

**A WOMAN'S TERRITORY: FEMALE PROTAGONISTS IN 21ST
CENTURY ROAD MOVIE-BASED FAIRY TALE FILMS**

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Abstract

This paper closely examines fairy tale films with road movie components, in particular those films featuring female protagonists. The study's objective is twofold: first, to further develop existing research on the road movie by exploring one of the lesser known constituents of this broad genre and, second, to address gaps in scholarly literature on road movies when it comes to themes in female-led trips and the characterization of travelling females.

Through a detailed analysis of the journeys of female characters in recent voyage-oriented fairy tale films—*Peter Pan* (P.J. Hogan, 2003), *Alice in Wonderland* (Tim Burton, 2010) and *Tangled* (Byron Howard and Nathan Greno, 2010)—the investigation shows that these new heroines significantly differ from those of old. Their travels are portrayed as being less difficult, and the traits that they exhibit while on the road, namely fearlessness, rationality and an undying optimism, are rather favourable when compared to those exhibited by former road heroines.

Although these protagonists still face characters who wish to impede their movement away from a domestic setting, it is demonstrated that the protagonists are ultimately successful in not only acquiring power in the surroundings that they find themselves in, but also in carrying over their goals and dreams to their own worlds upon their return, privileges that most former road heroines did not have. Ultimately, the study shows that females can be as efficient travellers as males, and in some cases are portrayed as even more competent than their male counterparts.

Chapter 1: Introduction

As far back as the ancient world, humans have been embarking on journeys away from home. Motivations for embarking on a voyage varied: sometimes, people travelled to reach local festivals or events; other times, they journeyed for commercial, religious, political or military purposes (Shackley 2006: 6). Travel thus became equivalent to a quite enticing opportunity for exploration and discovery (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006: 4). According to David Laderman (2002), going on the road “expresses our distinction as humans, embodying the essential stuff that makes human civilization possible” (2). To Laderman (2002), the road is a universal symbol of the course of life and is the lure of both freedom and destiny (2). In fact, the popularity of travelogues and travel guides during the last decades of the 20th century shows a high interest in travel: detailed accounts of fascinating journeys seem to propel other people onto the road (Enevold 2000: 404). It is therefore not surprising that the notion of being on the road also plays a key role in film and television. Watching road stories is thought to “sweeten up our daily routines and responsibilities with a taste of freedom and spontaneity” and can lead to new perceptions of one’s home community (Mills 2006: 22). Katie Mills (2006) claims that road stories help people of all ages see themselves as agents of their destinies rather than as passive characters (21).

The present study seeks to further develop research on these types of film narratives, typically classified as road movies. Although various scholars have discussed the road movie, research on this genre is by no means exhaustive. As elaborated in the literature review in the subsequent chapter, the examination of the road movie genre

starts with a study of *genres* and, more specifically, *film genres*. Notable genre theorists have long debated how to categorize films and what should distinguish one category from another. These theorists tend to agree that assigning particular labels to films, such as “comedy” or “drama,” is no simple feat. In fact, some films tend to be mixed—they include components of various genres, all of which might be used to market the films to different audiences (Altman 1999: 132). Indeed, the road movie is shown to have many varied predecessors, both literary and cinematic, from which it can draw ideas (Roberts 1997: 50; Orgeron 2008: 47).

Since road movies revolve around a journey, which can be undertaken for a multitude of reasons (Laderman 2002; Mills 2006; Schaber 1997), and feature protagonists who are often marginalized in the world they inhabit (Schaber 1997: 34), certain films generally classified in the fairy tale film genre—such as *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939) and *Alice in Wonderland* (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson and Hamilton Luske, 1951)—can be said to belong to the road movie genre as well (Wood 2007: 238; Gehring 2012: 66). In films exhibiting road movie features, protagonists tend to struggle when choosing between a static lifestyle and being mobile (Laderman 2002: 37). In fact, for the mobile protagonists in these journey-focused films, it is not always clear how far the road taken goes and there may not be signs describing where the road leads and where it ends; yet, it is important to just be moving (Orgeron 2008: 199). These “road protagonists” have therefore been characterized as having nomadic tendencies, or a desire to wander for long periods of time, as described in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s treatise on nomadology (1987).¹ However, other authors claim that road

¹ As detailed in the literature review, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) believe that nomads desire to occupy an open or “smooth” space where there are no boundaries and where they can indulge in constant variation

protagonists in fact desire stability of some sort (Orgeron 2008: 2; Robertson 1997: 271). Additionally, not only are these characters described as looking for new experiences but also as hoping to achieve personal growth (Mills 2006: 38).

Another tension found at the heart of road movies is that between domesticity and *male* freedom (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006: 123). Scholars who have examined films in this genre note that they often display a crisis of gender, in that they mainly focus on men and the absence of women (Corrigan 1991: 144). These films suggest that a woman's place should be the home, and not the road. In fact, even road films that include females and those in which females are the leads of the story are believed to paint an unflattering portrait of these women (Rohrer Paige 1996; Laderman 2002: 265). Some later female road films, such as *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991), try to debunk these stereotypes by presenting more self-assured protagonists; yet, these female characters end up facing multiple difficulties on their trips (Sturken 2000) and oftentimes do not succeed in their endeavours. Thus, these newer road films are ultimately not considered to present significant changes when it comes to female road trips. Moreover, most scholarly literature on road movies does not include many sections on female travellers.

The main objective of the present investigation is to address these gender portrayals in female road movies released in the 21st century, which seem to have received even less scholarly attention than previous female road films. The study will introduce analyses of three films featuring a female protagonist embarking on the road, and will demonstrate what changed in the portrayal of female road protagonists and their

through movement that is perpetual, and not simply from one point to another—"a movement without aim or destination, without departure or arrival" (353).

journeys. Since the road movie is a highly hybridized genre, the study will examine films that are perhaps more commonly placed in the fairy tale category yet include all the necessary elements of a road movie. As most genre critics prefer to deal with films that can be more clearly tied to one genre (Altman 1999: 17), the study attempts to deviate from these methods by providing research on films that might be otherwise overlooked.

In addition, fairy tale films, whether they possess road movie elements or not, have been quite popular in recent years. According to fairy tale film author Kristian Moen (2013), literary fairy tales “have become increasingly central to contemporary film, often in multifaceted and complex ways,” and this has led to prominent material for big-budget Hollywood productions (212). Anthony Breznican (2011) notes that these types of films often rule the box office since they deliver magic, monsters, mysterious settings, and moral lessons that transcend the ages (18). Indeed, the past couple of years alone have seen the release of several fairy tale films: *Hansel & Gretel: Witch Hunters* (Tommy Wirkola, 2013), *Jack the Giant Slayer* (Bryan Singer, 2013), two film versions of the Grimms’ “Snow White,” *Frozen* (Jennifer Lee and Chris Buck, 2013), *Maleficent* (Robert Stromberg, 2014) and, most recently, *Cinderella* (Kenneth Branagh, 2015).

The films selected for the purposes of the current investigation are *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Tangled*. These films, released in the last 15 years, have gained commercial popularity in North America and visibly fit in both the fairy tale film category and the road film category. They centre on a female traveller whose trip comprises a considerable portion of the film. Moreover, in order to further investigate the longings of female travellers, these particular films were selected as they focus on heroines who leave home because they desire to go on a road trip and not because they

are being chased, need to save someone or need to retrieve an object of some sort. With a total of three films, a detailed film analysis of the main characters' journeys will be possible. The analysis will follow both a theoretical approach, with genre theory and current road movie research providing a framework for the study, as well as an analytical approach by closely inspecting the themes and patterns in the films, guided by the key concepts of mobility, female rebellion, power, (self-) control and stability.

Following a critical reception of *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Tangled*, chapters 3, 4 and 5 will closely examine the key components in these female travellers' journeys. By breaking down their journeys into sections revolving around the protagonists' departure from home, the period of time that they spend on the road and their return home, the study hopes to present an as-complete-as-possible image of the road trips. The heroines' departure from home includes analyses on certain concepts that were not previously explored in depth, such as the female characters' strong imagination, and these characters' relationships with the other inhabitants of their home environments, in particular, their relationships with their mothers or other female characters. A close look at the treatment of these heroines by the inhabitants of the world that they step in after leaving home is also included as a matter of comparison. Comparisons will also be drawn between the three films in their portrayals of this part of the protagonist's journey, and additional comparisons to older road films featuring female protagonists will be made.

Chapter 4 illustrates the heroines' behaviour while on the road, a concept that has seemingly not been the main focus of previous research on female road movies. It will be demonstrated how these new female travellers compare to "older" road movie heroines,

such as the protagonists in *Thelma and Louise* and Dorothy of *The Wizard of Oz*, who have oftentimes exhibited weakness or over-emotion, disorganization or aggressiveness (Chaston 1997: 16; Sturken 2000: 65). The heroines in *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Tangled* will be examined in terms of their courage, level-headedness and temperament through specific scenes in the films. To further the analysis, comparisons with male characters in the heroines' trips will also be shown with regard to the above-noted characteristics.

Finally, Chapter 5 is dedicated to the road protagonist's return home. The completion of the protagonists' "internal quest," (Roberts 1997: 54) or their spiritual journey leading to a transformation of some kind, will be discussed. The importance of home and stability for these heroines will also be highlighted, and comparisons to their male counterparts will be made in this regard. The tragic or unsatisfactory returns of previous female travellers will be discussed as well, and arguments about the differences in these new heroines' respective returns will be pointed out. Also, the protagonists' lives upon their return home will be inspected, addressing yet another gap in previous scholarly research which does not provide much detail after the completion of a female character's journey, portraying the end of this journey as somewhat abrupt. The chapter also includes notes on the differences between the nomadic portrayal of heroines of *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Tangled* and more traditional portrayals of nomads.

Through the above-noted points, this study will not only explain the changes that occurred in female travels in film narratives over the past decades but also how male travellers and female travellers differ. By establishing various comparisons, the study underlines the individual traits of the three road films as well as how they fit into broader

discussions on the genre. Indeed, every traveller and, by extension, every journey, exhibits slight differences when compared to another.

This investigation stems from a personal interest in travel, and from an urge to more closely examine the road movie genre, “the modern travel genre par excellence” (Enevold 2000: 404). The study can also be said to have relevance to real matters in today’s world since, even in the 21st century, trips undertaken by women tend not to be taken as seriously as those undertaken by men (Jordan and Aitchison 2008; Friedman 2012), and the ways in which women manage various struggles on the road, both physical and psychological, are not being fully surveyed. Also, travel is still viewed as more hazardous for women than for men (Siegel 2004: 69). However, studies have shown that women tend to almost always unanimously report that they find solo leisure travel empowering (Siegel 2004: 69). The present study aims to bring to light more positive results when it comes to female road trips.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Genre matters

Most popular film narratives have roots in literature—many films are actually on-screen adaptations of novels, short stories and plays (Kaminsky 1985: 3). Centuries ago, prominent scholars started classifying literary oeuvres into types, or genres. Plato divided literary works into three types: the “lyric” type encompassed narratives in which the sole voice was that of the poet; the “tragedy or comedy” type included those stories that consisted of dialogues between the characters; and the “epic” type was comprised of tales in which were present both the poet’s voice and the voices of the characters (Harrison 2007: 3). Plato’s student, Aristotle, added an important ingredient to this genre analysis by maintaining that each literary genre has an appropriate subject matter and a list of formal features (one of which was length) and that, through experience, poets learn to recognize to which genre the topic of their narrative would best be suited (Harrison 2007: 3).

During the Augustan Age (27 BC to AD 14), tragedy and comedy were split into distinct categories, and the idea of a hierarchy of genres surfaced: the epic genre was perceived as the most prestigious genre due to its extended length and inclusion of dignified characters, whereas the comic genre was perceived as the least esteemed one with its conversational tone and focus on lower-rank characters (Harrison 2007: 10). However, it was also thought that a work in a specific genre can incorporate elements of a different or opposing genre (Harrison 2007: 9). Nevertheless, poets like Horace wanted to limit a writer’s right to mix certain genres, namely tragedy and comedy, and reacted against such attempts at art (Altman 1999: 4). Later theorists, like Northrop Frye, divided

literary genres even further. For instance, the romantic genre, one of the four genres that Frye (2007) enumerated (the others being the tragic, the comic and the ironic [or satire]), was described as having two forms—a form for themes of chivalry and knight-errantry and a form devoted to legends of saints (32). Moreover, Frye (2007) stated that comedy can in fact blend into satire and even into romance in certain cases but, like Horace before him, insisted on the fact that the tragic and the comic are simply too different to be mixed (151).

Most scholars embraced literary genre theory and study, and maintained that in order to have artistic significance, a work must vary or depart from its original generic conventions (Harrison 2007: 13). However, due to arguments that genres have borders and hence a specific route that they must follow (as per French writer Ferdinand Brunetière, as cited in Altman 1999: 6), philosophers like Jacques Derrida questioned the overall meaning of generic systems and pointed out the many norms and interdictions that the term *genre* carries (Bawarshi and Reiff 2010: 21).

Now that an introductory presentation on genres has been laid out, the focus will turn to genres in film. Over the past decades, notable film theorists have been discussing genre definitions and the concepts of genre purity and genre mixing.

A film genre has been defined as, among other things,

- a body, group or category of similar works—works which share a wide number of motifs that can usually be identified, or those which properly fall within a particular kind of film (Kaminsky 1985: 9);
- a vital structure through which flow a number of interconnected themes and concepts (Kitses 1969, as cited in Altman 1999: 15); and

- a complex series of events regularly repeated according to a recognizable pattern (Altman 1999: 84).

Barry Keith Grant (2007) explains that there is a simple approach to genres in film—according to the author, genre movies are, put simply, those commercial feature films which through repetition and variation tell familiar stories with familiar situations—and a more detailed approach, one that revolves around the fact that genre movies include conventions and iconography (1). Conventions are frequently used stylistic techniques, such as bits of dialogue, musical figures and patterns of mise-en-scène. For example, the film noir genre frequently uses low-key lighting and narrative flashbacks (Grant 2007: 11). Icons refer to particular objects, archetypal characters, and so on. In the Western genre, cowboys, horses, wagons, frontiers, gunfights and an overall wild environment regularly appear on screen (Grant 2007: 12).²

Therefore, for a genre to exist, numerous similar texts need to be produced; this, in turn, shapes the meaning of the individual films themselves (Altman 1987: 4). Relying on a “common cultural consensus,” as per Andrew Tudor (1973) (as cited in Grant 2007: 22) to identify which films belong to the same genre might not be the most helpful suggestion since genres are not only dependent on their reading by an audience but also on the construction of films by the filmmaker (Neale 1980:7). Rick Altman (1999) argues that genres begin as reading positions established by studio personnel and that they depend too much on those who name, package and distribute them (46). The consumers, or the audience, are of course an important factor—they bring to the movie theatre their

² A variation of this idea is found in *Cinema Today* by Edward Buscombe (2003, as cited in Grant 2007: 12). Buscombe differentiates between an inner and an outer form of a film: the inner form encompasses a film’s themes and the outer form is concerned with objects regularly found in such a film.

expectations about the films (Neale 1999: 27)—but they are thought to be influenced by the industry’s view of generic classifications (Altman 1999: 124).

Various film user groups, such as journalistic and academic critics, are also seated at the genre jury table. Indeed, advertisements, posters, publicity photos, trailers and reviews all help construct the generic image of a film (Altman 1999: 54; Neale 1999: 35). Posters tend to use phrases like “action-packed thriller” or “family-friendly comedy,” trailers give away theme-related clues, and Internet marketing campaigns serve as enticing visuals that increase viewers’ interest and retention (Neale 2002: 170). Genre is hence labelled as multidimensional (Neale 1999: 27).

Unfortunately, film genres are not neutral categories (Altman 1987: 5). A genre is not permanently located in one place, but may depend on different criteria at different time periods. We may think that a film belongs to a certain genre, but that does not mean that it always has; it might have been advertised as belonging to another genre at one point because its own did not exist at the time (Altman 1999: 140).

Scholars tend to disregard films that do not have clear qualifications (Altman 1999: 17). However, several authors have noted that many newer movies have been hybridized and contain elements from previous genres, which were perceived as being “pure” genres (Bordwell 1985: 16; Collins 1992: 245; Grant 2007: 23). Moreover, there exists a belief that as long as they contain a romance, all Hollywood films are hybrids of some sort (the romance serving as a type of generic plot) (Grant 2007: 23). Timothy Corrigan (1991) claims that since genre movies mainly mimic current structures and there really is no film that represents a pure or classical genre that genre theory needs to sustain itself, genre criticism is somewhat pointless (138). Nonetheless, each new film adds

something new to the existing corpus (Grant 2007: 35; Neale 1990: 56). It is important to take into consideration that films can always be redefined by contemporary critics and, therefore, genres realigned (Altman 1999: 141).

Genres can also be crossed with any genre that ever existed. They can mix easily because of the highly identifiable elements of a genre (Altman 1999: 70). One genre influences another and this mixing process is fundamental to the evolution of genres; in fact, many genres have not only borrowed from a single pre-existing genre but from several, even seemingly unrelated ones (Altman 1999: 34). A film does not need to precisely follow a specific genre's logic throughout to be associated with that genre (Altman 1999: 131). For example, the musical genre's list of inter-generic relationships could range from sophisticated sex comedies to gangster films (Altman 1987: 114). More and more, during film promotion, studios tend to implicitly advertise the presence of multiple genres. Reviewers and critics tend to attribute multiple generic labels to a single film (Altman 1999: 140) and the audience at large realizes that one film is able to fit into a number of categories (Altman 1999: 131).

As shown above, when analyzing film genres, theorists, critics and others rarely work with the traditional corpus (Altman 1987: 91). Genre theory takes into account that a corpus is not only established based on conventional notions but also on individual practice (Altman 1987: 91). In summary, there are different ways of evaluating and grouping texts. Altman (1987) concludes that one genre might borrow with little change from another medium and thus be fairly predictable, a second genre might develop slowly, undergo changes and then settle into a familiar pattern, and a third one might go through a series of paradigms, none of which can claim to be dominant (93; see also

Grant 2007: 106). Genre theory thus functions best at a specific level rather than at levels of universal generalizations (Neale 1999: 64).

2.2 The road less travelled

The non-linearity of film genres is particularly reflected in the road movie genre. Film theorists who have examined the road movie have admittedly struggled to produce definitions, and what *precisely* qualifies a film as a road movie is not fully evident to this day (Cohan and Hark 1997: 2).

Most scholarly literature on road movies highlights the importance of mobility to this genre (Enevold 2000: 404; Orgeron 2008: 105; Laderman 2002: 35). However, whereas certain authors consider a moving vehicle—car, truck, bus, or other related means of transportation—with at least one person in it to be a key icon of the genre (Corrigan 1991: 146), others claim that road movies actually place significance on the idea of vast, open roads (Lopez 1993, as cited in Laderman 2002: 14; Mills 2002: 171), and that the characters who travel on these roads are not required to drive a vehicle (or ride in the passenger seat)—they may simply travel on foot (Mills 2002: 171). In any case, the means of getting to a destination seems to be less crucial to the road movie than the journey itself (Laderman 2002: 13).

