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Unravelling the Power Play:

Identity Negotiation & Power Balance in Lewis Carrols's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* & *Through the Looking-Glass*

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Abstract

Lewis Carroll's Alice books have long been subject to diverse interpretations, with one prominent view presenting Alice's adventures as a psychedelic journey. This perspective, popularized since the 1960s, suggests that the nonsensical nature of the narrative mirrors the effects of narcotics. However, this thesis challenges such readings and proposes a deeper exploration of Carroll's narrative style.

Drawing on insights from Beatrice Turners' analysis in the article "'Which is to be master?': Language as Power in Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass," this thesis reframes the interpretation of Alice's adventures. Instead of viewing them solely through the lens of drug culture, the narrative is examined as a nuanced exploration of power dynamics between adults and children during the "Golden Age" of children's literature.

Through a detailed examination of language use and Alice's interactions with certain characters within the narrative, this thesis argues that Carroll's storytelling serves as a mechanism to thematize and interrogate the authority and identity dynamics prevalent in Victorian society. By imagining Alice's interactions as adult-child dialogues, the thesis unveils the complexities of power relations embedded within the text, hidden behind a whimsical facade.

Ultimately, the thesis contends that Carroll's portrayal of "adult society" from a child's perspective reveals not only the vulnerability of children but also the manipulative tendencies of some adults. By shedding light on these dynamics, Carroll prompts readers to reconsider conventional notions of authority and childhood, offering a profound commentary on societal norms and power structures.

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Unravelling the Power Play: Identity Negotiation & Power Balance in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass*

In May 2023, BBC Culture published an article titled "Alice in Wonderland's hidden messages," authored by Hephzibah Anderson, which delved into various interpretations of Lewis Carroll's Alice books. Anderson presented theories ranging from viewing the texts as "an allegory on drug culture" to "a parable of British colonialization," and even suggesting the story as portraying "a heroine with a bad case of penis envy" (Anderson). However, one interpretation stood out, resonating widely since the 1960s: the idea of Alice's adventures as one large psychedelic journey. Anderson elaborated, noting, "From its heat-addled opening scene, there is a psychedelic vibe - besides all those pills, time moves erratically, and the grinning Cheshire Cat is here one minute, gone the next" (Anderson).

Initially, I interpreted Alice's adventures through the lens of the latter interpretation, where I understood the nonsensical nature of the narrative as a reference to the influence of narcotics. However, I will now argue that this perspective is not only inaccurate but quite reductionistic. Therefore, in this thesis, I will argue that Carroll's narrative style functions as a mechanism to thematize and challenge power dynamics between adults and children during as the "Golden Age" of children's literature, lasting from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. Particularly in how use of language function in shaping identity and authority within the narrative. My aim is to provide a nuanced exploration of power dynamics among characters and the complexities that arise from imagining Alice's verbal encounters as adult-child dialogue. I argue that "adult society" can be glimpsed from a child's perspective, and in this, Carroll reveals not only how vulnerable children are, but how manipulative adults can be over a child, knowingly or not.

Mechanics of nonsense

To fully comprehend Carroll's works, it is crucial to clarify some of the theoretical background of the literary genre known as "nonsense literature." Alan Levinovitz's article "Slaying the Chinese Jabberwock: Towards a Comparative Philosophy of Nonsense" outlines two types of nonsense: "pure" and "impure." Edward Lear's style is categorized as "pure" and "absolute poetic" nonsense, Carroll's style of nonsense has been categorized as "impure"

nonsense, further described as "mathematical and rule-driven" (Levinovitz 251). Levinovitz argues that any connotations to the term "impure" do not equate to lower quality when discussing the styles of nonsense. He asserts, "There are other advocates of nonsense, however, who believe the value of nonsense is almost always traceable to some set of rules, and therefore purity and quality are not synonymous when it comes to nonsense" (Levinovitz 262). In other words, Levinovitz argues that nonsense literature can still achieve its intended purpose regardless of whether or not it follows grammatical structures or not.

In her article "'Which is to be master?': Language as Power in Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass," Beatrice Turner provides valuable insight into the mechanics of language within Carroll's narratives. Turner argues that despite the apparent nonsensicality of Carroll's language, it adheres to recognizable grammatical patterns. This adherence to known rules of syntax allows readers to derive meaning from the text based on context, even when the meaning may seem open-ended or absurd (Turner 248).

