Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of English Language and Literature

“CALL IT WHAT YOU LIKE”: A POSTMODERN READING OF LEWIS CARROLL’S *ALICE’S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND* AND *THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS AND WHAT ALICE FOUND THERE*

Feride Zeynep İŞCEN

Master’s Thesis

Ankara, 2025

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The jury finds that Feride Zeynep İŞCEN has on the date of 17.06.2025 successfully passed the defense examination and approves her Master's Thesis titled ""Call it What You Like": A Postmodern Reading of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*".

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ABSTRACT

İŞCEN. Feride Zeynep. “Call it What You Like”: A Postmodern Reading of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*. Master’s Thesis. Ankara 2025.

During the early nineteenth century, highly moral and didactic tales dominated children’s literature, aiming to discipline and train young minds to become ‘ideal’ Victorians. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832-1898), more commonly known as Lewis Carroll, with his *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871), is one of the authors who reacted to heavy didacticism and moral rigidity imposed on children. Rather than instructing, Carroll wrote the *Alice* novels merely to entertain Victorian children, embracing imagination and creativity with his unique worlds, which challenged the prevailing norms of Victorian children’s literature. Although they were published over a century ago, when not even modernism was extant yet, the *Alice* novels demonstrate features that align with postmodernism, making it possible to examine both novels through a postmodern lens. Thus, this thesis analyses *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* through a postmodern perspective, as both novels display elements and techniques aligning with postmodernism such as the challenge to grand narratives, meaning, and identity as well as the subversion of traditional narrative conventions. Both novels subvert the Victorian grand narrative of didacticism and moralism enforced on children, while embracing multiple meanings and truths, and portraying the fluidity of identity. Moreover, since they employ parody and playfulness, their narrative form and structure reflect a lack of continuity, coherence, and clear aim. Rather than claiming Carroll was a postmodernist, this thesis argues that the *Alice* novels exhibit parallels with postmodern theory both in their content and form. By challenging authority, undermining fixed meanings, and experimenting with narrative in an imaginative and distinctly original way, both novels subvert the dominant norms of Victorian children’s literature. While Carroll’s primary intention was to entertain young readers, his fantastical worlds challenge dominant conventions and privilege imagination over instruction. A postmodern reading of the novels not only directs readers of all ages to question truths and norms, but also encourages them to adopt a more pluralistic, playful, and imaginative worldview.

Keywords

Victorian Children’s Literature, Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, Postmodernism

ÖZET

İŞCEN. Feride Zeynep. “Adına Ne Derseniz Deyin”: Lewis Carroll’ın *Alice Harikalar Diyarında* ve *Alice Aynanın İçinde*’sinin Postmodern Bir Okuması. Yüksek Lisans Tezi. Ankara 2025.

On dokuzuncu yüzyılda, genç zihinleri ‘ideal’ bireyler olacak şekilde terbiye etmek ve eğitmek amacıyla çocuk edebiyatına fazlasıyla ahlaki ve öğretici hikayeler hakimdi. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832-1898), daha çok bilinen adıyla Lewis Carroll, *Alice Harikalar Diyarında* ve *Alice Aynanın İçinde* adlı eserleriyle, çocuklara dayatılan katı ahlaki anlayışa ve öğretici anlatılara tepki gösteren yazarlardan biridir. Carroll, öğretici bir amaçtan ziyade, *Alice* romanlarını Viktorya dönemi çocuklarını eğlendirmek amacıyla yazarak, romanların özgün dünyalarıyla hayal gücü ve yaratıcılığı benimseyerek Viktoryen çocuk edebiyatına hâkim olan geleneksel normlara meydan okumuştur. *Alice* romanları, modernizmin henüz var olmadığı bir asırdan fazla bir süre önce yayınlanmış olmalarına rağmen, postmodernizmle örtüşen özellikler sergilediklerinden, postmodern bir bakış açısıyla incelenmeyi mümkün kılmaktadır. Bu nedenle, her iki roman büyük anlatılara, anlama ve kimliğe meydan okuma, ve geleneksel anlatı yapılarını altüst etme gibi postmodernizmle örtüşen unsurlar ve teknikler içerdiklerinden, bu tez *Alice Harikalar Diyarında* ve *Alice Aynanın İçinde*’yi postmodern bakış açısıyla incelemektedir. Her iki roman çoklu anlamları ve doğruları benimseyip, kimliğin değişkenliğini vurgularken, çocuklara dayatılan öğretici ve ahlakçı Viktorya dönemi büyük anlatısını altüst etmektedir. Ayrıca, romanlar parodi ve oyunbazlık içerdiklerinden, anlatı biçimleri ve yapıları süreklilikten, tutarlılıktan ve net amaçtan yoksundur. Carroll’ın bir postmodernist olduğunu iddia etmeden, bu tez, *Alice* romanlarının hem içerik hem de biçim açısından postmodern teoriyle paralellikler gösterdiğini ileri sürmektedir. Otoriteyi sorgulayarak, sabit anlamları zayıflatarak ve yaratıcı ve açıkça orijinal bir şekilde anlatıyla oynayarak, her iki roman Viktoryen çocuk edebiyatının baskın normlarını altüst etmektedir. Carroll’ın temel amacı genç okuyucuları eğlendirmek olsa da, onun fantastik dünyaları egemen geleneklere meydan okumakta ve eğitici olmak yerine hayal gücünü ön plana çıkarmaktadır. Romanların postmodern okuması, her yaştan okuyucusunu doğruları ve normları sorgulamaya yönlendirmekle kalmayıp, daha çoğulcu, oyunbaz, ve hayal gücünü ön plana çıkaran bir dünya görüşünü benimsemeye teşvik etmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Viktorya Dönemi Çocuk Edebiyatı, Lewis Carroll, *Alice Harikalar Diyarında*, *Alice Aynanın İçinde*, Postmodernizm

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis argues that through their subversive content and experimental style, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*[1] (1871) can be read as postmodern texts. Both novels reflect elements and techniques aligning with postmodernism, such as the challenge to grand narratives, particularly those of the Victorian Period concerning didacticism and moralism, an embrace of multiple meanings and ambiguity, the depiction of fluid identities, and the use of parody and playfulness. Furthermore, the novels subvert traditional narrative conventions through their lack of continuity, coherence and clear aim. Although postmodernism as a theoretical framework emerged in the mid-twentieth century, and thus post-dates Carroll's *Alice* novels by nearly a century, this thesis approaches the novels through a postmodern lens not to make an anachronistic claim, but to highlight the ways in which both novels resonate with postmodern characteristics. Rather than claiming that Carroll was a postmodernist, the aim is to demonstrate how the themes addressed in the novels and his narrative techniques can be examined through postmodern theory and stylistics. This thesis will first contextualise the *Alice* novels within nineteenth-century children's literature and focus on the novels' function and role in the Victorian Period. Then, Carroll's subversive approach to didacticism in children's literature will be explored, along with aspects of his biography that shed light on the experiences which influenced his writing of the *Alice* novels. Following this, an overview of postmodern theory, its origins and features, will be provided. Finally, the thesis will offer a detailed analysis of the specific postmodern elements in both novels.

Due to the novels' richness in thematic complexity, Carroll's *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* have been analysed through a wide range of critical and theoretical approaches, including psychoanalytic and psychological interpretations, studies of childhood and spiritual development, feminist criticism, linguistic, and surrealist analyses as well as

[1] *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* will be referred to as *Wonderland* and *Through The Looking- Glass and What Alice Found There* will be referred to as *Looking-Glass*.

examinations of dreams, transformation, and literary rewritings. This thesis differs from these existing approaches by offering a comprehensive postmodern reading by simultaneously engaging with discursive and stylistic aspects of the novels. It examines the thematic and ideological content as well as the structural, stylistic, and narrative techniques through which Carroll subverts narratives, meanings, coherence, and literary conventions. By engaging with both the novels' content and form, this thesis highlights the many ways in which Carroll's novels subvert fixed meanings and challenge Victorian conventions. This perspective not only sheds light on Carroll's creativity as an author but also reveals the limitations of Victorian children's literature and demonstrates how postmodernism can be used to illuminate these aspects in ways previous readings have not.

Although often read as whimsical children's stories *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* explore a wide range of themes and are rich in narrative experimentation, allowing both novels to be analysed from an array of perspectives. Written in 1865 and 1871 respectively, these novels are regarded as classics of children's literature (Paul 398). As Joe R. Christopher points out, whether regarded as a highly successful works of fantasy or children's fiction, or as foundational examples of nonsense literature, the novels remain significant in multiple respects and are undoubtedly worth celebrating (142). Both novels achieved immediate success and have become cultural icons, inspiring a wide range of adaptations and reinterpretations. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, in particular, has been adapted into numerous plays and radio broadcasts, with multiple film versions produced over the years (Weaver 10). Weaver highlights the lasting cultural significance of the *Alice* novels by describing them as "as timeless as Homer" (10).

Wonderland begins with Alice drifting into a dream after falling asleep on a hot day that left her feeling "very sleepy and stupid" (37). In her dream, "burning with curiosity," she follows the White Rabbit, falling into a deep hole which leads her to the absurd world of Wonderland (38). Alice, physically growing and shrinking while making her way through the fantastical realm, experiences a set of bizarre events, such as attending a 'mad' tea party, playing croquet with a deck of cards and witnessing a trial which has no logic whatsoever. In these events, she encounters very eccentric characters such as the White Rabbit, the Mouse, the Caterpillar, the Duchess, the Cheshire Cat, the March Hare, the

Hatter and many more, who lead Alice to the King and Queen of Hearts. After being attacked by the Queen's cards, Alice wakes up from her dream which she later recites to her sister.

Although *Looking-Glass* is the sequel to *Wonderland*, it is not a direct continuation of its predecessor and takes place in an entirely different realm, governed by its own set of rules and characters. The fantastical and bizarre events begin as Alice, who was "sitting curled up in a corner of the great armchair, half talking to herself and half asleep" (156), gradually drifts off and dreams her way into a fantastical world by stepping through a mirror in her living room. This world is constructed as an enormous chessboard, and Alice, who begins as Pawn, completes the game and wakes up from her dream by becoming Queen. As she advances, square by square, she encounters a variety of strange and mystical creatures, including the Red Queen, the White Queen, Tweedledum and Tweedledee, Humpty Dumpty, and the White Knight, all of whom challenge her understanding of truth, time, and meaning. Governed by reversal and contradiction, the Looking-Glass world constantly undermines familiar expectations and makes Alice's journey both bewildering and transformative.

To fully understand the subversive and innovative nature of Carroll's *Alice* novels, it is essential to consider the cultural and philosophical context in which they were written. The Victorian Period, a period known for its profound transformations in nearly every aspect of life, provides crucial insight into the dominant ideas and values Carroll's novels engage with, especially those concerning childhood and morality. The Victorian Period, named after Queen Victoria whose reign lasted from 1837 to 1901, was an era that gave birth to countless ideas and innovations. During this time period, an abundance of political, religious, scientific, and socio-cultural developments which shaped the modern world took place. British expansion was seen both in terms of territory and ideological outlook, since it was a time period when the Victorians strived to discover more about themselves and the world around them (Timko 610). Accordingly, as Robin Gilmour states, "the sheer accumulation of information produced by the development of modern communications and technology, combined with the growing intellectual pluralism of the period," gave rise to many significant political, social and cultural changes (xiii). These changes, hence, caused a shift in the way of thinking and view of life for the Victorians.

Aside from the revolutionary changes that marked the nineteenth century, what distinguishes the Victorian Period from previous eras is the Victorians' awareness of the transformations happening around them. As Humphrey House notes, the Victorians "themselves knew that they were peculiar … they were conscious of belonging to a *parvenu* civilization … they are all agog at being modern, more modern than anyone has ever been before" (93). Among the many developments that contributed to this awareness of modernity, one shift the Victorians were particularly proud of was the rise of children and the emergence of children's literature as a distinct and valued genre (Lang 17). The concept of childhood had always existed; nevertheless, a new "ideology of childhood … one vastly different from the one that characterized pre-Enlightenment Europe" emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century (Horne 12). Caroline M. Hewins underscores the emergence of children's literature as a distinct genre in the nineteenth century, noting that "[t]here have been children's stories and folk-tales ever since man first learned to speak. Children's books, however, are a late growth of literature" (n.p.). The final decades of the nineteenth century, in particular, were seen as "the Age of Children" and "the Children's Century" (Lundin 49).

In order to grasp what made Carroll's *Alice* novels so distinctive and revolutionary, it is necessary to understand how the concept of children's literature developed in the English literature, and what dominant ideas shaped it leading to the Victorian Period. Even though stories and texts for children have existed for centuries across many cultures, the concept of children's literature as a distinct genre began to form in the eighteenth century and reached its zenith during the nineteenth, due to Industrialisation and the changing ways of thinking it brought across various fields. The eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinking stressed the significance of teaching "private and public virtue," which was also reflected in children's literature (Horne 4). For this reason, children's literature harboured exaggeratedly virtuous and villainous protagonists alongside antagonists, rendering it a tool for instruction. These characters were designed to embody high moral standards and ideals that children were expected to adopt from an early age (Horne 4). Enlightenment writers such as John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau, who emphasised the development of reason and moral judgement (Demers 143), believed that children were "miniature adult[s]," who would one day develop into "rational, enlightened human beings" through education (Roberts 354). By writing, "[e]ducation concerns itself with the forming of

Children's Minds, giving them that seasoning early, which shall influence their Lives later," Locke stresses the importance of educating and moulding the minds, or "blank slates," of young children at an early age (103). Enlightenment philosophers believed that educating children from an early age could be achieved by instilling adult values through both the education system and the moralistic texts of the time (Thacker, "Imagining" 22). As a result, children's literature and education focused on moral and educational content, aiming solely for the cultivation of knowledge through reason. This rationalist mindset led philosophers like Locke and Rousseau to argue that there was no need for imagination in children's education, prompting them to endorse solely instruction without entertainment (Carpenter 7). Because Locke believed that children's literature should foremost serve to teach morals, he considered fables as one of the most suitable reading materials for children:

> When by these gentle ways he begins to be able to read, some easy, pleasant book, suited to his capacity, should be put into his hands, wherein the entertainment that he finds might draw on him on, and reward his pains in reading; and yet not such as should fill his head with perfectly useless trumpery, or lay the principles of vice and folly. To this purpose I think Aesop's *Fables* the best, which being stories apt to entertain a child, may yet afford useful reflections to a grown man; and if his memory retain them all his life after, he will not repent to find them there, amongst his manly thoughts and serious business. (211)

Since these didactic stories sought to first and foremost educate children and plant the seed of proper mannerism into their tender minds, Locke found Aesop's *Fables*, which was first translated into English in 1484, to be the best in educating children through reading[2]. While favouring fables for the upbringing of children, Locke strongly rejected imaginative fiction such as fairy tales with the following statement:

> But even then, and always whilst he is young, be sure to preserve his tender mind from all impressions and notions of sprites and goblins, or any fearful apprehensions in the dark. It being the usual method of servants to awe children, and keep them in subjection, by telling them of Raw-Head and Bloody-Bones, and such other names,

[2] Apart from Aesop's *Fables*, Locke also found Reynard the Fox, The Lord's Prayer, the Creeds, and Ten Commandments to be made use of for the same purpose (211).

> as carry with them the ideas of some hurtful, terrible things inhabiting darkness, this must be carefully prevented. (196)

Locke makes it clear that he did not support exposing children to fantasy or supernatural creatures as these stories, often told to frighten or control children, could have lasting negative effects on a child's mind. He feared that fantasy stories and fantastical creatures would fill children's minds with fear instead of good values, thus preventing them from growing into rational adults.

Nineteenth-century children's literature carried on this Enlightenment practice by continuing to idealise protagonists through their virtuous and exemplary behaviour. Carpenter points out that the children's books published in Britain from 1740 to 1820 were "sternly moral," containing messages ranging from religion to social values (2). Like the Enlightenment writers, moral growth in children was crucial for the Victorians, even more so than psychical growth (Ostry 27). Following the path of the Enlightenment philosophers, Victorians believed that children should be educated morals and beliefs from a very early age. By growing up with traditional values, it was, hence, expected from Victorian children to flourish into 'proper' members and leaders of the society. In order to achieve this, children, and especially the working-class, were hardly exposed to recreational reading until the mid-nineteenth century (Altick 154) for fear that children could be corrupted by fiction (Roberts 356). Victorians feared that this corruption would become a hinderance for children's transformation into Victorian adults and, ultimately, the growth of the nation. Reflecting this concern, founder of the periodical *The Guardian of Education* (1802-1806) Sarah Trimmer advised Victorian parents "to be very cautious what books they put into their [children's] hands" (qtd.in Roberts 356). Therefore, since anything deemed 'useless' or 'silly' was considered a "sin against reason [and] informational literature," didactic and moralistic Victorian values were preferred to be reflected in children's literature, resulting in children losing their ability to exercise creativity and imagination (Reichertz 9). This preference in children's literature clearly displays how obedience and dutifulness was prioritised by Victorian parents and guardians rather than the cultivation and inventiveness of the imaginative mind (Frost 11).

While the *Alice* novels emerged from a culture shaped by Enlightenment values such as rationalism, moral instruction, and educational purpose, as well as Victorian moralism, they also significantly deviate from these ideals. Both novels bear traces of Enlightenment thinking, and features associated with postmodernism. On one hand, the novels engage with logic, rules, and language, whereas on the other hand, they challenge fixed meaning, favour ambiguity, and disrupt coherence. Hence, Carroll's *Alice* novels can be seen as works that reflect both Enlightenment and postmodern practices. This duality positions the novels between two seemingly opposing thoughts, allowing for a more layered, complex, and multifaceted analysis.

However, even as these didactic preferences dominated early Victorian literature, the nineteenth century also marked the beginning of a shift in how childhood was perceived. Often referred to as "The Age of Children," "The Children's Century," or "The Golden Age of Children's Literature," the Victorian period saw the emergence of new ideas that subtly softened Enlightenment rigidity (Lundin 49–50). Jean Jacques Rousseau played a significant role in reshaping what childhood meant. While he agreed with the Enlightenment thinkers that literature should "exemplify virtues to be adopted and vices to be shunned" (qtd. in Roscoe 30), he also claimed that children possess an innate innocence and unique potential that should be protected from adult intervention, as adults were more likely to corrupt the innocence of children (Rousseau 79). This shift led to childhood being regarded as a "separate state of life," accentuating the desire to preserve the innocence of children lost in the corrupted world of adulthood (Lundin 49).

This new understanding of childhood as a separate phase created space for later perceptions on how children should be raised and what they should learn. For this reason, during the nineteenth century, when children's literature flourished more than ever, the question of what children should read became critical (Lang 17). This concern reflected a wider attitude, as Victorians were overtly focused on moral values in almost every part of daily life (Lundin 44). As Himmelfarb points out, it was the Victorians who coined the "unmistakably Victorian" phrase 'manners and morals,' which was so commonly used that it came "trippingly off the tongue" as if one word (*De-moralization* 5). This obsession with morality thus extended into children's literature. Although children were taught Victorian values through "sermons, school exercises, courtesy manuals, and religious

primers" (Demers 1), books were also seen as essential teaching tools. Hence, entertainment was mixed with moral lesson and instruction.

Therefore, fiction written for children was crafted not only to entertain but also to overtly instruct young readers by teaching Victorian morality and values. These ideals can be summed up by former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's speech in an interview in 1983 as follows:

> We were taught to work jolly hard. We were taught to prove yourself; we were taught self-reliance; we were taught to live within our income. You were taught that cleanliness is next to godliness. You were taught self-respect. You were taught always to give a hand to your neighbour. You were taught tremendous pride in your country. All of these things are Victorian values. They are also perennial values. (qtd. in Samuel 14)

Although Thatcher lived predominantly in the twentieth century, her remarks demonstrate that the influence of Victorian morality and manners continued beyond the era. Her words highlight how serious and highly regarded Victorian values were. Supporting this, Himmelfarb notes that virtues such as "family as well as hard work, thrift, cleanliness, self-reliance, self-respect, neighbourliness, patriotism" were distinctively Victorian, as they differed from classical and Christian virtues, since they were "more domesticated than the former and more secular than the latter" (*De-moralization*, 5,12). Nonetheless, while these virtues are associated with the Victorian Period, Himmelfarb emphasises further how they are a mixture of already existing ones. She states that Victorian values were "indeed bourgeois ones. But they were also classical ones; they were hardly unfamiliar to the Greeks. And they were also religious ones; it was, after all, from the Jews and Christians that the Puritans derived them" ("Manners" 229).

Moreover, the Victorians' fixation on morality is evident in the views of Edmund Burke with the following lines:

> Manners are of more importance than laws. Upon them, in a great measure, the laws depend. The law touches us but here and there, and now and then. Manners are what vex or soothe, corrupt or purify, exalt or debase, barbarize or refine us, by a constant,

> steady, uniform, insensible operation, like that of the air we breathe in. They give their whole form and colour to our lives. According to their quality, they aid morals, they supply them, or they totally destroy them. (126)

Burke underlines the profound influence social conduct had on the Victorian society by presenting how the Victorians held morality, values and virtues close to the heart, implementing them in many facets of life. He emphasises that manners shape moral character far more than laws or legislation do, hence, suggesting that moral behaviour is crucial to the growth of society as a whole. A similarity can be found in nineteenth-century British author Samuel Smiles' *Self Help* with the quote, "[m]orals and manners, which give colour to life, are of much greater importance than laws, which are but their manifestations. The law touches us here and there, but manners are about us everywhere, pervading society like the air we breathe" (237). Both Burke and Smiles illustrate how the Victorians saw morality as a foundation that held society together and how they believed it was even more important than the law itself.