2.2.1 Origins and evolution of the road movie

Road narratives have been published for centuries (among prominent past writers are Sophocles, Dante and Chaucer [Mills 2006: 18]) but one of the chief early literary influences on the road movie is thought to be Homer's *The Odyssey* (Enevold 2000: 408;

Roberts 1997: 50). This tale and other similar tales of epic journeys revolve around the idea of voyaging, featuring heroes who venture into unfamiliar regions and embark on mysterious adventures (Campbell 1949: 30). Later centuries saw the rise of popular adventure novels such as *The Swiss Family Robinson* (Johann David Wyss, 1812), *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (Mark Twain, 1876) and *The Hardy Boys* series by Franklin W. Dixon, started in 1927—all of which, according to filmmakers like Terrence Malick, served as an inspiration to road-movie making (Campbell 2003: 40). However, Jack Kerouac's famed *On the Road*, unveiled in 1955 and based on cross-country road trips in the company of friends, is believed to have had the most considerable effect on road films all over the globe (Mills 2006: 36).

Scholarly research also suggests a link between the road movie and an anterior film genre, the Western (Mills 2002: 171; Orgeron 2008: 47; Roberts 1997: 50). Westerns frequently show individuals travelling on open roads, crossing frontiers and exploring the border between culture and nature (Kitses 1970, as cited in Laderman 1996: 43), as exemplified in films like *Stagecoach* (John Ford, 1939) and *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956) (Roberts 1997: 50). Due to these motifs, the Western is often viewed as one of the predecessors of the present-day road movie (Orgeron 2008: 47; Roberts 1997: 45).

Among films generally found in the road movie category are classics like *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn, 1967), *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969), *Badlands* (Terrence Malick, 1973) and *Thelma and Louise* (Wood 2007; Cohan and Hark 1997), to name but a few. Although it is widely theorized that the road movie developed in America (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006: 3; Schaber 1997: 22; Mills 2006: 3), or at least that it was popularized there (Everett 2009: 166), the genre has been flourishing in various other

parts of the world (Everett 2009: 170; Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006: 9). Europe, for instance, has produced many interesting versions, including *La Strada/The Road* (Federico Fellini, 1954) (Laderman 2002: 249), *Im Lauf der Zeit/Kings of the Road* (Wim Wenders, 1976) (Orgeron 2008: 133) and *Drôle de Félix/The Adventures of Félix* (Olivier Ducastel and Jacques Martineau, 2000) (Grandena 2013: 42).

It is important to note that the road movie, typically thought to feature adult male protagonists of Caucasian race, has embraced diverse road travellers over the years (Everett 2009: 168). Journeys have been undertaken by heterosexual couples (*Bonnie and Clyde*, *Badlands*); adult and child pairs (*Paper Moon* [Peter Bogdanovich, 1973], *Alice in den Städten/Alice in the Cities* [Wim Wenders, 1974]) (Wood 2007); visible minorities (African-Americans in *Get on the Bus* [Spike Lee, 1996], Native Americans in *Smoke Signals* [Chris Eyre, 1998], travellers of Arab origin in French films such as *Loin/Far* [André Téchiné, 2001] and *Exils/Exiles* [Tony Gatlif, 2004]) (Laderman 2002: 218; Rascaroli 2013: 25; Blum-Reid 2013: 210); the elderly (*The Straight Story* [David Lynch, 1999], *About Schmidt* [Alexander Payne, 2002]) (Mills 2006: 201; Orgeron 2008: 166); women (*Sans toit ni loi/Vagabond* [Agnès Varda, 1985], *Thelma and Louise*) (Laderman 2002: 265; Schaber 1997: 35); and gay, lesbian or transgendered characters (*Boys on the Side* [Herbert Ross, 1995], *Drôle de Félix*, *Transamerica* [Duncan Tucker, 2005]) (Laderman 2002: 204; Grandena 2013: 42; Tarancón 2005).

The fourth and final section of this literature review will examine, in more detail, female-oriented road movies, in particular *Thelma and Louise*, deemed to be an “important turning point in the popular and academic reception of the road film” (Cohan and Hark 1997: 10).

2.2.2 The road movie and genre mixing

As mentioned in the introductory paragraphs of the present section, the road movie does not have a refined description, and the genre is repeatedly accused of being impure by continually borrowing from and blending with other—more recognizable—genres (Corrigan 1991: 138). On top of the films enumerated above, within the road movie corpus are catalogued films like *Midnight Run* (Martin Brest, 1988) and *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* (John Hughes, 1987) (Gehring 2012: 66; Wood 2007), which comprise cross-country road trips but are usually believed to be part of the comedic genre³ (Gehring 2012: 66); *It Happened One Night* (Frank Capra, 1934), which revolves around a romance—with a dash of humour—and therefore also functions as a romantic comedy (Cohan and Hark 1997: 5; Gehring 2012: 66); fairy tale films such as *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939) and *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure* (Tim Burton, 1985) (Wood 2007; Orgeron 2008: 65; Gehring 2012: 66); and even horror stories like *Wolf Creek* (Greg McLean, 2005), featuring backpackers trapped in the Australian wilderness (Wood 2007: 240). Moreover, some authors propose that films like *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979), *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* (Leonard Nimoy, 1986) and *Back to the Future* (Robert Zemeckis, 1985), where—instead of a road—protagonists move along a river, through space or through time, could very well be road movies themselves (Gehring 2012: 66; Mills 2006: 164).

In fact, Wes D. Gehring (2012) observes that the word “road” could simply be added to a film of another existing genre, which contains a road and a journey, in order to

³ The wandering aspect of the road movie, among other things, has also been identified in the screwball comedy, as well as in several other film genres (Laderman 2002: 35).

create a road movie (for example, a “road comedy” or a “road drama”) (67). Nonetheless, Gehring highlights the road movie’s uniqueness in that variations exist in all genres (2012: 66).⁴

2.2.3 The road movie’s themes and characterizations

The road movie’s diversity is also reflected in the multitude of reasons for which a journey may be undertaken by the protagonist(s) in these films: escape, a daredevil challenge, a breakaway from certain unwelcoming or oppressive circumstances, spatial confinement, spontaneity and the gaining of new experiences, the “simple *being* in the world . . . as a kind of blind necessity”—in other words, travel for travel’s sake—and so on (Lopez 1993, as cited in Laderman 2002: 17; Mills 2006: 8; Schaber 1997: 34; Ganser 2009: 21). Actually, one point that road movie scholars and critics tend to agree on is that films included in the road genre reveal a struggle between the “dynamic and the static,” or rebellion and conformity (Laderman 2002: 37; Orgeron 2008: 49; Mills 2006: 20).

Indeed, numerous labels have been attached to road movie protagonists, among others, “drifters” (Orgeron 2008: 104); people who live “in-between,” that is, “between parental origins of suburban settlement and the unknowable” (Campbell 2003: 46); and nomads (Laderman 2002: 83), as per Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s treatise on **nomadology**. Deleuze and Guattari’s study (1987) describes nomads as people who are determined to “occupy an open space . . . a space without borders or enclosure” (380),

⁴ Other scholars, like David Laderman (2002), argue that most “road comedies” do not actually put emphasis on road travel but on ridiculous laughs and car-crash displays (132). Laderman (2002) acknowledges that numerous traditional genres yielded road movie elements, but claims that the road movie emerged as an independent genre in the late 1960s with the release of motorcycle-driven *Easy Rider*, viewed as the quintessential road film (3).

also known as “smooth space” (353). As opposed to a “striated” or “sedentary” space, where there are routines, boundaries and no deviation from the established norms and ideals, a smooth space allows for “the possibility of springing up at any point: the movement is not from one point to another but becomes perpetual, without aim or destination, without departure or arrival” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 353). In other words, nomads have a habit of regularly moving from one territory to another. They tend to reject homogeneity and universal thinking, and embrace the thought of “constant variation” and “doing things differently” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 379).

In relation to Deleuze and Guattari’s study, road movie author Shari Roberts (1997: 53) claims that it is only by moving away from these controlling, or “striated” spaces—therefore, being *dynamic*—that an individual can look forward to fulfilment of some kind. Roberts (1997) describes this fulfilment as the intertwining of the physical journey with a spiritual quest (53). Of course, the road is not always a passage to utopic horizons and may at times lead to dystopia instead (Mills 1997: 322). This is skillfully portrayed in many European road films, which tend to focus on characters for whom travel is “awfully difficult and not synonymic with pleasure” (Rascaroli 2013: 21). Often, these individuals are emigrants, exiled or homeless, and they equate travelling with “tracing the meaning of *citizenship* as a journey” (Laderman 2002: 248).

Several French road movies of the past decade or so efficiently illustrate this uneasiness: *Depuis qu’Otar est parti.../Since Otar Left* (Julie Bertucelli, 2003) and *Rome plutôt que vous/Rome Rather Than You* (Tariq Teguia, 2006) paint the struggles of North African and Eastern European emigrants who envision Western European cities as longed-for El Dorados (McGonagle 2013: 95; Rascaroli 2013: 31). Sadly, the reality for

some of these protagonists is rather bleak: the large cities that they immigrate to, like Paris, are filthy and full of poverty, hosting a vast number of people, most of whom are just passing by (Rascaroli 2013: 27). In other films, like *La fille de Keltoum/Daughter of Keltoum* (Mehdi Charef, 2001), emigrants travel back to their home country only to be discouraged by its repressiveness and primitivism when compared to the West (Waldron 2013: 75).

Nevertheless, no matter the number of obstacles a traveller may face, the road, more often than not, functions as a learning experience and can potentially lead to self-discovery (Roberts 1997: 53). Road movie protagonists are commonly considered to be alienated or solitary individuals (Schaber 1997: 34) who, on top of various other problems, deal with a personal identity crisis (Mills 2006: 12).⁵ At the end of their journey, whether it be successful or not, road movie characters generally transform in some sense; for example, they might become wiser or more courageous (Roberts 1997: 53).

2.2.4 The road movie's return home

As is the case with most other film genres, however, scholars and critics have further inspected, if not revived, some of the road movie's assumedly core ingredients. Devin Orgeron (2008) contends that the mobility of road movie protagonists is not so much a rebellion against conformity as it is a desire for stability, which is derived from community and communication (2) (see also Mills 2006: 188). According to Orgeron (2008), road movie characters are frequently forced to accept that community and

⁵ For instance, in *Badlands*, the main characters are not only alienated from their environments, but also from each other and from themselves: they are depicted as being unemotional and lacking ambition, and they continually play with their identities by experimenting with different looks (Mottram 2003: 17).

communication are the missing elements in their lives and, ironically, the exact ones that the road tends to lead away from (108). Despite their seemingly antisocial appearance, these individuals make attempts at communication through other means, such as drafting letters or recording thoughts while travelling (as seen in *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Badlands* or *Natural Born Killers* [Oliver Stone, 1994]) (Orgeron 2008: 54).

A few scholars (Robertson 1997: 271; Bjurström and Rudberg 1996: 69) expand on this need for stability by insisting that the road film is a genre “obsessed with home.” They assert that, while typically the road takes a person *away* from home (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006: 123), home is undeniably perceived as an absence, is searched for and can in effect be found “anywhere and everywhere on the road” (Robertson 1997: 271).

Films like *Raising Arizona* (Joel and Ethan Coen, 1987) and *Wild at Heart* (David Lynch, 1990), for instance, mainly centre on outlaw couples who are looking to settle down and raise a family (Laderman 2002: 161). This theme also appears in more recent films like *The Straight Story*, where the traveller takes to the road in order to reconcile with his estranged brother (Orgeron 2008: 174), or *Away We Go* (Sam Mendes, 2009), where a young couple expecting their first baby is seeking a place to put down roots, preferably near friends (Durbin 2009). Undoubtedly, the search for roots also seems to be a common challenge for the protagonists in the French films discussed earlier.

Furthermore, road movie characters occasionally encounter “alternative” families (Orgeron 2008: 166). In *The Straight Story*, the protagonist befriends and temporarily resides with people who welcome him in when his lawnmower (the “vehicle” that he uses for the trip) breaks down (Orgeron 2008: 174). In *Drôle de Félix*, the individuals that the hero meets during his travels are characterized by him as brother, grandmother, cousin

and father, and in fact “help him renegotiate his relationship with the ideological institution of the traditional family” (Grandena 2013: 44). Thus, the road can sometimes be a space of reunion, connectedness and togetherness rather than one of solitude and silence (Orgeron 2008: 166).

In the end, it is precisely the road movie’s flexibility—its articulation of various concepts and shifting concerns, its blending ability and its adaptability to different cultures—that defines it and positions it as an important genre for our times (Everett 2009: 173).

2.3 Road movie enchanted: the fairy tale film

Embedded in the ever-growing road movie collage is the fairy tale film, bearing at first glance a perhaps less obvious relation to the road movie (Gehring 2012: 66; Oxberry 2004; Wood 2007: 238).

Although not as widely discussed as some other constituents of the road movie mix, films like *The Wizard of Oz* and *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), usually placed in the fairy tale film category (Zipes 2011; Worley 2005), as well as their more modern counterparts such as *Pee Wee’s Big Adventure* (Tim Burton, 1985) (Worley 2005: 66), have all worn the road movie label (Gehring 2012: 66; Oxberry 2004; Wood 2007: 238; Worley 2005: 66).

2.3.1 Origins and structure of the fairy tale film

Films typically classified in the fairy tale film genre⁶ are described as being set in worlds resembling our own, but replete with twisted or exaggerated elements and therefore viewed as being unreal (Worley 2005: 14; Furby and Hines 2011: 6). The characters inhabiting these worlds are inevitably strange in order to correspond to their bizarre surroundings, and fairy tale films routinely use all kinds of odd occurrences, without having to explain themselves (Worley 2005: 14). “Psychedelic” events—such as Alice’s tumble down the hole to Wonderland, or a crowd of chipmunks suddenly bursting into song—are not unusual. More often than not, the plots in these types of films are symbolic or allegorical (Worley 2005: 14).⁷

Fairy tale films come in a variety of formats: early cartoons and shorts, animated feature films and live-action films (including live-action silent films) (Zipes 2011). They are rooted in literary short stories, aptly named “fairy tales,” which feature characters such as witches, goblins, fairies, giants and elves, and magical or enchanted happenings (Worley 2005: 25). These tales, in turn, originate from earlier oral folktales or fables (Furby and Hines 2011: 7) shared during pilgrimages of the pious and travels of artisans and the well-to-do (Bottigheimer 1986: 76). However, not every fairy tale can be traced

⁶ According to several authors (Worley 2005: 13; Furby and Hines 2011: 6; Fowkes 2010: 9), it is generally thought that fairy tale films are a *subgenre*, or a subcategory, of the larger fantasy film genre. The latter is also said to include earthbound fantasy, heroic fantasy, epic fantasy and surrealism (for further details, see Worley 2005: 13).

⁷ The fairy tale film is considered to have started with George Méliès (Zipes 2011: 31)—a magician and “man of the theatre” who later became an inspired filmmaker—and has succeeded in achieving formidable success mainly under the wing of Walt Disney Studios. A massive volume of fairy tale films has been produced since the late 19th century, among others, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (William Cottrell, Wilfred Jackson, Larry Morey, Perce Pearce and Ben Sharpsteen, 1937), *La Belle et la Bête/Beauty and the Beast* (René Clément and Jean Cocteau, 1946), *The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T* (Roy Rowland, 1953), *The Little Mermaid* (Ron Clements and John Musker, 1989), *Otesánek/Little Otik* (Jan Švankmajer, 2000), *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi/Spirited Away* (Hayao Miyazaki, 2001) and *Ella Enchanted* (Tommy O’Haver, 2004) (Zipes 2011; Worley 2005).

back to an oral tradition (Furby and Hines 2011: 7). Nonetheless, due to the high adaptability of their narratives to new circumstances and contexts, fairy tales are believed to be common to all societies (Furby and Hines 2011: 7).

Fairy tales tend to follow established plot patterns: these stories normally revolve around a hero, a villain and some sort of pursuit (Propp 1968: 26-39). At the beginning of most stories, the hero is sent off on a quest, to a location far away from home. The motivations for the quest vary: if the hero is not expelled or cast adrift by a villain's hatred or envy, or departs to follow a prophecy, he or she usually leaves home either due to a lack of something or a desire to have something. There are also occasions in which the hero leaves with no real aim announced (Propp 1968: 75-78). Along the way, the hero faces various obstacles but is often helped by individuals or creatures whom he or she encounters; sometimes, the hero is offered magical objects in exchange for something else (Propp 1968: 39-46).⁸

Given that the motif of mobility (or “wandering”), as exemplified by the hero's departure from home to embark on a quest, is deemed a prominent aspect of *most* literary fairy tales (Propp 1968: 107), scholars like Risto Jarv (2010: 283) and Dani Cavallaro (2011: 68) claim that fairy tales can subsequently function as road—or tourist—trips. Jack Zipes (2011) extends this notion to fairy tale films by asserting that these films tend to depict protagonists as voyageurs who explore regions where things differ from the world that they are accustomed to (285).

⁸ Propp (1968) notes that, although certain fairy tales do not cover all of the enumerated elements, the absence of an element is not necessarily considered an omission (108).

2.3.2 Fairy tale films as road movies

Comprising a larger-than-life road trip, *The Wizard of Oz* has been cited as another early influence on the road movie genre, and as one of the films from which the road movie might have borrowed more than a few ideas (Orgeron 2008: 107). According to Jason Wood (2007), the popular fairy tale film might be one of those rare road movies in which the journey is taken on foot without the use of a vehicle or mode of transport of any kind, but it nevertheless contains elements typically found in a road movie, among others, the struggle between rebellion and conformity and self-discovery; it also contains a close link to the importance of home (239).⁹

The Wizard of Oz's Dorothy is, like many other road movie figures, emotionally confused and oppressed, and yearns for a world in which she can express her desires freely and fully (Robertson 1997: 274). To Dorothy, the world “out there” or “Somewhere Over the Rainbow,” portrayed as bright and colourful, is fascinating; Kansas or “in here,” on the other hand, is grey and plain, and thus constricted and mundane (Orgeron 2008: 65). Dorothy is torn between home and errancy: in the film, home represents stasis whereas to err is to wander, but also to find one's inner strength. The latter is something that is not always possible at home, where Dorothy tends to lack autonomy (Hamelman 2000: 315). Similar to the road movie travellers in *Badlands*, Dorothy starts her journey in search of self-definition and self-understanding (Orgeron 2008: 107). Through various adventures in Oz, she “finds herself” and, as a result, starts growing into a more mature young woman (Gehring 2012: 67).

⁹ On a related note, fairy tale film theorists frequently point out that fairy tale films, as well as their literary counterparts, are meant to ignite a quest for *home* (Zipes 2011: 3) as they have a tendency to picture home as the best possible place in the world (Fowkes 2010: 11).

In the film, the road also leads to familial unification, and eventually to home itself (Orgeron 2002: 34). Just like the elderly protagonist in *The Straight Story* who takes to the road not to escape but to rebuild a family, Dorothy begins by looking for the unfamiliar, but finds instead another community that she can join in (Orgeron 2002: 32). This alternative “family” makes Dorothy realize how much her own family means to her (Orgeron 2002: 32). Furthermore, the communities in these films occasionally assist the road travellers—and vice versa. In *The Straight Story*, the people encountered on the road facilitate the hero’s journey in different ways (Orgeron 2002: 40), whereas in *The Wizard*, Dorothy serves as the mother/sister/friend to her newfound road companions (Bourget 2005: 183).