This perspective shows how the intricate interaction between language and power dynamics in Carroll's works. While Wonderland and the Looking-Glass world may appear chaotic and illogical, the underlying structure of language imposes a sense of order and meaning onto the narrative. In this sense, Carroll's use of language functions as a tool through which power relations are negotiated and navigated within the text. By adhering to familiar grammatical patterns, Carroll creates a framework through which readers can interpret and make sense of the seemingly nonsensical events unfolding in the narrative. This linguistic structure not only provides a sense of coherence and continuity but also establishes a foundation upon which power dynamics between characters can be explored and understood. Thus, language becomes a central mechanism through which authority, identity, and agency are negotiated within the whimsical and fantastical worlds of Wonderland and the Looking-Glass.

In regards to the rule-governed nonsense in the Alice texts, the narratives challenge conventional storytelling norms by employing absurdity and illogicality to convey deeper meanings. Levinovitz further emphasizes that the rules of Wonderland and the Looking-Glass world provide a significant quantity of the narratives' nonsense, as the plot unfolds through Alice's struggles to navigate the rules of Wonderland. Levinovitz points out that the "rules themselves are arbitrary and therefore nonsensical, while at other times the rules make sense but get taken to logical extremes" (Levinovitz 262). This interaction between arbitrary and illogical rules creates a dynamic narrative environment where Alice must constantly adapt her

understanding of the world around her, mirroring the challenges children face in navigating the complexities of adult society.

Purpose of Children's Literature

This departure from traditional storytelling norms is significant, reflecting a broader shift in children's literature towards exploring complex themes within seemingly whimsical narratives. To fully grasp this shift from the traditional moralistic function of children's literature, it's essential to understand how children's literature functioned prior to Carroll's approach. Scholars like Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown attempted to define plot in children's literature, asserting that 'children's books are about the experiences of childhood' (qtd. in Nodelman 190). However, Perry Nodelman, in his book *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature*, offers a more nuanced perspective. He argues that the experiences of childhood portrayed in children's literature are filtered through adult understanding and perception rather than authentic experiences of actual children. Nodelman states, "While it is true that texts for children often claim to depict childhood experiences, they are actually only doing so to the extent that adult authors' interpretations of childhood align with those of actual children" (Nodelman 190). According to Nodelman, Western society has been characterized by binary thinking, as explained by Derrida's concept of différance, and that this concept of dichotomies has further affected children's literature. Wherein "[…] the binarism that underlies all adult thinking about children in the centuries in which special children's literature has existed - the understanding of childhood purely in terms of its opposition to, lack of, and subordination to maturity" (Nodelman 209). In other words, Nodelman argues that the common belief among adults that childhood is defined primarily by its contrast to, absence of, and subordination to adulthood. This binary perspective has shaped the perception and treatment of children, often emphasizing the differences between childhood and maturity while positioning childhood as a stage of development inferior to adulthood.

Aihong Ren, in "Power Struggle between the Adult and Child in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," supports this notion, further elaborating this concept by highlighting the dichotomy between adults and children in Victorian social dynamics. This dichotomy led to a power imbalance, with children often viewed as inferior and incomplete adults-in-training rather than as individuals with their own agency. Ren's analysis emphasizes how children's literature served as a tool for reinforcing adult authority and imparting adult values onto young readers (Ren 1659). Ren contends that while many Victorian authors used children's literature as a means of moral instruction and indoctrination. Stating: "There is always a

power imbalance between the adults and children, as children are considered by the adult society as insufficient and in need of guidance to grow up and become socially acceptable" (Ren 1659). However, Ren argues in favor of Carroll's approach. Arguing that Carroll's works defy these conventions by portraying Alice's struggle against adult dominance in a world of chaos and absurdity. Suggesting that unlike many of his contemporaries, Carroll challenged the established power dynamics between adults and children. He portrays Alice's struggle against the dominance of adult authority figures in a world characterized by chaos and absurdity, demonstrating empathy for the child protagonist caught in the midst of adult whims and conventions (Ibid.).