One of the reasons why Victorian morals were held in a high regard was because they were deeply rooted in religious beliefs. Religion had an important role in the shaping of Victorian morality and manners. Values like hard work, self-discipline, and thrift emerged from Puritanism and the rise of Evangelicalism, faiths that stressed strict moral conduct as essential for personal salvation as well as social order. Puritanism, a branch of Protestantism, focused on personal salvation, firmly believing that God forgave sinners through faith in Christ. The Puritans practiced self-discipline and endorsed a strict moral code (Coffey and Lim 2-4). Building on Puritan roots, Evangelicalism, which grew in the nineteenth century, emphasises personal salvation alongside a moral and social reform. Evangelicals stressed the importance of living a moral life. For this reason, it played an important role in shaping Victorian ideals about behaviour in both private and public spheres (Gorham 16-19).

This relationship between religion and morality shaped Victorian children's literature considerably. As Roberts points out, childhood was not innocent from an Evangelical perspective as Evangelicals believed that it was based on "original sin and innate depravity," meaning that children were to be raised under strict discipline and with prayer at home (355). This religious view influenced how society viewed children and also how

literature was produced for them. Early Victorian books for children focused on children's "moral and spiritual welfare" rather than their physical care, which is an Evangelical belief, Gorham indicates (66). Thus, children's literature was heavily didactic and instructive, while bearing little entertainment.

In addition, although Victorian morality was deeply rooted in religion, it also evolved out of the dichotomies of the time such as the clash between science and religion. Himmelfarb points out that after the publication of Darwin's *Origins on Species* (1859), it was feared that science would undermine religion and morality (*De-moralization* 26-27). Morality did not perish but became a substitute for religion. Hence, Himmelfarb further underlines how the diminishment of religious faith "inspired a renewed and heightened moral zeal," leading to an even harsher focus on moral values. This new and elevated morality included familiar values such as "work, thrift, cleanliness, temperance, honesty, self-help," but also created new values such as "promptness, regularity, conformity, rationality" which contributed to work ethics (*De-moralization* 29).

Apart from its religious and social significance, morality was also given importance to and was encouraged by distinguished and leading figures in the Victorian society who helped spread moral values within the society. One of the well-known Victorian figures who advocated Victorian morality and values by producing as well as publishing books, was English publisher and bookseller John Newbery. Grenby notes that although instructional books had been aimed at children for centuries, Newbery is considered the first to successfully commercialise instructive books written for children (70). Apart from publishing books written by acclaimed writers of the time, Newbery also published his own book in 1744 called *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book*, which sold thousands of copies before the end of the century and ended up being one of the most read instructive literary works for Victorian children (Granahan 54). Even though this book consists of amusing illustrations, stories, and riddles appealing to children, Newbery's emphasis was heavily on conveying moral lessons, or as the full title puts it, "Instruction and Amusement"[3].

[3] The extraordinarily long title of John Newbery's book reads, *Little Pretty Pocket-Book, intended for the instruction and Amusement of Little Master Tommy and Pretty Miss Polly, with an agreeable Letter to read from Jack the Giant Killer, as also a Ball and Pincushion, the use of which will infallibly make Tommy a good Boy, and Polly a good Girl. To the whole is prefixed a letter on education humbly addressed to all Parents, Guardians, Governesses, &c., wherein rules are laid down for making their children strong, healthy, virtuous, wise and happy.*

Hence, a number of fables, morals, proverbs, and rewards for being a 'good' child or punishments for being a 'bad' child, also make an appearance in this book designed for the purpose of instructing children (Granahan 7). Newbery's use of a didactic style made his books popular among Victorian adults in search of instructional books for their children, earning him the title "The Father of Children's Literature" (Welsh 94). Hence, with Newbery's lead, children's literature gradually started to be seen as a commodity to spread manners and morality. Newbery, along with his contemporaries, contributed to the rise of moral and instructive literature aimed at young readers which eventually evolved into a vast industry during the Victorian Period.

The vast commodity of children's literature can be seen in the extensive production of books, magazines, journals and illustrated works created specifically for children during the mid-nineteenth century. Unlike in eighteenth-century Britain, where literacy and literature were mostly limited to children of the upper and middle classes, the Victorian Period experienced accessibility of these opportunities within different social groups (Lang 17). With books being produced in large quantities and at affordable prices, children from all social classes began reading, more or less, books that conveyed similar messages and themes.

With the growing accessibility and variety of reading material, children's literature became a powerful tool for shaping behaviour. Victorian adults used children's literature to teach children obedience, modesty, and moral restraint through exemplary stories, morality tales and conduct books. Written by authors such as Charles Kingsley, Dinah Maria Mulock Craik, Christina Rossetti, and George MacDonald, Victorian exemplary stories and morality tales imposed strict limitations on the imagination and self-exploration of children. Similarly, conduct books were addressed to the Victorian child and their parents in the form of books and letters, giving guidance and lectures on morality, such as Jane Alice Sargant's *Letters from a Mother to her Daughter* (1820) (Ostry 27-28).

While Victorian children's literature aimed to teach moral conduct and obedience, a significant part of this moral instruction also imposed strict gender roles and positioned

children within these socially constructed identities. Denny highlights how children are "exposed to gender socializing messages" from a wide variety of sources, including institutions like families and school as well as cultural products such as television and books, with these messages being conveyed openly and subtly, sometimes even unintentionally (27). For example, Simons mentions that the articles and stories in *The Boy's Own Paper* (1855-1967) advocated 'manly' traits by focusing on "adventure, service to empire, science and sport" (428). Since being adventurous and patriotic were seen as essential qualities for Victorian boys, these themes were of utmost importance with regard to the education of male children and were reflected in children's literature. The Victorians placed great importance on raising young boys who were conscious of patriotism and adventurism (Lang 26); the two key distinguished characteristics of the Victorians.

These so-called masculine values that were incorporated in children's literature were closely tied to the British Empire's territorial expansion during Queen Victoria's reign, as Britain colonised African and Asian nations one after another. The Victorians' enthusiasm for progress and expansion, along with the fascination for exotic and mysterious lands, gave rise to new genres in children's literature such as travel and adventure novels. While adventure stories reached their peak during the era of New Imperialism (1875-1914), scholars generally agree that the genre's origins can be traced back to Daniel Defoe's *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) (Elleray 7).

Adventure novels like *Robinson Crusoe* were targeted at young boys who would one day become the leaders of the society and continue the legacy of British imperialism, a central concern of British ideology for centuries. In this context, Horne argues that adventure stories were designed as tools "to construct a very specific type of masculinity, one that functioned to support the British imperial project" (23). The depiction of national pride, however, evolved significantly over the course of the nineteenth century. Whereas earlier texts often portrayed soldiers as brutal (Budd 86), the soldiers and sailors in adventure novels written in the second half of the century were praised as heroes and combat was glorified in order to invoke excitement in children towards war and British imperialism (Flothow 130). Henty puts emphasis on how the depiction of war in children's novels awakens patriotism and shapes adventurous minds as follows:

> It is sometimes said that there is no good to be obtained from tales of fighting and bloodshed, —that there is no moral to be drawn from such histories. Believe it not. War has its lessons as well as Peace. You will learn from tales like this that determination and enthusiasm can accomplish marvels . . . The courage of our forefathers has created the greatest empire in the world around a small and in itself insignificant island; if this empire is ever lost, it will be by the cowardice of their descendants. (vii)

George Alfred Henty's statement reveals the importance Victorians gave to instilling children with love and passion towards British imperialism and how children should feel a sense of pride towards their empire with regard to past and future wars. Dunae suggests that towards the end of the nineteenth century, British children were already aware of their imperial past since, especially boys, were exposed to Britain's imperialistic ideology "[a]t schools, in church groups, in recreational associations" (105). Because Britain's imperial heritage was highlighted in almost every aspect of Victorian life, hundreds of adventure tales that "glorified the exploits of British empire builders" made their appearance in children's literature through novels and boys' periodicals (Dunae 105). The most popular novels of this genre were Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1864), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1881) and H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885). These novels contributed to the ideological formation of Victorian children, particularly boys, by glorifying imperialism and war as well as promoting heroism, loyalty to the nation, and national pride. Adventure fiction thus played a crucial role in constructing imperial masculinity and preparing young Victorian boys to take part in the imperialist ambitions of the British Empire such as expanding and preserving the nation.

While boys' literature pursued imperial and masculine ideals, girls' literature imposed domesticity and femininity, reflecting the rigid gender expectations of the Victorian society and making the moral values attributed to Victorian boys and girls dramatically different from each other. While boys were steered towards characteristics such as courage, strength and authoritativeness, girls were expected to showcase much more domestic features such as being submissive, obedient and modest. These attributed gender roles prepared young boys to become leaders in the society and young girls to become

caregivers in the domestic sphere. These gender roles were illustrated in children's literature from educational conduct books to fantastical novels, moulding young children into becoming the ideal Victorian men and women.

In relation to the attributed gender roles on Victorian children, Simons indicates how *The Girl's Own Paper* (1880-1956) laid emphasis on the family and the domestic sphere while encouraging girls to be submissive and respectful to authority as well as conformity (430). Similarly, Gorham underlines that the key aspects of femininity and female piety applied to Victorian girls were their reliance and submission to men as well as traits such as "innocence, purity, gentleness, and, above all, self-sacrifice; and a rejection of all anger, hostility, and ambition" (4-5). Whereas adventure fiction continuing the legacy of *Robinson Crusoe* was written for boys, domestic fiction such as Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) was written for girls (Lundin 43). In addition to novels, *Aunt Judy's Magazine* (1866-1885) founded and edited by Margaret Scott Gatty, is, for instance, one of the many juvenile magazines that focused on the explicit idealisation and moralisation of girls (Knoepflmacher 502).

These literary texts evidently reveal a striking difference in the characteristics attributed to boys and girls in the nineteenth-century Victorian society[4]. This stereotypical and sexist ideology, widely promoted in Victorian children's literature, had a damaging effect on the imagination and personal development of children. As Simons explains, "the separate fictional worlds of boys and girls in nineteenth-century juvenile novels, magazines and periodicals" show how Victorian children were expected to act within the territory of their designated gender "from which the other sex was outlawed," which inevitably restricted children's curiosity and imaginative freedom (427).

In addition to exemplary stories, morality tales, conduct books, and cautionary tales, Victorian fantasy and fairy tales also contained moral and didactic implications that further dulled children's imagination and curiosity. Although fairy tales have been considered as "the simplest of all narrative forms," they have been one of the most experimental genres dominating the nineteenth century alongside being of importance in the development of children's literature (Newton 32). With distinguished terms and

[4] The construction of gender roles for Victorian children will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 2.

elements as "spells, enchantments, disenchantments, resurrections, and re-creations," the purpose of fairy tales has been to entertain and ignite the imagination of, especially children, but adults as well (Zipes 3). Zipes states that it was from 1830 to 1900 that the fairy tale flourished and fully established as a genre in children's literature, gaining acceptance and popularity especially after the English translations of the Grimm brothers' and Hans Christian Andersen's works (20). Because these writers actively 'Christianised' their tales (Newton 37), the overtly religious and moral Victorians deemed the Grimm brothers' as well as Andersen's fairy tales worthy of reading. In other words, it was indicated that the Grimm brothers and Andersen annihilated any potential "impiety" of the supernatural that would suggest pagan views and rendered these tales into religious guides with cautionary tales instead (Newton 37). After the striking popularity of the Grimm brothers' and Andersen's stories, Victorian writers also started to write fairy tales with overt moral didacticism and statements about religious piety which led to fairy tales thriving in Britain in 1870 (Moss 47). Due to the abundance of fairy tales and fantastical works, this period is considered to be the 'Golden Age' of children's literature, an age signifying and celebrating "the development of the distinctiveness of children's literature as a form" (Thacker, "Victorianism" 41). Hence, during the 'Golden Age,' fairy tales became an acceptable genre within children's literature, taking its place next to other types of fiction for children alongside adults (Newton 21). As Roberts underlines, even though fantasy "signaled a significant shift away from purely moralizing fiction," didactic intentions were still in effect in children's literature until the end of the nineteenth century (361).

Some of the popular didactic fairy tales of the Victorian Period were *The King of the Golden River* (1841) by John Ruskin, *The Rose and the Ring* (1855) by William Thackeray, *Granny's Wonderful Chair* (1856) by Frances Browne, *Goblin Market* (1862) and *Speaking Likenesses* (1874) by Christina Rossetti, *The Water Babies* (1863) by Charles Kingsley, and *The Magic Fishbone* (1867), and *A Christmas Carol* (1867) by Charles Dickens. By employing the fairy tale mode, these Victorian writers "reinforce[d] bourgeois moral lessons on thrift, industry, piety, and other plodding Victorian virtues," aimed directly at children for the purpose of their education (Moss 47). While some of these tales teach Victorian manners and praise hard work, such as *The Rose and the Ring* and *The King of the Golden River* respectively, others deal with different issues of the

time, ranging from poverty, as seen in *The Magic Fishbone*, to cautioning young girls to stay away from danger as in *Goblin Market*. Illustrating this point, Johnson articulates that Victorian writers aimed both to entertain children's imaginations and also instruct them with moral lessons through fairy tales:

> Story-tellers have always been more or less furtively didactic, but Victorian writers conceived it their absolute duty to instruct as well as entertain and nowhere is this tendency more apparent than in the fairy tales, where writers elsewhere bound by considerations of literary realism felt free to adjust events in magical ways the better to moralize. (qtd. in Sancewich 51)

Johnson displays how Victorian fairy tales still had the priority to teach Victorian morals and values in line with the Victorian frame of mind. As Zipes notes, "the stories, poems, and novels written for children were mainly religious and instructional. If literary fairy tales were written and published, then they were transformed into didactic tales preaching hard work and pious behaviour" (145), underscoring how children's literature, including fairy tales, was mainly focused on didacticism and moral lessons. So, even in the magical world of fairy tales with its supernatural characters, creatures, and occurrences, Victorian children were not given enough resources or space to expand neither their creativity nor their imaginative minds.

Nonetheless, after the first half of the nineteenth century, didacticism in children's literature gradually began to decline. Victorian educators and parents began to realise that the harsh moral lessons imposed on children were causing them to lose their source of inspiration and expressiveness. This shift, aided by the rise of Romanticism in Britain, caused imagination to gain importance, with "the stimulation of the imagination [becoming] just as important as the cultivation of reason for moral improvement" (Zipes 150). Since the expansion of fairy tales coincided with Romanticism, some Victorian writers "sought a Romantic attuning to primitive and fugitive states of mind, to the suprarational self, and to the past (the child, the savage, the rustic) against the modern world" in their fairy tales (Newton 28), focusing on a return to a more natural and emotional state as a reaction to the industrialised modern world.

Nevertheless, it was not only fairy tales that loosened explicit and harsh didacticism on children, but other forms of children's literature such as Edward Lear's nonsense poetry, and Lewis Carroll's fantasy tales with particularly *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* being one of, if not the most, popular children's works of all time. Edward Lear's nonsense poems, or "rhymes-without-reason" (Jackson 9), in his *Book of Nonsense* (1846) gained instantaneous success and was read by children as well as adults. Because it "eschews didacticism" and lacks any reference to moral lessons, Lear's nonsense poetry was a notion the Victorians were not yet fully accustomed to (Lodge 103). While Lear's experimental and peculiar nonsense limericks are considered to be one of the most profound Victorian explorations (Hark 112), Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is considered to mark "a key transition" in literature (Patkus 7). Together with his subsequent story *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, the *Alice* novels were ground-breaking for Victorian children's literature, causing an irreversible change in its course.

The reason why the *Alice* novels were revolutionary is due to their creative and imaginative storyline and narrative style, alongside Carroll's divergent stance towards children's literature. Carroll disregarded moral and didactic implications in his *Alice* novels by creating a world full of imagination, filled with nonsensical, absurd characters, events, and remarks designed purely to entertain children. As a matter of fact, Carroll is regarded as being one of the handful of Victorian writers "who protested or parodied the reign of informational didacticism," according to Reichertz (27). Carroll believed that pure delight and amusement should be foregrounded in children's literary texts, which is what he utilised in the *Alice* novels. His non-didactic approach caused the *Alice* novels to become "the turning points at which fantasy and imagination banished dry didacticism and the moment when children's fiction gained a complexity and literary value to equal adult literature" (Roberts 360). Therefore, considering their non-didactic nature, the *Alice* novels cease to exist as merely entertaining children's novels since they are considered "[t]he best example of the type of subversion attempted during the latter part of the nineteenth century," according to Zipes (22). Hence, Carroll paved the way for writers and readers to recognise childhood as a space free from Victorian moral constraints. It was this undidactic approach which made his *Alice* novels both unconventional and highly appealing to Victorian children and adults alike.

In order to grasp Carroll's subversion of rigid didacticism in children's literature, it is important to understand the effect his early life had on his becoming a writer. Mathematician, photographer, and poet-writer Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, or more commonly known for his pseudonym Lewis Carroll, was born in 1832 in Daresbury, England. He was the third child in a family of eleven children born to Frances Jane Lutwidge and Anglican clergyman Rev. Charles Dodgdson. Carroll spent the first eleven years of his life in Daresbury, where "even the passing of a cart was a matter of great interest to the children," completely secluded from the world (Collingwood 26). It is mentioned how there was not much to do in the country parsonage the Dodgson family lived in, and a typical Sunday began with the children "learning hymns and scriptures by heart until eight a.m.," followed by family prayers, Sunday school, and an evening service at six (Weaver 13). Surrounded by the rigid routines of a deeply religious household and isolated in a quiet village with little entertainment, Carroll began inventing games and stories from an early age to entertain himself and his siblings (Weaver 14). His nephew, Stuart Dodgson Collingwood, describes how in this quiet and secluded environment, Carroll "invented the strangest diversions for himself; made pets of the most odd and unlikely animals, and numbered certain snails and toads among his intimate friends" (27), hence, constructing his own miniature Wonderland at an early age, long before writing it down.

After turning twelve, Carroll was sent to Richmond School in Yorkshire in 1845 where he, thirteen at the time, began writing in the Dodgson's family magazine *Useful and Instructive Poetry* (1845) followed by *The Rectory Umbrella* (1850-1853). The poems written by Carroll in *Useful and Instructive Poetry*, e.g. "My Fairy" and "Rules and Regulations," reflect the troubles and frustrations he endured during his childhood, such as being objected to bullying at school for his shyness and stammering (Carroll and Gardner xvi). He was especially bullied at Rugby School, which he attended for three years after his education at Richmond School. Looking back on his time there, Carroll recalled: "I cannot say that I look back upon my life at a Public school with any sensation of pleasure, or that any earthly considerations would induce me to go through my three years again" (qtd. in Woolf 56).

These difficulties extended well into Carroll's adulthood. He remained intensely shy and socially awkward, traits that were often misunderstood or dismissed by those around him. As Weaver observes:

> Dodgson was thin and stooped, so that there was an illusion of his being tall. In all his adult relations he was dreadfully shy - perhaps one should really say pathologically shy, for he had the awkward manners, the tendency to stammer, the perspiring palms, the essential left-handedness, which sometimes reflect serious maladjustment. And, like many shy persons, he was capable of being very abrupt and very rude. In fact, and in spite of his recognized humor, he was doubtless often viewed by adults as a rather unpleasant person and something of a bore. (15)

This depiction highlights how Carroll's introversion and eccentric mannerisms deepened his feelings of social alienation and further pushed him towards the comfort of children's companionship and the imaginative world of fiction. As Douglas-Fairhurst notes, Carroll's struggle with speech, such as his stammering, caused anxiety and that Carroll "found every sentence a path littered with potential potholes and booby traps" whereas the act of writing and "the blank page released his tongue" (41). Thus, for Carroll, writing was not merely a tool of expression but a refuge where he surpassed the limitations of his persona and communicated freely. Notably, the only time Carroll's stammering disappeared was in the presence of children. As Skinner observes, Carroll did not stammer while he was with children and the stammering only returned when an adult interrupted Carroll's interaction with children (8). This explains why children held such an important part in Carroll's life and how their presence not only provided emotional comfort but also freed Carroll from the social anxieties that disrupted his speech.

In 1850, Carroll matriculated at Christ Church, University of Oxford at age eighteen in which he excelled in mathematics and classical studies, obtaining First Class Honours in Mathematics and a Second in Classical Moderations (Collingwood 91). In 1861, he was appointed deacon of Christ Church where he remained for the rest of his life, unmarried. It was during his years in the Church when Carroll first took up photography, becoming "one of the masters of the Victorian camera" (Carpenter 50). Having taken pictures of Tennyson, the Rossettis, Thackeray, and Ruskin, Carroll was especially keen on taking photographs of female children, taking "pains to acquire pictures … of virtually every

beautiful female child he came across" (Carpenter 51). Hence, it was Carroll's interest in taking photographs of young children and finding comfort in the act that led him to meeting Alice Liddell.

It is presumed that Carroll first encountered the Liddells while he was working as a sub-librarian at Christ Church's Library (Douglas-Fairhurst 81). As the Liddell sisters played in the garden most of the time, they gradually became "excellent friends" with Carroll (Douglas-Fairhurst 82). After forming an acquaintance, Alice, aged ten, and her sisters became frequent models for Carroll's photography. On July 4, 1862, Carroll wrote in his diary that he "made an expedition up the river to Godstow with the three Liddells" (qtd. in Collingwood 147). It was during these outings and expeditions that Carroll told the Liddells the fairy tale of "Alice's Adventures Underground" which would one day become the renowned and celebrated *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Douglas-Fairhurst 9). Liddell recalls the emergence of Carroll's story, stating that "nearly all of 'Alice's Adventures Underground' was told on an afternoon under the haystack at Godstow" (qtd. in Douglas-Fairhurst 10). Publishing the story was not Carroll's purpose when he initially wrote it for the Liddell siblings to keep them entertained. Nevertheless, Carroll's friend and acclaimed Victorian writer George MacDonald persuaded him to publish the story (Collingwood 155), which was published as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in 1865, followed by its sequel *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* published in 1871.

Because Carroll found deep comfort in the company of children, much of his social life appeared to revolve around their presence. It is mentioned how Carroll was not fond of the usual adolescent or adult activities and instead preferred solitary walks, intellectual games, or writing (Skinner 9). As an adult, he developed eccentric habits which were more related to the imaginative world of childhood rather than the restrained Victorian adulthood. Skinner mentions how Carroll's closest friendships were with young girls, often around the age of thirteen or fourteen, with whom Carroll shared playful and affectionate moments and exchanges (10).