Alongside *The Wizard of Oz*, Disney’s *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) is considered to be a road film mainly due to its themes of escape, risk and freedom (Oxberry 2004; Gehring 2012: 67), and the frantic and challenging journey to freedom by a protagonist who is in reality searching for a home (Oxberry 2004). *Alice in Wonderland* undoubtedly contains parallels to classic road films such as *Easy Rider* and *Thelma and Louise*: like the duo in *Thelma and Louise*, Alice feels confined in her everyday life and dreams of a vibrant, boundless world (Oxberry 2004). Moreover, Alice’s initial boredom, which motivates her voyage, is similar to that of the comrades in *Easy Rider* who seek something “different” because of their conviction that “all cities are alike” (Oxberry 2004). Indeed, Alice, like these other road movie characters, seems tempted by a nomadic lifestyle (Oxberry 2004).

Alice is also in search of self-definition while on the road, and does this through experimentation: whereas the group in *Easy Rider* engages in drug-fueled activities, Alice

drinks from peculiar-looking objects and impulsively decides to eat whatever is attached to an “EAT ME” sign (Oxberry 2004). This causes her to shrink or grow at an alarming speed. Unfortunately, Alice’s trip is, in fact, filled with problems. Like the *Easy Rider* protagonists, who are rudely treated at a small-town diner, Alice is verbally attacked by some flowers on her path on the pretext that, since she does not look like them, she must be an unwelcome weed (Oxberry 2004).

Although Alice apparently wants to create a niche for herself in Wonderland, she seems unable to do so, unlike Dorothy in Oz (Oxberry 2004). The citizens of Wonderland provide Alice with confusing directions and she ultimately becomes lost after being repeatedly told that “all ways are the Queen’s ways” (Oxberry 2004). This chaotic new society therefore leaves Alice with no other choice but to go back to her original home, where nothing has changed, except for her, and where no one can really understand what she has gone through (Oxberry 2004).

As seen above and stated in previous sections of this literature review, films do not need to have the exact configuration of a “typical” road film to be associated with the genre (Altman 1999: 131). Interestingly, in films of a fantastic nature such as fairy tale films, where protagonists often find themselves in labyrinth-like environments, road movie conventions are perhaps more easily observed than in certain more realistic genres (Gehring 2012: 67). This shows just how unpredictable the road movie’s routes are and, seemingly, have always been.

2.4 Female crossings

As indicated earlier, travel was first perceived as belonging to the male sex. In fact, this view can be traced back to early literary road narratives and film genres like the Western (Roberts 1997: 45; Orgeron 2008: 63). Essentially, road trips were understood to be *male* identity projects because they entail a movement away from the domestic sphere, deemed to be the domain of the woman (Mitchell 1996, as cited in Orgeron 2008: 63). Men were encouraged to journey away from home and domesticity to indulge in the spirit of “a paradise of male camaraderie” (Kimmel 1996, as cited in Enevold 2000: 411). Women, on the other hand, were generally stationary and linked to *pre-* and *post-*travelling stability (Enevold 2000: 411; Bjurström and Rudberg 1996: 56).

Indeed, female characters have often been marginal in road movies, from earlier examples like the Bing Crosby and Bob Hope series *Road To...* (1940-1962) to more recent ones like *Midnight Run* (Roberts 1997: 62). In *Easy Rider*, for instance, female characters lead a fixed, passive existence: they are mainly seen during the temporary stops on the trip that the male protagonists undertake and are the stay-at-home wives of the male characters whom the heroes encounter, residents of a commune or brothel girls (Roberts 1997: 62; Orgeron 2008: 145). Moreover, in road films where women hold major roles, such as those focusing on heterosexual travelling couples like *Bonnie and Clyde* or *Badlands*, the heroines are frequently depicted as constrained in male-oriented and male-dominated fantasies—principally, as powerless travel accessories who seem to agree with the male protagonist’s ideas and ideals (Roberts 1997: 62; Latto 2003: 90).

Nevertheless, films like *The Wizard of Oz* and *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), among a number of others, do revolve around female travellers. Alice and Dorothy of Oz

journey to exciting worlds on their own. Alice gladly forces herself through a rabbit hole (Oxberry 2004) to reach this new milieu, and Dorothy, who eventually finds male road companions, is the *least* stationary of the characters: she is the one who, after putting on her red travelling shoes,¹⁰ persuades the rather inert Scarecrow, Lion and Tin Man to embark on an adventure on the yellow brick road (Bourget 2005: 182).

However, once *The Wizard of Oz*'s heroine returns home at the end of the film, she is pictured lying in bed surrounded by men who insist that her adventures were but a dream. Furthermore, after her exhilarating journey, Dorothy appears to be frightened by the sole *idea* of a life away from home—thereby repressing any further travels (Rohrer Paige 1996: 152). Authors like Linda Rohrer Paige (1996: 152) and Steven Hamelman (2000: 316)—who have examined this film's road movie aspects—believe that, although Dorothy's return home may have allowed her to reunite with her family, her situation at the end of the trip points to a willingness to accept a rather static lifestyle (by not wanting to venture too far away from home ever again) and an existence which seems to be mainly centred on domestic duties. .¹¹ In Rohrer Paige's view, it is as if though the film seems to promote the message that females should stay at home, where they are seen as “angels”: nurturing and loving but afraid to step out of their comfort zone to gain new experiences (1996: 149).

¹⁰ Dorothy's red travelling shoes (the colour *red* deemed to embody passion) are commonly argued to be exclusively a woman's symbol and a sign of female mobility (Rohrer Paige 1996: 147).

¹¹ In fact, Dorothy's trip to Oz is almost interrupted once, near the beginning of the film, when an eccentric professor whom she happens to meet falsely notifies her that her aunt at home is having a heart attack. Dorothy then momentarily forgets about her journey and runs back to the farm to check on her aunt (Rohrer Paige 1996: 150).

Alice in Wonderland's leading lady is represented as a slightly weaker traveller than Oz's Dorothy: while in Wonderland, she constantly whines because she cannot find her way—her tears actually create a large pool in one scene (Chaston 1997: 16). At one point during her trip, Alice concludes that she made a mistake by setting off on the road and discouragingly declares that “curiosity often leads to trouble”¹² (Oxberry 2004). Just like Dorothy, upon her eventual return home, Alice appears to be thoroughly relieved that she is finally safe from the perils associated with road travel (Chaston 1997: 16).

Road heroines in some later films, such as French director Agnès Varda's *Vagabond*, are depicted as somewhat more untamed. *Vagabond*'s female protagonist may be feisty and uninhibited, but the people in the towns that she passes through not only reject this voyageur's boldness, eccentricity and sexual freedom but are utterly disgusted by these qualities of hers, which leads to the assumption that, for women, road travel simply does not offer the same possibilities as it does for men (Laderman 2002: 265)—in many of these films, travelling women tend to be perceived as “fallen” or “loose” (Enevold 2000: 411). Over the past twenty years or so, however, the road in film became densely populated with journeywomen, who have perhaps been more successful than their earlier counterparts in enjoying their fair share of adventures. *Leaving Normal* (Edward Zwick, 1992) focuses on two women who “choose their route through tossing coins, picking cigarettes, and waiting for birds to excrete on their map” (Roberts 1997: 66). *Boys on the Side* features three free-spirited women, who do not seem to let men stand in their way, on a spontaneous road trip to California. However, it is female-

¹² For quite some time, curiosity was viewed as a dangerous feature for a woman to possess as it is linked to the woman's gaining of knowledge and exploration of the imagination—which were, in turn, seen as a threat to patriarchy (Aikens 2010: 29).

oriented *Thelma and Louise* that undoubtedly earned the most popularity and scholarly attention (Laderman 2002: 265; Roberts 1997: 62).

Thelma and Louise focuses on two friends who decide to leave their suffocating partners and jobs for a pleasant weekend getaway. While on the road, they revel in beautiful landscapes, lounge in motels, spend an evening at a bar and engage in romantic encounters (Bjurström and Rudberg 1996: 62; Laderman 2002: 190). The male characters whom the heroines leave behind in their hometown are portrayed as being uncomfortable alone in a domestic setting, and spend most of their time sitting around and waiting for the women to contact them and give them something to do (Sturken 2000: 42). Yet, as opposed to films like *Easy Rider* where men drive the narrative and women are virtually invisible and inaudible, in *Thelma and Louise* men are by no means silent (Bjurström and Rudberg 1996: 63). The women's trip is in fact regularly interrupted by various men, who attempt to overpower them and mark the road as male territory. Additionally, the heroines and these male characters do not seem to express themselves in the same manner most of the time, and frequently speak past each other (Sturken 2000: 44).

Actually, it is precisely male harshness that reinforces the women's desire for exploration (Sturken 2000: 37). Unlike earlier films featuring female travellers, *Thelma and Louise* fully delves into female longings and fantasies of rebellion, and female mobility as mainly "the desire for autonomy from patriarchal structure and rebellion against male privilege" (Mills 2006: 194). During their trip, the women are shown as being comfortable in the hot Western environment, as they quickly start dressing casually and assuming laidback postures, reminiscent of male travellers (Cook 2007: 7), and are quick to act—after Thelma's near sexual assault, Louise shoots the unremorseful rapist

(Mills 2006: 194). Not only do these women experience freedom on the road, but they do so in an assertive manner (Laderman 2002: 187): they are not fragile but instead stand up for themselves with calm confidence (Bjurström and Rudberg 1996: 64). Whereas certain other road heroines, such as Alice in *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), end up feeling guilt for embarking on a road trip, Thelma and Louise's slight unease at the beginning of the film quickly disappears as the women find their calling as road rebels. Even with the police chasing them, Thelma turns to Louise and exclaims, "Whatever happens, I'm glad I came with you" (Oxberry 2004).

Interestingly, at the height of the film's popularity in the 1990s, a number of discussions revolved around the notion that *Thelma and Louise* is a "simple case of role reversal" (and not some type of progress on the feminist front): the film was accused of portraying women on the road as not being able to control themselves and as being just as foolish and offensive as men in earlier films (Roberts 1997: 63; Mills 1997: 322). Yet, although Thelma and Louise occasionally break laws, they also strictly adhere to certain other ones: after robbing a store, for instance, they make sure not to litter on the street (Sturken 2000: 57) and, when they hold a man at gunpoint and lock him in the trunk of his own car, they do so gently and apologize repeatedly (Laderman 2002: 189). Finally, as much as they feel the necessity for a road trip, Thelma and Louise still appear to hold a faint hope for some kind of stability in their lives. In their case, there is obviously no stable home to return to and one ought to be created from scratch (Bjurström and

Rudberg 1996: 69)—a home where women depend on *each other* to survive¹³ (Dargis 1991: 17).

Though it has been suggested that female road films do not exactly provide “a female space for escape or revitalization” because the protagonists ultimately meet a grim fate—if not unfair compromises, then grave illnesses or even death (Roberts 1997: 66; Cole 2005: 15), *Thelma and Louise* undeniably refreshed the growingly prevalent road movie genre—and by extension, modern nomadism—by revealing unexpressed gender expectations and tensions that previous road films left unchallenged (Mills 2006: 197).

2.5 Summary

The above literature review has shown, first and foremost, that the concept of a film genre is difficult to grasp. Films can be said to belong to the same genre if they contain interconnected themes and similar stylistic techniques and narrative structure, among other things, but a film need not obey a specific genre’s logic throughout to be associated with that genre. To further complicate things, a genre may borrow ideas from another genre, or even several other ones. Genres can always be redefined as they tend to depend on different criteria at different time periods, as well as on their construction by the film industry and on their reading by an audience.

The road movie genre includes films that tend to revolve around travel and plots involving a journey or a quest. It is generally believed that within road movie

¹³ The original movie poster for *Thelma and Louise* not only highlights the charm of travel and the open road, but also female friendship: shown in the poster’s background is a highway and a rugged vast space and, in the foreground, a Polaroid picture of the two friends laughing, with faces pressed close together (Cook 2007: 16). This bond also forms in several other road films with female protagonists, such as *Boys on the Side*, where a group of very different travelling women come together to create a unique female community (Willis 1997: 297).

protagonists lies a struggle between the dynamic and the static, or rebellion and conformity. They are thus often described as “nomads” since they have a habit of regularly moving from one territory to another. Their journey usually functions as a learning experience and can potentially lead to self-discovery and the resolution of a possible identity crisis. Certain scholars have also described these characters as searching for a home or a community (and not necessarily as running away from one), or at least for some type of stability in their lives.

Nonetheless, since many deemed-to-be more conventional film genres tend to include above-mentioned elements, films from various other categories have also been classified as road movies. For instance, several of these road movie motifs, such as voyaging or mobility, surface in films generally belonging to the fairy tale category. Namely, films like *The Wizard of Oz and Alice in Wonderland* (1951) have been included in several discussions on road movies and have been compared to road movies of the more “classic” variety, such as *Easy Rider* or *The Straight Story*.

The literature review also examined the notion of female versus male mobility. Female characters have frequently “taken the back seat” in road movies, or have been depicted as confined in male-oriented fantasies or as “fallen” or “loose.” It was not until *Thelma and Louise* that female longings, mobility and rebellion against male privilege have been closely examined. The film is believed to have paved the way for independent female travellers.

2.6 Forthcoming Research

As mentioned above, since the success of female-oriented *Thelma and Louise* in 1991, in North America alone, several road films of the more classic variety featuring females in lead roles were brought to the big screen (*Leaving Normal*, *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* [Gus Van Sant, 1993] and *Boys on the Side*, among others). The last decade or so included an increased number of female traveller films—North American variants such as *Crossroads* (Tamra Davis, 2002), *Last Holiday* (Wayne Wang, 2006) and *Wendy and Lucy* (Kelly Reichardt, 2008), as well as European ones, among others, *À tout de suite/Right Now* (Benoît Jacquot, 2004) and *L'Intouchable/The Untouchable* (Benoît Jacquot, 2006). Although some of these films did receive fair scholarly attention, most seem to have been overlooked by critics and scholars.

Turning over to fairy tale films classified in the road movie genre, on which the present study is based, *The Wizard of Oz* and *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) both made decades ago, seem to be, by far, the most discussed ones. Even though there have been numerous film adaptations of Lewis Carroll's beloved story and generally all *Alice* films contain a departure from home and a transformation through unusual adventures (Zipes 2011: 285), most of these versions have not been popular with road movie scholars. For instance, analyses on Bud Pollard's 1931 version of *Alice*, Jonathan Miller's 1966 version or Jan Švankmajer's 1988 adaptation tend to deal with issues of puberty and childhood, or dreams/fantasy versus reality (McWilliam 2011; Livolsi 2005). It is possible that the reason for the lack of elaborate discussion about the travelling aspect of fairy tale films is that fairy tale films in general have not received much thought from critics and theorists (Zipes 2011: preface), due to them being viewed by many as infantile (Zipes 1994: 83).

The films that have been selected for the present in-depth analysis, *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) and *Tangled*, have all been released in the past 15 years. Although female-oriented road films have not been as discussed as road films with male protagonists, this lack of discussion mostly shows when it comes to 21st century female films, as literature on these is particularly scarce. These three films have also been chosen for a close study because they visibly fit into the fairy tale film category, as per Alec Worley's (2005) definition, as well as in the road film category by featuring a protagonist undertaking a journey away from home. These films centre on a female traveller—even if she does not always travel alone—and the traveller's trip comprises a considerable portion of the film. Moreover, in order to be able to closely examine female longings, a decision has been made to study only those films in which the heroine leaves home because she desires to go on a road trip (as opposed to the heroine leaving home because she is being chased, or because she wants to save someone or retrieve an object of some sort). Although fairy tale films with road movie conventions certainly exist all over the world, films from English-speaking regions were selected due to accessibility and ease of comprehension. The three above-mentioned films have also gained commercial popularity here in North America (IMDB).

It should be noted that one of the cited films, *Tangled*, is a 3D animated feature film, whereas the other two are live-action films. Animation has always been closely connected to the fairy tale, and there has been a vast production of animated feature fairy tale films throughout the 20th and 21st centuries in all regions of the world (Zipes 2011: 83). As the selected films will not be discussed in terms of form, the fact that *Tangled* uses animation techniques should not detract from its elemental road movie themes.

The ensuing chapters of this study will present a detailed analysis of *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Tangled*. These chapters will elaborate on the road movie themes and characterizations defined in the literature review by illustrating how these 21st century films appropriate the established points, and by showing the similarities and differences between the journeys and the portrayals of the new female road protagonists and those of the heroines in older films.

The key concepts guiding the analysis are mobility, female rebellion, power, (self-) control and stability. For the purposes of this study, **mobility**, or movement, is the ability to freely change environments (Barber 2004: 995). It is the opposite of being fixed, passive or sedentary. As the literature review has shown, mobility is the key feature of road movies since the completion of a journey can only be done if a person keeps on moving. As mentioned, as opposed to male road movie characters, female characters have often been passive/sedentary. **Rebellion** is defined as “openly resisting authority or established norms or conventions” (Barber 2004: 1288). Rebellion is also an important component of road films since it tends to be the reason behind most road trips—a need to experience something new or something different, namely, a refusal to stay at the same spot, unchanged. As shown in the literature review, in many films featuring females, rebellion is precisely resistance against traditional social roles or patriarchal oppression.

Power is used in the sense of “influence,” “authority” or “leadership” (Barber 2004: 1217). In most road films, power is often discussed in terms of gender difference or gendered dependence and, as scholarly research shows, even on female-led trips, males tend to hold the power and females are subject to insubordination. **Control**, or **self-control**, is defined as “the power of controlling one’s external reactions, emotions, etc.”

(Barber 2004: 1407). In other words, it is the ability to stay composed, even in the most difficult situations. A lack of self-control on the trip has been shown to be detrimental to many road protagonists, especially women, and even lead to their downfall in some cases. As mentioned in the literature review, **stability** has been one of the underlying notions of road movies. Indeed, road movie protagonists have a tendency to focus on “finding a home” or “alternative families” on the road. For the present investigation, stability is used in the sense of “reliability” and “dependability” (Barber 2004: 1514). Thus, a stable environment is one that offers some sort of certainty or peace of mind.

The methodological approach used for the study is both theoretical and analytical. Genre theory will provide a framework for the investigation and will enable strong comprehension and judgment. A film studies approach will allow for an in-depth analysis of the films. Films can be “read” in different ways, and these are usually divided into examinations of “micro” elements of a film and examinations of “macro” elements (Bennett, Hickman and Wall 2007: 221). Micro elements include technical codes, such as camera angles, lighting, editing or sound, and performative codes, such as costume, setting, acting or props. In contrast, macro elements include film genre, narrative, themes and characterizations (Bennett, Hickman and Wall 2007: 221).

Since the consulted literature on road films tends to focus on the content of these films more so than on the technical aspects, it makes sense to focus on the *macro* elements for the present study. Focusing on macro elements allows the study to be more expansive, and helps when exploring comparative issues—for example, how a film compares to others in its genre (Bennett, Hickman and Wall 2007: 222; Barsam 2007: 337). The present film analysis also covers the narrative, or the story, of the films by

dividing the films into “sections.” Guided by the specified key concepts, important scenes in the films will be examined and recurrent themes, behaviours and characteristics will be extracted and discussed.

The heroines’ journeys will be explored in terms of departure, initiation and return, the main components of a hero’s trip (Campbell 1968). More precisely, a journey features an “awakening of the self,” (Campbell 1968: 48) followed by a “crossing of the threshold” into a new environment or world in which the hero or heroine undergoes a series of trials—both physical and psychological (Campbell 1968: 81; Roberts 1997: 53). At the end, the hero or heroine usually returns home (but not always), transformed in a certain way (as seen from the road movie literature, the hero usually becomes wiser, stronger or more at peace with himself or herself (Campbell 1968: 167).