To further illuminate this discussion on the unequal distribution of power between adults and children, Turner delves into how language shapes perceptions of childhood to reinforce adult authority. She emphasizes that "The text grant linguistic control to those who inhabit Wonderland and the Looking-glass world and, in doing so, define them as adults. They use this control in a very adult way too: they exercise the adult's right to tell the child what she is" (Turner 249). Perpetuating the power imbalances in utilizing language in shaping children's identities and realities. In her own words: "Adults, as the arbiters of language, create the child, and they also create the signs by which the child shall be described: innocence, inexperience, a lack of knowledge" (Turner 251). She further argues that "The distribution of power between the adult and the child is un-equal: the adult has the power to write and to define the child, while the child remains a passive thing described within a text, and in doing so the experienced adult leaves this defined child with a trace of their adultness, their experience and their knowledge of the world" (Ibid.). In other words, Turner depicts how Carroll's narrative thematizes the relationship between the adult and child by depicting two criteria. The first focuses on how the narrative lays bare the ways adults have had the power to define the child. While the second, creates an awareness over how adults in the Victorian society treated children to be a passive thing.

This thesis aims to explore incidents from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, examining themes of identity and authority based on Turner's two criteria. Additionally, Carroll's use of language as a tool of power warrants closer examination, shedding light on how the use of a nonsensical narrative to uncover deeper meaning, and how linguistic elements shape perceptions of childhood and reinforce adult authority. By analyzing Carroll's linguistic techniques, we can unravel layers of meaning and understand the complexities of power dynamics in children's literature.

"Advice from a Caterpillar"

In their article, Ren argues that the Caterpillar in the chapter "Advice from a Caterpillar" functions as a portrayal of a tendency amongst adults during the “Golden Age” of children’s literature, to establish and exercise authority over children in order to maintain a superior position, based on the previously discussed binary way of thinking. In Ren's own words: "Lewis Carroll mocks the adults' desire for power by portraying an arrogant Caterpillar" (Ren 1660). In correlation to this essay, I wish to argue that Carroll explores and challenges the concept of identity through Alice’s interactions with the Caterpillar and the Pigeon in the chapter "Advice from a Caterpillar,” and again in the chapter “Tweedledum and Tweedledee” in the next book. Upon entering Wonderland, Alice immediately experiences uncertainty regarding her sense of self. She wonders aloud:

> "I wonder if I've been changed in the night? Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is, Who in the world am I?" (Carroll 46).

In an effort to regain her sense of self, Alice tries to recite some of her lessons, including poems, multiplication, and geography, but all of them come out wrong. This leaves Alice feeling uncertain about her acquired knowledge and her understanding of logic, momentarily leading her to believe she has become her less bright friend, Mable. Adding to her confusion about her identity, Alice undergoes multiple changes in size throughout the story of "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," leaving her ambivalent about who she truly is.

This uncertainty is further challenged as Alice interacts with the Caterpillar, where an unequal power distribution unfolds based upon certainty of one's identity. Through these interactions, Turner's two criteria become apparent. Firstly, the interactions in this chapter accentuate some ways adults exercise authority and linguistic control, based on experience and a more established identity, in order to define the child. Upon initial contact, the Caterpillar in an indifferent manner questions Alice's identity: "Who are you?" (Carroll 69). In which the following dialogue ensues:

> 'I - I hardly know, sir, just at present - at least I know who I *was* when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.'
> 'What do you mean by that?' said the Caterpillar sternly. 'Explain yourself!'

'I can't explain *myself,* I'm afraid, sir,' said Alice, 'because I'm not myself, you see.'
'I don't see,' said the Caterpillar. (Carroll 69-70)

This exchange can be interpreted as to highlight the adult's role in shaping the child's understanding of identity. Since, by demanding an explanation from Alice, the Caterpillar places significance on a clearly defined sense of self, hinting at an innate need to label and categorize things. Further reinforcing the power dynamic where adults in Victorian England sought to assert control and impose their understanding of the world onto the child, in an attempt to guide them. When Alice, frustrated by repeatedly having her identity questioned, redirects the Caterpillar's question back to him, he disregards it and advises Alice to control her temper.