Moreover, through writing, Carroll established a distinct boundary between his private and public identities by adopting a pseudonym. As Weaver explains, "[o]nly to his younger feminine friends was he ever willingly to admit that Charles Lutwidge Dodgson,

the Oxford mathematical tutor and deacon, was indeed Lewis Carroll, the writer of children's stories" (10). This deliberate separation suggests a deep discomfort or embarrassment with being publicly associated with his imaginative persona, Lewis Carroll. Weaver further notes that Carroll was "embarrassed by identification with Lewis Carroll" and went to great lengths to keep his pseudonym separated from his professional and clerical identity as Dodgson (Weaver 10).

Carroll's personal experiences ranging from his isolated and deeply religious upbringing to his struggles with speech, social alienation, and the pressure of academic and clerical life seem to have created a profound need for imaginative relief. As Weaver notes, "[i]t is small wonder that it was necessary to invent a dream-world for escape (14). It can be observed that writing and inventing fantastical worlds offered Carroll a form of escape from the rigidity and expectations of Victorian society, which placed immense burdens on adult conformity. Carroll's close connection with children appears to have provided him with a sanctuary from the responsibilities and the harsh realities of adult life. In this light, beyond their literary significance, Carroll's fantastical and nonsensical worlds can be seen as personal havens for Carroll, where rules are defied, difference is embraced, oppression is destroyed, and the absurd or impossible becomes possible. Through Wonderland, in particular, Carroll constructed an alternative reality in which he could momentarily break free from the repressiveness of the world around him.

Before delving into the postmodern reading of Carroll's *Alice* novels, it is essential to examine the literary context and framework that paved the way for the publication of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the first novel of the sequence. The prefatory poem "All in the Golden Afternoon" offers insight into the story's origin, recalling the "golden afternoon" in 1862 when the Liddell sisters, eager for a story during a boat ride with Carroll, inspired the spontaneous creation of what would later become *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll and Gardner 7). The poem illustrates how the story of Alice was created at the request of the three girls, who specifically demanded that it contain "nonsense":

> Imperious Prima flashes fort
> Her edict 'to begin it'-
> In gentler tone Secunda hopes
> 'There will be nonsense in it!'- (*Wonderland* 35)

Gardner indicates that Prima was the eldest sister, Lorina, at age thirteen, and Secunda was Alice, at age ten (Carroll and Gardner 7). In relation to the nonsensical framework of the story, Carroll writes the following:

> … but I distinctly remember, now as I write, how, in a desperate attempt to strike out some new line of fairy-lore, I had sent my heroine straight down a rabbit-hole, to begin with, without the least idea what was to happen afterwards. And so, to please a child I loved (I don't remember any other motive), I printed in manuscript, and illustrated with my own crude designs- designs that rebelled against every law of Anatomy or Art (for I had never had a lesson in drawing). (Carroll and Gardner 7-8)

Carroll's recollection of the story's origin highlights both its spontaneous nature as well as his embrace of imaginative freedom, demonstrated particularly through the use of nonsense. Although the tale emerged as a playful attempt to entertain children, the nonsense within the novel is far from meaningless, as the playful nature of Wonderland with its paradoxical meanings and reversed logic, mirrors the way children perceive and interpret the world. An example of this can be seen early in the novel when Alice wonders, while falling down the rabbit-hole, whether she will fall "right *through* the earth," and whether people living on the other side of the world "walk with their heads downwards" (*Wonderland* 39). While such a thought may appear absurd and even nonsensical from an adult perspective, it becomes reasonable from the standpoint of children, whose perceptions and interpretations on unknown concepts often result in seemingly nonsensical conclusions. By creating his story around nonsense, Carroll has an understanding of the child mind, which accepts fantastical and irrational incidents as logical and 'real.' As Skinner observes, Carroll, "who did not dare to become an adult…also remained a child and in this role solved the problem which we all have faced when growing up," suggesting that Carroll's refusal to fully assimilate into adulthood allowed him to understand children (30). Thus, Carroll not only entertains but also undermines adults' expectations of logic, order and coherence. This quality of Carroll's *Alice* novels reflects how nonsense is deliberately structured to subvert conventional and adult logic. This attitude alongside the novels' subversion of moral instruction, embrace of multiplicity and ambiguity, preference for playfulness and rejection of a coherent

narrative structure, thus enables the *Alice* novels to be interpreted through a postmodern lens. What begins as a playful tale told under the summer sun, transforms into a subversion of Victorian norms, celebrating contradiction and confusion.

For these reasons, both *Alice* novels can be interpreted as more than mere nonsensical stories. The novels exhibit postmodern features such as going against the repressive, didactic and moralistic norms of the Victorian Period, through its proposal of multiple meanings truths, embrace of plurality and ambiguity, portrayal of the fluidity of identity, the employment of parody and playfulness and, lastly, lack of continuity, coherence and aim. These postmodern techniques will be analysed in depth in their designated chapters.

Chapter 1 will examine postmodernism through its theoretical framework. It will also provide an overview of modernism to clarify the context and conditions that led to the emergence of postmodernity. It will explain why and how postmodernism came about, exploring the reasons behind its rise and development over time. Furthermore, the chapter will highlight postmodern critics, thinkers, and philosophers along with their interpretations and definitions of postmodernism.

Chapter 2 will examine various elements within the *Alice* novels that resonate with postmodern thought. It will focus on how the novels challenge overarching grand narratives, embrace multiplicity and ambiguity, and depict fluid, unstable identities. In particular, it will explore how Alice encounters a variety of shifting definitions, meanings, and interpretations that undermine her fixed perspective. Moreover, her constant shifts in identity lead her to questions who she truly is. Thus, this chapter will demonstrate how these elements, supported by examples from the novels, reflect a distinctly postmodern perspective in both works.

Chapter 3 will analyse the postmodern literary techniques employed in the *Alice* novels. This chapter will delve into the experimental narrative style characterised by parody and playfulness, as well as the deliberate fragmentation and subversion of continuity, coherence, and narrative purpose. Through parody, the novels critique and challenge the ideological stances and established truths of the Victorian Period by humorously distorting well-known Victorian poems and rewriting them in an absurd and playful style. Additionally, both novels challenge conventional plot structures by lacking clear

continuity, coherence, and aim in Alice's actions and interactions. These elements of parody, playfulness, and narrative discontinuity align with postmodern literary techniques that subvert traditional literary forms. Through these techniques, it will be revealed how both novels embody postmodern characteristics and challenge conventional literary forms.

CHAPTER 1
FROM MODERNISM TO POSTMODERNISM: THE RISE OF A NEW CULTURAL LOGIC

To understand the foundations of postmodernism and its literary forms, it is essential to first examine its predecessor, modernism, and to explore how and why postmodernity emerged. This requires an understanding of the origins of modernity and its impact on Western thought and culture. Modernity refers to the historical time period approximately from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment to the twentieth century. It consists of social, cultural, political, economic and philosophical changes, including Industrialisation and rationalism. Modernism refers to the artistic and literary movement that came about during this time. Modernism employs techniques such as experimentation, fragmentation, irony, and stream of consciousness (Best and Kellner 3-4). In contrast, postmodernity refers to the historical and cultural condition that emerged in the late twentieth-century capitalist societies, marked by consumerism, the dominance of mass media, and a scepticism towards stable meanings. Postmodernism refers to artistic and literary movements that arose from the framework of postmodern theory. Postmodernism techniques include parody, playfulness, pastiche, fragmentation, intertextuality, and metafiction (Best and Kellner 2-4). As Appignanesi and Garratt state, "postmodernism identifies itself by something it isn't. It isn't modern anymore" (11). This definition implies that modernism has been surpassed by a new cultural logic, a new understanding of the world or a "new age" which "harbor[s] a revolutionary impulse: the impulse *to do things differently*" (Vanhoozer xiii). The prefix 'post' in postmodernism indicates that the movement and theory is "historically and philosophically *against* modernism," as Hicks points out (25; emphasis added), but it also signals that it comes after modernism both chronologically and conceptually.

1.1 POSTMODERNISM'S RESPONSE TO MODERNITY

Modernity caused a tremendous shift in philosophy and the way of thinking and viewing life in general, replacing traditional, religious and cultural views with reason, science, and individualism, which reshaped Western philosophy and culture altogether. It is defined

by Foucault as “a break with tradition, a feeling of novelty, of vertigo in the face of the passing moment” (39), referring to the cultural and intellectual shift that took place in the West from around the 1800s to the 1950s. It is essentially the reliance in human progress through the development of rationality, reason, knowledge, and technology (Vanhoozer 7). Modernity has been seen as the saviour of civilisation and the key to further improve mankind for thousands of years. It was embraced strongly in the West because, before the emergence of modernity, the pre-modern era which took place during the Medieval Period was conducted by religion, the church, and the monarch. It was considered blasphemy to go against, yet alone question or doubt religious and/or monarchic authorities. For this reason, it was a ground-breaking movement for modernity to make an appearance starting with the Reformation and continuing with the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.

Hicks points out that modernity’s essentials lie in the views of Francis Bacon, René Descartes and John Locke who emphasise reason, objectivity, science and the individual as tools that are needed to know nature and, ultimately, enhance civilisation, as opposed to the “faith, mysticism, and intellectual authoritarianism of earlier ages” (Hicks 26-30). This view is also known as the ‘Enlightenment project,’ an ideology that has “striven to bring about the emancipation of mankind from economic want and political oppression” which matured in the 1700s (Sim vii). Vanhoozer further notes that “[m]odern discourses like science appeal to metanarratives that legitimate it” by telling stories of how the Enlightenment defeated ignorance and superstition through critical thinking, or how modern science has brought “greater health and prosperity to humanity” (9). This demonstrates how transformative modernity was for Western philosophy and the way people lived.

Postmodernism, however, rejects modernity, as postmodernists believe that the Enlightenment was as a tool to oppress mankind and force certain ways of thinking through ideologies and discourses (Sim vii). Postmodernism is against *all* outcomes of the Enlightenment philosophy, “from capitalism and liberal forms of government to science and technology,” according to Hicks (39). As briefly mentioned, modernity marked a shift from supernatural beliefs to intellectual reason which, according to Enlightenment philosophers, was the way to discover objective truth and knowledge. Postmodern critics argue that the end point of modernity has surfaced more enormities on

the long run, as "[m]odern narratives of progress, scientific truth, and human history have after all been used to justify patriarchy, racism, imperialism, and war" (Jorgensen 281).

Postmodernism is sceptical towards modernity as the revolutions that surfaced from science, reason and knowledge led to some of the most disastrous, damaging and pathological events such as "regional conflicts, spasms of genocidal violence, international terrorism, and the perennial threat of nuclear annihilation" (McHale 13). These consequences are evident in the events of World War II, during which scientists applied reason and scientific knowledge to inflict maximum damage on the enemy forces in the least amount of time, resulting in the initiation of Nazi concentration camps and the droppings of nuclear bombs on Japan (Çakmak and Özer 62). These events, hence, pushed postmodernists to be critical as well as sceptical towards modernity and totalising conceptions of truth in general.

Postmodernism is sceptical of science not only because of the devastating consequences that occurred during World War II, but also because postmodernists view science as a social construct:

> Postmodernists are against the claims traditionally made by scientists that they can describe and analyse, objectively and truthfully, and therefore with a universal application, the physical reality which surrounds us…For postmodernists, who are good relativists, scientists can have no such privileges: they promote just 'one story among many,' their pretensions are unjustified. They do not so much 'discover' the nature of reality as 'construct' it, and so their work is open to all the hidden biases and metaphors. (Butler 110-11)

Butler's quote reveals how postmodernism prioritises to demolish grand narratives, even the ones embedded within the society throughout centuries like science, knowledge and rationality, because they are viewed as subjective social constructions. Therefore, since postmodernists reject the idea of a single and objective truth, postmodernism encourages a critical stance towards all grand narratives, advocating for a more complex and critical approach to understanding the world.

Furthermore, postmodernists posit that not only science but also concepts and ideologies such as cultural and economic movements, religion, and "absolutist political theories" are social constructs (Watson 67). Postmodernists argue that these concepts are all social constructs tainted by power, thus, causing oppression one way or another. This postmodern argument indicates that there are power dynamics hidden within social constructions which are concealed to the naked eye by the authoritative powers in rule (Best and Kellner 48). This concern with power relations is central to the works of Michel Foucault, one of the most influential postmodern thinkers. Foucault analysed power, discourse as well as knowledge and how they were applied to control the society through legitimation and institutions (Appignanesi and Garratt 186). He claims that power and knowledge are intertwined, meaning that while knowledge is shaped by hegemony it is also used to exercise control over individuals and societies (263). This is why postmodernists considered liberal democracy, Marxism etc. as grand narratives, since these political ideologies and discourses were constructed to "keep certain groups in power" (Sim 287). As Grant notes, even supposedly progressive narratives like the Enlightenment and Marxism are scrutinised, as postmodernism is sceptical towards any ideology claiming universal objectivity and truth:

> While grand narratives such as the Enlightenment narrative of infinite progress in knowledge and liberty, or the Marxist narrative of the progressive emancipation of labouring humanity from the shackles imposed upon it by industrial capitalism, have played a crucial role in anchoring knowledge and politics in modernity, postmodernity has entailed a crisis of confidence in them. (27)

Grant's observation reveals that postmodernism no longer sees the Enlightenment as the tool that carries civilisation towards more knowledge and freedom, nor Marxism as an opportunity for proletariats to be freed from oppression. Instead, these ideologies are met with scepticism as they can enforce power and control despite their promises. Thus, this leads postmodernists to question even the most universal values.

In addition to the aforementioned social constructs, postmodernists argue that history is also constructed rather than objective. Since postmodernists reject the notion of a single,

universal truth, they view historical narratives as subjective, shaped by dominating power, and therefore inevitably distorted. Postmodernists argue that by rendering history in compliance with their interests, throughout centuries, power holders gained access into shaping the minds of the public in accordance with their ruling ideology. In accordance with the postmodern approach, Hutcheon presents compelling arguments about history:

> History is not made obsolete: it is, however, being rethought—as a human construct. And in arguing that history does not exist except as text, it does not stupidly and 'gleefully' deny that the past existed, but only that its accessibility to us now is entirely conditioned by textuality. We cannot know the past except through its texts: its documents, its evidence, even its eye-witness accounts are texts. Even the institutions of the past, its social structures and practices, could be seen, in one sense, as social texts. (*A Poetics* 16)

For this reason, postmodernists approach with caution and scepticism towards historical texts and deem them as mere myths since they are written by historians. As mentioned before, postmodernists reject the concept of objectivity and single truth. Keeping that in mind, postmodernists view the products of historians as interpretations which do not represent reality. In relation to this view, Hutcheon asserts the following:

> But because poststructuralism and postmodernism together had challenged Western cultural assumptions about totalities and coherent unities, logic and reason, consciousness and subjectivity, representation and truth(s), the history with which the postmodern concerned itself was not the single, neutral or objective Truth assumed of empirical History (with the capital letters symbolizing here the status as 'absolutes' held by these concepts). ("Postmodernism" 122)

Hutcheon underscores how postmodernism replaces a single History with many histories as postmodernism rejects the notion that any perception of history is objective. Hence, postmodernism claims that history does not act as a guide in mirroring the past but is mere fiction created by the voices of many. Because postmodern thought challenges grand narratives prevalent in the society, history is bound to be put in the category of grand

narratives as well, since it is not possible for a single and 'true' history, or "History with a capital H," as Van Den Abbeele puts it (22), to be conveyed.

As a matter of fact, apart from stripping history from its credibility of being the ultimate truth (du Toit 111), some postmodern critics suggest that history is simply fiction. In relation to this concept, Butler notes:

> Once again, postmodernist thought, by analysing everything as text and rhetoric, tended to push hitherto autonomous intellectual disciplines in the direction of literature – history was just another narrative, whose paradigm structures were no better than fictional, and was a slave to its own (often unconsciously used) unrealized myths, metaphors, and stereotypes. (95)

Butler displays how written history is no different from a fictional story, and is, in a sense, imaginary. Nonetheless, it should be underscored that postmodernism does not reject history itself; it refuses the idea of a single 'History,' or, in Eagleton's words, "the idea that there is an entity called History possessed of an immanent[5] meaning and purpose which is stealthily unfolding around us even as we speak" (Eagleton 63). Eagleton further highlights that postmodernism's aim is not to contribute to the writing of history whatsoever, but to merely expose its façade. He writes "[p]ostmodernism is not delivering another narrative about history, just denying that history is in any sense story-shaped," (66) pointing out how it becomes a construct.

After examining the emergence of modernity and modernism, as well as the historical and cultural influences that shaped them, it becomes clear how postmodernism arose as both a continuation of and a reaction against modernism. Postmodernism challenges many of modernism's claims regarding history, power, and science, yet it stands as a social construct itself which makes its challenge to other social constructs somewhat paradoxical and self-contradictory. "On the one hand, all truth is relative; on the other hand, postmodernism tells it like it really is," comments Hicks (376). He further claims that "[o]n the one hand, all cultures are equally deserving of respect; on the other, Western

[5] In his book *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (1996), Terry Eagleton intentionally employs the term 'immanent' rather than 'imminent'.

culture is uniquely destructive and bad. Values are subjective—but sexism and racism are really evil" (376), which displays the paradoxical and contradictory nature of postmodern discourse. Similarly, Vanhoozer points out that with there being so many narratives, questions such as "*whose story, whose interpretation, whose authority, whose criteria counts, and why?"* (10) are what postmodern condition tackles but rejects to find a single answer to. Examining all these different types of definitions and proposals may lead one to see postmodernism as an intellectual movement that raises more questions than it has answers. But then again as Ward observes "[p]ostmodernity promises neither clarification nor the disappearance of perplexity" (xii), an ambiguity that mirrors the *Alice* novels.

1.2 DEFINING POSTMODERNISM AND ITS AESTHETIC FORMS

Coming about as an intellectual, cultural and artistic movement, postmodernism is believed to have initiated in France in the late 1950s (Storey 204), immediately taken up by American academics during the mid-1980s (McRobbie 2), and is still present as a literary movement today in the twenty-first century (Bishop and Starkey 132). Defining postmodernism is a "notoriously difficult endeavour," as Bishop and Starkey put it, since it goes against what postmodernism stands for at its core: to deconstruct established meanings and form multiple meanings, definitions and truths instead of one (131). So, it would go against the notion of postmodernism to talk about one specific type of postmodernism, as the concept of postmodernism can change from person to person and from time to time, making it, according to Ihab Hassan, an "ongoing historical process" that is bound to change as life continues ("Postmodernism Revisited" 143). In accordance with Hassan's view, Vanhoozer offers the following in relation to the definition of postmodernism:

> Those who attempt to define or to analyze the concept of postmodernity do so at their own peril. In the first place, postmoderns reject the notion that any description or definition is 'neutral.'… A definition of postmodernity is as likely to say more about the person offering the definition than it is of 'the postmodern.' Second, postmoderns resist closed, tightly bounded 'totalizing' accounts of such things as the 'essence' of the postmodern. And third, according to David Tracy 'there is no such phenomenon as postmodernity.' There are only *postmodernities*. (3; emphasis added)

Vanhoozer highlights how any attempt to define postmodernism is subjective, and how it would be more suitable to indicate that there are several forms of 'postmodernisms,' which are all equally correct and valid, instead of one fixed 'postmodernism.'

Even though scholars and academics often deem it impossible to pinpoint a single, fixed definition for this complex intellectual movement, one of the most influential and widely recognised definitions come from French philosopher and literary theorist Jean-François Lyotard. Lyotard simplifies postmodernism by defining it as "incredulity towards metanarratives" (xxiv). He remarks that "metanarratives," or grand narratives, that have dominated Western thought are no longer recourses in art, culture or knowledge (60). Lyotard's vision of postmodernism, as outlined by Wood, emphasises a rejection of "totalizing discourses" and "metanarratives," such as the Enlightenment or the Marxist vision (541), which have lost their credibility and no longer function as valid sources of truth in the postmodern condition. As a substitute for the outdated grand narratives, Lyotard suggests "little narratives" (petit récit) that remain "the quintessential form of imaginative invention, most particularly in science" (60). Postmodernism, then, is essentially the act of going against grand ideologies by questioning as well as deconstructing those traditional structures and dominant ideologies through smaller narratives. In doing so, it creates a world where knowledge is fragmented and decentralised, allowing room for diversity instead of singularity as well as multiple truths instead of a single, universal one.

This scepticism towards universal truths is particularly relevant when analysing the *Alice* novels through a postmodern lens. While Carroll's primary intention was simply to amuse, the *Alice* novels nonetheless challenge established moral and social conventions, especially through the nonconforming and unconventional behaviour of the creatures in both novels. Postmodernism argues that one should always be "suspicious of truth claims" and of "getting it right" (Vanhoozer 11) and be open to multiple interpretations and truths. If one were to question the Victorian moral code against the Victorians, Vanhoozer remarks that they might highly be faced with the answer "that's the way things are," to which postmodernists would have responded with "that's the way things are *for you*" (11; emphasis added). That is because, postmodernism inherently goes against grand, or universal and overarching narratives, by questioning their past and present

credibility, suggesting that "a certain social sea-change is occurring; new emphases and sensibilities are making themselves felt and older ways of looking at and explaining the significance of the world are becoming otiose or no longer credible" (Ward xiv).

While some thinkers, like Lyotard and Ward, argue that grand narratives such as modernism and the Enlightenment are no longer valid (Lyotard 79, Ward xiv), other like Hicks go further and claim that these narratives were never credible to begin with (Hicks 38). While many scholars refer to established truths as 'grand narratives,' others use different terms, for instance, Lyotard, who refers to them as 'metanarratives'. In essence, it does not matter what one labels them; grand narratives, metanarratives, established narratives, etc. Whatever one chooses to label and define it as, what is of significance is postmodernism's scepticism and even "incredulity" towards grand/meta/established narratives (Lyotard xxiv).