Chapter 3 will focus on the protagonist’s home environment and her departure from this environment. In addition, the chapter will shed light on how the protagonist is viewed by others whom she meets on the road, once her trip is initiated. Chapter 4 will define the traveller’s personality traits and overall attitude while on the trip, and how the obstacles that come her way in her new environment affect her. Lastly, Chapter 5 will deal with the heroine’s learning experience upon the completion of her journey and her subsequent return home.

Chapter 3: Departure From Home and New Encounters in Twenty-First Century

Female Road Films

Although the road movie genre became significantly enhanced with the release of female-led films following *Thelma and Louise* (Roberts 1997: 63), scholars have consistently noted that when it comes to female travellers in general, many are met with unfriendliness and hostility, perhaps even more serious than that in films featuring male protagonists (Laderman 2002: 266-70; Roberts 1997: 66; Ganser 2009: 79). According to Shari Roberts (1997), these unfair treatments of female characters on the road seem to emphasize the patriarchal order existing in the societies they live in and the environments they travel through, where males hold primary power/social privileges (63).

Other criticism arises from the fact that in these later road films, like *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, it seems that women go on the road claiming to want liberation, yet their aspirations are to become models or strippers (Enevold 2000: 416). These women are therefore believed to be simply using their looks to satisfy the male gaze instead of having a more “intellectual type of mobility” (Enevold 2000: 416). In fact, James Clifford (1997, as cited in Almeida Santos 2006) states that he is still convinced that travel is something that men simply do better than women (see also Ganser 2009: 90).

Before these points are explored further in *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Tangled*, however, a brief overview of the three films is hereby presented.

3.1 Critical reception

3.1.1 Peter Pan

Filmed in Australia, *Peter Pan* opened in theatres in North America on December 25, 2003, and grossed \$121,975,011 worldwide (IMDB).¹⁴ An adaptation of Scottish author J.M. Barrie's novel *Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Would Never Grow Up* (1904), the film centres on a young girl named Wendy Darling who meets a flying boy, Peter Pan, in her London home one night and sets off with him and her two brothers to Neverland, a faraway island of mermaids, fairies and evil pirates where children never grow up. After spending some time in Neverland and partaking in various adventures, Wendy decides to return home with her brothers, taking several of Neverland's inhabitants with her.

The reviews for this film were mainly favourable. The film has been described as “combining the depth of J.M. Barrie's original with all of the magic that current technology has to offer” (About.com 2002). Susan Wloszczyna (2003) calls it “mysterious and dark” and with “so much bite and wit.” Others point out that although there are multiple film versions of *Peter Pan*, what is really special about the 2003 film is that it is the first live-action movie featuring a real boy playing the role of Peter Pan (Murray 2004). Peter Hollindale (2005) explains that it is unusual for the parts of Peter and Wendy to be played by children (a 14-year-old American boy was cast as Peter and a 12-year-old English girl as Wendy) but that it is precisely why the film is seen as the first authentic performance of the novel (212). The film may be set in Edwardian London but, according to Hollindale (2005), the children are “a recognizable boy and girl of the present day,” namely, they act as 21st century children (212).

¹⁴ Price expressed in US dollars.

It is important to mention that several reviews highlight that Peter Pan himself is not the main protagonist in this film, like he was in previous versions. It is actually Wendy who is the focus of the story (Wloszczyna 2003; Scott 2003) and the film revolves around *her* adventures (Wloszczyna 2003). Wendy has been referred to as an “action heroine” (Scott 2003) and a “modern Wendy” who also takes part in the fighting against Neverland’s pirates (Hollindale 2005: 213).

Nonetheless, there exists a belief that as much as the film is about Wendy, it is the romance between Wendy and Peter that prevails (Hollindale 2005: 213). J.M. Barrie’s god-daughter, Laura Duguid, for instance, disagrees with what she calls the “obvious sexuality and romance of the film” and the portrayal of Wendy as “a ‘lolita’ who is experiencing a sexual awakening through her relationship with Peter,” and claims that this theme is not found in the original story (Hastings and Edwardes 2002).

3.1.2 Alice in Wonderland

Filmed in both the United Kingdom and the United States,¹⁵ *Alice in Wonderland* was released in North America on March 5, 2010. The film grossed \$1,024,299,904 worldwide (IMDB).¹⁶ Adapted from Lewis Carroll’s novels *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871),¹⁷ *Alice in Wonderland*’s protagonist is Alice Kingsleigh, a 19-year-old girl who leaves her engagement party to follow a white rabbit in the woods and falls through a tree hole only to end up in Underland, a magical place with strange-

¹⁵ Los Angeles, California/Culver Studios and Sony Pictures Studios in Culver City, California.

¹⁶ Price expressed in US dollars.

¹⁷ As opposed to the 1951 film version of *Alice in Wonderland*, which is mainly based on the first novel.

looking talking creatures, an evil Red Queen and her sister, the good White Queen. Alice slays the Red Queen's flying monster, the jabberwocky, and saves Underland from the queen's reign of terror before returning home.

Reviewers have remarked that this version of the popular Carroll novels is, just like *Peter Pan* above, "mysterious and dark" and more "serious" in tone, and that there is even a nightmarish aspect to Alice's journey, as exemplified by her stepping on some severed heads in the Red Queen's castle (Dargis 2010). Matt Soergel (2010) states that there is plenty to enjoy in the film: impressive and gorgeous visuals, a story that moves quickly and no needlessly long action scenes. Still, the author asserts that it does not *all* work: "The story seems thin, too cobbled-together from bits of 'Lord of the Rings,' the Narnia stories and 'The Wizard of Oz' . . . and there's little emotional connection between anyone" (Soergel 2010).

Additionally, this new Alice, has also been hailed as an action heroine, just like Wendy in *Peter Pan*, but Alice's "combination of Tenniel's chivalric Childe, dragon-slayer St. George, visionary St. Anthony and heroic Joan of Arc" is viewed by some critics as not being believable enough (Kérchy 2012).

3.1.3 Tangled

Tangled was produced in the United States and released throughout North America on November 24, 2010; it grossed \$590,721,936 worldwide (IMDB).¹⁸

Tangled is loosely based on the Brothers Grimm story "Rapunzel" (1812) and is about a young girl named Rapunzel, with very long hair that possesses secret powers. When Rapunzel was a baby, a witch abducted her from her real parents, a king and a queen, and

¹⁸ Price expressed in US dollars.

locked her up in a tower deep in the forest where no one would be able to find her. One day, a thief, Flynn Rider, breaks into the tower and Rapunzel embarks on a trip with him to see the floating lights which the king and queen set off from their palace every year in the hopes of finding their lost daughter, something that Rapunzel is unaware of. At the end of her trip, the heroine learns the truth about her background and is reunited with her parents.

Tangled is the first animated fairy-tale-based Disney film primarily using CGI, or computer-generated imagery (hand-drawn animation had been used up until then) (Farley 2010). Helen O'Hara (2010) labelled the film as the "best-looking Disney since *Sleeping Beauty*." Although the film appears to be dreamy, romantic and medieval-art inspired, the author states that it is action-packed, and has a modern tone to it as well as a surprising plot (O'Hara 2010). Despite the fact that Rapunzel's hair is essential to the plot, reviewers have admitted that the journey is the bulk of the film (Graham 2010). This is actually a twist on the original story because, instead of staying in the tower as the Grimms' Rapunzel does, *Tangled's* heroine decides to leave the tower within the first 15 minutes of the film. Thus, this version sticks less closely to the conventions of the story that it was based on than do *Peter Pan* and *Alice in Wonderland* (Graham 2010).

Moreover, although *Tangled* has been described as an enjoyable but "basic Disney princess musical" (Corliss 2010), it has also been perceived as "an empowerment tale for young girls" (Corliss 2010) because it shows that "self-actualization must precede successful romantic fulfillment" (Schager 2014).

Now that a short summary of the films has been laid out, the pages that follow will delve further into their themes and character portrayals as they relate to the road movie genre.

3.2 The power of imagination

Since the female protagonists in *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Tangled* have been defined as action heroines, it could be said that they do not simply serve as pauses in the action and that they are not tied to stationary existences like some previous road heroines (Orgeron 2008: 145). Instead of seeing themselves as passive objects, these heroines are rather mobile, as they engage in the activities that a journey traditionally evokes (Ganser 2009: 93),

It is interesting to note that, in these three 21st century film adaptations, the protagonists are portrayed as having vivid imaginations which tend to take them to faraway places before they even hit the road. According to Mills (2006: 11), imagination is very important to the road story, and these films perhaps depict that more than previous road films featuring female characters. However, as mentioned in the literature review of the present study, curiosity, which accompanies imagination, was for a long time “thought to be a powerful and rather terrifying force” but also a negative feature for women (Aikens 2010: 29). This view stemmed from the fear of some men that a woman may acquire knowledge through the exploration of her imagination, becoming a threat to the patriarchal system (Aikens 2010: 29).

At the very beginning of *Peter Pan*, Wendy’s voice is heard telling a story about Cinderella. It is not a typical Cinderella story, though, but one where the main character

escapes from “the ugly and the ordinary” in her everyday life and battles pirates and other dangerous criminals on the way. Wendy adds other unusual elements to the story and proceeds to enthusiastically sword fight with her brothers using wooden sticks and wearing pirate hats and eye patches. Wendy is undeniably confined in her day-to-day environment—indeed, she is mainly shown in her home or in the classroom, which are not exactly synonymous of an open or smooth space that road movie protagonists commonly crave (Campbell 2003: 43; Everett 2009: 168; Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006: 111). Instead, they are relatively serious places that conflict with the exuberant energy that this heroine projects. Thus, Wendy is depicted as engaging in make-believe quite often, and seems to have somewhat managed to create an exciting alternate existence in her own ordinary-looking bedroom. It could be said that Wendy, perhaps subconsciously, rebels against the society in which she lives by rejecting certain conventions and adopting other, unusual, ones.

This tendency to rebel through imagination also surfaces in Tim Burton’s *Alice in Wonderland*. Alice—older in this version than in previous film versions of Carroll’s books—is portrayed as having, as a young child, illustrious nightmares which include a white rabbit with a waistcoat, a blue caterpillar and a smiling cat. Thirteen years later, Alice, now a young woman, has not lost her imaginative side: as she dances with a young man, Hamish, at a social function (which turns out to be her engagement party), she mentions to him that she is picturing all the ladies there wearing trousers and the men wearing dresses. She also gazes at the birds in the sky and wonders out loud what it would be like to fly. It is quite obvious that others do not view this quality of Alice’s as a favourable one, and Alice is portrayed as not fitting in the society in which she lives, a

problem that road movie protagonists generally face (Mottram 2003: 17; Schaber 1997: 34). Alice's environment may not be as confined as *Peter Pan's* Wendy's, but she simply does not care about the things that the majority of her peers do—fashion, proper manners, dancing and courting. Rather, she is portrayed as shunning, or rebelling against these norms. As she accidentally bumps into people on the dance floor, she tries to envision herself being elsewhere.

In slight contrast to Wendy and Alice, *Tangled's* Rapunzel has been locked in the same place her entire life. Her imagination does not necessarily include make-believe or visions of any kind, but she does use it to think of different hobbies that she could engage in in her tower. As time passes, Rapunzel becomes skilled in numerous activities: she reads several books in a row, she paints interesting characters and landscapes all over her ceiling, she plays guitar and darts, and she constructs masks out of papier-mâché. In a way, she turns her tower into an amusement centre. Sadly, simply trying out new things in the tower has become exhausting and not as fascinating as it used to be when she was younger. Rapunzel thus starts “wondering when would her life begin,” but without explicitly showing her rebellious side. Rapunzel is even lonelier than Wendy and Alice, as she mainly has conversations with her pet chameleon, Pascal. To make matters worse, this heroine's constricted space is directly contrasted with that of another *male* character, Flynn Rider, a petty thief who, along with his two companions, is shown jumping from building to building and taking in breathtaking views of green pastures and vast open spaces.

It could be concluded that these heroines use their imagination to try to “escape” the striated spaces they inhabit. As illustrated in the previous chapter, Deleuze and

Guattari's study on nomadology (1987) finds a significant difference between the sedentary, or "striated," space and the nomad, or "smooth," space:

Sedentary space is striated, by walls, enclosures and roads between enclosures, and thus prohibits free motion, while nomad space is smooth, marked only by traits that are effaced and displaced with the trajectory . . . the nomad distributes himself in a smooth space, he occupies, inhabits, holds that space; that is his territorial principle (381).

As mentioned, nomadic characters usually wish to experience living in a manner that differs from the established societal norms (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 379). Since smooth spaces are heterogeneous (diverse in character and content), the spaces of "the smallest deviation," the characters inhabiting these spaces do not tend to align themselves with a universal way of thinking (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 371). For the three heroines above, it seems that their fantasies partly allow them to "deterritorialize" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 312), that is "leave" their environments for other—more exciting—ones even prior to their actual departure from home.¹⁹ Deterritorialization is not exactly a *physical* movement away from something but rather a "line of flight" from a social or political frame (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 21). Even before these heroines start their trips, they attempt to detach themselves from the ideas and ideals of the societies they inhabit. Through their imaginations, they "travel" to worlds in which there are no rules, worlds where they can be completely autonomous.

¹⁹ In *Subverting Patriarchy*, Alison Lewis (1995) maintains that women's fantasies tend to become the sites for the representation of desires that have no place in "conscious existence" (166).

3.3 Mother knows best

As noted in previous road films featuring female travellers, in particular those made in the 1990s, such as *Thelma and Louise*, the protagonists feel the need to make their way out into the world not only in order to escape patriarchy but, more specifically, to escape the explicitness of male brutality (Roberts 1997: 65). They leave behind their unhealthy relationships with men for fantastical and liberating journeys on the road (Bjurström and Rudberg 1996: 63). However, *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Tangled* show that it is not always *male* brutality, or unfairness, that one is escaping from to embark on a road adventure—at times, mothers, female relatives or other female characters vehemently disapprove of a heroine’s imagination and desires and wish to impede her mobility.

In one of the opening scenes in *Peter Pan*, when Wendy’s Aunt Millicent comes to visit and the entire family gathers in the living room, young Wendy exuberantly declares that she knows a “thing or two about pirates” and that her “great ambition is to write a novel about my adventures—in three parts.” Since Aunt Millicent does not understand which adventures Wendy is referring to, the latter states, “I’ve yet to have them, but they will be perfectly thrilling.” This statement is met with a series of cries and shocked glances from Aunt Millicent, as Wendy’s father and mother simply sit quietly and smile nervously. Aunt Millicent then reprimands Wendy for wanting to go on the road, and affirms that “novelists are not well thought of in good society” and that “there is nothing more difficult to marry than a novelist.”

Although young Wendy’s need for mobility can be defined as being of the intellectual type—and not flimsy dreams of using her looks to achieve success on the

road as some previous road heroines did (Enevold 2000: 416), or ideas of mindless wandering à la *Easy Rider* (Orgeron 2008: 108)—Aunt Millicent disregards this and concludes that Wendy is “almost a woman” and should focus more on a *truly* great adventure, that of finding a partner. She then retreats to the study with Wendy’s parents where she clarifies to them that Wendy must spend more time with her and less time with her brothers, and that Wendy must have her own room, “a young lady’s room.” Aunt Millicent, who clearly holds the power in the household, even chastises Wendy’s father, George, for not moving up from his clerk position at the bank and becoming a manager so that Wendy may become more desirable to potential suitors. To Aunt Millicent, femininity is equated with domesticity, passivity and submissiveness.

Not only do Wendy and her brothers disagree with Aunt Millicent’s thoughts but Wendy’s father is equally surprised by them. When Aunt Millicent first brings up the idea of marriage, both Wendy and George shout “Marry?” with disbelief and confusion painted on their faces. Later, following the conversation in the study, George is seen drinking from his glass of wine in big gulps in order to calm his nerves. In fact, prior to Aunt Millicent’s arrival, George is never shown lecturing or scolding Wendy about her spirited games of make-believe or her tales of wishful adventures. He is portrayed as a rather quiet, reserved and gentle man, and seems to be unable to refuse Aunt Millicent’s orders; as Susan Wloszczyna (2003) points out, he is “a comically ineffectual father.”

After Aunt Millicent’s arrival, George slowly starts changing: he shouts at Wendy to grow up after Nana, their dog nurse, runs into his office building one day and creates a scuffle. This is apparently the first time that the Darling family has seen George angry because they stare at him in awe as though not recognizing the man in front of them.

George then decides that Wendy will start her instructions with Aunt Millicent shortly. Wendy's eyes are full of fear and concern during these discussions and decisions about her marriage prospects, and she is depicted as not being in the slightest ready for something like that.²⁰

In addition to her aunt, Wendy's imagination and, by extension, her rebellion, is also blocked by one of her female teachers after the latter catches Wendy drawing Peter Pan hovering above her bed instead of paying attention in class. The teacher instantly starts drafting a letter to Wendy's father, inviting him to discuss Wendy's "distracted behaviour."

As in Wendy's case, it is mostly the women in *Alice in Wonderland* who disagree with Alice's "easily distracted behaviour" and push a passive, domestic way of life onto her. Alice's mother is confused by her visions and appalled at the fact that Alice is not properly dressed for her own engagement party. Both Alice's mother and sister insist that she marry Hamish, who is a lord. In this film, however, the marriage must happen as soon as possible, as Alice is an older girl than *Peter Pan*'s Wendy. Alice's sister even declares that Alice's pretty face will not last forever and does not understand why Alice is not taking the idea of marriage seriously, since, according to her sister, everything has already been settled. Hamish's mother, seemingly a power figure in the society, then talks to Alice about the food that Hamish will and will not be able to eat, as it is assumed that Alice will be cooking for him. Furthermore, when Alice catches her sister's husband in the bushes with another woman, he asks her not to tell anyone because it might ruin his

²⁰ Interestingly, one evening while the children are asleep, Aunt Millicent is shown reading from *The War of the Worlds* (H.G. Wells, 1898), a science fiction novel. It seems that when no one else is around, even the strict and traditional aunt indulges in fantasies of mobility, by surrounding herself with distant lands and characters.

and her sister's marriage. Therefore, it is obvious that a striated patriarchal system is in place in the society that Alice lives in, as marriages are not only very important but must also be conserved, even if they are unhappy or dishonest.²¹

Alice seems to have inherited her father's imaginative side and, while he was still alive, he had nothing against that and even encouraged it. At the beginning of the film, when Alice is still a child, her father is shown pacing around his study trying to convince a group of men to believe that "the only way to achieve the impossible is to think that it is possible." As young Alice was worried about her reoccurring dreams and wondering if she had gone mad, her father replied, "I'm afraid so, but I'll tell you a secret—all the best people are." With her father gone, Alice is portrayed as slightly frustrated and, at her mother's remark that she is not properly dressed for the engagement party, she retorts, "father would've laughed." Moreover, the only other character at the party who does not seem to care much about the marriage organization is another male, Hamish's father, who is concerned with not having invested in Alice's father's "mad ventures" when he had the chance.

Although Alice is not as vocal about her need for mobility as Wendy is, she keeps getting distracted by a white rabbit running around and sneaking into the bushes. This is juxtaposed with the slow and elegant manner in which the guests at the party move around. As Alice becomes increasingly interested in the white rabbit's whereabouts, others become impatient with her attitude. Alice is constantly reminded of her Aunt Imogen, who has ended up alone in her old age and still has fantasies about meeting

²¹ On a related note, certain authors (Compton, Blumer and Boeckmann 2011) highlight that when the white rabbit that Alice keeps seeing at the party is pointing at his clock and nervously remarking that he is late, it is an indication of Alice's lateness in completing a task that is expected of a young girl by a certain time period (55).

foreign princes. It seems that that is exactly what happens to women in Alice's society when they rebel by letting their imagination run wild and pursuing other endeavours instead of a conventional way of life, that of settling down. Alice, unlike Wendy, tries to rebel by standing up to these women, though. For example, she interrogates her mother about her need to be proper at all times: "What if it was agreed that proper was wearing a codfish on your head? Would you wear it?" Nonetheless, Alice appears to fully realize that she needs a change of environment only after she is forced to meet Hamish at the gazebo to accept his marriage proposal.