Moreover, this excerpt also relates to Turner's second criteria, which concerns how adults in the Victorian society regarded children as passive entities. Alice's inability to control the conversation or assert her own understanding demonstrates her passive role in the interaction. Furthermore, the Caterpillar's lack of empathy towards Alice, as well as his need to distinguish himself from her, further exemplifies this notion. It becomes evident as their conversation unfolds that Alice assumes the Caterpillar possesses an understanding of her situation. Ren supports this notion through the observation of Alice taking "it for granted though that the Caterpillar is an infant, as he is the larva of a butterfly. If a butterfly marks the state of being an adult, then the Caterpillar must be a baby" (Ren 1660). This assumption leads Alice to use phrases such as "you see," "perhaps you have not found it so yet," and "won't you?" — expressions typically implying a shared understanding in everyday discourse. However, the Caterpillar bluntly denies this assumption before repeating his question, "Who are you?" (Carroll 70). The Caterpillar's blunt rejection of Alice's assumed understanding can be interpreted as reference to the previously discussed concept of binary thinking. The Caterpillar deems it necessary to differentiate himself from Alice and her ambivalent sense of self. Ren argues that the Caterpillar reacts in this manner by implying "that only a child will be puzzled by the bodily change, as an adult who has experienced this process of growth will take it lightly" (Ren 1660), thus differentiating himself from Alice the child. By creating this opposition, the Caterpillar aspires to assume a perceived superior role as the "experienced elder."

Furthermore, Ren's analysis delves into the nuanced dynamics between adults and children in Carroll's Wonderland. She interprets the exchange between Alice and the Caterpillar as a lens through which adult hypocrisy is scrutinized. The Caterpillar's behavior,

notably marked by its ill-temper and cryptic responses, embodies the inconsistency of adult authority figures. Ren suggests that certain adults, like the Caterpillar, evade their own questions and offer advice they themselves could benefit from. Through this portrayal, Carroll challenges the traditional power dynamics by revealing the fragility and inconsistency of adult authority in the face of a child's curiosity (Ibid.). The Caterpillar's evasive responses and dispensation of advice reveal a discrepancy between adult authority and behavior. By showcasing adults who fail to adhere to the standards they set for children, this exchange exposes the inconsistency and hypocrisy inherent in Victorian adult-child interactions, further challenging traditional power dynamics within the Alice narratives.

Incident with the Pigeon.

In Alice's encounter with the Pigeon, Turner's theory regarding the correlation between mastery of language and authority finds further evidence. Following Alice's encounter with the Caterpillar, Alice gains the ability to manipulate her size by consuming the Caterpillar's mushroom. While experimenting with the mushroom's effects in order to reclaim her original size, Alice's neck extends to reach the treetops, leading to her encounter with the Pigeon. The Pigeon, who has spent her days searching for a safe nesting place away from egg-hunting serpents, mistakes Alice for one such serpent and imposes this definition on her. This imposition of identity by the Pigeon aligns with Turner's first criteria, highlighting the ways in which some adults exert power over children by imposing definitions upon them. Continuing from the incident with the Caterpillar, Alice remains quite ambivalent regarding her sense of self. However, when confronted by the Pigeon Alice tentatively takes the first step to reclaiming her own identity;

> 'I - I'm a little girl,' said Alice, rather doubtfully, as she remembered the number of changes she had gone through, that day.
> 'A likely story indeed!' said the Pigeon in a tone of deepest contempt. 'I've seen a good many little girls in my time, but never *one* with such a neck as that! No, no! You're a serpent; and there is no use denying it. I suppose you'll be telling me next that you have never tasted an egg!'
> 'I *have* tasted eggs, certainly,' said Alice, who was a very truthful child; 'but little girls eat eggs quite as much as serpents do, you know.'
> 'I don't believe it,' said the Pigeon; 'but if they do, why then they're a kind of serpent, that's all I can say' (Carroll 77)

Despite Alice's attempt to assert her identity as a little girl, the Pigeon, embodying the role of a parental figure, insists that her physical appearance and eating habits align more with those of a serpent. Turner illustrates this dynamic, stating; "The Pigeon, a mother and an adult, reserves the right to define little girls, or children, by her own logic. Serpents eat eggs, so if little girls eat eggs, then they must be serpents too" (Turner 249). In other words, Turner introduces a sense of Wonderland-logic, where adult characters assert linguistic control and impose their own meaning as facts. Since both children and serpents consume eggs, they must indeed be the same.