It should be noted that postmodernism does not deny the existence of grand narratives, it simply puts forward the idea that no 'one' grand narrative can be accepted as the ultimate truth, no single metanarrative should be placed over the other, and that other narratives are just as true and valid as the dominating ones. This belief suggests the notion that everything can be regarded as equally 'true,' diminishing the almightiness of grand narratives. Instead of evaluating experiences from a rigid perspective, Lyotard and postmodernists come to propose to view the world through multiple truths, or "little/small narratives" (Lyotard 60), which disregard the singularity of human experience and accentuates on its diversity. Hence, by subverting universal and fixed truths, postmodernism argues that many voices, perspectives and experiences exist instead of one, and that all of these are equally valuable.

A clear understanding of what it means to challenge grand narratives from a postmodern perspective is crucial, as it reveals how it opens the way for the acceptance and encouraging of multiple, coexisting meanings and truths. Harvey writes the following on the incredulity of grand narratives:

> Postmodernism signals the death of such 'metanarratives' whose secretly terroristic function was to ground and legitimate the illusion of a 'universal' human history. We are now in the process of wakening from the nightmare of modernity, with its

> manipulative reason and fetish of the totality, into the laid-back pluralism of the post-modern, that heterogeneous range of life styles and language games which has renounced the nostalgic urge to totalize and legitimate itself… Science and philosophy must jettison their grandiose metaphysical claims and view them selves more modestly as just another set of narratives. (10)

Harvey's commentary offers insight into how postmodernism is moving away from the authority of modernity as well as other social constructs and demolishing the perception that science and reason, which are no different from other narratives, are objective and can lead individuals to enhancing the civilisation. In relation to multiplicity and plurality, Sim notes that "[i]t is this distrust of grand theory, and its authoritarian bias, that can be considered the distinguishing feature of postmodern philosophy, which maintains a libertarian attitude throughout its various expressions" (11). Sim's remark underscores how postmodernism's scepticism toward authoritative and totalising truths creates space for multiple forms of expression and thus allows more liberty. This embrace of multiplicity and plurality, as mentioned by Harvey and Sim, resonates with Lyotard's concept of "little narratives" which "remains the quintessential form of imaginative invention, most particularly in science" (Lyotard 60). As du Toit mentions, for Lyotard, these little or small narratives "represent society" and enhance imagination and creativity through diversity (109). As Sim elaborates, "little narratives are the most inventive way of disseminating, and creating, knowledge, and that they help to break down the monopoly traditionally exercised by grand narratives" (*8). Hence, postmodernism acknowledges 'little' narratives as a crucial means for undermining and reframing established meanings. By embracing multiplicity and plurality, postmodernism creates space for "voices from the margins speaking from positions of difference" to emerge (Storey 205), allowing all those who have been historically excluded or silenced by dominating and totalising discourses to be heard, which is an idea clearly reflected in the Alice novels.*

This philosophical stance is also reflected in art, literature, architecture, and popular culture. Although architecture is arguably the field in which postmodernism first became a "cause," postmodernism extended widely across multiple fields in a variety of forms (Sim ix). The aesthetic implications of postmodernism are analysed in depth by Fredric

Jameson, one of the most prominent theorists of postmodernism. Jameson professes that the transition from modernism to postmodernism was much more than merely a new movement or style, but a "radical break, both with a dominant culture and aesthetic" (*The Postmodern Condition* vii). He defines postmodernism as a "cultural logic" of late capitalism that emerged towards the end of the twentieth century, characterised by the collapse of traditional boundaries, including the distinction between high art and mass culture (*The Cultural* 20). He exemplifies the blurring of boundaries as follows:

> But many of the newer postmodernisms have been fascinated precisely by that whole landscape of advertising and motels, of the Las Vegas strip, of the Late Show and B-grade Hollywood film, of so-called paraliterature with its airport paperback categories of the gothic and the romance, the popular biography, the murder mystery and the science fiction or fantasy novel. They no longer 'quote' such 'texts' as a Joyce might have done, or a Mahler; they incorporate them, to the point where the line between high art and commercial forms seems increasingly difficult to draw. (*The Cultural* 2)

By fusing high culture with mass culture, as Jameson demonstrates, postmodernism rejects the elitist tendencies of modernism which privileged high art and culture. This attitude of postmodernism gave way to a very peculiar style as Jameson exemplifies with the following lines:

> The concept of postmodernism is not widely accepted or even understood today. Some of the resistance to it may come from the unfamiliarity of the works it covers, which can be found in all the arts: the poetry of John Ashbery, for instance, but also the much simpler talk poetry that came out of the reaction against complex, ironic, academic modernist poetry in the '60s; the reaction against modern architecture and in particular against the monumental buildings of the International Style, the pop buildings and decorated sheds celebrated by Robert Venturi in his manifesto, *Learning from Las Vegas;* Andy Warhol and Pop art, but also the more recent Photo-realism; in music, the moment of John Cage but also the later synthesis of classical and 'popular' styles found in composers like Philip Glass and Terry Riley, and also punk and new-wave rock with such groups as the Clash, the Talking Heads and the Gang of Four; in film, everything that comes out of Godard contemporary vanguard film and video but also a whole new style of commercial or fiction films, which has its equivalent in contemporary novels as well, where the works of William Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon and Ishmael Reed on the one hand, and the French new

> novel on the other, are also to be numbered among the varieties of what can be called postmodernism. (*The Anti-Aesthetic* 111)

Jameson offers that this list of postmodern examples displays how forms of postmodernism emerged as specific reactions against the established forms, such as "high modernism," which was dominant in all areas of life from the university to the museum (*The Anti-Aesthetic* 111). Since "the line between high art and commercial forms" (*The Anti-Aesthetic* 112) became difficult to trace, postmodernism and its by-products stood as a reaction against modernism and all established forms in general.

Understanding these cultural shifts is crucial to recognising how the *Alice* novels employ experimental and playful techniques. To fully grasp these stylistic features, it is essential to first understand the postmodern theory behind these techniques. Ihab Hassan captures postmodernism's subversiveness through its reaction to modernism by outlining a series of stylistic oppositions, where the modern principles of form, purpose, hierarchy, and totalisation are subverted by postmodern traits like antiform, play, anarchy, and deconstruction ("The Question" 36). This shift in literary technique stems from the postmodern philosophy that resists fixed or singular meanings and instead embraces multiplicity and flexibility in literature. As Gerhard Hoffman highlights, "postmodernism is not to be understood in the singular but in the plural" (41), signalling the thought that just as postmodern theory aims for pluralism, so does postmodern literature. To exhibit subversiveness, postmodern writers employ experimental techniques such as breaking linear and coherent narrative structures, playing with and reconstructing language, and blurring the line between fiction and reality to challenge traditional narratives, structures, and ideas about truth and meaning. By using techniques such as incoherent and discontinuous narratives, metafiction, self-reflexivity, pastiche, parody, and intertextuality, postmodernists aim to blur the line between fiction and reality, author and reader, high and low culture. Postmodernism, then, upsets traditional storytelling rules to challenge the idea of a "tenable metanarrative" or, in other words, a single and objective truth (D'haen 186).

This experimental approach to narrative and meaning leads to a playful and subversive use of literary form and conventions which paves the way for multiple interpretations through experimentation. Postmodern literature possesses such an experimental and subversive attitude to "expose dominant discourses, literary conventions and genres as bourgeois, as logocentric, as male-dominated" as well as "[play] with different genre conventions at the same time and [make] them thus dismantle each other" for readers who appreciate and enjoy this kind of 'play' (Broich 253). This playfulness gives way to multiple perspectives alongside "the comic mode" such as humour and irony, which "leaves the author a remarkable freedom of range, of roaming widely" (Hoffmann 76) and the reader a freedom of range to interpret endlessly. In relation to the 'play' aspect of postmodern literature, Edwards argues that 'play' which is "always already interplay," creates interaction between the writer and the reader while encouraging a more flexible perspective by rejecting "ideas of solitariness and singularity, fixed positions, simple binarism, privilege and truth" and embracing "difference, pluralism and process" instead (Edwards xii). Due to its playful nature, Broich defines postmodern literature through its "ludic function" as a "literature of pla(y)giarism," since it combines an array of techniques in innovative ways while rejecting overtly moral and political motives (253). While some critics argue that postmodern literary works are unoriginal repetitions of the past, claiming that "it's all been done before" or that "it all derives from [fill in the blank]," postmodernism reuses earlier forms and styles in distinctly different new ways "with an ironic twist" (McHale 8). The reuse, thus, is not about imitation or mimicking, but about creating something new from what already exists.

In short, in Hoffman's words, postmodern literature developed from a major shift in how aesthetics was perceived, and postmodern writers, who aimed to challenge as well as connect with their audience, strived to render their work mysterious and strange, pushing the limits of familiar conventions and ultimately changing how the world is perceived (Hoffmann 83). One of the strategies through which postmodern literature subverts is through the use of 'play,' which is a technique that disrupts fixed meanings and invites open-ended as well as endless interpretation. As Edwards notes, postmodern play can be seen as both "destructive, in its subversion of totalities... and constructive, in its affirmation by theory and demonstration of the positive cultural effects of difference" (86). This dual nature of play is evident in Carroll's *Alice* novels, where linguistic

absurdity and narrative experimentation simultaneously dismantle Victorian certainties and open up space for multiple interpretations. Once such aspects of postmodernism are considered, as McHale also rightfully claims, the "playfulness" and "experimentalism" of *Wonderland* as well as *Looking-Glass* have become remarkably significant (56). Carroll's experimental narrative techniques, which he used solely for the purpose of entertaining and engaging the imaginations of children, thus align with postmodern literary techniques.

Through his use of wordplay, nonsensical language, and playful experimentation with narrative and structure, Carroll reflects a distinctly postmodern sense of play in both *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass*. Carroll exemplifies linguistic playfulness through wordplay, puns, and riddles in the Alice novels while portraying structural playfulness through intertextuality and subversion of narrative form, all of which are striking characteristics of postmodern literary techniques. By using these techniques, Carroll challenges and undermines established language and meaning of the Victorian Period, hence, and aligning his novels with postmodern thought.

Language was, and arguably still is, a topic that postmodernists dealt thoroughly with. The belief that language "passively reflects a coherent, meaningful and 'objective' world" is no longer accepted by postmodern theorists (Waugh 3). This shift in the thinking paved the way for intellectual movements such as poststructuralism and later deconstruction, which emerged as an extension of poststructuralist theory. It is noteworthy to add that poststructuralism itself is an aspect of postmodernism (Allen 176).

Poststructuralist thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, and Roland Barthes reject the notion that language can objectively reflect truth. Instead, they view language as a socially constructed, unstable, and fragmented structure (Vanhoozer 11). Poststructuralism, as a broad philosophical movement, emerged as a response to structuralism, which poststructuralists regarded as rigid and authoritarian (Sim 4). Poststructuralism challenges the structuralist idea that words and meanings are fixed and stable, while arguing that words have more than one meaning and that meaning cannot be grasped without analysing the text and context as a whole (Sim 287).

Building on poststructuralist thought, deconstruction also asserts that words and meanings are inherently unstable (Butler 54) and a "fleeting phenomenon" rather than a fixed and stable one (Sim 5). The term was coined in the late 1960s by French philosopher, Jacques Derrida, one of the most influential philosophers and theorists of the twentieth century (Smith-Laing 9). Derrida, who examined the "foundations of human language and knowledge," dealt with what he perceived as inherent flaws in how language is understood and employed (qtd. in Smith-Laing 10). He aimed to demonstrate that knowledge and meaning rest on unstable foundations, as language is fluid and always shifting. Deconstruction, in its simplest term, is a destructive or critical reading instead of an attempt to find a single, consistent and unified message and meaning (Sim 245), which is ultimately positive as well as constructive according to Derrida (qtd. in Smith 44). Deconstructing or picking apart a text enables the reader to search for hidden meanings and explore contradictions, paving the way for the endless interpretations of a text and strengthening the view that meanings change depending on the reader and/or the context since "all language systems are inherently unreliable cultural constructs" (Butler 54). Similarly, du Toit underscores the benefits of deconstruction by asserting that it enables freedom from traditional authority and encourages "a healthy scepticism of cultural ideas, including those of organizations" and hierarchical structures (111). Since postmodernists perceive language to be unstable and incapable of delivering an objective or stable meaning, they often reflected this view through literary techniques of playfulness with language in order to underscore the flexibility of language and subvert the idea of a fixed meaning.

These ideas are articulated in Derrida's influential essay "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (1966). In this essay, Derrida critiques the Western thought that structures are organised around a stable and fixed centre that grounds meaning. He observes that although the concept of structure is embedded in the Western episteme, it has been "neutralized or reduced… by a process of giving it a center or of referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin" (89). This demonstrates that once the centre is decentred, structure no longer anchors a meaning, and language becomes ever shifting and in flux. Derrida refers to this perpetual deferral as différance. The concept of différance illustrates that language is fragmented and incapable of reflecting objective truth and is open to multiple, even contradictory, interpretations, which is at the core of

postmodern thinking. In Derrida's view, words do not refer to stable things in the world but to other words in an endless chain of references. As a result, meaning is always postponed, never present in a pure or fixed form. Language, therefore, becomes a fragmented and constructed system, unable to deliver objective truth but instead producing multiple interpretations (89).

Because Carroll's *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* embody the subversive and experimental characteristics of postmodern theory and literary style, the following chapters will examine how these novels can be interpreted through a postmodern lens. Both novels challenge grand narratives which leads to the embrace of multiplicity and diverse perspectives. They also depict fluid identities, employ parody and playfulness, and subvert traditional narrative conventions through techniques such as discontinuity, incoherence, and the absence of clear purpose.

CHAPTER 2

THE CHALLENGE TO GRAND NARRATIVES, MEANING, AND IDENTITY IN *ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND* AND *THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS AND WHAT ALICE FOUND THERE*

"Mathematics becomes very odd when you apply it to people. One plus one can add up to so many different sums…" (Michael Frayn, *Copenhagen*)

This chapter analyses how Carroll's *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* challenge grand narratives, embrace multiple meanings and truths, and depict fluid and unstable identities. The challenge to grand narratives, or overarching truths, can be observed on two levels. First, in a time period when children's literature was dominated by moral instruction and didacticism, Carroll subverts the conventions of his time by writing the *Alice* novels primarily for the amusement and imaginative delight of young Victorian readers. Second, through the nonsensical events and illogical characters of both magical worlds, the notion of a single and absolute perspective is dismantled. These fantastical realms embrace multiplicity and plurality, where logic is reversed, and everything operates according to rules entirely different from those Alice has learned in the real world. As a matter of fact, from time to time, the two worlds abandon all rules and operate instead on complete absurdity.

In both *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass*, Alice encounters a variety of creatures who challenge Alice's perspective through illogical, comical and absurd dialogues and characters such as the Frog and Fish Footmen, the White Queen, the Cheshire Cat, the Hatter and the March Hare and many more. The actions, conversation and views of these creatures demonstrate the postmodern element of challenge to grand narratives and

underscoring the possibility of multiple meanings and truths instead. In both novels, Carroll presents two fantastical worlds that operate quite differently from the Victorian society which perplexes Alice. As the two worlds have their own set of rules and logic, Alice encounters, for the first time, the possibility of multiple meanings and truths. This concept is central to both of Carroll's *Alice* novels as well as to postmodernism, which rejects singular and fixed truths in favour of plural and shifting ones. While Alice tries to apply her knowledge and common sense to the absurd events in the worlds of *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass*, she realises that it is futile to do so, as the two worlds operate on their own rules. Hence, while Alice's experiences with the creatures in both worlds illustrate the postmodern thinking of endorsing multiple meanings by subverting established truths and narratives, Alice struggles to accept the idea that other truths and meanings apart from the ones she is accustomed to are equally valuable and valid. Throughout this journey Alice's knowledge, logic and 'truths' are constantly challenged. Her adventures are not pointless as they teach her to look at the world from different perspectives than she has been taught to do. Nevertheless, this lesson that Alice learns, quoting Paterson, "nearly costs [Alice] her identity – and her sanity" (17) as some of the rules and characters in the fantastical worlds have no reason and logic to them at all. Alice's revelation affects her deeply and dramatically because, suddenly, all of the rules and laws that she had recognised to be true and acceptable without questioning, and all of those which she had believed to be false and unacceptable are reversed, even taunted. This disturbance of certainty and meaning reflects one of the primary concerns of postmodern theory, and the following section will examine this aspect in detail in order to reveal how *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* challenge grand narratives and present a world shaped by multiple meanings and truths instead.

2.1 THE CHALLENGE TO GRAND NARRATIVES AND THE PORTRAYAL OF MULTIPLE MEANINGS AND TRUTHS

Carroll's playful approach to writing, free from didactic purpose, aligns with the postmodern principle of a challenge to dominant ideologies and conventions. Highlighting the significance of didacticism in children's literature, Reichertz notes that informational works produced from the late eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century were considered appropriate, acceptable and official for children (21).

He adds that by creating such imaginative worlds during a time when children's literature was barren for creativity, Carroll ultimately challenged didactic conventions, and, hence, the literary status quo of the period (22). In light of this subversive attitude, Woolf raises compelling questions about Carroll: "Was he always witty in his conversations and correspondence or did he have a serious side? Was he conventional by Victorian standards or did he sometimes act in an unconventional manner? Did he follow the moral and ethical codes of his day or did he rebel against the norms of Victorian society?" (56). While definitive answers to these questions remain elusive, the *Alice* novels openly display Carroll's witty, unconventional and rebellious side. Through the characters such as the Cheshire Cat, the Hatter, the Knight and more, Carroll invites both Alice and readers to question that there is no single truth in life, but many; that there is no single way to do things in life, but many, which aligns with postmodern thinking.

Unlike the stern and didactic tales imposed on Victorian children under the appearance of fairy tales, Carroll intended the *Alice* novels to be stories which simply unleash the imagination of children without the burden of any social expectations. In a letter written in 1876 titled "An Easter Greeting: To Every Child Who Loves Alice," Carroll stresses the significance of playfulness in the *Alice* novels and how they should be regarded as a means for entertainment:

> Some perhaps may blame me for thus mixing together things grave and gay; others may smile and think it odd that anyone should speak of solemn things at all, except in church and on a Sunday: but I think- nay, I am sure- that some children will read this gently and livingly, and in the spirit in which I have written it. For I do not believe God means us thus to divide life into two halves- to wear a grave face on Sunday, and to think it out-of-place to even so much as mention Him on a weekday. Do you think he cares to see only kneeling figures, and to hear only tones of prayer- and that He does not also love to see the lambs leaping in the sunlight, and to hear the merry voices of the children as they roll among the hay? Surely their innocent laughter is as sweet in His ears as the grandest anthem that ever rolled up from the 'dim religious light' of some solemn cathedral? And if I have written anything to add to those stores of *innocent* and *healthy* amusement that are laid up in books for the children I love so well, it is surely something I may hope to look back upon without shame and sorrow… when my turn comes to walk through the valley of shadows. (*Looking-Glass* 280-81; emphases added)

In these lines, Carroll explains how his style of writing may not be suitable for the average Victorian reader who is quite uptight and strict when it comes to preaching doctrines in children's literature. He writes that some find it strange how he mixes serious topics and debates in a comical and absurd manner in the novels and how some even find it inappropriate to do such a thing. Nonetheless, Carroll gives hypothetical examples through God and how God would not have wanted people to divide their happiness and their sadness, their formality and their informality harshly, but embrace polarising experiences concurrently. He further continues by saying God would not only want people to pray in seriousness but would want them to enjoy life with joy and gaiety. Hence, Carroll indicates the importance of innocent and healthy entertainment for children, especially in children's literature, without bearing any didacticism, and how it is needed for the healthy development of children. Nevertheless, it is crucial to note that Carroll did not initially and deliberately write the *Alice* novels to go against the dominating didacticism of children's literature. As already mention before, his purpose was to simply amuse and entertain the Liddell children, whom he originally wrote *Wonderland* for, but little did he know, he would delight and expand the imagination of millions of children and adults for more than a century.