Tangled's Rapunzel wanted to see in person the lights that float in the sky each year on her birthday ever since she was a little girl, and instead has to satisfy herself with watching them starry-eyed from her tower window. She keeps painting these lights in every empty spot that she can find on her walls, and gains up the courage one day to ask her "mother" (the witch, whom she believes to be her real mother) to go on a trip to see the lights.

Just as in *Peter Pan* and *Alice in Wonderland*, this heroine's ideas are met with rejection. Rapunzel does perform mainly domestic duties like cooking and cleaning, and is expected to throw her hair down the window whenever her mother comes back from her trips so that the latter can use the hair to climb up the tower, but her mother does not want her to find a partner and to get married and wants her to stay in the tower forever instead. Her mother dismisses the lights in the sky as simply being stars and does not understand what is so special about them. Furthermore, she has been telling Rapunzel during her entire life that the world outside is a dangerous place full of people who would want to take advantage of her. Rapunzel's mother goes through great lengths to prevent

her from being mobile, or engaging in adventures outside of the home. At the first mention of Rapunzel's trip, she insists that Rapunzel, who is already 18 years old, should not leave the nest yet. Thus, she is using her authority to infantilize Rapunzel, not letting her grow at the same pace as others her age. Below is an excerpt of her mother's "wise advice":

Mother knows best, listen to your mother, it's a scary world out there. Mother knows best, one way or another, something will go wrong, I swear. Mother's right here, mother will protect you, darling here's what I suggest: Skip the drama, stay with mama, mother knows best.

If that is not frustrating enough for the heroine, Rapunzel's mother also tries to make her believe that she is not strong enough, both physically and mentally, for a road trip. She tells her that she is immature, clumsy and naïve. She finishes her speech by stating that Rapunzel should never ask to leave the tower again. The second time that Rapunzel tries to rebel and mentions the road trip, her mother first refuses to partake in a discussion, telling her to drop the subject. Finally, exasperated, she screams, "You are not leaving this tower! Ever!"

Curiously, this aggressiveness is hidden behind exchanges of sweet words, such as "I love you" and "I love you more" between Rapunzel and her mother. Nonetheless, Rapunzel ultimately leaves the tower when the opportunity arises. As a result of her mother's intimidation, this heroine is only able to physically step outside her home about 30 minutes into the film.

3.4 Her fair share of adventures

On the other hand, the characters whom these heroines encounter during their trips actually encourage their movement and need for adventure instead of obstructing it, and do not look down upon them for leaving home or for being “different,” as was the case with the characters whom most previous female protagonists would meet on the road (Oxberry 2004; Laderman 2002: 266-70; Sturken 2000).²²

In *Peter Pan*, when Peter flies into Wendy’s room for the second time, whisking her and her brothers away to Neverland, he declares that “one girl is worth more than twenty boys,” and that girls are too smart to get lost, unlike boys (he is referring to the Lost Boys, his companions in Neverland who ended up there when they wandered away from their real homes in England and were not claimed by their parents in the first seven days of their absence). A close link forms between Peter and Wendy when he confides in her about running away from home one night when he overheard his parents talking about what he was to be when he grows up. In fact, Peter prefers to have Wendy accompany him to Neverland *without* her brothers, whom he stares at in a somewhat degrading manner. He even momentarily forgets who they are as the four of them soar through the sky on their way to Peter’s wonderful world.

In Neverland, Peter shares his telescope with Wendy as they rest on a cloud so that she can observe and indulge in the adventures of Captain Hook and the rest of the pirates on board the pirate ship. Peter takes her to the edge of the sea to see the entrancing mermaids, and invites her in the deep of the forest to watch two fairies perform a magical

²² In *The Wizard of Oz*, the characters whom Dorothy meets may be friendly and helpful to her, but all that Dorothy can think about is returning home (Chaston 1997: 15; Hamelman: 2000: 315); thus, these other characters could be viewed as encouraging her to *get back home*, rather than encouraging her to continue on her trip.

ballet. When Captain Hook captures Wendy's brothers and locks them up in the Black Castle, Peter and Wendy fly there together; he hands her a sword and they practice sword fighting before Peter informs her that she can fight whomever she wants with the sword, but that he would like Hook to be *his* target. Peter does, however, tell Wendy to wait for his signal and steps inside the castle first.

When Wendy gets captured by the pirates while she is asleep one night and wakes up on their ship the next day, they do not reprimand her for "running away from home," but instead admire her mobility and shout "How wonderful!" She divulges to Hook that her parents wanted her to grow up instantly, and he agrees that growing up can be a "barbarous business." During this time, Captain Hook's assistant, Smee, offers Wendy cigars and wine, and does not quite understand why she rejects them. As a matter of fact, the most hostile person to Wendy during her trip in Neverland is another female, the fairy Tinkerbell, who orders the Lost Boys to shoot Wendy with an arrow while she is floating through the sky, tricking them into believing that it is a bird.

Nevertheless, although Wendy rebelled against the orders to suddenly "grow up" and train to be a housewife back in London, it is significant to note that, in Neverland, she is occasionally asked to fulfill certain domestic duties. The Lost Boys also beg her to be their mother and to tell them stories when they first meet her. Later in the film, the pirates want her to tell them stories, as well, as they gather around her, intrigued. Therefore, Wendy seems to also assume the role of nurturer. Most of the time, though, Peter seems to view Wendy as his equal. He orders the Lost Boys to make her a house "with chimneys, a doorknob and windows." He makes her a "co-parent" of the Lost Boys and co-head of household, telling her that "we" must discipline the boys and "we" must

spank them, thus providing Wendy with as much responsibility and power over the boys as he himself possesses.

Very few derisive gender-related remarks are made about Wendy on her trip. At one point, as Wendy prepares to give Peter a thimble—which turns out to be a kiss—Captain Hook mockingly declares, “Oh, how like a girl.” When Peter and the boys find out that there is a new girl pirate on the pirate ship, Red-Handed Jill (in reality, Wendy), they first laugh at Wendy’s statement that this girl pirate can be a brave swordswoman. These moments of condescension are very rare, however.

In *Alice in Wonderland*, as Alice falls down the tree hole and enters Underland, she is at first greeted by characters who are a little less welcoming than *Peter Pan*’s Neverland inhabitants. They claim that she is the “wrong Alice” and Absolom, the wise blue caterpillar, even calls her a stupid girl on more than one occasion. However, it is soon established that she is in fact the *right* Alice, and that it has been predicted in Underland’s compendium—a calendar telling of each day from the start of time—that she will be the one to slay the evil jabberwocky on a day called the Frabjous Day. Consequently, her mobility in Underland becomes highly significant. Compared to the Alice in the 1951 film version, who is not given as much attention during her trip (Oxberry 2004), Burton’s Alice is viewed as an important traveller.

As Alice continues her journey through Underland, she is mainly greeted with respect and awe. The Cheshire Cat carefully bandages a scratch on Alice’s arm, and upon learning that she is *the* Alice, becomes overjoyed. The Mad Hatter, also very happy to see her, sits her at the table to serve her tea, and shrinks and hides her in a teapot when the Red Queen’s army comes looking for her. He also makes her a new dress as the one that

she was wearing has become a little too big for her since she has decreased in size, and offers to help her travel by putting her on his hat. Other characters, like the White Queen, also provide Alice with new clothes as well as shrinking and growing potions whenever she is in need.

When Alice decides not to continue to the Red Queen's castle at one point during the trip because she does not think that she will be able to slay the jabberwocky, the Hatter, among many others characters, is thoroughly disappointed. He laments, "What happened to you? You have lost your muchness. Something in there is missing." The other characters therefore constantly encourage Alice to follow her passions and to continue moving through Underland. This has been viewed by some authors as a sign that perhaps expectations have not changed that much in Underland as compared to the "real world" because in Underland Alice is still told what to do (Compton, Blumer and Boeckmann 2011: 55). Nonetheless, the White Queen assures Alice that, in the end, she must willingly make choices: "You can't live your life to please others—the choice must be yours."²³

Once again, similar to Wendy's situation in Neverland, among the creatures that Alice encounters in Underland, it is a female character who is the most hostile to her. The female dormouse angrily sticks a needle in Alice's foot at the beginning of her trip, and later refuses to help her save the Mad Hatter, by hiding important objects from her.

²³ Although Alice may seem to come across many obstacles in Underland, that new place is still a significantly "smoother" place than the one she left behind. In Underland, Alice's motion is not prohibited and she tends to do whatever she pleases. Besides, Underland's "authority," the Red Queen, does not seem to be respected or acknowledged by the rest of the inhabitants, who continue to live their own "deviated" and chaotic lives. In addition, as seen in the literature review, the road can in fact be very challenging sometimes. However, for road movie scholars, those challenges are part of the journey. It is highly probable that in spaces of constant variation conflicts will arise, but what matters is the way in which the road protagonist deals with them.

In *Tangled*, even though the heroine's opportunity to depart arises when Flynn Rider comes into her tower, she is the one who persuades *him* to go on the trip by hiding his satchel. Therefore, Rapunzel is not following a male-oriented and -dominated fantasy like some road heroines of old (Roberts 1997: 62) and is the primary agent of her own liberation and mobility (McCormick 2012). Just like in *Peter Pan* and *Alice in Wonderland*, the heroine in *Tangled* is not discouraged from going on a journey by characters whom she encounters. At the start of her trip, Flynn Rider tells her that she should follow her desire to venture away from home and that a little rebellion and adventure is good and healthy: "You've just got to do it." Flynn leads her all the way to the floating lights and even ensures that she has an ideal seat to watch them from—a canoe on the water. Flynn explains to her that after that dream of hers is over, she should just find another dream.

Although Rapunzel does not come across many other people on her trip, the ones she does meet are friendly to her. At a ruffians and thugs' pub in the forest, Rapunzel's movement is once again encouraged as she is told to go and live her dreams. When Flynn mentions that he has a dream as well, the ruffians look at him disapprovingly, informing him that his dream "stinks." When Rapunzel and Flynn reach the king's palace, everyone smiles at Rapunzel and a couple of girls even braid her hair. Despite the fact that Flynn mockingly calls her "blondie" on a few occasions at the beginning of the trip, and seemingly views her as being a little fragile, he soon learns that Rapunzel's hair has super-human strength and that he does not necessarily need to watch out for her.

Unfortunately, in the middle of Rapunzel's trip, her mother shows up. She has been following Rapunzel ever since she realized that the tower is empty. She firmly

announces that the two of them are going home, and even asserts that it is absurd for Rapunzel to think that she will be able to survive on her own. This brief interruption in Rapunzel's movement is reminiscent of *The Wizard of Oz*'s Dorothy's trip, which is disrupted at the very beginning of the film when she is fooled into believing that her aunt is ill and returns home promptly. However, Rapunzel stands up to her mother and refuses to go back home with her, citing the many advantages that the trip can offer to her.

3.5 Summary

As the above analyses show, recent female road films do include some differences when compared to older films. These recent films focus on heroines' buoyant imagination, which seems to fuel their rebellion and allows them to "deterritorialize" or leave the established social/political conventions in their home environments before they even embark on their journeys. Whether accompanied by a male character or not, these girls are portrayed as having firmly made up their minds about partaking in various, rather unconventional, adventures. Moreover, although these recent heroines are still discouraged by certain characters from following their dreams and asked to choose a passive, domestic way of life, the films show that it is not always strict males who repress women's desires and force a patriarchal order upon them; the protagonists can in fact be prevented from leaving home by other female characters. During these young women's trips, however, most people whom they encounter are depicted as being inviting and accepting of the travellers, as well as gentle and respectful toward them (but without infantilizing them). The heroines' mobility is encouraged and they tend to be viewed as equal to male characters. Indeed, these female protagonists seem to have managed to find

a temporary niche, or home, for themselves (Robertson 1997: 271) in these new worlds, something that was not always possible for female protagonists in earlier films.

Chapter 4: Being on the Road, or the Trials of Travelling

The previous chapter discussed the treatment of the female protagonists in *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Tangled* by the characters encountered on their road trips and concluded that, as opposed to previous films with road movie heroines, Wendy's, Alice's and Rapunzel's movement away from home is encouraged rather than criticized. The present chapter will examine the ways in which these travellers are portrayed while moving through their new environments and how they deal with obstacles that come their way.

Past female travellers might have experienced more hostility on their trips than Wendy, Alice and Rapunzel, but it is still important to keep in mind that even the simple act of wandering into the unknown can “evoke a sense of displeasure and even annihilation of the self” (Rascaroli 2013: 21) and that challenges abound regardless of whether the traveller is by herself or surrounded by others. Except for *Thelma and Louise*, female travellers' portrayals while on the road have not been discussed exhaustively in previous films, even though the initiation, or the part of the journey that the protagonist spends on the road, (usually) comprises a significant portion of the road film.

As mentioned in the literature review, earlier road heroines have been viewed as somewhat weak travellers: whiny when faced with unpleasant situations or unwilling to stand up for themselves in their new environment. In the 1951 film version of *Alice*, for instance, the heroine frequently cries when she temporarily loses her way or when she ends up growing or shrinking too much, and even sings a self-pitying song (Chaston

1997: 16).²⁴ Although she does not know exactly where she wants to go in Wonderland, she is terrified at the thought of meeting any “mad people.” Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz*, who is depicted as being a little stronger than Alice, also has plenty of moments when she lacks self-control and breaks down during her trip, lamenting that she will never make it home (Duncan 2008: 57; Hamelman 2000: 316). Even though Dorothy is said to possess “a heart, a brain and courage” (Rohrer Paige 1996: 151), she still does not fight back when attacked in Oz: when the evil witch’s flying monkeys sweep above her, Dorothy does not run or try to resist them, but instead keeps standing still and screaming while they take her away. Other road heroines have been portrayed as rather unenthusiastic or completely unemotional while on the road: not only do they not have a sense of direction but, in a way, they seem to not really care about what happens to them (Patterson 2003: 6; Laderman 2002: 267).

In fact, even Thelma in *Thelma and Louise*, is not exactly a good traveller for the first half of the trip: she shows her lack of self-control through her childish and impulsive behaviour, often “imitating a whining puppy when asking Louise, the parental figure, to stop at the bar or to pick up the hitchhiker” (Sturken 2000: 27). Her feeling “wide awake” (Laderman 1996: 54) by going away from home is accompanied by her putting her skirt and legs up in the car, imitating Louise’s smoking and getting irresponsibly intoxicated. She is often shown behaving like an overeager adolescent thirsty for her first wild experiences. Thelma clearly does not think things through and is even slightly gullible at the beginning of the trip. She also really craves male attention, to the point of getting herself into trouble. Her companion, Louise, is portrayed as a more reserved and careful

²⁴ Interestingly, Joel D. Chaston (1997) states that this heroine’s literary counterpart rarely voices this concern to return home and, although she does cry occasionally, the film seems to put more emphasis on these scenes, thus making its heroine weaker (16).

traveller, but her maturity does not come without a certain cynicism and uptightness (Sturken 2000: 26), blocking her from thoroughly enjoying herself, even later on in the film.

While Thelma and Louise are at first disgusted by the gun that Thelma brings along on their trip, they start becoming very comfortable with it once the first few bullets are shot by Louise. Indeed, their vacation quickly turns into a criminal flight (Schaber 1997: 35) and the heroines become not solely victims of violence, but agents of violence as well (which was up until then deemed to be a “male privilege” in road films) (Cook 2007: 2).²⁵ *Thelma and Louise* may be considered a breakthrough for films about mobile women, but it is undeniably violent and seems to highlight the consequences of handling conflict by means of impulsive action and aggression (Sturken 2000: 65).

Actually, Susan Cole (2005) notes that most road films of the 1990s which feature bold and autonomous heroines also tend to portray these women as quite violence-oriented: “Either the travellers flee the scene of a murder they’ve committed, or they are out to kill somebody” (15). In fact, even Western European road films of the era feature many female travellers with “deranged personalities” (for example, *Merci la vie* [Bertrand Blier, 1991] and *Bandits* [Katja von Garnier, 1997]) (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006: 179).

²⁵ It is interesting to point out that, since traditionally, a woman’s role is believed to be to nurture, not to destroy, a female destroyer is viewed by many as not being able to be a good mother and not being able to be forgiven or praised for her violent actions, as a man might be (González and Rodríguez-Martín 2009: 200).

4.1 I am woman, hear me roar

If more recent road film heroines have been pictured as bold travellers, *Peter Pan's* Wendy, *Alice in Wonderland's* Alice and *Tangled's* Rapunzel are seemingly downright fearless. For these heroines, almost no feat is too challenging. In Neverland, when Wendy sees Captain Hook up close for the first time—while hiding away from him behind a rock as he scours the area hoping to get a glimpse of her—it is specified that she is not afraid of him at all, but rather *entranced* by him. Instead of cowering behind the rock until Hook leaves, Wendy peeks out wide-eyed. In effect, Wendy seems to not think much of the dangerous pirates and does not let them intimidate her. The first time that a pirate attacks Wendy, she fights back right away—she steps on his foot and then proceeds to draw her sword first. Later in the film, when the pirates capture Wendy while she is asleep one night and she awakes the following day aboard their ship, she does not look in the slightest concerned, but curious. Instead of panicking and trying to find a way out, she marches straight up to Hook's cabin, walks in casually and sits down at his table where they have a conversation. Toward the end of Wendy's trip, Hook asks her if she would want to join his crew of pirates and she boldly retorts that she would rather die. Even as the pirates force her to walk the plank, Wendy does not let out a single scream; blindfolded, she steps onto the plank, still trying to look brave and calm.

Therefore, Wendy is shown to be a traveller completely in control of her new environment (instead of letting her new surroundings control *her*) as she is unafraid of obstacles as well as of others' reactions. Moreover, her behaviour contrasts with that of some road heroines of old who would accuse the men around them of “imposing a masculine power trip” (Mills 2006: 144) but would simply end up complying with

whatever these men were dictating, thus coming across as marginalized and usurped (Enevold 2000: 416).

Similar to Wendy, Alice is also portrayed as a heroine who plows through challenges, even before her epic battle with the Red Queen's jabberwocky. When Alice falls down the tree hole at the beginning of her trip, she stays calm as she tries to find out where she has landed. As she notices the doors around her and attempts to open them one by one, she does not shed tears or feel sorry for herself, but simply contemplates her next move, without losing control. When the tiny bottles and cakes with the ability to make her shrink and/or grow appear in the room, she confidently tells herself that nothing bad can happen to her and consumes the drinks and food without fear. As she is striding into Underland, strange giant insects and frightening plants and objects surround her, yet she finds everything "curious" instead of terrifying. Her fearlessness seems to be related to the fact that she firmly believes that she is dreaming, and she is thus able to bravely go ahead. When Alice first meets Underland's inhabitants, she demands to know who they are, and refuses to be held and dragged to the caterpillar that these characters wish to take her to but chooses to walk amongst the creatures freely to reach him. She also stands up for herself when everyone claims at the beginning of her trip that she is the wrong Alice: "What do you mean? I ought to know who I am." She even taunts the other characters in return by saying, "This is my dream. I'm going to wake up now and you'll all disappear."