Moreover, the Pigeon's refusal to acknowledge Alice's self-identification as a little girl especially reflects Turner's second criteria, reinforcing the dynamic where the Pigeon considers Alice as a passive entity requiring a definition provided by an adult. Through linguistic control, the Pigeon expands her definition of serpents to include little girls, emphasizing the extent of adult influence and control over children's identities. This imposition disregards Alice's autonomy and agency, accentuating the challenges children face in asserting their sense of self within a world governed by adult authority.

Despite the challenges posed by the Caterpillar and Pigeon's imposition of identity, Alice's confrontations in the chapter "Advice from a Caterpillar" marks a pivotal moment in her journey. After the confrontation with the Pigeon, where Alice reclaims her identity as a little girl, Alice displays a clear-minded sense of orientation by stating her goal in Wonderland: "I've got back to my right size; the next thing is, to get into that beautiful garden" (Carroll 78). This determination to pursue her goal signifies a shift in Alice's mindset. No longer solely preoccupied with regaining her sense of self, she now focuses on advancing her journey.

"A Mad Tea-Party"

In the Article "*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as an Anti-Feministic Text: Historical, Psychoanalytical and Postcolonial Perspectives," Flair Donglai Shi suggests that the mental shift following her encounters with the Caterpillar and the Pigeon indicates a transition to challenges more resembling those of the real world. Relating to what was previously mentioned regarding Carroll utilizing absurdity to uncover social dynamics. Shi argues, that this shift "can be read as the increasing the level of difficulty of the challenges Alice has to face as her antagonists increasingly resemble adults in the real world and present not only insanity and illogicality, but also manipulation and violence" (Shi 187). Alice's

interaction with the participants of the Mad Tea-Party aligns with this narrative shift, however leaning more to the absurd qualities of the text than threats of violence. As the incidents previously discussed involved a caterpillar on a mushroom and a pigeon in a nest, the characters in "A Mad Tea-Party" display more humanlike tendencies by attending a tea party, albeit a mad one. In the chapter "A Mad Tea-Party," Alice engages with the Mad Hatter, alongside the March Hare and the Dormouse, signifying a transition from primarily animalistic characters to more humanoid ones. This shift in the characters' portrayal as the narrative unfolds can be argued to align with the increase of difficulty explained by Shi. In other words, one can argue that in the worlds created by Carroll, humanoid characters can be interpreted as a manifestation of more threatening challenges, while the animalistic characters represent more absurd qualities. The nonsensical nature of the events in this chapter can be interpreted as a reflection of the illogical aspects of adult society. Here, Alice, as an outsider in Carroll's literary worlds, struggle with understanding the mechanics of Wonderland's linguistical and social rules, much like a child navigating adult society.

To connect this interaction with Turner's criteria, it is essential to consider Turner's previously mentioned argument regarding adult's linguistical control. As noted earlier, adults, as the "arbiters of language," not only shape the child, but also determine how the child is described (Turner 251). In this chapter, the encounter is characterized by miscommunication and power-imbalance relating to comprehension and mastery of language. Where Alice's comprehension of English, clashes with the unconventional language used by the inhabitants of Wonderland. Turner's first criteria becomes evident as Alice's attempts to engage in rational conversation are met with absurdity and illogicality. In Wonderland, figurative expressions are interpreted literally, allowing characters to assert dominance over Alice by exploiting her unfamiliarity with their linguistic norms. As Turner formulates it: "Alice finds herself in a secret system that appears meaningless to those outside it. Knowledge of the game's rules is a signifier of power, and Alice, ignorant of how this logic works, is powerless" (Turner 249), acting as an example of Carroll utilizing whimsical narrative to uncover deeper meanings, reflecting social dynamics. For instance, during the Dormouse's story, Alice's questioning of the story's logic is dismissed by the March Hare's offer of more tea:

> 'Take some more tea,' the March Hare said to Alice, very earnestly.
> 'I've had nothing yet,' Alice replied in an offended tone, 'so I can't take more'.
> 'You mean you can't take *less*,' said the Hatter: 'it's very easy to take *more* than nothing.'
> 'Nobody asked *your* opinion,' said Alice (Carroll 96).