Although Alice's experiences in both novels are exaggerated and comical, they nonetheless depict worlds governed by absurd and illogical systems, which aligns with the postmodern tendency to challenge grand narratives, universal truths and absolute claims. Just as postmodernism emerges from "a reversal of the dominant… directions," in which "the foundations of the Western Literature have been shaken, and all the concepts of the past have been questioned" (Oppermann 213), the fantastical worlds of *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* similarly destabilise fixed structures of meaning, authority, and logic**.** Upon arriving in Wonderland and encountering various challenges, Alice is eager to pompously solve the problems with her knowledge, perhaps even show off. In the beginning of *Wonderland*, she is certain that her answers will solve the problems she faces in this fantastical world. Alice attempts to apply the logic and rules of Victorian society to a place where those conventions do not exist. For example, Alice immediately starts to apply her knowledge gained from her education to events after following the White Rabbit and falling "down, down, down" the rabbit hole:

> 'I must be getting somewhere near the centre of the earth. Let me see: that would be four thousand miles down, I think –' (for, you see, Alice had learnt several things of this sort in her lessons in the schoolroom, and though this was not a very good opportunity for showing off her knowledge, as there was no one to listen to her, still it was good practice to say it over) ' – yes, that's about the right distance – but then I wonder what Latitude or Longitude I've got to?' (Alice had no idea what Latitude was, or Longitude either, but thought they were nice grand words to say). (*Wonderland* 39)

In this instance, Alice has no idea where she is or where she is going. Nonetheless, she still finds it reasonable to apply her classroom-knowledge to the incident by making back-handed predictions. This prompts the reader to question how she could possibly measure a distance as specific as four thousand miles, or what practical use it would be for her to know which latitude and longitude she is situated in, in such an unfamiliar place. Hence, Alice's presumptuous predictions indicate how she is simply eager to gloat over her knowledge. She flaunts her accumulation of knowledge, even when it is false or unnecessary, and positions herself superior to all the other creatures in Wonderland:

> 'Would it be of any use, now,' thought Alice, 'to speak to this mouse? Everything is so out-of-the way down here that I should think very likely it can talk: at any rate, there's no harm in trying.' So she began: 'O Mouse, do you know the way out of this pool? I am very tired of swimming about here, O Mouse!' (Alice thought this must be the right way of speaking to a mouse: she had never done such a thing before, but she remembered having seen in her brother's Latin Grammar, 'A mouse- of a mouse- to a mouse- a mouse- O mouse!) The Mouse looked at her rather inquisitively, and seemed to her to wink with one of its little eyes, but it said nothing. 'Perhaps it doesn't understand English,' thought Alice; 'I dare say it's a French mouse, come over with William the Conqueror.' (For, with all her knowledge of history, Alice had no very clear notion how long ago anything had happened.) So she began again: 'Où est ma chatte?'[6] which was the first sentence in her French lesson-book. (*Wonderland* 49-50)

Unfortunately, for Alice, the Mouse fails to understand her, despite her efforts in displaying her knowledge and social skills. Her attempt to 'properly' socialise with the creature ends up in vain as Alice "was taught in a catechetical method, in which fixed

[6] "Where is my cat?" in French.

answers were given to fixed questions… In Wonderland, however, she is constantly misunderstood and treated rudely," as Ostry explains (36). Alice's frustration emerges from the realisation that the rigid knowledge she has been taught, which she positions on a pedestal, is rendered meaningless in Wonderland's nonsensical logic. This not only disturbs Alice but also challenges the Victorian educational system which she holds in high regard. Her annoyance grows as she discovers that the more time she spends in Wonderland, the more common sense she loses, forgetting even the basic knowledge she was taught, such as mathematics and geography. Her knowledge proves to be of little use, as she finds herself lost in these fantastical worlds with no guidance or explanation of what is happening around her. She begins to realise that not everything operates according to the logic she was raised with, and gradually, her thinking starts to mirror the bizarre nature of the two worlds:

> 'Oh, how I wished I could shut up like a telescope! I think I could, if I only knew how to begin.' For, you see, so many *out-of-the-way things* had happened lately, that Alice had begun to think that very few things indeed were really impossible…She was quite surprised to find that she remained the same size: to be sure, this generally happens when one eats cake, but Alice had got so much into the way of expecting nothing but *out-of-the-way things* to happen, that it seemed quite dull and stupid for life to go on in the common way. (*Wonderland* 41, 43; emphases added)

Alice's struggle to comprehend the unusual events, such as changing sizes or talking animals going about their day-to-day lives, illustrate the postmodern challenge to grand narratives. While she views these experiences as "out-of-the-way," or unusual, Wonderland gradually reveals that what is considered 'normal' or 'true' is subjective and changes with perspective. This undermines the grand narrative of a fixed, objective reality.

Similarly, Alice finds herself equally perplexed in *Looking-Glass* as she was in *Wonderland*. Upon hearing all the reversed and unreasonable rules of the magical world, Alice admits to the White Queen that she is dumbfounded:

> I don't understand you,' said Alice. 'It's dreadfully confusing!'
> 'That's the effect of living backwards,' the Queen said kindly: 'it always makes one giddy at first-'

> ‘Living backwards! Alice repeated in great astonishment. ‘never heard of such a thing!’
> ‘- but there’s one great advantage in it, that one’s memory works both ways.’
> ‘I’m sure *mine* only works one way,’ Alice remarked. ‘I can’t remember things before they happen.’
> ‘It’s a poor sort of memory that only works backwards,’ the Queen remarked. (*Looking Glass* 208)

This dialogue illustrates Alice’s difficulty in adapting herself to the rules and behaviour of *Looking-Glass*, where logic is inverted, and the realm is ruled by chess pieces. For instance, while Alice understands ‘remembering’ as recalling past events, the Queen uses the term to refer to future occurrences, or the “things that happened the week after next,” as she puts it (*Looking Glass* 208). Alice is convinced that this must surely be a mistake, but the Queen insists that “that is the way things happen here” (*Looking Glass* 209). Nonetheless, the logic of the Queen remains incomprehensible to Alice, such as the Queen’s screaming *before* pricking her finger on her brooch. “I haven’t pricked it yet,” says the Queen and concludes with “but I soon shall – oh, oh, oh!” (*Looking Glass* 209).

The postmodern rejection of singular truths and fixed structures leads to an embrace of multiplicity and plurality which is evident in Carroll’s fantastical worlds. Best and Kellner state that “postmodernists reject unifying, totalizing, and universal schemes in favour of new emphases on difference, plurality, fragmentation, and complexity” (255), emphasising the importance of diversity and plurality within postmodern discourse. This challenge to objective truth as well as foundational ideas can be pinpointed in the *Alice* novels, where fixed meanings are constantly undermined by alternatives. To Alice, Wonderland and Looking-Glass appear random and unsystematic while the creatures are rumbustious and haphazard. However, from the perspective of those inhabitants, that is not the case, as their worlds adhere to a logic of their own. Just as going to school and learning history and geography are normal experiences for Alice, so are the strange occurrences of these fantastical worlds for their inhabitants. Talking animals, King and Queen deck cards, talking chess pieces, hookah smoking caterpillars, babies turning into pigs, and fish and frog footmen are not extraordinary in Wonderland. Likewise, in the Looking-Glass world, it is natural for chess pieces to rule a kingdom, for flowers to speak, for time to function in reverse, and for one to believe six impossible things before

breakfast. This unfamiliarity leaves Alice perplexed and even irritates her, at times, especially when she is scolded for "talking such nonsense!" (*Wonderland* 57). Her frustration eventually leads her to wish she had never fallen into Wonderland at all:

> 'It was much pleasanter at home…when one wasn't growing larger and smaller, and being ordered about by mice and rabbits. I almost wish I hadn't gone down that rabbit-hole- and yet- and yet- it's rather curious, you know, this sort of life! I do wonder what can have happened to me! When I used to read fairytales, I fancied that kind of thing never happened, and now here I am in the middle of one!' (*Wonderland* 61)

Alice is annoyed and disoriented; nevertheless, Vanhoozer notes that "[p]ostmodernity is upsetting, intentionally so. Postmodern thinkers have overturned the tables of the knowledge-changers in the university, the temple of modernity, and have driven out the foundationalists" (xiii). Vanhoozer sheds light onto postmodernism's intentionally disruptive nature, since it confronts the notion that only one universal truth can explain the world, advocating instead for the multiplicity of perspectives. This transition from singularity to plurality can be unsettling, especially after years of embedded doctrines under systems that prefer absolute truths and narratives. Rather than embracing the new perspectives she encounters, Alice dismisses them as wrong and unworthy.

Alice's dismissal towards Wonderland's peculiarity is especially clear during her interaction with the Caterpillar. Upon meeting the Caterpillar, Alice laments how she cannot remember what she once knew, and that what she does remember is no longer valid in Wonderland. As a response to this complaint, Alice is asked to recite the poem "You are old, Father William." Although Alice recites the poem correctly according to her and the Victorian readers, the Caterpillar announces that the poem "is not said right…It is wrong from beginning to end" (*Wonderland* 74). To this, "Alice said nothing: she had never been so much contradicted in all her life before, and she felt that she was losing her temper" (*Wonderland* 74), which exemplifies how Wonderland challenges Alice's perception of 'truth,' reflecting Vanhoozer's assertion that postmodernism "reject[s] the idea that there is one universal rational form" (7).

Alice can be seen as a representation of Victorian norms and values. Her mindset is shaped by Victorian rationalism which is grounded in Enlightenment principles such as reason, logic, and empirical knowledge. Throughout the *Alice* novels, she assumes that her education and knowledge grant her a superior and fixed understanding of the world, positioning her above the other inhabitants she meets. This Victorian perspective is particularly evident in her conversation with the White Queen, where Alice's irritation and difficulty in accepting contradiction reveal her struggle to replace her rationalist outlook with the more flexible and fluid realities of the two magical worlds:

> 'Can *you* keep from crying by considering things?' [Alice] asked.
> 'That's the way it's done,' the Queen said with great decision: 'nobody can do two things at once, you know. Let's consider your age to begin with- how old are you?'
> 'I'm seven and a half exactly.'
> 'You needn't say "exactually," the Queen remarked: 'I can believe it without that. Now I'll give *you* something to believe. I'm just one hundred and one, five months and a day.'
> 'I can't believe that!' said Alice.
> 'Can't you?' the Queen said in a pitying tone. 'Try again: draw a long breath, and shut your eyes.'
> Alice laughed. 'There's no use in trying,' she said: 'one can't believe impossible things.' (*Looking-Glass* 210)

Even though the Queen attempts to instruct Alice on how certain things are properly done in the world of *Looking-Glass*, Alice insists on refusing to accept them, including the Queen's age. Alice's disbelief and laughter reflect both her resistance towards accepting different perspectives and also a deeply rooted confidence shaped by her Victorian education and Enlightenment principles such as logic, reason, and knowledge. Alice expects all experience to conform to the fixed truths of nineteenth-century Western society, disabling her from accepting different possibilities and alternative ways of thinking. Hence, the two magical worlds challenge Alice's sense of intellectual superiority by confronting her with multiple and contradictory realities that undermine the fixed truths she has been taught. This experience reflects the postmodern thought of embracing multiplicity and questioning singular, absolute interpretations of truth.

Thus, postmodernism offers a more sceptical, critical and complex view of the world by rejecting a single, objective truth and replacing it with multiple subjective experiences

and individual interpretations, celebrating difference and diversity, which Alice comes to experience in the novels. For postmodernists and critics such as Harvey, difference, diversity and multiplicity are "the most liberative and therefore most appealing aspect of postmodern thought" (47). Harvey further highlights that "[t]he idea that all groups have a right to speak for themselves, in their own voice, and have that voice accepted as authentic and legitimate is essential to the *pluralistic* stance of postmodernism" (48; emphasis added), displaying the significance of multiplicity and diversity and how it should be celebrated. As mentioned previously, throughout her time in the two realms, Alice tries to use her common sense to navigate around the foreign lands while simultaneously trying to find her way home. Her acquired knowledge, however, proves to be futile in these unique and strange worlds. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall engaged deeply with postmodern ideas such as fragmented and fluid identities, alongside the questioning of grand narratives. In line with this perspective, Hall claims that "[w]e can no longer conceive of 'the individual' in terms of a whole, centred, stable and completed Ego or autonomous, rational 'self.' The 'self' is conceptualized as more fragmented and incomplete, composed of multiple 'selves' or identities in relation to the different social worlds we inhabit" (225), highlighting the inevitability of the identity becoming multiple 'identities' and changing over time. According to McRobbie, Hall's aim was to explore "a different set of possibilities," emphasizing that "the new world is a very different one. There are moving boundaries and borders, new maps, new nationalisms and transnationalisms" (8). This sense of "newness" McRobbie refers to is clearly reflected in the *Alice* novels, where Alice's knowledge and common sense become ineffective:

> 'I'll try if I know all the things I used to know. Let me see: four times five is twelve, and four times six is thirteen, and four times seven is- oh dear! I shall never get to twenty at that rate! However, the Multiplication Table doesn't signify: let's try Geography. London is the capital of Paris, and Paris is the capital of Rome and Rome- no, *that's* all wrong, I'm certain!'… she crossed her hands on her lap as if she were saying lessons, and begun to repeat it, but her voice sounded hoarse and strange, and the words did not come the same as they used to. (*Wonderland* 47)

Alice attempts to recall her general knowledge but fails. She realises that she incorrectly answers the questions; however, what vexes her is *why* she cannot answer correctly. It

seems as if her knowledge gets tempered with and reshaped by the irrationality of the two magical worlds. Apart from being inept of using her knowledge, the creatures of Wonderland question and even look down on Alice as seen through the conversation between Alice, the Gryphon and the Mock Turtle:

> 'Why did you call him Tortoise, if he wasn't one?' Alice asked.
> 'We call him Tortoise because he taught us,' said the Mock Turtle angrily: 'really you are very dull!'
> 'You ought to be ashamed of yourself for asking such a simple question,' added the Gryphon; and then they both sat silent and looked at poor Alice, who felt ready to sink into earth…
> 'Yes, we went to school in the sea, though you mayn't believe it- …'
> '*I've* been to day-school, too,' said Alice; 'you needn't be so proud as all that.'
> 'With extras?' asked the Mock Turtle a little anxiously.
> 'Yes,' said Alice, 'we learned French and music.'
> 'And washing?' said the Mock Turtle.
> 'Certainly not!' said Alice indignantly.
> 'Ah! Then yours wasn't a really good school,' said the Mock Turtle in a tone of great relief. 'Now at ours they had at the end of the bill, "French, music. And washing-extra".' (*Wonderland* 115-16)

Receiving foreign language and music education at school is not unexceptional for Alice, as a matter of fact, it is utterly normal. For the Gryphon and the Mock Turtle, however, it is unacceptable that Alice has not received washing education, which is equally unacceptable for Alice to receive it at school. Once again, Alice is incapable of using her knowledge against the inhabitants of Wonderland, and moreover, ends up being laughed at. Similar to Wonderland, she discovers how Looking- Glass is also quite unlike her own world and has a whole set of different rules. During a conversation, the White Queen and the Red Queen question Alice's general as well as mathematics knowledge. This dialogue shows how Alice distressfully realises how this world operates distinctly different from the Victorian society:

> 'Can you do Division? Divide a loaf by a knife- what's the answer to that?'
> 'I suppose- ' Alice was beginning but the Red Queen answered for her. 'Bread-and-butter of course. Try another Subtraction sum. Take a bone from a dog. What remains?'
> Alice considered. 'The bone wouldn't remain, of course, if I took it- and the dog wouldn't remain; it would come to bite me- and I'm sure *I* wouldn't remain!'
> 'Then you think nothing would remain?' said the Red Queen.
> 'I think that's the answer.'
> 'Wrong, as usual,' said the Red Queen; 'the dog's temper would remain.'

> …
> 'She can't do sums a bit!' the Queens said together, with great emphasis. (*Looking-Glass* 259-60)

Once again, while expecting to be praised for her knowledge and education, Alice is harshly criticised for her lack of comprehension. If she were to recite the Queen's response to any individual outside of the *Looking-Glass* world, Alice would likely be mocked, as it would appear irrational and absurd. Nevertheless, within that world, the logic, thus this answer, is valid. This demonstrates how even though Alice is "well coached in the art of conversation" (Ostry 36), her conversational abilities and charm miserably fail to get her way in *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass*, where conventional rules and understanding no longer apply.

As Harvey notes "[p]ostmodernist philosophers tell us not only to accept but even to revel in the fragmentations and the cacophony of voices…" (116), emphasising the postmodern celebration of multiplicity and difference. Alice's difficulty in accepting multiple perspectives that differ from her own, reflects the difficulty of embracing difference. "What we must learn, then," states Owens, "is how to conceive difference without opposition (62), which is something Alice struggles to accomplish throughout the novels. She resists the idea that other meanings might be just as valid as her own, which causes her interactions with the creatures to be quite rocky. For instance, when she encounters the Fish-Footman and the Frog-Footman, her curiosity heightens, which pushes her to try and learn more about these creatures:

> For a minute or two she stood looking at the house, and wondering what to do next, when suddenly a footman in livery came running out of the wood- (she considered him to be a footman because he was in livery: otherwise, judging by his face only, she would have called him a fish- and rapped loudly at the door with his knuckles. It was opened by another footman in livery, with a round face and large eyes like a frog; and both footmen, Alice noticed, had powdered hair that curled all over their heads. She felt very *curious* to know what it was all about, and crept a little way out of the wood to listen. (*Wonderland* 79; emphasis added)

Alice had never seen fish and frog footmen in her life, which causes her to find the whole situation quite humorous. For the Fish-Footman and the Frog-Footman, their serving their duties to the Duchess is a noble and serious act, but Alice merely laughs at their actions:

> The Fish-Footman began by producing from under his arm a great letter, nearly as large as himself, and this he handed over to the other, saying, in a solemn tone, 'For the Duchess. An invitation from the Queen to play croquet.' The Frog-Footman repeated, in the same solemn tone, only changing the order of the words a little, 'From the Queen. An invitation for the Duchess to play croquet.' Then they both bowed low, and their curls got entangled together. Alice laughed so much at this, that she had to run back into the wood for fear of their hearing her… (*Wonderland* 70)

Alice cannot grasp that the actions of the footmen are not only accepted but regarded as normal in Wonderland. Because she has been accustomed to human beings fulfilling such roles, she finds the situation rather comical and absurd. Upholding Western Victorian principles, Alice expects all she encounters with to share her understanding of moral conduct e.g., what is right, wrong, civilised and uncivilised. When she tries to enter the Duchess's house, the Frog-Footman refuses to let her in, deeming it unnecessary to knock on the door from the outside. Moreover, the Footman's behaviour of gazing at the sky while speaking to Alice, appears "decidedly uncivil" to Alice (*Wonderland* 81). After Alice persistently asks how she is to enter the house, the Footman replies with "*Are* you to get in at all?... That's the first question, you know" (*Wonderland* 81), further dumbfounding Alice and her expectations. This response baffles Alice and is unacceptable to her, firstly, because she does not take the Footman seriously for being a frog and, secondly, because she "did not like to be told so" (*Wonderland* 81). Her annoyance reaches a peak when she exclaims that there is "no use talking to him… he's perfectly idiotic!" (*Wonderland* 81), and enters the house disregarding the Footman. At this moment, Alice's rigid perspective reveals the limitations of conforming to a single worldview and perspective, highlighting the need to embrace multiple meanings instead, such as the Footman's reasons for his actions. Alice's inability to accept the Footman's role and behaviour creates a tension between her belief in fixed, social constructions and the pluralistic nature of Wonderland. Carroll's *Alice* novels attempt to subvert the idea that there is one universal truth or way of being, by presenting worlds where multiple and

contradictory logics and meanings coexist. This multiplicity undermines Alice's Victorian norms and aligns with the postmodern subversion of grand narratives that claim universal validity. The world of both novels embraces difference and disorder, highlighting the postmodern thinking of plurality, diversity and multiplicity.

One of the most striking instances where the postmodern elements of challenging grand narratives and embracing multiple meanings and truths are seen together is Alice's conversation with the Cheshire Cat, followed by the Hatter's Tea Party in *Wonderland*. Once again, Alice is lost and does not know where to go, as everything and everyone is so alien to her. She stumbles upon the Cheshire Cat, "sitting on a bough of a tree" (*Wonderland* 87). Because she does not know how to approach the creatures of Wonderland, "'Cheshire Puss,' she began, rather timidly, as she did not at all know whether it would like the name; however, it only grinned a little wider. "'Come, it's pleased so far,'" thought Alice, and she went on with "'[w]ould you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?'" (*Wonderland* 87). Alice's persistency on asking the inhabitants of Wonderland where she ought to go stems from her perception that there *must* be a right way which can take her back home, when in reality, there is not. The Cat makes it clear that there is no 'right' way to do anything in Wonderland. After Alice says it does not matter where she goes, the Cat replies with "[t]hen it doesn't matter which way you go" (*Wonderland* 87), which does not satisfy Alice. The Cat, then, points to the direction of the Hatter and the March Hare, whom he describes as "mad" (*Wonderland* 87). This upsets Alice even more as she rebukes that she does not want to be among mad people, to which the Cat replies:

> 'Oh, you can't help that,' said the Cat: 'we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad.'
> 'How do you know I'm mad?' said Alice.
> 'You must be,' said the Cat, 'or you wouldn't have come here.'
> Alice didn't think that proved it at all; however, she went on. 'And how do you know that you're mad?'
> 'To begin with,' said the Cat, 'a dog's not mad. You grant that?'
> 'I suppose so,' said Alice.
> 'Well then,' the Cat went on, 'you see a dog growls when it's angry, and wags its tail when it's pleased. Now *I* growl when I'm pleased, and wag my tail when I'm angry. Therefore I'm mad.'
> '*I* call it purring, not growling,' said Alice.
> 'Call it what you like,' said the Cat. (*Wonderland* 87-88)

In this conversation, the Cat's understanding of madness differs from Alice's, leaving her perplexed. The cat's definition of madness is shaped by his personal opinions and behaviour, embracing the postmodern element of multiple truths, whereas Alice defines madness through universal norms and objectivity. Through the Cat's responses, common sense, logic and rationality, the fundamentals of Enlightenment thinking, are playfully subverted. To Alice, the Cat's explanation of madness appears rather absurd and deeply illogical. However, what the Cat proposes about madness, with the example of the dog and its tail, is not so illogical in itself since it is not inconsistent. It demonstrates the postmodern idea that truth cannot be objectively determined by logic. What baffles Alice, however, is how absurd it is to accept, let alone contemplate such an irrational thing in her own reality. Hence, through this dialogue, the Cat voices the postmodern thought of rejecting as well as questioning established truths while encouraging Alice and readers alike to accept and celebrate the existence of multiple and contradictory truths.

The Cat's philosophy of, "call[ing] it what you like," can also be seen in *Looking-Glass*, where similarly multiple and subjective interpretations are encouraged. Just as she tries to find her way in Wonderland, Alice attempts to navigate around the fantastical world of *Looking-Glass* by asking its inhabitants how she should advance. Nonetheless, she becomes contempt with their answers and finds them illogical as well as contradictory. This instance can be seen in a conversation between Alice and the Red Queen:

> Alice didn't dare to argue the point, but went on" '- and I thought I'd try and find my way to the top of that hill-'
> 'When you say "hill",' the Queen interrupted, '*I* could show you hills, in comparison with which you'd call that a valley.'
> 'No, I shouldn't,' said Alice, surprised into contradicting her at last: 'a hill *can't* be a valley, you know. That would be nonsense-'
> The Red Queen shook her head. 'You may call it "nonsense" if you like,' she said, but I've heard nonsense, compared with which that would be as sensible as a dictionary!" (*Looking-Glass* 176)

Alice argues that it is impossible to assign the same definition to two different concepts. For Alice, a hill is a hill and a valley is a valley, which shows how she embodies the Enlightenment and Victorian mindset of strict rules, clear definitions, fixed boundaries, and stable meanings. Even though Alice sees the Red Queen's contradictory manner and mindset as utter nonsense, the Red Queen, similar to the Cat, insists that she can call

things whatever she likes: she may call a valley a hill, a hill a valley, sense nonsense, and nonsense sense. To her, it simply does not matter. The Red Queen, thus, embodies the postmodern rejection of putting ideas into such strict categories and embracing multiplicity and flexibility. Hence, the Cat and the Red Queen mock and subvert modern logic and discourse by deducing that concepts such as what is normal, rational, or true may vary from person to person, and that there is no fixed or single truth, but multiple truths, however arbitrary they may appear. Postmodernists claim that no single answer should exist for these questions, as all answers and definitions should be accepted. Thus, not only is the grand narrative of Enlightenment thinking mocked, but multiple meanings are also celebrated, both characteristics of postmodernism.