After the Bandersnatch, a treacherous dog creature, shows up and starts chasing Alice, she at first runs away but suddenly stops and tells herself that the creature cannot hurt her (although it does scratch her arm). A few moments later, Alice becomes separated from her companions, but she simply continues to walk through the deep forest

even as night falls and the directions become confusing. Later in the film, Alice spends the night alone sleeping under a giant hat and, at one point, walks over human skulls in a pond to cross over to the other side. When the Red Queen's army captures the Mad Hatter, Alice announces to the bloodhound who is temporarily keeping her company that she will go rescue the Hatter, even though that is not foretold in Underland's compendium:

I don't care. From the moment I fell down that rabbit hole, I have 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 . . . I make the path.

Alice, just like Wendy, wants to be in control on her trip. No matter the number of unpleasant situations that she finds herself in and no matter how impossible the trials ahead seem to be, she maintains her composure and her strength.

In comparison with Wendy and Alice, Rapunzel is portrayed as a little fearful when she first steps outside her tower. She hesitantly checks Flynn's teeth to see if they are the "monster teeth" that her mother told her outsiders have. She lets out little shrieks here and there. At the first sound of something hustling in the bushes (just a bunny), she jumps on Flynn and stammers, "ruffians, thugs, did they come for me?" However, she does manage to knock Flynn unconscious, stuff him in the closet and tie him up to a chair when he first bursts into her tower, and manages to quickly overcome her initial fears of the outside world. Described as "a girl of contemporary spunk and daring" (White 2010),

Rapunzel verbally attacks the dangerous thugs who take hold of Flynn at one point. When the police surround her and Flynn as they are trying to make their way out of a dam, she swings from one side of the dam to the other using her long hair. Rapunzel is also not afraid to use the frying pan that she brought along as a defense weapon when needed.²⁶ Her actions contrast with the notion of woman as “malleable body-matter supporting man” which has been prominent in male travels across boundaries and spaces (Enevold 2000: 409). Rapunzel shows that she does not want to fit into these subordinate roles.

Interestingly, these heroines’ fearlessness and overcoming of obstacles are even more emphasized through their interactions with the male characters on their trips. In *Peter Pan*, on the night that Wendy embarks to Neverland, she unabashedly questions the magical flying boy, an alien creature in her London home, about his place of residence and his background. During these exchanges, as Wendy steps toward Peter, inquisitive, he is the one looking concerned and backing away from her. Later on, Peter breaks down in tears when he cannot attach his shadow back to his foot (his shadow should always be attached to him even if it seemingly has a life of its own) and Wendy needs to comfort him. The film demonstrates that the male character can be weak and whiny when compared to the female, and not vice versa as seen in some previous road films (Latto 2003: 90; Roberts 1997: 62; Mills 2006: 144).

Although Wendy crosses the threshold into this other world with Peter, he is the one who tends to depend on Wendy. On the night that Wendy announces that she and her

²⁶ It goes without saying that Rapunzel’s “weapon of choice,” her frying pan, has been traditionally associated with domesticity and females more so than with males (Miller and Bryan 2005: 52). Nonetheless, the pan’s usefulness is glorified in the film by Flynn, who remarks that he has got to get himself one when he realizes that he can easily battle enemies with it.

brothers are ready to leave Neverland, Peter has nightmares and cries out Wendy's name in his sleep. Later on, during a sword fight with Captain Hook, Peter is wounded and lies on the ground helplessly. Wendy comes to his aid and plants a subtle kiss on his lips. The kiss gives Peter more strength than he has had before and he is finally able to defeat Hook. Hook also believes that Wendy holds a certain power as a female. When Peter and Wendy dance in the woods earlier in the film, Hook spies on them and looks on longingly, admitting to himself that Peter has found someone while he is all alone. All the pirates end up believing that they too need "a Wendy" shortly after that.

Therefore, it can be said that Wendy gains power, and thus authority, in this new milieu through the others' dependence on her and these others are, in return, rendered somewhat powerless. Wendy seems to have "territorialized" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 174) this new territory by marking it as hers.

In Alice's case, this shift in power is first depicted as she picks up a caterpillar off Hamish's shoulder as he is proposing to her at the beginning of the film. Hamish looks wholly disgusted by the caterpillar and tells Alice that she will have to wash her finger; Alice, on the other hand, is not at all perturbed. At the Red Queen's castle in Underland, when Alice is about to enter the Bandersnatch's cave and explains to the white rabbit her plan to retrieve the magic sword from the cave while at the same time showing him the scratch on her arm, he faints and Alice is left alone to carry out the plan. Indeed, Underland's inhabitants depend on Alice, just like Peter and his comrades in Neverland depend on Wendy. However, as opposed to Wendy, Alice has the function of fighter/saviour in Underland. The others depend on *her* to kill the jabberwocky. In the end, it is precisely Alice's imagination, which was rejected in her home environment that

gives her the courage to kill the beast. Alice also needs to repeatedly comfort the Mad Hatter following his concerns that he must be mad and that he has failed himself by, first, not being able to save Underland from the Red Queen and, later, by accepting to fabricate hats for the queen's enormous head. Alice assures him that, as her father used to tell her, "all the best people are mad." He, in return, looks at her in admiration. Alice also helps out other characters along the way, such as a little porcupine whose hands are bound as he is being used as a ball for a game of croquet.

In *Tangled*, Rapunzel is the one who needs to remind Flynn not to "freak out" when her hair starts glowing and exhibiting its magic powers. When the two of them meet the wild horse, Maximus, in the forest one morning, Rapunzel does not scream at the sight—unlike Flynn—and she starts caressing and calming Maximus, whispering to him that he should not hurt Flynn.

In her analysis of *Thelma and Louise*, Jessica Enevold (2004: 80-81) points out the attributes regularly categorized as "masculine" in travellers, such as aggressive, ambitious, analytical, assertive, competitive, dominant, independent, and strong, and those regularly categorized as "feminine," such as gentle, sensitive, shy, soft-spoken, understanding, yielding, gullible and childlike, and states that films like *Thelma and Louise* provide no clear distinctions between the two. The heroines do not always seem to stay on the "female/femininity" side but seem to at times appropriate some of the above qualities that are viewed as traits of masculinity or linked to males.

The points established in the above analyses of Wendy's, Alice's and Rapunzel's personalities demonstrate that these new protagonists also exhibit both "feminine" and "masculine" traits, and earn the respect of the male characters around them. In addition,

these protagonists seem to have transformed their new environments into territories where females can freely exert power over most matters, something that previous road heroines were not able to achieve. Moreover, it is revealed that the male characters can in fact express certain of the above characteristics categorized as being “female” and thus appear more fragile..²⁷

It is also important to note that, although Wendy, Alice and Rapunzel need to physically fight in order to defend themselves at times, they are not necessarily violence-oriented, like certain past female travellers, and do not engage in unlawful behaviour. Wendy makes it clear that she does not want to “pillage” like the pirates do, highlighting the fact that she wishes not to partake in senselessly violent activities. Alice, who, as mentioned in the previous chapter, has been described as a far-fetched female idea of a soldier and slayer (Kérchy 2012), does not actually want to kill anyone or anything. In fact, when she first sees her “fate” (slaying the jabberwocky) in the compendium, she claims that she will not do it because “that’s not me,” unable to picture herself carrying out extremely violent actions. Even Rapunzel tries to mediate disputes that arise on her trip so that she *does not* have to fight.

These heroines do not feel compelled to attack their new environments with a vengeful attitude; they do not wish to harbour anger while travelling. Moreover, in contrast with earlier female travellers, like Thelma and Louise, who have decided to express their resilience by adopting masculine bodily postures and manners during their trip (Bjurström and Rudberg 1996: 64) or a masculine-looking wardrobe such as t-shirts

²⁷ Gender studies author Agneta H. Fischer (1993, as cited in Shields 2000: 15) finds that sadness, anxiety and fear are emotions for which greater female expressivity seems to be the rule, and these are regarded as a lack of control. On the other hand, stereotypically masculine emotions such as anger, pride, and contempt are indicative of an attempt to gain control over a situation.

with skulls on them (Sturken 2000: 30), or *Vagabond's* female lead, Mona, who does not seem to care at all about her appearance and voluntarily walks around with torn, dirty clothes, unbathed and disheveled (Laderman 2002: 267), Wendy, Alice and Rapunzel are not shown trying to “look masculine” and keep their feminine appearance, sophisticated language and elegant manners.

4.2 Voices of wisdom

The heroines in *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Tangled* are not only depicted as fearless but also as fairly intelligent and as somewhat more rational than the male characters whom they encounter on the road, proving again that the road can in fact be a female territory.

Wendy tricks Peter into believing that a thimble is a kiss since the latter is completely unaware of what a kiss is. When Peter first talks about how he met his fairy Tinkerbell, Wendy exclaims that there are no such things as fairies in real life, but Peter refuses to let her talk about how fairies do not exist. The maturity of Wendy and immaturity of Peter is further emphasized at their house in the woods in Neverland, as Peter declares one evening that he and Wendy should kill the Lost Boys for being disobedient. Wendy succeeds in distracting Peter from that idea by explaining that, although she agrees with the boys being “perfectly horrid,” if they kill them the boys should think themselves important. She then suggests something “far more dreadful” to quiet down the boys: medicine. Peter, as well as the other boys, accepts this idea, not knowing any better (the “medicine” apparently consists of droplets of water).

Wendy also refuses the alcohol and cigars that the pirates offer to her aboard their

ship, fully aware that she is a little girl. She obviously does not need her trip to consist of overly wild experiences, but thinks clearly about her every move. In fact, the only time in the film that she appears to be a little gullible is when, following the conversation in Hook's cabin, she believes in his promise that the pirates will not follow her to find out where she and the boys live in the woods.

Although it has been claimed that Wendy's feelings for Peter are at the heart of the film (Hastings and Edwardes 2002), a notion that downplays the strength of this female traveller's character, the children's discussions about love actually seem to serve as emphasis on Wendy's knowledge and rationality. When Wendy and Peter dance in the woods after watching the fairy ballet, Peter wonders out loud if what they are doing is just "all pretend." Wendy asks him about his real feelings but Peter is confused by the sole term *feelings*. "What do you feel," she inquires, "happiness, sadness, jealousy?" Peter, on the other hand, can only understand feelings if he can associate them with a specific person. For jealousy, he mentions Tinkerbell, for instance; for anger, he mentions Captain Hook. Again, his thinking process seems to be limited when compared to Wendy's. When Wendy brings up the word "love," and that Peter must have felt it with someone, somewhere, Peter, reminiscent of a toddler throwing a tantrum, screams, "Why do you always spoil everything? We have fun, don't we? I thought you to fight and to fly!" Meanwhile, Wendy looks at him in disbelief and disappointment, realizing that Peter cannot fully grasp some rather simple notions.

However, Wendy is not just attracted to Peter, but to the whole adventure ordeal. If she can make romance part of her adventure, then so much the better, but that is not the only thing that she is after when she embarks on the trip, as seen in the previous chapter.

Additionally, Wendy frequently defends her stories—which Captain Hook and others call “love stories”—as “adventure stories” where good triumphs over evil. She thus acknowledges that going down the road can lead to not only different possibilities and risks but also romance (Eyerman and Lofgren 1995: 57). Instead of looking like a desperate woman madly in love, as was the case with some former road heroines (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006), Wendy comes across as very reasonable.²⁸

Like Wendy, Alice’s power in her new environment is also displayed through her ability to be very logical and witty, far more so than the characters she meets in Underland. When Alice is running away from the Red Queen’s army with the twins Tweedledee and Tweedledum, an eagle comes out of nowhere and storms at them, carrying away the twins who do not think of ducking like Alice does in order for the eagle to bypass them. When Alice sees the captured twins again later on at the Red Queen’s castle, they almost give her identity away to the Red Queen. Thankfully, Alice hushes them and tries to make them understand that she has actually come to save them. In fact, Alice tricks the Red Queen’s entire kingdom into believing that she is a person called “Um” from a fake town named Umbridge, something that she makes up on the spot as the queen uncovers her from the bushes in the palace’s yard. In comparison, the white rabbit, also present in the yard at the time, stutters nervously trying to explain who Alice is. Unlike Wendy, Alice chooses not to make romance a part of her adventure as she openly rejects the advances of the queen’s red knight when he flirts with her.

²⁸ Anne Latta (2003) explains that a couple of decades ago, women would be constantly exposed to cosmetic ads, love songs and advice columns which all seemed to imply that it is important to meet a beautiful, powerful, potent and rich man (91). The author claims that this has possibly influenced some previous road heroines to obsessively attach themselves to the men travelling with them. On a related note, June Cummins (1995), among other scholars, points out that most popular film versions of fairy tales (whether they feature a journey or not) seem to say that true happiness for women exists only in the arms of a man and that their most important quest should be to find that man (22).

Rapunzel, although locked away for 18 years, still manages to appear smarter and more reasonable than characters in the outside world. She exasperatedly tells the irrational ruffians and thugs at the pub to “find their humanity,” and explains to Flynn that he would be better off using his real name, Eugene, instead of keeping up his fake identity in order to sustain his so-called reputation. She laughs at Flynn’s reply that “a fake reputation is all a man has” and insists that he should simply accept his true self, like she accepts her own quirkiness. Later on in the journey, when Rapunzel and Flynn reach the king’s palace, Rapunzel is shown spending time with Flynn at the public library and reading to him, seemingly teaching him about the power of knowledge.

Rapunzel does develop feelings for Flynn toward the end of the film but, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the film shows that “self-actualization must precede successful romantic fulfillment” (Schager 2014). Indeed, at the beginning of her trip, Rapunzel does not care for Flynn’s flirting and stares at him incredulously while he is showing her his “smouldering faces” and looking completely ridiculous. Rapunzel slowly starts to engage in conversations with Flynn, mainly because she realizes that he will be her companion during the whole trip. Therefore, she connects with him on a friendship level first, which only later turns into something more.

These films show that females do not necessarily have to be associated with a lack of rationality, as cited in the sets of the above-mentioned “masculine” and “feminine” traveller characteristics. By being able to exhibit more wisdom than their counterparts, these heroines truly show that they hold the power in these new worlds.

4.3 Colouring the world

After the initial urge to depart from home and the joyful first moments of being on the road, many previous female travellers, perhaps due to the trip not being what they had expected (Laderman 2002: 185; Campbell 2003: 41), or due to letting difficulties along the way get to them, seemingly lost their enthusiasm. Heroines like Holly in *Badlands* and Thelma and Louise in fact wish at moments to get out of the environments that they are travelling through and to be taken off to some “magical land” or some other utopic exotic location. Their wishes obviously do not come true, and this simply reminds them that happiness has not been achieved during the trip and that these smooth spaces that they were looking forward to when leaving home may only exist in magazines or on television (Campbell 2003: 41). These heroines continued on their journeys but the joy of a road trip was soon replaced by frustration or disappointment.

Peter Pan's Wendy, on the other hand, looks ecstatic to be on the road throughout the film. Wendy immerses herself in all activities in Neverland, regardless of whether or not these have met her previous expectations. She carries on a big smile and has a sunny disposition. She is absolutely delighted when she first starts flying and soaring through the skies. As she watches the fairy ballet, her eyes glisten with joy. Whenever she sword fights with the pirates, she is portrayed as highly energetic, spinning enthusiastically and laughing wholeheartedly. Even when she and Peter go visit the mermaids, who are apparently not very friendly or trusting, Wendy happily exclaims “Oh, how sweet!” when the mermaids swim up to the shore. When the Lost Boys beg her to be their mother, she does not reject this idea and instead calls it “fascinating,” even if back in London she did not feel that she was ready yet to take on responsibilities of the kind. She even adds that

she will do her best being the mother even though she does not have much experience. Wendy takes every opportunity that comes her way on the trip, and seems to find fascinating all that is different from her life back home. The only dilemma that Wendy finds herself in, which makes her temporarily lose her smile, is her struggle to make Peter see that she likes him more than a friend. Nonetheless, when she cries at one point in the film, she does so silently in the house in the woods and does not really show to the others that she is dealing with an unpleasant situation, thus maintaining her self-control.

Rapunzel, just like Wendy, seems extremely thrilled to be travelling. As she first touches the grass outside her tower, she squeals in happiness. She splashes around in a pond, starts chasing dandelions and at one point even twirls and dances in the woods. At the ruffians' pub, she gleefully sings, "and with every passing hour, I'm so glad I left my tower." Rapunzel's face keeps glowing as she moves from one part of the forest to another and she jumps up and down in happiness as she and Flynn approach the king's palace in all its glory. A vibrant girl, instead of losing control when faced with hardships on the road, she turns these obstacles into once-in-a-lifetime experiences. She loses her positive demeanour for a few minutes when she and Flynn are trapped in a cave and water starts filling up, but she quickly finds a way to get them out of there and regains her excitement. Rapunzel also brings some light-hearted joy into others' lives. She leads the ruffians to sing and dance and open up about their own dreams and when she reaches the palace, she starts to dance in the middle of the town square and invites those standing around to join in.

When Rapunzel and Flynn are in the canoe gazing at the floating lights toward the end of her trip, Rapunzel is slightly nervous that the amazing experience that she has

gone through may not be repeated, and wonders out loud “what do I do then?”

Nevertheless, she is blissful that she is finally able to see the lights and keeps on lovingly looking at the sky and the water, breathing in the beautiful picture.

In contrast to Wendy and Rapunzel, Alice is not travelling through Underland with an enormous smile on her face, yet she does not look at all miserable either. A slightly more serious traveller, she is very inquisitive and wishes to know as much as possible about Underland’s history and its inhabitants. She frequently asks the other characters to explain the foreign words that they sometimes use and she tries to fit in every crowd as best she can. She only worries about killing the jabberwocky occasionally, when the other characters remind her of this. However, she does try to make the best out of her travel experience and looks very relaxed and in control throughout the trip.

In fact, all three heroines look relaxed while travelling. For instance, they walk around barefoot the entire time during their trips. Wendy actually wears her comfortable-looking nightgown and Alice changes into looser and shorter dresses as her trip progresses (as opposed to keeping her original wardrobe, consisting of a tight corset and stockings under a ball gown). The heroines also keep their hair loose and flowing, with no formal updos.

Also interesting is the fact that the girls want to continually keep moving during their trips. They do not seem to want to be stationary or rest for long periods of time. Wendy, as elaborated above, keeps going from one activity to the next instead of simply spending time in Peter’s den. Alice, just like Wendy, wants to experience as much as she can while in Underland, and becomes restless when she is unable to uphold her

movement. For example, when the Hatter puts her in a teapot to hide her from the Red Queen's army, Alice tries to argue with him, shouting, "let me out." Even Rapunzel keeps exploring the outside world with Flynn and the breaks that they take are very short (they are pictured resting only once, actually—after their near-drowning experience).

4.4 Summary

The above examination indicates that new female travellers exhibit rather favourable personality traits on the road, especially when compared to the male characters in the film or to female travellers in earlier road films. *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Tangled* depict intrepid protagonists who never back down and even overpower their male counterparts, while rejecting extreme violence and maintaining their feminine demeanour. They are the authority on their own trips, and do not fall back to the margins of the society they step in or follow others' orders, especially those of males. They engage in adventures willingly rather than being pushed into them by someone "stronger." In a way, they territorialize these new environments, marking them as female territories. These protagonists also show admirable self-control; in comparison, their male counterparts tend to show signs of weakness and fear, as well as a need for protection. The heroines do not exhibit anger or aggression, as opposed to some past heroines who wished to seem tougher perhaps, but ended up being too similar to male heroes.