According to Márcia Lemos in the article “Language-Games in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* or: How language operates in Carroll’s text to produce nonsensical meanings in common-sense references,” this excerpt displays a breakdown in communication as Alice attempts to control language based on her understanding. Lemos elaborates on the linguistical nuance in this exchange. Explaining that "using the word 'more' generally implies that something has already happened. After all, more of nothing is still nothing. There is, however, a great difference between 'more of nothing' and 'more than nothing'. This linguistic nuance is cleverly explored by the Hatter who deconstructs Alice's world of references" (Lemos 28). The distinction between "more of nothing" and "more than nothing" is more than a mere play on words; it reflects a deeper theme of familiarity versus unfamiliarity within Alice's journey. The Hatter's deconstruction of Alice's world of references illustrates how Wonderland-logic operates in opposition to conventional linguistic norms. By exploiting the linguistic nuances of "more of" and "more than," the Hatter asserts dominance over Alice, revealing how language itself becomes a tool of power.

Furthermore, Alice's childish rebuttal of "Nobody asked your opinion" (Carroll 96) can be interpreted as a manifestation of her frustration and struggle to assert herself in a world governed by nonsensical rules. In this context, Alice's familiarity with conventional social interactions clashes with the absurdity of Wonderland's logic, highlighting her ongoing battle to navigate the unfamiliar terrain of this whimsical realm.

The dynamics exhibited in this exchange also align with Turner's second criteria, wherein Alice assumes a passive role in the conversation. Throughout the exchanges in this chapter, characters bombard Alice with questions, only to either interrupt or dismiss her attempts to respond. For instance, in the incident regarding the March Hare's offer of more tea, the offer first serves as a tactic to deflect Alice's logical questioning of the Dormouse's story, ultimately resulting in the correction of Alice's response based on previously mentioned linguistic nuances. Furthermore, the characters' behavior at the Mad Tea-Party, particularly their incessant questioning and disregard for Alice's responses, serves to reinforce their authority and dominance over her by disregarding Alice's agency and comprehension. By interrupting Alice's attempts to engage in rational conversation and dismissing her opinions, the Wonderland characters assert their control by establishing themselves as the arbiters of language and discourse within Wonderland, effectively rendering Alice to a passive entity. Further emphasizing the power-imbalance between adults and children, as well as the challenges faced by Alice as she navigates the nonsensical world of Wonderland.

"Tweedledum and Tweedledee"

As Alice encounters Tweedledum and Tweedledee in "Through The Looking-Glass," the previously discussed themes take on a more serious tone. In this encounter, Turner's criteria merge with existentialist concepts, delving deep enough to argue a commentary on the power dynamic between the author/creator and their creation. Turner's notion of linguistic control is pushed to the limit as Tweedledum and Tweedledee present Alice with the sleeping Red King. Not only fulfilling Turner's first criteria by defining Alice, but also challenging her very existence, by arguing that she is simply a figment of the King's dream:

> "He's dreaming now," said Tweedledee. "And what do you think he's dreaming about?"
> Alice said, "Nobody can guess that."
> "Why, about you!" Tweedledee exclaimed, clapping his hands triumphantly. "And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be?"
> "Where I am now, of course," said Alice.
> "Not you!" Tweedledee retorted contemptuously. "You'd be nowhere. Why, you're only a sort of thing in his dream!"
> "If that there King was to wake," added Tweedledum. "You'd go out - bang! - just like a candle!" (Carroll 201).

Turner suggests that this interaction highlights a dilemma inherent in children's literature, as well as literature overall. In essence, it illustrates how adults often define and shape the concept of childhood through their writing, effectively turning the child into a construct created by adults (Turner 251). Herein Turner's second criteria emerges, as nothing characterizes passivity more than the subordinate status as nonexistent. Alice's insistence on her reality, followed by tears of frustration, mirrors her struggle for self-identification in the chapter "Advice from a Caterpillar." Much like in the situation with the Caterpillar and the Pigeon, the relevant characters display a lack of empathy and a dismissal of Alice's emotions to further illustrate the unequal power dynamic between adult and child. To Alice's argument "if I wasn't real, I shouldn't be able to cry," Tweedledum responds "I hope you don't suppose those are real tears?" (Carroll 201). This final piece of the interaction exemplifies further the dynamic described in Turner's second criteria, where Alice experiences a lack of autonomy as a result of interacting with adult characters. Even as Alice attempts to affirm her sense of self

and how she feels, she can't do much against Tweedledum and Tweedledee's refusal to acknowledge her existence.