The postmodern characteristic of rejecting singular objectivity and accepting multiple interpretations is also clear in the scene, "A Mad Tea-Party," where logic and reason are ridiculed and dismantled once again. Walking through Wonderland after her conversation with the Cat, Alice stumbles upon the Hatter, the March Hare and the Dormouse, having a tea party under a tree. Even though the table is large, the three creatures "were all crowded together at one corner of it" (*Wonderland* 90). Although the creatures insist that there is not enough room for Alice when, in reality, there is "*plenty* of room," Alice insists on joining the party (*Wonderland* 90). After making a few remarks on Alice, the Hatter asks her a riddle which perplexes her: "'Why is a raven like a writing-desk?'" (*Wonderland* 91). Alice, confident in finding the correct answer to it, ponders over the riddle but is not successful. Nevertheless, Alice could never have guessed the correct answer, as no such answer exists. After being asked what the answer to the riddle is, the Hatter replies that he has not "the slightest idea" (*Wonderland* 93). The Hatter's nonsensical question mocks the belief that all questions can be answered with logic, reason, and knowledge. In this tea party and in Wonderland in general, Alice's knowledge does not advance her and even hinders her from having successful conversations with the creatures. Since they are having a tea party, it can be assumed that asking riddles with no answers is simply a pastime activity for the Hatter and the March Hare. Alice, however, cannot join in the fun, as she believes that everything must have an answer, a rule, and an order to it, even time:

> ‘What a funny watch!’ she remarked. ‘It tells the day of the month and doesn’t tell what o’clock it is!’
> ‘Why should it?’ muttered the Hatter. ‘Does *your* watch tell you what year it is?’
> ‘Of course not,’ Alice replied very readily: ‘but that’s because it stays the same year for such a long time together.’
> ‘Which is just the case with mine,’ said the Hatter.
> Alice felt dreadfully puzzled. The Hatter’s remark seemed to have no meaning in it, and yet it was certainly English.
> ‘I don’t quite understand,’ she said, as politely as she could. (*Wonderland* 92)

The Hatter makes it clear that time does not operate as Alice expects. Accustomed to the twenty-four-hour cycle, which does not exist in Wonderland, Alice is confused by the Hatter’s claim that it is “always six o’clock now” because Time is sensitive, especially when the Hatter remarks on “murdering the time” (*Wonderland* 94). As a result, the Hatter and the March Hare remain stuck in a continuous cycle, where the clock perpetually signals teatime. This peculiar experience challenges conventions and reflects a postmodern rejection of fixed and universal norms in favour of flexibility and plurality.

2.2 THE PORTRAYAL OF FLUID IDENTITIES

In *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass*, Carroll enquires into the postmodern concept of fluid identity, portraying Alice’s physical transformations such as growing and shrinking, as well as the reconstruction of her identity, where she is seen as a flower, a queen, a chess piece, and even a mythical creature in the two novels, respectively. These instances align with the postmodern belief that identity is neither fixed nor inherent, but fluid and constantly shaped by one’s surroundings (Kempny 2). Postmodernism’s understanding of identity derives as a reaction to modernists’ single, fixed, and stable view of identity.

To fully grasp the postmodern view of identity, it is essential to understand the earlier understandings of identity that postmodernism subverts. In this regard, Dunn remarks “[i]n traditional society, identity is largely pregiven through membership in the group and community, determined externally by systems of kinship and religion. In traditional cultures, identity is more or less fixed at birth and integrated into relatively stable structures of custom, belief, and ritual” (52-53). Traditional societies in Dunn’s comment refers to the pre-modern societies, where the individual’s identity is predestined by societal norms rather than personal choice or self-construction. Dunn’s comment

illustrates how such societies conceived of identity as stable, fixed, and inherited. Similarly, modernism also views identity as singular and unified in response to the disruptions of the modern world which does not allow room for change (Waugh 24).

In contrast, postmodernism subverts both traditional and modernist views on identity. Postmodernism rejects the idea of a coherent and unified self, asserting instead that identity is constructed, fluid, and unstable (Bauman 18). While postmodernism reached its zenith in the 1960s, Zygmunt Bauman remarks how, until 2004, the question of identity "was nowhere near the centre of [postmodernist] thoughts, remaining but an object of philosophical meditation," stressing its recentness in the field (17). He further claims that through postmodern thinking, identity was revealed "as something to be invented rather than discovered," drawing attention to how postmodernists view identity as a construction instead of an inheritance (15). It should be underscored that the postmodern perspective on identity stems from the broader postmodern subversion of universal values and fixed truths. As Bielik- Robson puts it, postmodernism challenges all social constructions, ultimate truths and universal sets of values, or posits "a disbelief in any ethics that claims to be based on solid, universally valid foundations" (64), demonstrating the reason behind postmodernism's rejection of traditional and modernist views of identity as unified, rooted, and stable. Instead, postmodernism argues that identity is inherently fragmented and fluid in character, shaped by discourse and power dynamics as well (Szkudlarek 100-102).

Alluding to Foucault, Szkudlarek emphasises how modern forms of control are not only exercised through brute force but through modern strategies with, "when some instance of power disappears from our eyes it usually means that it merely changes its economy, that for some reason it is being replaced by other, more effective or just more up-to-date strategies of control" (102). Taking into consideration Szkudlarek's interpretation on Foucault, postmodernists regard identity as the new method of control. Thus, for postmodernists, viewing identity as stable and fixed would be to submit to the power system, whereas rejecting it by embracing fluidity enables to be free of power and strict boundaries.

In light of this information, Alice's multiple and fluid identities can be viewed as a challenge to the traditional view of a stable, fixed, and coherent identity when analysed

through a postmodern lens. In the two novels, Alice's identity is not fixed but is fluid instead. Her identity is constantly morphed dramatically as she advances through the fantastical realms. In the world of *Wonderland*, she grows, and she shrinks in various instances until even Alice cannot realise herself. In *Looking-Glass*, although she does not experience a physical shift in her appearance and her body stays constant throughout the plot, her identity is, nonetheless, still challenged and redefined by the inhabitants she encounters. She is perceived as a flower by the talking garden, treated as chess pieces in a chess game, and referred to as a child or mythical creatures by others. All of these changes Alice encounters results in her asking "Who in the world am I? Ah, that's the great puzzle!" (*Wonderland* 46). In the following paragraphs, the postmodern understanding of fluid identity and how Carroll's examples align with it will be further discussed and analysed through specific scenes and dialogues from both novels, illustrating how these examples can be examined from a postmodern point of view.

Upon arriving in the world of *Wonderland*, Alice constantly faces obstacles which require her to change her physical appearance. When she encounters a tiny door through which she must pass in order to advance, Alice is faced with the issue of being too big for the door. She finds the solution in drinking a bottle labelled "DRINK ME," and shrinking significantly in size:

> 'What a curious feeling!' said Alice. 'I must be shutting up like a telescope.'
> And so it was indeed: she was now only ten inches high, and her face brightened up at the thought that she was now the right size for going through the little door into that lovely garden. First, however, she waited for a few minutes to see if she was going to shrink any further: she felt a little nervous about this; 'for it might end, you know,' said Alice, 'in my going out altogether, like a candle. I wonder what I should be like then?' (*Wonderland* 42)

Before the change in her size, Alice enters Wonderland with confidence in her sense of self and clear about what defines her identity. However, after shrinking suddenly, she experiences a disorienting sensation of discomfort and unfamiliarity. This shift unsettles her and evokes a fear of losing her identity altogether. From a postmodern perspective, however, Alice's fear of losing a fixed identity is unnecessary. Postmodern theory challenges the very notion of a stable and coherent self, instead positioning identity as fluid, fragmented, and continually reshaped by external forces and experiences. Thus,

rather than losing an essential self, Alice's transformations illustrate the inherent instability and multiplicity of identity itself.

Shrinking is not the worst of Alice's troubles as she also experiences rapid growth in *Wonderland*, which causes a shift in identity as well. After shrinking and becoming the correct size to enter the garden, Alice realises she needs a key in order to get through but she would have to grow in size to reach the key. After eating a cake, labelled, this time, as "EAT ME," Alice experiences another shock in the shift of her appearance:

> '…now I'm opening out like the largest telescope that ever was! Goodbye, feet' (for when she looked down at her feet, they seemed to be almost out of sight, they were getting so far off). 'Oh, my poor little feet, I wonder who will put on your shoes and stockings for you now, dears? I'm sure *I* shan't be able! I shall be a great deal too far off to trouble myself about you: you must manage the best way you can – but I must be kind to them,' thought Alice, 'or perhaps they won't walk the way I want to go! Let me see: I'll give them a new pair of boots every Christmas.' (*Wonderland* 44)

One again Alice experiences the surprise of changing, but this time, by growing uncontrollably in size and being more than nine feet high. Similar to shrinking, this sudden growth causes a brief disorientation for Alice as she sees her feet so far away from her. Her identity becomes so estranged that she regards her feet as separate pieces which destroys the coherence of identity. Because Alice is not accustomed to change, she laments her old, unified, and coherent self, similar to the modernists. She complains about how her new identity will only be trouble for her, as she will not be able put on her shoes and stockings anymore.

Alice does not find it easy to accept the change in her identity and she often tries to define herself as to what she is *not* instead of what she *is*, resulting in her constructing her identity through the perspective of herself as well as others. Throughout her journey in *Wonderland*, Alice's first and foremost aim is "to grow to [her] right size again; and the second thing is to find [her] way into that lovely garden" (*Wonderland* 66). Hence, by trying to retain her old identity, Alice depicts the modernist view on identity and how identities should be coherent and one in itself. "In our fluid world," remarks Bauman, "committing oneself to a single identity for life, or even for less than a whole life but for

a very long time to come, is a risky business. Identities are for wearing and showing, not for storing and keeping" (89). Whereas Alice finds it risky to experience a constant shift in her identity, Bauman's postmodern view on identity exhibits how identities should be fluid and the true risk lies in not allowing the self to experience change. After experiencing multiple changes in her appearance, Alice starts questioning who she truly is and tries to make sense of her identity by trying to label herself as, "'I'm sure I'm not Ada,' she said, 'for her hair goes in such long ringlets, and mine doesn't go in ringlets at all; and I'm sure I can't be Mabel, for I know all sorts of things, and she, oh! She knows such a very little! Besides, *she's* she, and *I'm* I, and- oh dear, how puzzling it all is!'" (*Wonderland* 47). Because Alice loses a coherent understanding of identity and constantly faces new versions of herself, she tries to create an identity for herself through what she is not instead of what she is, which, ultimately, perplexes her even more. Melchior argues that the formation of identity occurs through differentiation and comparison:

> The notion of 'one's own (individual) identity' encompasses two aspects of one's 'self.' First, there is the sense of personal identity: It points to the differences that the individual perceives and experiences in relation to others, this is where the awareness of being distinct and unique resides. The second aspect of the self is the sense of social identity: Here the emphasis is on similarities between the individual and other members of the group, and also on differences between the individual, as a member of his or her group, and members of other (alien) groups… One can be perceived as 'different,' and thus labeled, by one's social surroundings, or one can feel 'different' as a result of one's own comparisons with others. (105-106)

Melchior's comment presents how the concept of identity occurs through one's perception of the self as well as the perception of others. This idea is reflected in Alice's attempt of contrasting herself with her friends Ada and Mabel. She tries to form a new identity for herself by underlining how she is not like her friends. Hence, she identifies herself in relation to others while at the same time trying to conceive how others might perceive her. This highlights how identity is not fixed but is fluid both in itself but also for other people, as others' perception of an identity is subjective and changes from person to person. Currie further elaborates on this notion by stating that "identity is relational, meaning that it is not to be found inside a person but that it inheres in the relations between a person and others. In other words, personal identity is not really contained in the body

at all; it is structured by, or constituted by, difference" (17). Currie's remark is exemplified with Alice's confusion about her identity and how she attempts to define herself by that she is not, instead of what she is. Hence, she tries to shape her identity through differences and interactions with others.

Melchoir's and Currie's statements are also evident in the scene where Alice is identified as a serpent. After taking a bite out of a magical mushroom, Alice's neck grows immensely, "like a stalk out of sea of green leaves that lay far below her" (*Wonderland* 76). The extraordinary growth in Alice's neck results in Alice moving her neck "easily in any direction, like a serpent" (*Wonderland* 76). Alice's new transformation causes the Pigeon to mistake Alice for a serpent to which Alice rebukes:

> 'But I'm *not* a serpent, I tell you!' said Alice. 'I'm a- I'm a-'
> 'Well! *What* are you?' said the Pigeon. "I can see you're trying to invent something!'
> '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 the 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's no use denying it…and what does it matter to me whether you're a little girl or a serpent?'
> 'It matters a good deal to *me*,' said Alice hastily. (*Wonderland* 77-78)

This instance in the novel displays Melchior's and Currie's argument that identity is shaped through the perception of others alongside self-perception. Alice insists that she is a little girl despite the Pigeon's claim that she is a serpent, based on her physical transformation. By saying this "rather doubtfully" (*Wonderland* 77), Alice reveals her doubts regarding who she truly is. The Pigeon's refusal to accept Alice's self-definition combined with the contradictions between her appearance and self-understanding leaves Alice confused and unable to define who she is.

Nonetheless, Alice asserts that being a serpent instead of being a little girl matters significantly for her, thus causing her to plunge deeper into confusion in regard to her internal self. This instability of identity that Alice experiences affiliates with postmodern claims that identity is fluid, not fixed, and unstable. Alice does not want to linger on the obscurity of her changing identity. She concludes, "'I must be Mabel after all, and I shall have to go and live in that poky little house, and have next to no toys to play with, and

oh! Ever so many lessons to learn! No, I've made up my mind about it; if I'm Mabel, I'll stay down here!'" (*Wonderland* 48), signifying her persistency on forming a unified identity for herself, even if it means applying the identity of someone else. Bauman, however, criticizes harsh labelling and finds it a hinderance in the acceptance of fluid identities:

> The moment people say, 'How nice it is to have an identity,' one can be pretty sure that they are not certain that they have one, nor do they know exactly what to do to get it. One has an identity if one has no need to think of it. One becomes aware of having an identity, or of a need for having an identity, when there is something not really clear and straightforward about answering the questions, 'Who am I?' or 'Where do I belong?' two questions that, for all practical intents and purposes, blend into one. (19)

Bauman's comment makes it clear how Alice's search for a coherent identity is inherently a harmful act. He underlines how once one stops creating an identity for oneself and disregards labels as well as definitions, then they will eventually gain an identity without realising it. Hence, Alice's questions, "Who in the world am I?" and "What *will* become of me?" (*Wonderland* 46, 61), indicate how she is still unsure of her identity and by trying to define it, she is straying further from discovering it.

The postmodern challenge to the notion of a stable and coherent identity is also reflected in Melosik's argument that "the concept of authenticity does not exist anymore… There are only representations of various 'authenticities' that aspire to become the 'real and true one'" (84). Melosik's comment highlights that what people perceive as a true or stable self is merely a representation shaped by social influences. He explains that claims to authenticity are illusions and constructs designed to appear natural but are in fact fabricated. Similarly, Bauman describes identity as a "fiction," stating that it "did not gestate and incubate in human experience 'naturally,' did not emerge out of that experience as a self-evident 'fact of life'. That idea was forced into the Lebenswelt[7] of modern men and women - and arrived as a fiction" (20). Bauman's critical assessment on identity underlines how identity does not come inherently or naturally and is, thus, a

[7] "Lebenswelt" is the German word for "life-world," or the "world of lived experience" according to the Marriam-Webster dictionary.

modern product and construct, or as he calls it, merely fiction. Bauman adds that having to constantly have a defined identity or trying to answer the question "who am I?," is also a product of modernity. Hence, Bauman claims that the understanding of modern identity was imposed upon people through power discourse and institutions such as media, education, literature etc., becoming a weapon of power and simply one other narrative. Similar to Bauman's views on identity, Kempny states that "[t]hus, if identities are still stable and fixed, it is because of their being embedded in coherent and integrative social practices," (4), indicating how a stable and fixed identity does not exist naturally or biologically within a person but how it is rather a social construct.

This postmodern understanding of identity as unstable and constructed is illustrated in in the scene between Alice and the Caterpillar. As Alice progresses through Wonderland, she encounters a hookah-smoking caterpillar who starts interrogating Alice:

> …the Caterpillar took the hookah out of its mouth, and addressed her in a languid, sleepy voice.
> 'Who are *you*?' said the Caterpillar. This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, 'I- I hardly know, sir, just at present – at least I know who I *was* when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.'
> 'What do you mean by that?' said the Caterpillar sternly.
> 'Explain yourself!'
> 'I can't explain *myself*, I'm afraid, sir,' said Alice, 'because I'm not myself, you see.'
> 'I don't see,' said the Caterpillar.
> 'I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly,' Alice replied very politely, 'for I can't understand it myself to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing.' (*Wonderland* 69-70)

When the Caterpillar bluntly asks Alice, "who are you?", she is unable to give a straightforward answer. Her reply that she hardly knows who she is at the moment reflects confusion and disorientation over her identity. The physical transformation she undergoes, such as changing size repeatedly, serves as a metaphor of the instability of identity. Her body has physically changed multiple times, and this instability causes her to question who she really is. However, rather than embracing this fluidity, Alice expresses anxiety and how she cannot explain herself or who she is because she is not herself. This statement reveals how she experiences a loss of identity due to constant

change, which aligns with postmodernism's rejection of a unified and essential self. Although Alice does not fully embrace the notion of identity as fluid, her inability to define herself and her frustration with the question "who are you?" illustrate the postmodern notion that the self is not fixed or single but is a construct that is continuously reshaped.

As opposed to Alice, the Caterpillar embodies a postmodern perspective by embracing the fluid nature of identity and viewing change not as a threat but as a natural part of life. This idea is vividly portrayed in the conversation between Alice and the Caterpillar:

> '…being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing.'
> 'It isn't,' said the Caterpillar.
> 'Well, perhaps you haven't found it so yet,' said Alice; 'but when you have to turn into a chrysalis- you will someday, you know- and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you'll feel it a little queer, won't you?'
> 'Not a bit,' said the Caterpillar.
> 'Well, perhaps your feelings may be different,' said Alice; 'all I know is, it would feel very queer to *me*.'
> 'You!' said the Caterpillar contemptuously. 'Who are you?' Which bought them back again to the beginning of the conversation. (*Wonderland* 70)

In this moment, Alice tries to justify the disorientation she experiences caused by the shift of her identity by mentioning to the Caterpillar how he will also undergo multiple changes which will cause him discomfort. The Caterpillar, however, is unbothered by the future changes his identity will encounter. His nonchalant answers to Alice's questions suggest his finding the fluidity of the identity a normal experience. For this reason, he is unbothered by any transformation, in contrast to Alice. Therefore, the Caterpillar embraces the fluidity of the self and rejects a fixed and stable identity, reflecting a postmodern attitude. The Caterpillar's view that identity is not meant to be fixed or clearly defined aligns with postmodern thought, thus contrasting Alice's belief in a unified and stable self.

In *Looking-Glass*, even though Alice does not experience a physical transformation in her identity, the postmodern understanding of fluid identity is evident throughout the novel, as her identity changes from child to chess piece, flower, knight, and queen. As Alice advances across the chess-board themed realm of *Looking-Glass*, she encounters magical

and strange places that perplex her sense of identity. In order to advance to the Eighth Square of the world, Alice is obliged to go through a dark wood which leaves her feeling quite timid. In this strange wood, things have no names, hence, causes living things to forget their identities when they pass through it. Alice's monologue, "'This must be the wood… where things have no names. I wonder what'll become of *my* name when I go in? I shouldn't like to lose it at all- because they'd have to give me another, and it would be almost certain to be an ugly one'" (*Looking-Glass* 189), displays how Alice is frightened of losing her name which she acknowledges as an indicator of her identity. For Alice, names stand for much more than mere labels, as she regards them a contribution to the making of identity. Hence, she does not want another name which signals the notion that she does not want a change in her identity. After strolling through the wood, she starts forgetting the name of insects which causes her to exclaim, "'[t]hen it really *has* happened, after all! And now, who am I? I *will* remember, if I can! I'm determined to do it!' But being determined didn't help her much…" (*Looking-Glass* 189). Once again, similar to her crisis in *Wonderland*, Alice is seen questioning her identity and asking herself who she is and what makes her who she truly is. Even though Alice tries to force herself to remember her identity, she fails. This scene suggests that identity is fluid and flowing in its own terms and cannot be fixed at will.

Apart from Alice, the Fawn also questions Alice's identity in the wood by asking her what she calls herself, to which Alice replies with "'I wish I knew… Nothing, just now'" (*Looking-Glass* 190). This answer does not satisfy the Fawn who disapproves it with "'[t]hink again… that won't do'" (*Looking-Glass* 190). In this instance, the Fawn displays a modernist approach on identity, putting it within strict boundaries. The Fawn's answer implies that Alice must have a consistent depiction of herself in order for her identity to be valid. Melosik's remark that "[i]n modern societies the borders of identity have been clearly defined, coherent, and stable," (74) supports this view. Nonetheless, the stable, fixed, and coherent definition of oneself the Fawn fancies renders identity into a construct which, according to postmodernists, is false and fictitious. Alice, however, cannot answer the complex question of who she is, as she struggles to define and label herself. Additionally, her remark, "just now" (*Looking-Glass* 190), indicates the fluidity, inconsistency and ambiguity of her identity, which she does not embrace. She conveys

how she wishes she could define herself, thus signalling the modernist desire for a coherent identity.