In addition, these new heroines' cleverness and sensibleness shines through, traits that were not discussed in depth in previous female road films. In fact, these heroines are often the voices of wisdom in their new environments, which further emphasizes their

power positions. Wendy, Alice and Rapunzel are knowledgeable about the world, and do not partake into activities for which they know that they could only get in trouble; they are also able to pass their knowledge onto others. Moreover, they do not let romantic feelings overwhelm them to the point where they forget why they have embarked on a trip in the first place.

Although their journeys do include occasional setbacks, Wendy, Alice and Rapunzel are portrayed as cheerful and optimistic on the road, and seem to revel in travel. Unlike previous road heroines, these girls do not become frustrated if portions of the trip do not turn out the way that they thought they would, and they simply maintain control and make the best out of the experiences that they are given.

Consequently, these analyses show that protagonists in female road trips can indeed be fierce and capable travellers while having fully satisfying experiences on the road.

Chapter 5: The Heroine's Return

As seen in the previous chapter, *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Tangled* confirm that females can be just as skilled on the road as their male counterparts, and can take great delight in travelling. The present chapter will describe the personal transformation that Wendy, Alice and Rapunzel experience toward the end of their trips, and discuss the ultimate completion of their journeys, that is, their return home.

It is important to remember that even the briefest isolation on the road from the mainstream can lead to various transformative experiences (Cohan and Hark 1997: 5). As mentioned in the literature review, road movies generally include a dual journey—a physical and a spiritual one. Since these two journeys are interdependent, the spiritual journey or the “internal quest” is deemed to be of the same importance as the physical journey (Roberts 1997: 54). Although there usually are hints of a protagonist's transformation throughout the road trip, it is perhaps toward the end of the trip that this becomes most obvious, whether the actual trip is successful or not (Roberts 1997: 53).

According to Joseph Campbell (1968), the return, or the last step of the journey, comes in many forms: it can be a gentle return where the hero simply decides at one point—on his or her own—to go back to the original point of departure, or it can be a more abrupt return, a sort of escape or flight back (167). At times, someone from the hero's home environment may come to get the hero and bring him or her home. It is also possible for there to be no return or a refusal to return and a retreat further into this other world in which the traveller spent time, or even—perhaps in true nomadic fashion—the refusal to return and the choice to keep travelling to yet different environments until a

suitable environment is found.

5.1 The completion of the internal quest

As mentioned in Chapter 4, *Peter Pan*'s Wendy learns that her friend Peter has difficulty understanding certain simple notions in life. Indeed, as Captain Hook discloses to Wendy, Peter cannot love because he is unable to *feel*. Hook explains to Wendy that this is “part of the riddle of Peter’s being.” However, as Wendy soon realizes, the other characters in Neverland cannot really feel either—the pirates, for instance, all claim to want to have someone like Wendy but they do not seem to fully understand why. The Lost Boys also seem feeling-less at times: even though they respect Wendy, at the beginning of her adventure, they do not think twice about shooting her with an arrow at Tinkerbelle’s order.

Thus, Wendy, who is without doubt fascinated by this playground called Neverland, seems to slowly start understanding that if one spends too much time in Neverland, he or she might just forget how to feel. As Wendy observes those around her and looks increasingly puzzled at their behaviour, she appears to realize how important feelings are to her, and how pleasant it is to be surrounded by people with some depth to them. When Wendy mentions that she might start forgetting or stop caring about her parents toward the end of her stay, and announces that she and her brothers must cut their trip short, she seems to have reached the conclusion that a life without real feelings is not worth living. In fact, she calls it a “deficiency.” What is interesting is that Peter seemingly starts experiencing mild feelings (of the romantic kind) shortly after Wendy

brings up these conclusions of hers. Therefore, it could be said that Wendy's personal transformation leads to a slight transformation for Peter, as well.

When it comes to *Tangled's* Rapunzel, as previously stated, she refuses to go back home with her mother when the latter rudely interrupts her trip. Rapunzel feels that she is learning a lot—and by extension, growing—by being on the road and, at least at that point, is not ready to go home. Later on, Rapunzel realizes that it was not her mother who prevented her from leaving the tower but that she was actually not strong enough to stand up to her. Rapunzel understands that she should always be the agent of her own destiny as it should really be up to her, and no one else, what she does in life.

Therefore, when Rapunzel “sees the light” of the floating lanterns and admires them from the canoe at the end of her trip, it is quite clear that she also sees the light figuratively—she recognizes that she has been somewhat blind in many matters and that at that moment “it's like the fog has lifted.” Rapunzel also concludes that Flynn most likely has feelings for her, a situation in which she has never been before. She becomes aware that Flynn treats her differently from her mother, and that his treatment almost feels more genuine. She is able to express herself with him better than she can with her mother. Indeed, she later reveals to Flynn that he was her new dream. Once again, just like it is the case with Wendy and Peter, it seems that Rapunzel also helps Flynn change in a certain way. As time passes, he looks at Rapunzel in a more and more endearing manner and starts forgetting about the material things that he was after toward the beginning of the trip.

Alice in Wonderland's Alice has perhaps the most obvious transformation of these three road heroines. Even before Alice arrives in Underland, she is portrayed as having

some trouble being decisive, like when she is unable to instantly announce to the party guests that she needs a moment, as she cannot outright say that she does not want to marry Hamish. Alice does criticize numerous behaviours at the party but still has difficulty explaining herself: when trying to refuse Hamish's proposal, she starts stuttering that everyone expects her to be Hamish's wife, that her face will not last and that she does not want to end up like her Aunt Imogen (all of these opinions actually came from other people who wanted her to hear them).

In Underland, even though Alice is portrayed as strong, intelligent and inquisitive, she is obviously struggling with her true identity, or her sense of a "real" self or real purpose in life (Compton, Blumer and Boeckmann 2011: 56). As stated in the previous chapter, she does stand up for herself fearlessly when everyone claims at the onset of her trip that she is the wrong Alice. However, although she replies confidently that she ought to know who she is, that is not necessarily true. Further on in the trip, she tries to dismiss this issue when the Cheshire Cat asks her excitedly if she is *the* Alice. Alice replies that there has been some debate about that. Even later, when the caterpillar questions her about her identity again, she claims that she is Alice because "you said so yourself."²⁹

Alice is seen completing her internal quest when, toward the end of her trip, she stumbles upon a dying Absolom as he is changing into a butterfly. Then, for the first time, Alice's repressed memories surface, and she recalls that she has been in Underland before as a little girl, something she believed was a dream. That, combined with the fact that she finally comprehends that she is the daughter of a man whose vision stretched halfway around the world and nothing could ever stop him, makes her see that she is not only her

²⁹ Compton, Blumer and Boeckmann (2011) actually maintain that Absolom, the caterpillar, is a symbol of Alice's unconscious self (56).

own person, but also an extension of her father and that she is the only one who can stop herself from going forward. Her realization that she has been in Underland before seems to make her even more powerful as she is now aware that she has always had it in her to pull through the wildest situations. She also accepts this adventurous side of hers as an important component of her identity. Although Alice consistently fights her way through Underland, the decision that she makes at the end to suit up and slay the jabberwocky is probably the fastest decision that she has reached up to date.

Indeed, if Wendy and Rapunzel were the reasons behind their male companions' transformative experiences, then it can be said that Alice encourages the Mad Hatter to come out of his shell: funny and charming, he tries to block his desire to dance the "Futterwacken" when Alice first meets him, deeming himself to be unworthy. Toward the end of Alice's trip, to everyone's great surprise, he starts dancing. Alice's acceptance of her identity seems to lead the Hatter to face his own identity crisis.

5.2 Home and away

Before we examine Wendy's, Alice's and Rapunzel's respective returns home, it is important to look at the role that home plays on their trips. As stated in the literature review, certain road movie scholars (Orgeron 2008: 2; Robertson 1997: 271) have determined that many road movie characters, although seemingly fighting against conformity, in reality desire stability of some kind. According to these authors, various previous travellers wanted to create a new home for themselves somewhere on the road and some others were simply seeking familial reunification.

Even in female-oriented road films of the past few decades there are multiple instances of protagonists desiring stability, no matter how “rough around the edges” some of those heroines are portrayed to be. For instance, Louise in *Thelma and Louise* and Robin in *Boys on the Side* do wonder what it would be like to find a partner to grow old with, start a family, or find an accepting community where they would be able to fit in (Sturken 2000: 46; Cohan and Hark 1997: 65). This theme, however, has not been closely inspected in female road films, possibly because the sole breaking away from the home environment to go on a trip was not that common for female characters and the chains of patriarchy were still quite tight in the environments through which these females would travel.

Whereas most past road movie characters preferred to find a brand new home on the road, or the thoughts of the home they left did not tend to linger in their mind, for Wendy, Alice and Rapunzel, it is apparent that home holds significant importance even during the road trip; in fact, the idea of an eventual return to the home they left seems to be ever-present.

As seen in Chapter 3, Wendy is confined both at home and in school and fantasizes about fighting pirates and other dangerous activities as she engages in make-believe with her brothers. Her strict Aunt Millicent rejects her love of adventure and would rather see Wendy become a respectable young woman and consequently improve her marriage prospects. Nevertheless, Wendy, from the start, clearly wants to go on the road only for a little while, and then return home. Her realization that Neverland is less than ideal, as seen above, presumably shortens this trip even more. When Wendy first meets Peter and the latter mentions going away to Neverland, Wendy, who is not

portrayed as being afraid to embark on the road, still ends up asking, “What about mother?” Therefore, as annoyed as Wendy is at that moment with her home environment and as excited as she is to be taking part in an adventure, she is still very attached to her family and is apparently worried that her parents might miss her.

Even as she is standing on the windowsill about to fly away to this other world, she throws one last nostalgic look at her room and her belongings inside. As Peter whispers to Wendy to “forget them all” and that in Neverland “we will never have to worry about grown-up things again,” Wendy calmly replies that “never is an awfully long time.” Therefore, if Wendy does not feel overly guilty about leaving home, at the same time she does not plan to escape forever. The whole trip seems to be a temporary need for her.

Although Wendy is a strong, intelligent and happy traveller who is able to make her mark in Neverland, is clearly glad to be participating in every activity, and is welcomed by most of Neverland’s inhabitants, home never really seems to leave her mind. She does not cry for home like some road heroines of old, but she does not forget where she came from either. Wendy frequently checks if her two brothers, who come along on the trip with her, are at her side. When she first starts interacting with the Lost Boys, and notices that her brothers have somehow gone missing in the meantime, she knows that she must find them instantly. Thus, she clearly wishes to keep a piece of home close to her heart in this new territory as it serves as a reminder that she must eventually return.

Similar to Wendy, at the beginning of her trip, Rapunzel announces to Flynn that, “you will act as my guide, take me to these lanterns and return me home safely.” Just like

Wendy, even though Rapunzel has run out of things to do and fantasize about in her tower, and the only other human being she comes in contact with is her overbearing mother, she still does not desire to go away permanently. She hopes that the road trip will last only a few days (while her mother is gone on her own trip to collect some sea shells for Rapunzel). Therefore, up until the end of her journey, Rapunzel apparently holds dear to her heart the familiar environment that she shares with her mother and does not want to give it up forever. This heroine does experience some guilt on the road as she goes through a series of reflections, uncertain if she did the right thing by leaving home, not because she thinks that the road might not be open enough for a woman but because she wonders if she will break her mother's heart. Even if Rapunzel is an enthusiastically passionate traveller, she cannot completely get rid of the thoughts of home and family during the trip.

When it comes to Alice, she is portrayed as leaving her striated environment in somewhat more of a hurry than Wendy and Rapunzel. Nonetheless, in her new world, home still has presence. As previously mentioned, for a long while into the trip Alice believes that everything that happens to her in Underland is nothing but a dream from which she can wake up at any point. She does not frustratingly pine for home, with an irresistible urge to go back, but home seems to always be close to the touch for Alice. So, like Wendy and Rapunzel, it appears that Alice did not really plan on going away for a long period of time when she ran through the forest and jumped into the tree hole leading to Underland. In addition, Alice frequently cites her father's words and advice on her journey, even if she does not appear to understand the reason for this until the end of the

trip. Thus, it can be said that she, like Wendy and Rapunzel, is also very attached to her roots.

Most significantly, however, although these three heroines manage to successfully gain power in these new environments, they openly believe that any traveller eventually needs to hang up his or her travelling shoes and engage into other life activities, opinions which were not emphasized very much in previous female-oriented road films, or perhaps even in most road films in general. Not only do Wendy, Alice and Rapunzel not forget about their home environments, but they also do not seem to completely reject the type of society in which they live, unlike their road companions.

For instance, Wendy does not exactly know what awaits her later in life but is aware that there is much more to life than flying and fighting pirates, something that for Peter is the ultimate purpose. She tells Peter that all of these parts of life, which maybe do not make sense to them at the moment, become clear when they grow up. Wendy accepts the fact that people need some routines, like having to go to school and later possibly working in an office, but Peter refuses to see that as a favourable alternative to the life that he is leading. Whereas Wendy seemingly does not have a problem with eventually having to get used to a more serious lifestyle, Peter apprehensively shouts, “you can’t catch me and make me a man” and “I always want to be a boy and have fun.” Wendy actually believes that Peter might be pretending to always want to be a boy, as she cannot grasp how someone would truly wish to aimlessly wander all the time and thinks that everyone, even Peter, needs stability at some point.

Alice, just like Wendy, knows that one cannot endlessly roam through fantastic regions with no real purpose and must agree to a more stable existence sooner than later.

Even if Alice is not quite sure on her trip who she will become and what she will do afterward, she still knows that there is more to life than being in Underland. Alice tries unsuccessfully to explain to the Hatter that his entire wonderful country is not “real,” in the sense that he is stuck in a place where insanity and chaos reigns, but the Hatter does not appear to yearn for a change in his way of life. Alice understands that she cannot be part of a mad world and that, even if the society she comes from might not be as creative as a mad, fantastic world, she will need to grow up and join in certain aspects of that society. This is confirmed by her telling the Hatter when he begs her to stay at the end of the trip: “I can’t . . . there are questions I have to answer, things I have to do.”

Similar to Wendy and Alice, Rapunzel seems to believe that living in a perpetual state of purposeless movement is pointless. Rapunzel knows that being a thief like Flynn and simply wandering from one territory to another with no end in sight is not the meaning of life, and that Flynn’s initial dream of being surrounded by immense piles of stolen money is rather immature, not to mention not exactly secure. Flynn good-heartedly suggests that Rapunzel should find a new dream after seeing the lanterns, thus encouraging her movement, but by that he also shows that he leads an unstable life where he never has to deal with responsibilities. While Rapunzel does not confront him about these thoughts, she does not seem to desire to merely continue chasing floating lights. Even when she recognizes that her relationship with her mother is not very healthy, by revealing that Flynn is her new dream, she indicates that no matter where she ends up she wants to eventually have a steady lifestyle, for example, a constant partner.

Therefore, even though it was mentioned in Chapter 3 that Wendy, Alice and Rapunzel wish to escape their striated environments and use their imagination to do so

even before their actual trips into smooth, nomadic spaces, it is now clear that these heroines may wish to just briefly experience living in a manner different from the established norms of society. In fact, no matter how pleasant their journeys into the unknown may be—since, after all, being outside of a striated space does allow for a large amount of autonomy (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 362)—these protagonists do not wish to upkeep this nomadic way of life. If, traditionally, nomads' movement does not have a departure and a return or an aim or destination (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 353), then it perhaps cannot be said that Wendy, Alice and Rapunzel are *true* nomads because, as established above, they really do not need that many different points on their map and an arrival *somewhere* seems to be crucial to them.³⁰

Now, since the nomad inhabits a “permanently transient space” (Ganser 2009: 38), for him or her there cannot really exist this concept of home and away (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006: 142). Whereas some other characters on Wendy's, Alice's and Rapunzel's trips do not seem to care much about what happens to them the following day (Peter, for example, declares that “to die would be an awfully big adventure” during one of his and Captain Hook's battles) because they do not quite understand the concepts of home and stability, these heroines appear to be at all times aware of the space which they have territorialized and the space which they have temporarily left behind. They cannot simply disregard these differences and pretend that they are in a perpetual in-between (Campbell 2003: 46) with no real consequences.

³⁰ In support of the idea of nomadism in road movies, Walter Moser (2008) claims that a true road movie protagonist should not return to the starting point, but at the end of the movie should hit the road again, toward another unknown destination. Once the road trials are passed and transformation is achieved, the “real” road movie protagonist apparently keeps on moving—he does not delimit his displacement (17).

5.3 The crossing of the return threshold

A road film protagonist's return may come in many forms but, as can be concluded from the above analyses, Wendy, Alice and Rapunzel all opt for a return to the point of departure. As discussed earlier in this study, past female-oriented road films did not tend to celebrate their characters' return home. In effect, former heroines often did not reach any destination, not because they were able to perpetually continue moving through new territories, but because their road trips often reached a tragic end. Many protagonists faced death or illness (Cole 2005: 15; Roberts 1997: 62), which led certain authors to suggest that the inherent masculinity of the road movie is further highlighted (Roberts 1997: 45). In fact, when tracing the road film back to Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, it becomes evident that road trips were for a long time practically inundated with dead women: "women strippers or women 'escorts' murdered by unknown bar tenants or boyfriends (high on drugs), casualties of their own substance abuse or victims of self-proclaimed vigilantes of morality" (Enevold 2000: 412).

For many other female characters, the only option turned out to be the return to a place where things either took a turn for the worse or remained completely unchanged. For heroines like *Thelma and Louise*, it is quite clear that at the end of the trip, even though they have undergone a personal transformation, the women cannot return home even if they wanted to. Going back would actually mean going to jail, so it would not have been a good life anyway (Sturken 2000: 70). In fact, most female road protagonists of the past decades would have had no actual home to return to, as the home they left was filled with hostility or there was no home stable enough in the first place (Bjurström and Rudberg 1996: 69). For female protagonists in European road films, especially, who

perhaps often did not have much hope to start with when they embarked on a trip, living situations frequently became even more complicated upon their return (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006: 198).

When it comes to *Thelma and Louise*, specifically, the women's non-return was seen as an example of "punishment" of the heroine who dared to be mobile, and rebel against the established patriarchal order (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006: 162). The film's screenwriter, Callie Khouri, claims that since the audience was left with the image of the women flying in their car over the Grand Canyon, this can be interpreted as the women flying out of this world and into the mass unconscious; since they have completely freed themselves from all the shackles that restrained them, they could no longer have a place in this world because it was not big enough to support them (Sturken 2000: 73).

Additionally, Grant (2001) notes that the film suggests that the fate of women could be represented as transcendent, that they too could remain true to their values and achieve glory in death (189). Nevertheless, authors like Rebecca Bell-Metereau (1993, as cited in Grant 2001: 189) strongly believe that in road films "a male death in the conclusion is sacrificial, symbolic, and Christ-like" whereas "a female death at the end of the story rarely receives such a heroic interpretation, from feminists or non-feminists."

Following the above-noted patterns in earlier road films, it becomes significant to say that Wendy, Alice and Rapunzel all make it home and do not meet grim ends, even if challenges arise here and there on their way home. Even though the girls never planned to stay away forever, the other characters in their new environments also allow them to go back, something that was not always possible for female protagonists. Wendy and Alice notably get the right to *choose* when they want to head home toward the end of their trip.