Additionally, the depiction of Tweedledum and Tweedledee as "great schoolboys" can be seen as an example of the hidden presence of adult perspectives within children's literature, previously highlighted by Nodelman. As we discussed earlier, children's literature has historically served as a tool for teaching morals and instilling values. Through the inclusion of adult viewpoints and agendas in stories meant for children, authors like Carroll subtly reveal the influence that adults have on shaping how children see the world. I will argue that Tweedledum and Tweedledee's clothing choices symbolize this influence, representing the imposition of adult ideas onto the experiences of childhood. As Nodelman points out, "childhood and a childlike point of view are concepts created by adults and then passed on to children, often through children's literature" (Nodelman 193). Therefore, this symbolism highlights the significant impact that adult authors have on crafting the stories and themes found in children's books, further demonstrating their power to shape the literary experiences of young readers, as well as shaping their understanding of the world.

In defense of Alice

In our previous discussion concerning the encounter with Tweedledum and Tweedledee, we drew a parallel between the relationship of an author and their creation. This passage will expand our previous discussion regarding authority and autonomy within Carroll's narratives. Turner argues that the conversation "embodies the problem of the adult writing the child into fiction; the child, or the idea of the child, only exists so long as the author 'keeps dreaming'" (Turner 250). However, in defense of Alice's autonomy, evidence within the same chapter suggests her existence extends beyond the confines of the dream world, contrary to Tweedledum and Tweedledee's assertion of Alice being merely a figment of the Red King's dream.

For example, when she reflects on her experiences and interprets events, it challenges the notion of her passivity. Suggesting she's more than just a character confined to the author's whims. Instances where Alice herself recalls and interprets her experiences, such as "'But it certainly was funny,' (Alice said afterwards, when she was telling her sister the history of all this)" (Carroll 194). Alice's ability to recollect and interpret the absurd nature of her experiences serves as a counterargument to Turner's criteria of her passivity, reinforcing Alice’s status as a character with her own consciousness, sense of logic and presence outside of Wonderland and the Looking-Glass world.

Moreover, Carroll's approach to children's literature is distinct. Rather than aiming to impart moral lessons, as was common during his time, Carroll seems to use the absurdities of Wonderland and the Looking-Glass world to critique societal norms on the behalf of children. Through Alice's journey, readers are prompted to reconsider conventional adult behavior and societal rules, offering a fresh perspective.

In addition to the incident with Tweedledum and Tweedledee, evidence of Alice's autonomy is spread out evenly throughout the texts after the incident with the Caterpillar. Both Turner and Ren present another dimension to achieving authority; possessing a large physical size (Ren 1662 & Turner 247). Ren argues that as Alice gains the ability to control her bodily size freely, she becomes more confident and assertive. For instance, she enters the Duchess' house without permission, barges into the mad tea party despite protests, refuses to obey the Queen's orders in the garden, and even snatches away the pen of a juryman at the trial (Ren 1662). It becomes quite apparent that Alice acquires a nuanced understanding of authority as she navigates her journey in Wonderland, which acts as further proof of Alice's autonomy.

To further argue for Alice's autonomy, Turner suggests that Alice's realization of the benefits of authority in Wonderland seems to carry over into the Looking-Glass world. Turner notes that Alice appears to retain the memory of her empowered experiences, as evidenced by her expressed desire to be a Queen in the chess game scenario (Turner 247). Alice confides to the Red Queen, "of course I should like to be a Queen, best" (Carroll 177). This statement suggests that Alice recognizes the benefits associated with authority, indicating her evolving understanding of power dynamics and her willingness to assert herself in both Wonderland and the Looking-Glass world.