As Alice moves across the chess board of *Looking-Glass*, she encounters even more creatures, each of whom interprets Alice's identity in different ways. Alice enters "the very queerest shop [she] ever saw" (*Looking-Glass* 217), run by an old Sheep, "sitting in an armchair knitting" (*Looking-Glass* 211). A comical conversation takes place between the Sheep and Alice, reflecting the Sheep's unusual perception of Alice's identity:

> 'Feather! Feather!' the Sheep cried again, taking more needles… 'Didn't you hear me say "Feather"?' the sheep cried angrily, taking up quite a bunch of needles.
> 'Indeed I did,' said Alice: 'you've said it very often- and very loud…'
> 'Feather, I say!'
> '*Why* do you say "Feather" so often?' Alice asked at last, rather vexed. 'I'm not a bird!'
> 'You are,' said the Sheep: 'you're a little goose.' This offended Alice a little, so there was no more conversation for a minute or two… (*Looking-Glass* 213-14)

At first, Alice cannot make sense of the Sheep's repeated use of the word 'feather,' so she chooses to ignore it. However, when the Sheep insists and calls her a little goose, Alice is taken aback by this unexpected labelling. She finally asks why the Sheep insists on saying 'feather,' since there are no birds around. To her surprise, the Sheep insists that Alice is indeed a bird, a little goose. Unsure of how to respond, Alice does not contradict the Sheep and instead continues on her way.

Alice, however, is not content with the identities given to her by the creatures of the land and declares that she wants to be Queen which she successfully achieves in the end of the book by completing the chessboard:

> She was standing before an arched doorway, over which were the words QUEEN ALICE in large letters, and on each side of it there was a bell-handle: one was marked 'Visitors' Bell,' and the other 'Servants' Bell.'
> 'I'll wait till the song's over,' thought Alice, 'and then I'll ring the- the- *which* bell must I ring?' she went on, very much puzzled by the names. 'I'm not a visitor, and I'm not a servant. There ought to be one marked "Queen," you know-' (*Looking-Glass* 264-65)

Alice starts out as Pawn and finishes the chess game as Queen, hence, marking a significant transformation in her identity alongside many other examples mentioned earlier. However, she faces yet another identity crisis when she must choose between ringing either the servants' bell or the visitors' bell to pass through the doorway. Alice experiences this as a dilemma because she identifies as neither servant not visitor since she is Queen. For this reason, she has trouble deciding what she must do in order to advance. This moment of hesitation reveals her confusion and frustrations with the rigid and predetermined categories imposed by the magical world, which fail to reflect her newly formed identity. Although Alice sees herself as Queen, she becomes baffled when confronted with labels that do not reflect her sense of self. This illustrates how constructions of identities often individuals into restrictive groups. Alice struggles to find a coherent sense of self because the limited options available prevent her from fitting within these strict boundaries and labels.

This conflict aligns with Bauman's postmodern view of identity as inherently flexible and evolving. As previously mentioned, Bauman argues that identities should be fluid and change with the flow of the world. This postmodern view is reflected through Alice's wish of going through the door marked Queen. However, because there is no such door, the options given to Alice do not allow her to present and embrace her new and flowing identity. Bauman also highlights the postmodern thought that "[i]dentities may be chosen if they look promising, or discarded when they disappoint, if they lose their past seductive power or are superseded by new, more attractive offers" (21), as seen in how Alice chooses which identities to accept or reject. When Alice enters Looking-Glass, the idea of becoming Queen, even if it means becoming a chess piece, becomes very alluring and tempting for her so she strives to finish the chess game. Thus, Alice's decision of wanting to become Queen correlates with Bauman's remark of identities being chosen if they look promising. After Alice acquires this position, she is once again faced with the possibility of shifting identities with the obstacle of the servants' and visitors' bells. Alice declines, or in Bauman's words discards shifting her identity, as the positions of these new identities will cause Alice to lose her past seductive power of being Queen.

Moreover, Szkudlarek's argument that "[i]n a decentered world, the Other cannot be easily defined. The postmodern world is therefore slowly learning to live with

ambivalence" (101) directly resonates with the ambiguity of identity Alice experiences while trying to go through the doorway. Alice has now become the 'Other,' as she is neither a visitor nor a servant which renders the two categories of bells inept. Szkudlarek posits that the world has become decentred, losing its previous conventions in many aspects such as the coherency of identity and that, therefore, such firm categories should not exist in the forming and existence of identities. His comment suggests that Alice should inherently have the freedom to go through the doorway without having to face societal pressures that hinder the possibility of multiple and fluid identities. Nonetheless, even though that freedom is not given to Alice, her rejection of ringing either bells correlates with Szkudlarek's remark of how the postmodern world is "slowly learning to live with ambivalence" (101). Alice does not accept to be put into the given identity roles and does not change her identity just to advance. She sticks to her sense of self and embraces uncertainty, even if it means costing her to reach her goals.

The fluid nature of identity in postmodernism, and the way this can lead to marginalisation and 'othering,' is further illustrated during the scene where the Duchess's baby transforms into a pig. Alice is not the only one who undergoes transformations resulting in the shifting of her identity throughout the two novels. The Duchess's baby also demonstrates the postmodern element of fluid and unstable identities. Similar to Alice's becoming Queen in *Looking-Glass*, the baby also gets marginalised due to its flowing and transforming identity. In *Wonderland*, after Alice enters the Duchess's house, she encounters a chaotic moment: flying "saucepans, plates and dishes" all over the place (*Wonderland* 83). Because she has an appointment to play croquet with the Queen, the Duchess hands the baby over to Alice. Just like all things in *Wonderland*, the baby also appears to be quite strange to Alice:

> Alice caught the baby with some difficulty as it was a queer-shaped little creature, and held out its arms and legs in all direction, 'just like a starfish,' thought Alice. The poor little thing was snorting like a steam-engine where she caught it, and kept doubling itself up and straightening itself out again, so that altogether, for the first minute or two, it was as much as she could do to hold it. As soon as she had made out the proper way of nursing it (which was to twist it up into a sort of knot, and then keep tight hold of its right ear and left foot, so as to prevent its undoing itself), she carried it out into the open air. (*Wonderland* 84-85)

Once again Alice is faced with an extraordinary and peculiar instance, this time, with a baby who blows steam from its nose and flings around its arms and legs like a starfish. The baby's transformation starts in the arms of Alice and after a second look at the baby, Alice realises that "it had a *very* turn- up nose, much more like a snout than a real nose; also its eyes were getting extremely small for a baby" (*Wonderland* 85). The baby experiences a shift in its identity by turning into a pig, which demonstrates the unreliable and fluid nature of identity seen in postmodern thought.

As mentioned on multiple occasions, postmodernists claim and embrace the instability and flowing nature of identity, as mentioned by Kempny that "identity is not a stable, intrinsic, and independent property of a person or a group, but is always formed in action" (6). Hence, just as postmodernists celebrate the plurality of truths, they also support the multiplicity of identities. As Eagleton notes, "[w]hat postmodernism pits against identity, in the sense of sameness is plurality, which it oddly assumes to be an unequivocally positive good" (222-23). Eagleton's remark highlights the postmodern nature of identity being plural, diverse and fluid and how it is acknowledged as inherently positive in contrast to the fixed, unified and single nature of identity that is romanticised by modern thinking. Nonetheless, Eagleton also stresses how even though the multiplicity and fluidity of identity is essential in escaping the conformity of a single and constructed identity, it does not always yield optimal results and can lead to complications.

In contrast to the "either/or" dichotomy of modernist thought, Hutcheon argues that postmodernism embraces a "both/and" view, highlighting the contradictive nature of identity ("Postmodernism" 120). Hutcheon concludes that the postmodern self, therefore, "was not seen as a coherent whole, but rather as always having traces of the other within itself," underscoring the importance of plurality rather unity ("Postmodernism" 120). These ideas are reflected in the baby's transformation into a pig and how Alice's attitude towards the baby noticeably shifts once the change occurs. For reasons unknown, the baby turns into a pig but Alice "did not like the look of the *thing* at all" (*Wonderland* 85; emphasis added). She addresses the pig, saying "[i]f you're going to turn into a pig, my dear… I'll have nothing more to do with you" (*Wonderland* 85). After the pig's violent grunts, Alice gets another glance of the baby who unmistakeably turns into a pig which results in Alice setting "the little creature down, [feeling] quite relieved to see it trot away

quietly into the wood" (*Wonderland* 86). In this instance, Alice marginalises the baby for transforming into a pig and positioning it as the 'Other.' She watches in disgust as the baby transforms into a pig, or as Alice quotes, a thing. After the baby completes its transformation, Alice discards of it by setting it into the wood. At first, Alice does not consider the baby to be a burden, even though it was making a ruckus and was quite difficult to tame. Nevertheless, after the baby turns into a pig, Alice starts viewing it as a burden and becomes relieved of having set it into the wood. Bauman's acknowledgement that "[i]dentities may be taken away with or without warning, the habitual and cozily familiar ones may be emptied of their content and made unworkable while the new ones may feel awkward and fit ill the habit" (21) points to how the baby's transformation happens suddenly, without warning and how it transforms into something quite out of the ordinary and estranged.

Carroll's portrayal of a baby transforming into a pig demonstrates the postmodern rejection of stable and traditionally constructed identities. Alice views the baby/pig's new identity as 'awkward' and 'fit ill the habit' which results in its value being diminished. Consequently, the baby/pig is marginalised for not conforming to the established norms of society and pushed to the edges by being ushered into loneliness. In relation to the marginalisation and 'othering' of minorities due to the difference in their identities Melosik states the following:

> In the contemporary world minority groups increasingly give up efforts to imitate the dominating cultural patterns and fight for gaining freedom in representing their own identity. They do not want to be perceived any more as having 'lower' or pathological identities. Very often they are proud of their Otherness: 'I am Black,' 'I am homosexual,' 'I am the minority.' As a result of this process it is more and more difficult for dominant groups to perceive their own identities as neutral and universal. (76)

Like the baby/pig in *Wonderland*, minorities in society tend to get marginalised and 'othered' for rejecting the societal norms imposed upon individuals and their identities. In this context, minorities refer to groups of people who differ from the majority in terms of ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, or other social and cultural characteristics. These groups often experience marginalisation because their identities do not conform to

the majority's established norms and values. Similarly, the baby's transformation into a pig symbolises how those who do not conform to societal expectations, such as minorities, can be devalued and pushed to the margins. Just as the baby/pig is rejected and isolated for its different identity, minorities frequently face 'othering' and exclusion for refusing to conform to norms. Melosik observes that in the constantly flowing and shifting postmodern world, minorities, however, are proud of their diverse and fluid identities. After the baby turns into a pig, Alice deems it unworthy and degrades its value. Alice's act demonstrates the dominating view of degrading identities that do not conform to the norms of the society and how this results in their getting marginalised and pushed into the periphery. Nevertheless, postmodernists are interested in the periphery and bringing the periphery into the centre. For this reason, they argue that marginalised groups are proud of being 'othered' and they do not allow the rigid and limited boundaries set on identities to assign their values. As Hutcheon notes "[t]hose who had been ignored by the grand narratives now demanded to be heard. Herein lay the roots of the postmodern focus on those who have been excluded, those variously referred to in the theory as the marginal, the ex-centric, the different or the other" ("Postmodernism" 120). Hutcheon's comment further sheds light onto how postmodernism does not simply acknowledge the marginalised, but centres them, thus making space for identities which were tended to be pushed to the periphery.

On another note, unlike conventional Victorian children's texts which harshly punished the curiosity of young girls as it was seen as a threat to the societal norms, Carroll's *Alice* novels subverts this practice by allowing Alice to freely pursue her curiosity in the fantastical worlds of *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass*. As Ren notes, Alice's journey "allows her to get into trouble, to meet, debate with, and even talk back to adult creatures, to explore new places by herself, and most importantly, to boldly assert who she is" (131). This case can be examined through a postmodern lens, in relation to both the challenge of grand narratives and the fluidity of identity. The Victorian Period gave utmost importance to gender roles and the expectations associated with each. As Scott observes, gender became a "cultural construction" in the Victorian Period, during which "appropriate roles for women and men" were created (1056). Alongside religious and moral teaching, Victorians embedded rigid gender roles on children from a very early age, hence, categorising them into feminine and masculine. Thus, Victorian children were

expected to behave in accordance with their appointed gender-specific roles which corresponded with obedience. Whereas boys were taught to be assertive leaders, girls were educated to be gentle and passive caretakers (Gorham 75). The Victorian society developed various social constructs, ideologies, roles, and behaviours centred around gender, with the 'angel in the house' concept being a prominent example. This phrase was coined by Coventry Patmore in his poem "The Angel in the House" (1854) in which women are idealised and assigned a distinct set of gender roles and "traditionally feminine values- love, intuition, beauty, virtue" (Christ 149), which designates them to the domestic sphere. Hence, as also illustrated in Patmore's poem, the Victorians were of the view that the ideal woman should possess the following attributions:

> The ideal woman was willing to be dependent on men and submissive to them, and she would have a preference for a life restricted to the confines of home. She would be innocent, pure, gentle and self-sacrificing. Possessing no ambitious strivings, she would be free of any trace of anger or hostility. More emotional than man, she was also more capable of self- renunciation. (Gorham 4-5)

These strict traits were created to confine women and young girls to the domestic and private spheres, encouraging them to aspire to be the ideal daughter, mother and wife. On the other hand, men and young boys were expected to exhibit 'masculine' features such as possessing the capacity for "action, aggression, and achievement" (Christ 149). These gender roles were conveyed in children's fiction through periodicals, didactic tales, novels and illustrations written for children in which gender differences were emphasized and the "worlds of girlhood and boyhood" were strictly constructed (Gorham 18). In relation to the constructed gender roles of young Victorian girls and boys, Davidoff and Hall state the following:

> With all the loving care, boys still had to learn that they were made of sterner stuff and prepare to enter a wider world…Girls…were not expected to be as adventurous. While boys were given hoops, balls and other toys associated with physical activities, girls played with dolls, dolls houses, needlebooks and miniature work baskets. Both sexes took part in activities such as keeping pets and tending small gardens, but the range of boys' pets was wider, including kites and owls as well as the more familiar rabbits, cats and dogs. Girls' gardens concentrated on flowers,

> while boys might plant trees and ferns. Boys were taught to swim and dive, activities not often encouraged for girls. (344)

This quote sheds light onto the harsh categorisation of girls and boys starting from an early age and how this categorisation was reinforced through various aspects of daily life such as toys, hobbies, and leisure activities. Boys and girls were directed into separate spheres as boys were encouraged to be active, adventurous, and physically engaged with the outside world, while girls were confined to the domestic sphere and encouraged toward sedentary tasks that foreshadowed their future roles as wives and mothers. Even shared activities by both sexes, such as gardening or pet keeping, were shaped by gendered expectations. These stereotypes not only shaped children's experiences but also enforced a strict code of behaviour. Girls who acted outside of these expectations were often scolded and seen as disobedient which fortified the idea that being a 'proper' young girl meant being passive and domestic.

In the *Alice* novels, Carroll, however, diverts from attributing Alice the strict gender role of the Victorian Period by illustrating her in action and pursuing her curiosity. By not punishing Alice for being curious and adventurous, Carroll refuses to confine her within traditional gender roles, thereby challenging Victorian norms based on gender roles which can be analysed through the postmodern concept of a challenge to grand narratives. Furthermore, by stepping outside of the domestic sphere assigned to women and journeying in the outside world of men, Alice subverts the Victorian gender roles assigned to young girls; an approach that can be examined through the postmodern element of fluid identities. As mentioned previously, Victorian children, both boys and girls, were expected to obey moral conducts and manners such as speaking and acting respectfully and portraying religious virtues such as patience and obedience. Complying to strict gender roles was another responsibility the Victorian child carried. For example, young girls were to stay at home with their mothers and learn housework. Nevertheless, the girls who gave into their curiosity and indulged in activities attributed to boys such as endorsing in physical activity and venturing on their own, were punished. Punishment tied young Victorian girls to the domestic field and disabled them from exploring the depths of their imaginations and curiosities.

The concept of punishment towards disobedient children in the Victorian Period is illustrated in *Looking-Glass* through Alice's dialogue with her cat Kitty. Alice gets upset with the kitten for undoing the ball of wool she had been winding, crying "you wicked wicked little thing!" at it (*Looking-Glass* 156). She condemns Kitty for its rambunctious acts:

> 'Do you know, I was so angry, Kitty,' Alice went on, as soon as they were comfortably settled again, 'when I saw all the mischief you had been doing, I was very nearly opening the window, and putting you out into the snow! And you'd have deserved it, you little mischievous darling! What have you got to say for yourself? Now don't interrupt me!' (*Looking-Glass* 157)

In this comical incident, Alice is clearly imitating Victorian adults who scolded their children for any unpleasant behaviour. Even though the kitten displays quite normal behaviour for its nature, Alice mirrors the phrases told to her by threatening the kitten and demanding it to not interrupt her. Alice's rebukes become even more comical as she gets upset with Kitty for things that do not even require any scorning:

> 'I'm going to tell you all your faults. Number one: you squeaked twice while Dinah was washing your face this morning. Now you can't deny it, Kitty, for I heard you! What's that you say?' (pretending that the kitten was speaking). 'Her paw went into your eye? Well, that's *your* fault, for keeping your eyes open- if you'd shut them tight up, it wouldn't have happened. Now don't make any more excuses, but listen!' (*Looking-Glass* 157-58)

In this passage, once again, Alice humorously mimics the harsh disciplinary behaviour of Victorian adults towards children. Even though Kitty's actions are harmless and relating to her nature of being a kitten, Alice threatens to punish it, mirroring the authoritativeness of adult figures who likewise rebuke children for their dynamic nature. Hence, this comical scene reflects how Victorian morals taught children that going against their curious nature is regarded as a sin and that they should reproach from it if they do not want to get punished.

Nonetheless, the moment Alice, "burning with curiosity" (*Wonderland* 38), steps foot into the magical realms of *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass*, she is free to pursue and endorse in her curiosity without facing harsh consequences and punishments. As mentioned previously, Victorian girls were expected to conform to traditional feminine roles and behaviours and were discouraged from curiosity and mischief. This idea is evident in *Looking-Glass*, where Alice tells Kitty she was "watching the boys getting in sticks for the bonfire" (156). Being confined to the domestic sphere, Alice is only allowed to watch the boys participate in physical activities such as collecting sticks. Even though it is an entertaining activity for girls as well, due to the strict Victorian gender roles, Alice cannot participate in it. However, once she sets foot onto Looking-Glass, she ventures around the magical world and satisfies her curiosity by talking to the creatures of the land and asking them about the place. In relation to this idea Horne observes how adventurous fiction written particularly for boys was discouraged from girls:

> Even when presented as a tool to teach proper manners, morals, and mores, adventure fictions, including robinsonades, all fell under the suspect generic category "novel." And fears of the noxious effects of novel reading on the young (in particular, on girls) expressed in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century conduct books continued far into the nineteenth century. (127)

Horne's comment displays how curiosity and independence were discouraged in young girls for fear of clashing with their feminine characteristics of being obedient, submissive, and fragile and such concepts were displayed in literary texts for young boys, such as robinsonades, which depicted adventure stories. Moreover, Goodman underlines how discouraging girls from concepts attributed to young boys such as curiosity and action and supporting female piety which was illustrated in books for girls, hindered "personal and social maturity" in the development of young girls (18). Carroll, however, does not punish Alice for exceeding the domestic sphere and transgressing Victorian norms, but instead rewards her "with growth and the return home" (Roberts 35). By doing so, Roberts notes how Carroll satirises "the adult world in general, and the adult guide in particular" (35). Carroll's subversive stance enables Alice to attain "independence of thought," making her a rebellious and exemplary character, paving the way for other independent female characters to come (Roberts 35).

In conclusion, Carroll's fantastical worlds of *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* reflect postmodern thinking by rejecting singular truths, embracing multiplicity, and celebrating the fluidity of identity. Through Alice's conflict with the realms' absurd logic, different realities as well as unstable and fluid identities, both novels undermine established meanings and display the limitations of the rigid ideals of the Victorian Period. Moreover, Carroll allows his female protagonist to explore, question, and fulfil her curiosity in the fantastical realms, rather than confine her to the limits of authoritative gender and social roles. Thus, by subverting grand narratives, stable identities, and societal expectations, the *Alice* novels align with postmodern thought, and invite readers to reflect on the constructed and established nature of reality by questioning conventional norms. In doing so, the novels demonstrate the liberating potential of postmodernism, thus embracing ambiguity, plurality, and the unknown within human experience.

CHAPTER 3
THE CHALLENGE TO NARRATIVE CONVENTIONS IN *ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND* AND *THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS AND WHAT ALICE FOUND THERE*

"I can explain all the poems that ever were invented –
and a good many that haven't been invented just yet."
(Lewis Carroll *Through the Looking Glass*)

In this chapter, the experimental style and subversive quality of *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* will be analysed through the lens of postmodern narrative conventions. Both novels bear many postmodern techniques, particularly in their playful and unconventional narrative structures. The analysis will begin with an exploration of parody and playfulness, followed by the examination of discontinuity, incoherence, and the absence of a clear narrative aim.