Just as Wendy was free to do pretty much anything in Neverland, Peter also tells her that he will not stop her once she is ready to go. There is a brief obstruction that Wendy has to deal with on her way out of Neverland, as she and the other boys are captured by pirates, but Peter promptly resolves the conflict by freeing them. Wendy has the opportunity to be flown aboard a beautiful ship all the way to her house in London. There, her parents, who have been anxiously awaiting her and her brothers' return, greet them lovingly with "my angels, I've missed you." Similarly, Alice is given a purple potion at the end of her trip that is supposed to take her home. Although the potion is rather strange-looking and has a foul taste, when Alice drinks it, she is swiftly flown out of Underland and ends up in the garden near the engagement party, where everyone seems to be waiting for her.

Unlike Wendy and Alice, however, Rapunzel does not exactly choose to go back to the tower, but her mother reappears in order to take her home. From her earlier learning experience, it is evident that, by this point, Rapunzel has almost stopped thinking about returning to the tower and she would prefer to start living a grown-up life elsewhere. Unfortunately, her mother and two thieves trick her into believing that Flynn has left her stranded by kidnapping him while she is not looking, tying him up to a boat and setting the boat off on the river. Even though Flynn has not in fact left Rapunzel (as soon as he is freed, he starts planning how to get her back), at the time that her mother comes out of the forest and embraces her, Rapunzel clearly looks heartbroken and like she does not know what else to do but go with her mother.

However, when Rapunzel returns to the tower, and realizes that her "mother" is in reality not her real mother and that her real parents are the king and queen of the land she visited, Rapunzel corners her until the latter admits what she has done. Rapunzel then

pushes her of the way and does not let her “mother” tie her up and hide her away, in contrast with the passive manner in which she accepted all of her orders prior to the trip. Thus, since this heroine has acquired a significant amount of power on her trip, she continues to fight for her rights at home and refuses to stay somewhere where she does not want to stay. She firmly resists oppression, unlike many older female travellers upon their return home. Additionally, it is important to note that Rapunzel’s cutting of her long hair at the end of the battle with her mother (thus losing her powers to keep the latter eternally young) is the final step in her conquering her mother and gaining her independence (Smith 2011).

Rapunzel, in a way, experiences a double return. After leaving the tower for the last time, she returns to her real home safe and sound, and there she is met by adoring parents, who have never given up hope of finding her. Although she was still thinking about her “mother” in the tower during most of her road trip, it can be said that Rapunzel finally experiences stability in an authentic home, a “lost origin where what you see is what you are” (Corrigan 1991: 154).

5.4 Mistress of the two worlds

Not only do these road heroines come out of their adventures alive and safe at home but, unlike the majority of their predecessors, after their temporary escape into freedom they do not simply settle for compromise (Roberts 1997: 64). Many road heroines whose trip did not end in death or imprisonment usually not only had to accept some type of strict middle-class married lifestyle but also forget about the adventures that they have been on. In fact, some of these women merely moved from lawbreaker to law

upholder, from rebel to conformist without even questioning their experiences (Latto 2003: 91).

As explained in earlier chapters, *The Wizard of Oz*'s Dorothy, for instance, is not only denied her childhood when she returns home, but also her adventures in Oz. In her case, she is forced to grow up, but is also punished for her actions by having her imagination suppressed and is seemingly forbidden from any further departure from home. Therefore, her growth is in a way halted and she becomes somewhat of a "lost girl," assimilated into a culture that demands nothing less than her ultimate surrender (Duncan 2008: 60). Rohrer Paige (1996) points out that even though Dorothy had a choice to return home or not, she choose poorly since she completely wastes her powers upon her return (152).

For Wendy, Alice and Rapunzel, there is a more positive outlook. First, before these heroines head home, they make sure to keep memories of their experiences with them. When Wendy gives Peter a kiss that she describes as his and only his, it is obvious that she wants him to always have a place in her heart and is not willing to forget the wonderful time that she had on the trip. Similarly, before Alice leaves Underland, she promises to the Hatter that she will not forget him or her adventures there. In fact, she even mentions to him, "I'll be back again before you know it." She also states that she will miss him when she gets back home, meaning that she, just like Wendy, is not willing to let her memories of the trip simply disappear. Even Rapunzel, at first heartbroken because she is led to believe that Flynn deserted her, firmly grips the purple handkerchief that she received at the palace party where she was with him. Even if these protagonists

opt for stability instead of a fully nomadic existence, they do not ultimately regret their experiences.

When Wendy steps back into her home, it is apparent that her stay in Neverland has helped her mature as she is now ready to be a full-time mentor to the younger children. She introduces the Lost Boys to her parents and aunt and coaches them on how to behave properly (to take their hats off, for example), and then asks her parents if she can keep the boys. Her parents agree, and by letting these wild beings into their environment and engaging with them, it can be said that they themselves have changed. Wendy's father, for instance, stops worrying about the expenses that it might take to raise the kids and simply enjoys their company. It is also possible to see a change in Wendy's aunt, who was mainly focused on respectable living up to then, and who finally seems to have acquired a little bit of an adventurous side. Wendy is not portrayed as having to make any compromises since no one is stopping her from talking about her adventures in Neverland. There is no punishment for this heroine's rebellion. As Wloszczyna (2003) states, *Peter Pan* is truly a story where you can go off on an adventure, triumph over your father (or in Wendy's case, her aunt) and then "come back and climb into his lap."

Moreover, even though it is stated that Wendy does eventually marry and have children of her own, nothing hints at an unbearable domestic situation where Wendy's imagination and mobility would be limited. Although it is not known whether Wendy takes other—brief—trips, she does go on telling stories of her adventures to her children, and they tell them to their children, so her descendants might one day have adventures of their own. Wendy's memories are given an important place even in her adulthood.

Peter Pan actually seems to conclude with the thought that endless nomadic

rebellion is truly no admirable goal. As seen above, not only does Wendy believe that a traveller should eventually opt for a more stable lifestyle—which does not mean that the traveller must forget what happened to him or her while travelling—but Wendy’s brothers and the Lost Boys all seem to agree with this. Even if boys are generally thought to tend to refuse to “grow up” more often than girls, here Wendy successfully convinces the boys to give up their nomadic existence (Bowman 2004: 50).

While Wendy and the boys are playfully interacting with her parents inside the house, Peter peeks at them through the window. When Wendy notices him and asks him to join in, he refuses, still not appearing to understand why that place is better than Neverland. In fact, Peter has been mockingly criticized for “opting for his cloisters in Neverland over a life with Wendy” (Worley 2005: 79). As he is about to fly back to his wonderful world, Peter declares to Wendy that “to live would be an awfully big adventure,” as if though he is not prepared for *that* type of adventure yet, and quite possibly never will be. Wendy, therefore, once again turns out to be braver than Peter, since she is not afraid of taking on this big “adventure” of growing up.

Since Wendy comes back from her trip transformed and is even able to use her newfound wisdom to slightly change her immediate surroundings, it could be determined that she has successfully “reterritorialized” her home environment. As per Deleuze and Guattari (1987), reterritorialization is not a just a simple return to an older territory/set of norms following deterritorialization but a redefinition or re-purposing of some sort (509). Namely, reterritorialization is not simply an imitation of the past territory but a transportation of new values into this territory (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 10). Wendy is able to change aspects of the territory that she left behind into something more suitable

for her; for instance, she has succeeded in slightly changing certain outdated prescriptions for gender roles in her society by paving her own path within this society, a path where she can be a wife and a mother yet still hold on to her desires of mobility and encourage others to pursue theirs.

For Rapunzel, during her first “return” home, her mother tries to take away all the hints from her ever being on a trip—like the flowers in her hair—and says, “there, it never happened.” However, as established earlier, Rapunzel does not let anyone hold her back or deny her the right to her memories once she finds out that she is the lost princess. When Rapunzel gets to her real home afterward, she is admired and accepted just the way she is, not only by her parents but by everyone in the kingdom. The society does not dismiss her adventures.

Rapunzel eventually marries Flynn but her lifestyle looks to be far from a retreat into a strict domestic life. As Rapunzel becomes queen, she “leads the kingdom with the same grace that her parents did before her.” Therefore, the others become *her* subordinates and they are the ones who might need to make certain compromises if need be, and not vice versa. As queen, Rapunzel is a woman in power, with multiple responsibilities. This simply serves to further the intellectual and emotional development that she has experienced on her trip and, although it is not specified whether or not Rapunzel embarks on other trips in her lifetime, she and Flynn are shown as a happy, exciting couple that really engages with the other citizens and does not seem to follow any strict routines. In fact, ruling the kingdom can be viewed as quite an adventure as well and a brave feat to take on. Thus, just like Wendy, and even more so perhaps, Rapunzel truly ends up making her own path in life instead of succumbing to patriarchal

oppression and traditional gender roles. Therefore, she can be said to have successfully reterritorialized her home environment. Since both Rapunzel and Wendy have shown to be leaders on their respective trips, it is refreshing to see that they can keep that power in their own worlds, with others having to depend on them.

Alice also exercises her leadership powers and what she has learned during her trip as soon as she gets back. She matter-of-factly states that she will not marry Hamish because he is not the right man for her; she tells her mother, sister and the other women who were pressuring her into marriage at the start that *she* will decide what to do with her own life; and she even shows everyone what she has brought back from her trip by dancing the Futterwacken in front of them. Essentially, she reterritorializes her home environment by making it her own and does not simply accept it the way it is. She instills her own values and ideas, re-designs it, in a way.

Alice replaces some outdated gender conventions in her society with her own ideas by suggesting to Hamish's father that they take his trading business all the way to China, and that he welcome her as an apprentice with his company. Alice is later shown at the helm of a ship, professionally dressed, and looking down at her mother and sister on the dock, who are smiling and waiving at her as she is about to sail to other unknown territories. It is clear that Alice has managed to successfully reterritorialize her home environment by rejecting a domestic life and even taking up a job that men usually excel in.³¹ She is also taking upon herself a duty that would make others depend on her, a big and brave responsibility. It seems that everyone else in Alice's home environment has

³¹ Alice's newfound vocation has not gone without critique. Kristina Aikens (2010: 31) deems her return to be a return to imperialism—a man's world which requires compliance and military force. According to the author, Alice may be a good role model, strong, self-sufficient and enterprising, but it should not mean that if women do not obsess over marriage and domesticity, they then have to pursue careers that hinge on oppressing others (2010: 31).

taken a step back and let Alice take control of her own destiny. She not only gets to keep her memories from Underland but also her mobility as she continues to travel to more faraway places on business, using her imagination for endeavours of a more serious kind. She might even keep her promise to the Hatter of one day going back to Underland to visit.

It is also important to note that Alice ends up nothing like her Aunt Imogen, who also rebelled by refusing to marry “in time” and instead lived through fantasies of foreign princes and lands. Whereas Aunt Imogen is living a miserable life and seemingly never had luck with anything else because she rejected a domestic lifestyle, Alice can be viewed as very successful. This contrast between the two females shows that in Aunt Imogen’s time, women probably did not have as much freedom or will to embark on a trip, or were not able to handle a travelling environment or, yet, situations worsened upon their return, as exemplified by many former road heroines. For Alice, a more modern girl, good opportunities seem not to be that impossible to come by.

5.5 Summary

The analyses in the present chapter show that it is possible for female road protagonists to move beyond or step outside the social order upon their return home, something that was seldom the case with previous road films featuring females (Ganser 2009: 90). Many previous female road films were still traditional in their representation of gender: they substituted in women for male heroes but did little or nothing to challenge sexist assumptions (Grant 2001: 196). *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Tangled* show that women can in fact come out of a road trip successful. Wendy, Alice and Rapunzel are

allowed to return to their respective—and loving—homes and are not punished for having let their imaginations flow and having engaged in movement away from home. Thus, it can no longer be stated that male characters are the only ones who find redemption at the end of a road trip (Cole 2005: 15).

Additionally, their successful returns indicate an opposition to the popular opinion among scholars that the personal transformation of female protagonists in road tales cannot be equated with the acquisition of wisdom of male heroes and that a female's return home mostly brings down her intellectual and emotional development (Lewis 1995: 142). Wendy, Alice and Rapunzel do not decide to live an unbound life on the road and they do not reject the stability of a married or more serious life, as it is often assumed to be something that male protagonists must do in order to have truly successful road trips (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006: 123). These heroines do not desire *just* a domestic existence upon their return but some other purpose as well, as opposed to former road heroines who were frequently confused or uncertain about their route once they arrived home (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006: 174). Therefore, it is obvious that a female road protagonist is able to upkeep the traditional role of mother or wife (if she wishes to) but can also uphold more demanding jobs.

Since these heroines come back transformed from their trips and are even able to use their newfound wisdom to change their immediate surroundings, it could be determined that there is a true reterritorialization in these films. The protagonists do not stay in an unlimited nomadic space, but they do not really find themselves in striated spaces either in the end. They achieve great power, and not only in their fantasies, not only somewhere over the rainbow as was the case before (Roberts 1997: 65). These

females are allowed to rebel against the outdated prescriptions for social roles in their societies and help change expectations for gender identities in their worlds. The confined territories that they were frustrated with earlier on have by the end of their journey become clean slates where their personal goals, hopes and dreams are realized.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study has examined female protagonists in fairy-tale-based road films of the past 15 years in order to assess how these protagonists fit into the overall road movie genre. Most previous scholarly research has concluded that female characters in road movies are not portrayed as “good” travellers, like male characters. However, few authors fully explored this subject, making most existing research on road movies male-dominated, just like the genre itself. This study sought to analyze further some of these gender-related issues with the aim to bring to light new thoughts on the portrayal of females in road films.

Guided by the concepts of mobility, female rebellion, power, (self-) control and stability, the study looked at the departure, initiation and return in the journey of female travellers in three films, *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Tangled*. It was concluded that the heroines in these films differ from the ones in previous road films since they use their imagination, whether it is engaging in make-believe or in a multitude of hobbies, to rebel against and deterritorialize, or “detach themselves from,” the strict conventions in their home environments even before they set foot on the road. They thus seem to be more “ready” for a road trip than past female protagonists, namely, they seem to be dully equipped for the road. Through their imagination the heroines show just how capable, fearless and open to different things they are and their readiness to take on road travel is thus even more pronounced. Examinations of the heroines’ lives at home show that oppression still exists when it comes to a woman wishing to be mobile and embarking on a journey. However, it was demonstrated that this oppression does not need to come

solely from male characters because other female characters, such as mothers, sisters and other relatives, seem to be equally capable of impeding a heroine's movement away from the domestic sphere, thus upholding patriarchal values and a more traditional way of life. In contrast, the male characters in the protagonists' home environments are not portrayed as interfering in their dreams of travelling.

The investigation has also shown that, while these female protagonists are on the road, their travels are generally not obstructed by the characters whom they encounter, as was the case in most previous road films. In fact, in these new films, the other characters even encourage the travellers' movement. Certain are very welcoming, giving the heroines tours, making them participate in various activities or helping them out in various ways. It is also argued that while these heroines travel, they exhibit mainly positive traits. Following in the steps of female road protagonists like *Thelma and Louise*, these new heroines are even more brave and do not let others push them around. The challenges of being on a road trip are actually depicted to not be that difficult, judging by these protagonists' abilities to exhibit self-control throughout. The power order between males and females in these films also seems to be reversed as the girls are shown to be better at taking care of themselves on the road and the male characters are the ones who do not come off as being as competent and rational and are frequently in need of the women's help. The heroines can therefore be said to have territorialized these new environments, or marked them as theirs. It is demonstrated that the heroines do not necessarily need to "act just as brainless and obnoxious as men" (Mills 1997: 322) in order to be able to handle being in a new environment. These new heroines do not follow established gender stereotypes and take control over their road trips while managing to

fully enjoy themselves.

Moreover, the study highlighted that these heroines explicitly express the fact that the road trip is just a temporary escape for them and that they do not desire to go away forever. During the trip, these protagonists do not forget where they came from, thus not entirely getting “lost” in these other worlds. However, even though this might not seem like a true nomadic experience, it is not really seen as a negative quality but rather as an admiring trait that shows that the heroines have many other aspirations in life, and road trips are depicted as pleasurable experiences that a woman must go through in order to reach some sort of stability in the end by becoming a more complete person. It is shown that these girls successfully reterritorialize, or redefine, their home environments, however. Not only are they allowed to cherish their adventures upon their return home, which was oftentimes not possible for past female protagonists, but they all end up contributing to society in some significant way by making their own paths.

Thus, these findings show that the road does not have to be solely a male domain, as previous road films suggested. These recent films demonstrate that the road can in fact allow for a successful “female space for escape or revitalization” (Roberts 1997: 66), even though women may travel in ways different from those of men.

As detailed as this study sought to be, it did contain a few limitations. For instance, the study chose to only focus on recent female road films made in North America or other English-speaking regions, such as the United Kingdom or Australia. As stated in Chapter 2, the present films were chosen due to accessibility (copies of these films were more readily available than those of foreign ones) and ease of comprehension. The films are also widely recognized in North America where they have achieved

significant success.³² Therefore, even though the literature review and background research included themes in certain European road films, generally, road movie literature focusing on films made in North America or in other English-speaking parts of the world was more easily obtainable. Thus, the bulk of the present study's background research also mainly focuses on these films..

In terms of the selection of the films for interpretation, no difference was made between animated and live-action films and they were studied in the same manner, with a focus on the narrative and on character portrayal. An alternate approach would have been to perhaps examine solely live-action films or solely animated films. In addition, the selected films were found on the IMDB website and chosen due to their relevance to the study. Other 21st century fairy tale films with road movie characteristics have been released, but the three that were chosen for analysis were believed to most easily portray what the study is looking for. Also, one of the films (*Peter Pan*) was made seven years earlier than the other two but this difference was not addressed because it was not considered to have a significant impact on the investigation. As well, the presented background information for these three films attempts to focus on the journey or the portrayal of the heroine. Additional reviews were found for each film but not used as they were not pertinent to the study. Moreover, the issues of youth, puberty and maturity, even though important to these three films, have not been discussed in the study due to a lack of space. Since few scholarly analyses have been made about females in recent road

³² It is important to note that, even though these recent fairy tale road movies, as well as other recent fairy tale films, have been highly successful and tend to endorse female autonomy and self-realization, this has not always been the case. Older fairy tale films with road movie components (or older fairy tale films, in general) might have been successful too in their time but female marginalization/stereotyping was more common within them.

films, the study wanted to address the way modern female protagonists behave on the road. It did not mean to focus on their adolescence specifically.

This study only focused on fairy tale films classified in the road movie category. Due to the broadness of the road movie genre, a possible avenue for future research would be to examine other types of recent road films featuring female protagonists, both domestic and foreign, in order to see how these films portray female characters. European road films, in particular French road films, have received considerable scholarly attention in recent years, but it would be advantageous to examine female road movies from other continents as well. Another avenue for future research would be to carry out a detailed comparison of recent female road films from different countries in order to see interregional similarities and differences. On a different note, although audience reception analysis was not the focus of the present investigation on road films, it would definitely be interesting for future researchers to explore how viewers, especially young women, are affected by the portrayal of females in road films of all kinds.

Of course, this study of gender portrayals in road movies could be of interest to studies of other rather “masculine” film genres, such as superhero films and other action films, spy films, crime or detective mystery films and gangster films. It could also be advantageous to comparisons of male and female travellers in television series with road trip components, such as *The Amazing Race*.

Finally, this study is hoping to contribute to the general debates on gender relations. Since there seems to be an ongoing interest in the portrayal of women across all media, the findings of the present study could lead to further research and discussion on

the subject. Also, since travel is a highly relevant topic in today's world, the study hopes to incite further interest in this important activity.

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