Additionally, it is essential to recall Carroll's previously discussed assumed intentions in creating these narratives. Carroll distinguished himself from his contemporaries by writing children's literature in sympathy with children (Ren 1659). Carroll's sympathy for children's position in adult society is evident through disruption of children's literature's traditionally didactic and moralistic function prevalent in the Victorian era. The nonsensical nature of Wonderland and the Looking-Glass world could be argued to serve as a satirical commentary on the absurdities and contradictions inherent in adult behavior and societal norms. Through Alice's journey, Carroll invites readers to view adult society from a child's perspective, challenging illogical rules and arbitrary norms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Lewis Carroll's "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" and "Through the Looking-Glass" portray a shift in children's literature, utilizing absurdity and a whimsical narrative to delve into profound explorations of identity, authority, and the intricate power dynamics between adults and children. By analyzing chapters such as "Advice from a Caterpillar," "A Mad Tea-Party," and "Tweedledum and Tweedledee," we have explored how Carroll's narrative technique and linguistic play invite readers into a whimsical yet thought-provoking world where childhood innocence collides with adult authority.

Carroll's departure from the didactic and moralistic traditions in children's literature offers a refreshing perspective, as he presents a nuanced portrayal of childhood experiences amidst a backdrop of chaos and absurdity. Through the lens of Turner's criteria, exemplified in encounters with characters like the Caterpillar, the Pigeon, Tweedledum and Tweedledee, and the participants of the Mad Tea-Party, we witness the subtle ways in which adult figures exert control over Alice, molding her sense of self and testing her autonomy.

Through Turner's criteria of linguistic control and the portrayal of children as passive entities, we have examined how characters like the Caterpillar, the Pigeon, Tweedledum and Tweedledee exert power over Alice, shaping her sense of self and challenging her autonomy. For instance, these encounters all illustrate the characters imposing their adult perceptions onto Alice, reflecting how adults perceive childhood and how adult authors often shape childhood experiences based on their own understanding. The Caterpillar's condescending tone and relentless questioning of Alice's identity not only undermine her confidence but also wear down her agency. His repeated insistence for her to "keep her temper" and rejection of Alice's attempts at camaraderie, highlight his disregard for her emotions, and further enforcing the adult/child dichotomy and placing Alice in a subordinate position.

Similarly, the Pigeon's manipulation of language and accusatory tone, labeling Alice as a serpent, show a complete lack of empathy for her and her sense of self. The Pigeon's expansion of the definition of serpents to include Alice, instead of engaging in genuine dialogue, further intensifies Alice's feelings of helplessness and disorientation.

Tweedledum and Tweedledee's treatment of Alice as a passive entity, displaying lack of empathy is particularly evident in their insistence that she is merely a creation of the Red King's dream, thus denying her reality and autonomy. Their repeated assertion of this idea serves to invalidate Alice's experiences and diminish her sense of self-worth.

While the "Mad Tea-Party" scene embodies the theme of unfamiliarity, akin to a child navigating within an adult society. Alice finds herself amidst bizarre behavior and nonsensical conversations, reflecting the disorientation children may feel in the face of adult interactions. The scene can be understood as highlighting the challenges of comprehending adult social norms and etiquette, mirroring the disconnect between childhood innocence and the complexities of maturity.

However, we have also seen moments of resistance and self-assertion from Alice, suggesting a more complex interplay between authorial control and character agency. This revelation prompts a reevaluation of Carroll's works, not only through the lens of a drug-induced "trip," but also as a profound sympathetic reflection on the children's experience in a world governed by adult authority hidden behind a mask of nonsense.

Moreover, Carroll's stories serve as both critique and celebration, challenging societal norms while championing the boundless imagination and resilience of childhood. Through Alice's journey, readers are encouraged to question the arbitrary constructs of society and embrace the possibility for individual agency and self-discovery. Carroll's narrative invites readers to explore the whimsical and nonsensical aspects of life, prompting reflection on the rigidity of adult conventions and the liberating power of imagination

As we contemplate Carroll's enduring legacy, we are reminded of literature's capacity to shape our understanding of the world and ourselves. Moving forward, it is essential to continue exploring the complex nature of childhood and the transformative potential of storytelling in challenging and reshaping societal paradigms.

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