVERSION

While both Carroll and Gaiman present the reader with narratives that lead towards women's conformity to gender norms, the filmic re-visionings of their narratives are less restrictive. The dynamic of 'becoming' that is generated through the filmic re-visionings as 'texts' drawing on a new contextual influence, to return to Kristeva's contribution, aligns strongly with Alice and Yvaine embracing their potential rather than surrendering to absolutes. They are allowed to grow in stature and agency, rather than falling down into gender submission.

In Tim Burton's (2010) filmic re-visioning of the *Alice* story, the 19-year-old Alice, who at first regards her previous adventures in Wonderland, as narrated by Carroll, as mere dreams of madness, finds herself tumbling down the rabbit-hole again. Her fall is significant, both as an escape from the world above and Hamish's marriage proposal, but also as a way of anticipating Alice's expected role in Victorian society. The fall down the rabbit-hole alienates Alice from social expectation. Her refusal to submit is seen in her landing on the ceiling, rather than the floor. This 19-year-old Alice demonstrates more agency than her younger incarnation in Carroll's *Alice* texts, and is most defiant when, in a shrunken state, she chooses to take control of her 'dream':

> Alice: From the moment I fell down that rabbit hole I've been told what I must do and who I must be. I've been shrunk, stretched, scratched and stuffed into a

> teapot. I've been accused of being Alice and of not being Alice, but this is my dream. I'll decide where it goes from here. (Burton 2010)

Within Burton's 'coming of age' narrative, the above declaration propels Alice into a state of autonomy that defies Victorian expectation. Unlike Alice's sister's dream, Burton's Alice comes of age and takes on a degree of agency. From the moment she accepts her power within Wonderland, leading to the defeat of the Jabberwocky, she is also able to exercise choice in the world of Victorian England above. Burton's Alice is able to transcend the dream, refuse Hamish's proposal and head off on a real adventure as Lord Ascot's apprentice. Carroll's domesticated Alice is transformed into Burton's 'un-domesticated' Alice who embraces her 'muchness' and, as she declares, 'makes the path' (Burton 2010). Alice's 'muchness' is only truly cultivated when she is removed from a society that effectively attempts to silence her. Alice's fall down the rabbit hole facilitates transcendence, typically an upward motion, towards 'muchness' (Burton 2010). This state enables Alice to 'become' herself, free from social prescription and according to her own design. In this sense, Freud's (1976, 320) 'Anatomy is destiny' is undone by Alice making her own path.

In Matthew Vaughn's filmic re-visioning of *Stardust* (2007), Yvaine's journey follows that of Gaiman's narrative – she is a fallen star who is enslaved by Trist[r]an, later falls in love with him, and assumes her place as the Lady of Stormhold. Vaughn set up her role as domestic and submissive for the most part. However, in collaborating with Gaiman on the script, Vaughn inserts two significant points that demonstrate Yvaine as following a different path from the one Gaiman lays out in the novel. First, she draws on her natural 'un-domesticated' abilities; and second, she returns to her natural 'un-domesticated' state.

In Gaiman's novel, Lamia, the witch who desires the heart of the star, does not attain that which she desires, but is also not defeated by Yvaine. Instead she lives on and must endure the suffering of not finding satisfaction. In Vaughn's film, Yvaine defeats Lamia by drawing on a quality characteristic of her nature as a star, rather than any quality that has been thrust upon her by her coloniser, Trist[r]an – 'Stars shine' (Vaughn 2007). Vaughn's Yvaine is, therefore, liberated to draw on her un-domesticated quality to defeat a predator who, herself, is operating in terms of patriarchal expectations that idealise women's youth and beauty as desirable qualities.

In acknowledgement of this innate quality, Vaughn rewrites the epilogue scenario, honouring the true nature of Yvaine, the fallen star. Rather than keeping her trapped on the earth, Vaughn's Yvaine returns to the night sky with Trist[r]an by her side. Where she was once subject to his world, his quest and his purpose, she is now able to raise him up into her world and her purpose. While Yvaine may still be connected to Trist[r]an, their union as a true fairy tale 'happily ever after' marriage, and their immortality, is not facilitated by the mortal Trist[r]an, but by the

immortal Yvaine. Through this, she achieves 'un-domestication', and, as the narrator concludes, 'still live[s] happily ever after' (Vaughn 2007).

6. CONCLUSION

The characters of Alice and Yvaine are strongly influenced by Victorian mores. For Alice, this influence is more immediate, being a product of Carroll's Victorian fiction, while, for Yvaine, the influence is retrospective within Gaiman's postmodern homage to Victorian England. Their journeys are weighed against a legacy of feminine fairy tale archetypes that serve as models for acceptable and unacceptable feminine behaviour. The rigid social expectations for women to fulfil their domestic obligation as dutiful wives and mothers, deemed natural and acceptable (Linton 1883, 2), are articulated in Carroll's and Gaiman's narratives. In the novels, the two female protagonists fall away from comfort and their true nature. They are encouraged to alleviate their anxiety by seeking to accept a prescribed gender hierarchy. Alice's desire to reject the chaos of Wonderland carries her back into the real world, and the world below is reduced to a mere dream. Yvaine's need to be protected by Tristran becomes solidified in her marriage to him. In both instances, 'un-domestication becomes domestication'.

In their films, Burton and Vaughn attempt to distance these characters from domestication, and both succeed in recreating Alice and Yvaine as 'texts-in-process' (Friedman 1996, 111), although they represent 'un-domestication' in different ways. Burton and Vaughn's Alice and Yvaine rise up against a fallen-down social expectation that requires them to assume a fixed role, devoting themselves to what Heilbrun (1988, 52) refers to as 'a male-designed script'. As products of the Victorian age, they are required to be proper rather than indecorous, self-alienated rather than self-realised. As products of twenty-first century re-visionings, they assume a more modern stand against patriarchal prescription and, in so doing, 'un-domestication becomes liberation'.

NOTES

1. Following the convention adopted in *The annotated Alice* (Gardner 2000), we refer to the combined volume of Carroll's works, entitled *Alice in Wonderland*, as 'the *Alice* texts'. This includes *Alice's adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the looking-glass*. We reserve the use of the title *Alice in Wonderland* for referring to Tim Burton's film (2010).
2. While taking cognisance of the extensive scholarship in film theory and criticism, this article does not engage with this body of work as to do so would extend the discussion beyond the length limits of an academic article. The films are mentioned only as they subvert the journeys of the female protagonists in Carroll's and Gaiman's novels.

3. Woolf may be criticised in that her observations apply exclusively to the middle class. Nevertheless, we contend that the insight that a woman's status is necessarily defined in relation to masculinity extends not only to the upper and lower classes, but is a founding condition of patriarchy.
4. Although Derrida's work may appear passé, we argue that it still offers the best tools for analysing oppositional terms.
5. There is a discrepancy between this name as it pertains to the male protagonist of Gaiman's novel (where the character is referred to as 'Tristran'), and Matthew Vaughn's filmic adaptation (where he is referred to as 'Tristan'). In this article, in deference to the text, the central male protagonist of *Stardust* will be referred to as Tristran throughout.

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Stardust. 2007. [Film] Directed by Matthew Vaughn. Paramount Pictures.

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