Carroll's early years give insight into the origins of the playful and experimental style that characterises the *Alice* novels. From an early age, Carroll possessed and showed signs of a deeply playful and imaginative demeanour. This playfulness was reflected in his early literary works and became a key feature of his literary voice with the publications of the *Alice* novels. As mentioned in the Introduction, Carroll grew up in a house full of children and invented games in order to entertain the household. These games were creatively mixed with wordplay as well as mathematics and logic, other interests of his (Weaver 15). His love for inventive games, riddles, and puzzles continued well onto his adult life, and he engaged with children through these playful and imaginative games, especially through magic tricks and puppets (Skinner 6). It is noted how he liked to form animals with his handkerchief and make them "jump mysteriously out of his hand," while also teaching children how to make paper boats and pistols "that popped when swung through the air" (Carroll and Gardner xvii). He also enjoyed games such as croquet, backgammon,

billiards and, particularly, chess. Gardner adds how Carroll always carried with him some sort of game, from "wire puzzles" to "unusual gifts," in a black bag which he always carried with him, in case he stumbled upon a child, preferably a little girl (Carroll and Gardner xviii). For Carroll, entertaining little girls was the hobby "that aroused his greatest joys," which ultimately led him to create the *Alice* stories. Hence, upon analysing his younger years, it becomes evident that Carroll's playfulness that is vividly portrayed in the *Alice* novels were neither incidental nor temporary, and his fascination with puzzles, wordplay, riddles, and puns shaped the content as well as the experimental structure of these works. Carroll's tendency toward play and experimentation laid the foundation for the use of parody, playfulness, and experimental narrative structure in the *Alice* novels, all of which can be examined through a postmodern lens.

3.1 THE EMPLOYMENT OF PARODY AND PLAYFULNESS

Even though the *Alice* novels predate postmodernism, many examples of parody and playfulness from a postmodern perspective are demonstrated in both novels. Carroll's parody touches on a variety of different areas such as Victorian morality and didacticism, the legal and political systems as well as adult figures in authority. At the same time, Carroll approaches storytelling in the *Alice* novels in a playful manner, using clever and witty wordplay. He also experiments with the narrative structure of both novels by referencing other texts and styles, and by subverting storytelling conventions, all of which can be examined through a postmodern lens.

Parody, which is defined in the most general terms as being an imitation of another text or style, has been employed as a literary device for centuries, dating back to classical thinkers such as Aristotle and Aristophanes (Weldt-Basson 1). In postmodern terms, parody is the fusion of creation with critique (Waugh 68). Its place in postmodernism is quite significant, as it is widely viewed by scholars as a central element of postmodernism (Hutcheon, *The Politics* 93). Since postmodernity as a theory challenges grand narratives and established meanings, postmodern literature similarly employs this deconstructive attitude in literature through the assertion and the deliberate undermining of principles such as "value, order, meaning, control and identity" (Russel 247).

Carroll exhibits this same subversive and experimental attitude in the *Alice* novels by parodying Victorian morality and didacticism, particularly through humorous, playful, and absurd rewritings of well-known moral poems of the time, such as Isaac Watts' "Against Idleness and Mischief" (1715), "The Sluggard (1715), and Robert Southey's "The Old Man's Comforts and How He Gained Them" (1799). Even though imitation is at the core of parody, Hutcheon refers to parody as an "acknowledged borrowing" (*A Theory* 38), highlighting how the purpose behind imitating past literary works lies in the intention to critique and subvert them, not mimic them, which is vividly seen in the *Alice* novels.

An example of Carroll's parody of Victorian morality and didacticism occurs when Alice attempts to recite Watts' poem "Against Idleness and Mischief." Watts' original poem, which reflects Victorian moral values, is as follows:

> How doth the little busy bee
> Improve each shining hour,
> And gather honey all the day
> From every opening flower!
>
> How skilfully she builds her cell!
> How neat she spreads the wax!
> And labours hard to store it well
> With the sweet food she makes.
>
> In works of labour or of skill,
> I would be busy too;
> For Satan finds some mischief still
> For idle hands to do… (1-12)

In this poem, Watts, an acclaimed hymn writer of his time (Carroll and Gardner 23), underlines and promotes the importance of discipline and virtuous behaviour aimed towards young Victorian children. By giving examples from a hardworking bee, Watts glorifies labour and presents it as a moral ideal and urges children to avoid idleness and instead devote themselves to productive and beneficial activities. Hence, Watts' poem reflects the Victorian belief that hard work was not only a virtue but also a moral obligation. During the nineteenth century, the poem was widely recognised as a didactic guide that shaped children's behaviour in line with the values and expectations of the

Victorian society. However, upon arriving in Wonderland, Alice finds that "words did not come the same as they used to" (*Wonderland* 47) and unconsciously recites a distorted version of Watts' moralistic poem:

> 'How doth the little crocodile
> Improve his shining tail,
> And pour the waters of the Nile
> On every golden scale!
>
> How cheerfully he seems to grin,
> How neatly spread his claws,
> And welcomes little fishes in
> With gently smiling jaws!' (*Wonderland* 47)

Carroll's parody replaces the busy and bustling bee with the cunning crocodile, thus mocking the moralistic and didactic messages embedded within Watts' poem. Rather than promoting hard work and virtue, the crocodile appears polite and cheerful while cunningly luring fish into its jaws. This unsettling yet humorous contrast illustrates the deceptive nature of appearances and subtly critiques the morality of Victorian didacticism. Carroll's parody transforms a lesson about virtue and productivity into menace and absurdity which undermines moral instruction aimed at children.

Carroll additionally parodies Watts' "The Sluggard" in which Watts promotes Victorian morality and didacticism by, this time, condemning laziness through the lazy sluggard. Similar to "Against Idleness and Mischief," "The Sluggard" also emphasises the significance of hard work and how children are expected to carry out these Victorian morals and values:

> `Tis the voice of the sluggard; I hear him complain,
> 'You have waked me too soon, I must slumber again.'
> As the door on its hinges, so he on his bed,
> Turns his sides and his shoulders and his heavy head.
>
> 'A little more sleep, and a little more slumber;'
> Thus he wastes half his days, and his hours without number,
> And when he gets up, he sits folding his hands,
> Or walks about sauntering, or trifling he stands… (1-8)

The aforementioned poems of Watts' take place in his *Divine Songs: Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children* (1715), one of the most acclaimed books of the eighteenth century, which is a collection of didactic and moral poetry written for children (Pinto 216). This collection served as a textbook in schools with the aim of teaching children Victorian values, religion, and moral instruction (Rogal 95). In this poem, Watts presents the sluggard as a negative example, personifying it with unwanted behaviour such as laziness and imprudence. By doing so, Watts instructs young readers to be mindful of their time and treat it with caution rather than squander it away. Carroll, however, subverts these strict moral expectations imposed on Victorian children by parodying Watts' overtly didactic poem by making Alice recite the poem in a humorous way:

> ``Tis the voice of the Lobster; I heard him declare,
> 'You have baked me too brown, I must sugar my hair.'
> As a duck with its eyelids, so he with his nose
> Trims his belt and his buttons, and turns out his toes.
> When the sands are all dry, he is gay as a lark,
> And will talk in contemptuous tones of the Shark:
> But, when the tide rises and sharks are around,
> His voice has a timid and tremulous sound.' (*Wonderland* 123)

Once more, Carroll mocks and diverts Victorian ideals by deducing Watts' didactic lines into absurd jokes. Upon hearing Alice's version of the poem, the Mock Turtle comments that it sounds like "uncommon nonsense" (*Wonderland* 124), which strengthens the parodic intention of the scene. Once again, Carroll mocks Victorian ideals and set of beliefs by rendering the original work of Watts into a mere jest for children to enjoy and laugh at.

In addition to Watts' poems, Carroll subverts the moralistic tone in Victorian children's literature with a parody of Robert Southey's poem "The Old Man's Comforts and How He Gained Them." Southey's poem aims to instil Victorian morality on young children through its portrayal of the advantages of being virtuous at a young age:

> You are old, Father William, the young man cried,
> The few locks which are left you are grey;
> You are hale, Father William, a hearty old man,

> Now tell me the reason, I pray.
>
> In the days of my youth, Father William replied,
> I remember'd that youth would fly fast,
> And abused not my health and my vigour at first
> That I never might need them at last… (qtd. in *The Annotated* 48)

Southey's poem reflects Victorian ideals of discipline through obedience and virtue, which is illustrated to lead to a peaceful life as one ages. The poem advises young children to spend their years of youth wisely by being pious and hardworking which would, in return, reward them in old age. In Southey's poem, the young man asks Father William multiple questions about his youth and how he has aged, to which Father William replies back happily and patiently. In Carroll's parody, on the other hand, the youngster also asks multiple questions to Father William; however, these questions are very different from the questions asked in Southey's poem, as they are rather comical and nonsensical:

> 'You are old, Father William,' the young man said,
> 'And your hair has become very white;
> And yet you incessantly stand on your head-
> Do you think, at your age, it is right?'
>
> 'In my youth,' Father William replied to his son.
> 'I feared it might injure the brain;
> But, now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,
> Why, I do it again and again.'
> …
> 'I have answered three questions, and that is enough,'
> Said his father; 'don't give yourself airs!
> Do you think I can listen all day to such stuff?
> Be off, or I'll kick you downstairs!' (*Wonderland* 73-4)

According to Gardner, Carroll's parody of Southey's poem is regarded as "one of the undisputed masterpieces of nonsense verse" (Carroll and Gardner 49). In this nonsensical poem, in which the meaning of the original poem is completely rendered, moral guidance is not given to the young child as expected from the Victorian adult figure. As opposed to Southey's poem, the young child in Carroll's poem seems to ask the questions to annoy Father William and remind him that he is very old, by asking questions that neither would benefit from. In return, the young child is faced with

bizarre answers and nonsensical comments, such as balancing an eel on the nose. Hence, Carroll subverts the message of Southey's poem of demonstrating the rewards of a virtuous youth in old age by presenting Father William in a playful and nonsensical behaviour.

This poem also has a parodic undertone because the Caterpillar *demands* Alice recite it, almost like a teacher, and Alice folds her hands and begins. It was believed in the Victorian Period that folding hands was the 'correct' posture for recitation (*Wonderland* 284). However, the fact that Alice recites a nonsensical and comical poem while acquiring the 'correct' posture adds onto the mocking tone of the scene. Thus, Carroll's use of parody in the *Alice* novels aligns with Hutcheon's view of parody being "a form of imitation, but imitation characterized by ironic inversion, not always at the expense of the parodied text" (*A Theory* 6). Hutcheon's statement sheds light onto the reason behind Carroll's employment of parody in both novels, which was to not simply mock them, but to render them nonsensical and thought-provoking at the same time. By doing so, the reader is encouraged to acknowledge the absurdity of the rigid Victorian conventions imposed on children through a subtle undertone that does not attack or reject them outrightly.

Carroll also mocks and subverts Victorian societal norms such as law and politics, particularly authoritative figures in such systems, by parodying them and presenting them in bizarre and absurd instances in both *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass*. This postmodern element of subverting grand ideologies through parody is seen through various instances in both novels such as the Queen of Hearts, The Knave of Hearts' trial as well as the Caucus-Race. Alice hears about the Queen of Hearts throughout her journey in Wonderland through various creatures such as the Duchess and the Hatter, but her first formal encounter with the Queen takes place when she enters her "beautiful garden, among the bright flowerbeds and the cool fountains" (*Wonderland* 98). As she progresses through the royal garden, Alice comes to realise that the Queen and her court are comprised of many absurdities:

> First came ten soldiers carrying clubs: these were all shaped like the three gardeners, oblong and flat, with their hands and feet at the corners; next the ten courtiers: these

> were ornamented all over with diamonds, and walked two and two, as the soldiers did. After these came the royal children: there were ten of them, and the little dears came all ornamented with hearts. Next came the guests, mostly Kings and Queens…Then followed the Knave of Hearts, carrying the King's crown on a crimson velvet cushion… (*Wonderland* 100)

Alice, however, does not take the royal circle seriously as she thinks "they're only a pack of cards, after all" (*Wonderland* 102). The Queen, who enters last of this '*grand*' (*Wonderland* 100; emphasis added) procession, is depicted as turning "crimson with fury" and constantly screaming 'Off with his/her head!' like a wild beast (*Wonderland* 102). The Queen of Hearts can be viewed as a parody of Queen Victoria who was well known for her notorious tantrums which even terrified her consort, Prince Albert, who had the fear that she "might have inherited the madness of George III[8]" ("Queen"). Carroll himself defines the Queen of Hearts as being "a sort of embodiment of ungovernable passion- a blind and aimless Fury" (Carroll and Gardner 82). Similar to the Queen, the King also blindly and comically exercises his political powers by wanting to behead the image of the Cheshire Cat's head floating in the sky, with the argument that "anything that had a head could be beheaded, and that you weren't to talk nonsense" (*Wonderland* 108). The King and Queen of Hearts and their court can, therefore, be examined as parodies of the nineteenth-century monarchy and their punishment system. While the leading political figures carelessly exercise power, their followers are forced to carry out the most absurd actions such as painting white roses on a tree red (*Wonderland* 99), out of fear.

Moreover, the Knave of Hearts' trial is also a parody of the legal system, as it follows the King and the Queen's impulsive wishes instead of justice. The purpose of the trial is, thus, not to regain justice, but to carry out the impetuous demands of the monarchy, which can be read as a critique of the Victorian legal and political systems. The trial is quite nonsensical as the jury-box is composed of animals and birds who are illiterate. Moreover, the judge is actually the King "who wore his crown over the wig" (*Wonderland* 117) and who creates rules as he wishes such as "'Rule Forty-two. All persons more than a mile high to leave the court'" (*Wonderland* 137). Additionally,

[8] King George III is famously known as "the mad king of England" because of his struggles with mental illness (Detweiler 37-39).

the witnesses offer no real evidence which adds onto the parodic and nonsensical tone of the scene. The first witness is the Hatter who is trialled due to "murdering the time" (*Wonderland* 94) after reciting a parodic version of Jane Taylor's well-known poem "The Star" (1806) which was later adapted into a nursery rhyme for kids. Carroll's parody follows as:

> Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!
> How I wonder what you're at!
>
> Up above the world you fly,
> Like a tea-tray in the sky. (*Wonderland* 94)

Carroll's parody is regarded as an 'inside joke' and a jab at Bartholomew Price who was Carroll's mathematics professor and good friend at Oxford (Carroll and Gardner 74). Price was coined the nickname "The Bat" by his students due to his lectures "soaring high above the heads of his listeners" (Carroll and Gardner 74). The Hatter was on trial after reciting this parodic piece:

> He came in with a teacup in one hand and a piece of bread-and-butter in the other. 'I beg your pardon, your Majesty,' he began, 'for bringing these in: but I hadn't quite finished my tea when I was sent for.' 'You ought to have finished,' said the King. 'When did you begin?' … 'Fourteenth of March I think it was,' he said. 'Fifteenth,' said the March Hare. 'Sixteenth,' added the Dormouse. 'Write that down,' the King said to the jury, and the jury eagerly wrote down all three dates on their slates, and then added them up, and reduced the answer to shillings and pence. (*Wonderland* 129-30)

The Hatter's nonchalant actions are in contrast with the expected decorum of trials, which undermines the legal system and monarchic authority through a playful parody. Moreover, the King and the jury do not follow a logical path in the questioning of the Hatter but judge him quite randomly and nonsensically by converting information into currency, which makes no sense whatsoever. Hence, through this scene, Carroll subverts the legitimacy of justice in trials and questions the power holders through parodic and playful scenes with absurd and arbitrary incidents. By imitating the

procedures of a real courtroom and trial, Carroll not only mimics the occurrence in order to mock it but employs a postmodern approach of mimicking it in order to enable the readers to question the validity of Victorian authority and power.

Carroll's parody of political figures within law and politics can further be observed in the absurd and chaotic scene of the Caucus-Race. Alice stumbles upon a Dodo, a Duck, a Lory, an Eaglet who are caricatures of himself, the Reverend Robinson Duckworth who often joined Carroll and the Liddell sisters on their boat expeditions, Lorina Liddell, and Edith Liddell respectively (Carroll and Gardner 27). As Alice and the creatures were soaking wet from swimming in Alice's tears, the Dodo offers to participate in a Caucus-race in order to get dry (*Wonderland* 53). Even though the term 'caucus' existed during the nineteenth century, the Caucus-Race is Carroll's peculiar invention. In *The Annotated Alice*, Gardner points out that the term 'caucus' emerged in the United States, and it referred to a meeting or group of political leaders held in order to choose or decide on a candidate and/or policy (31). He further states that this term was used in England slightly differently and was referred to a "system of highly disciplined party organization by committees." It was often used in a derogatory sense by rival parties as a means of criticising the methods of the opposing party. Gardner additionally adds that Carroll's intention might have been to mock and satirise politicians who "do a lot of running around in circles, getting nowhere, and with everybody wanting a political plum," or, in other words, a desirable political reward (31). Carroll's Caucus-Race is very similar to Gardner's definition of the term, but much more chaotic and absurd with arbitrary rules:

> First [the Dodo] marked out a racecourse, in a sort of circle ('the exact shape doesn't matter,' it said), and then all the party were placed along the course, here and there. There was no 'One, two, three, and away,' but they began running when they liked, and left off when they liked, so that it was not easy to know when the race was over. However, when they had been running half an hour or so, and were quite dry again, the Dodo suddenly called out, 'The race is over!' and they all crowded round it, panting, and asking, 'But who has won?' This question the Dodo could not answer without a great deal of thought, and it sat for a long time with one finger pressed upon its forehead (the position in which you usually see Shakespeare, in the pictures of him,) while the rest waited in silence. At last the Dodo said, '*Everybody* has won, and all must have prizes.' (*Wonderland* 54)

The Caucus-Race is quite arbitrary, as it has no clear starting point, no set rules, and the winners are decided on a whim. The creatures do not understand the rules but participate in it anyways, hoping to stumble upon any kind of reward, which end up being some comfits[9] Alice had in her pocket (*Wonderland* 55). For this reason, when examined through a postmodern lens, this peculiar race can be read as a parody of political systems, especially the nineteenth-century British politics of Carroll's time. The Dodo's decision to hand out everyone prizes also jabs at favouritism and nepotism within the political sphere, regardless of achievement. John Tenniel, the original illustrator of the *Alice* novels, depicts the Dodo with human hands "under [his] small, degenerate wings" (Carroll and Carpenter 32), holding a staff:

Tenniel's illustration of the Dodo (*The Annotated* 32)

Tenniel's illustration draws clear resemblance to prominent Victorian figures, who often carried canes as a symbol of status and fashion. Thus, this illustration further enhances the scene's mocking tone by imitating and subverting the social conventions of the time.

Carroll also employs parody in the *Alice* novels by undermining adult figures of the Victorian Period through characters such as the Duchess. Through the Duchess, Carroll mimics the adult figures of the Victorian Period who appeared to possess all

[9] According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a comfit is "an old-fashioned sweet made of a nut, seed, or piece of dried fruit with a hard sugar covering."

knowledge and who constantly guided children morally on all aspects of life. By illustrating this matter in a humorous and parodic attitude, Carroll unravels the oppressiveness and authoritativeness of Victorian adults on children. After coming across Alice in the Queen of Hearts' garden, the Duchess possesses an overtly didactic attitude by offering unsolicited advice and moral lessons. She interrupts Alice's train of thought with unnecessary and nonsensical advice:

> [Alice] had quite forgotten the Duchess by this time, and was a little startled when she heard her voice close to her ear. 'You're thinking about something, my dear, and that makes you forget to talk. I can't tell you just now what the moral of that is, but I shall remember it in a bit.'
> 'Perhaps it hasn't one,' Alice ventured to remark. 'Tut, tut, child!' said the Duchess. 'Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it.' (*Wonderland* 109)

In this scene, the Duchess' sudden and disruptive appearance can be observed as a parody of moral instruction and didactic lessons imposed on children in the Victorian Period. Also, the Duchess' insistence that everything has to have a moral undertone illustrates Carroll's parody of Victorian adult figures and their authoritative attitude over children. Carroll cleverly parodies the Victorians' obsession with morality and didacticism through the Duchesses' exaggerated behaviour of trying to find a moral behind everything, even in ordinary events. The Duchess continues to end her sentences with "'and the moral of *that* is-'" (*Wonderland* 110) to which the perplexed Alice thinks "'[h]ow fond she is of finding morals in things!'" (*Wonderland* 110). The Duchess' advice becomes completely nonsensical in the following exchange with Alice:

> '…flamingoes and mustard both bite. And the moral of that is- "Birds of a feather flock together."
> 'Only mustard isn't a bird,' Alice remarked.
> 'Right as usual,' said the Duchess: 'what a clever way you have of putting things!'
> 'It's a mineral, I think,' said Alice.
> 'Of course it is,' said the Duchess, who seemed ready to agree to everything that Alice said; 'there's a large mustard-mine near here. And the moral of that is- "The more there is of mine, the less there is of yours."'
> 'Oh, I know!' exclaimed Alice, who had not attended to this last remark. 'It's a vegetable. It doesn't look like one, but it is.'
> 'I quite agree with you,' said the Duchess; 'and the moral of that is- "Be what you would seem to be" – or if you'd like it put more simply – "Never imagine yourself

> not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that what you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise."' (*Wonderland* 110-111)

In this passage, Alice responds with logical and thoughtful answers and comes to the conclusion that mustard is neither a bird nor a mineral, but a vegetable. The Duchess agrees with Alice's answers, pretending she already knows these facts. The Duchess displays such an act merely to maintain her authority as an adult over Alice, even though Alice, in this instance, is in possession of more knowledge than the Duchess. Through this scene, Carroll mocks how Victorian adults tended to position themselves higher than children as adult figures who knew everything and had an answer to all the questions asked by children. As a counterattack on Alice's knowledge, the Duchess tries to proceed Alice by delivering a long and unintelligible advice. The Duchess' complex moral lesson becomes rather perplexing and ultimately ends up being useless advice, thus failing to reach the understanding of children. Hence, the Duchess' nonsensical advice and guidance that carries no deductive lesson further strengthens Carroll's use of parody to question adult authority over children.

As opposed to the authoritative adult figures in the *Alice* novels such as the Duchess, the White Knight is presented by Carroll as a contrast to the controlling and instructive adult figures that Carroll parodies in the novels. The White Knight, described as having a "gentle face and large mild eyes" (*Looking-Glass* 243), possesses characteristics no other creature in *Wonderland* or *Looking-Glass* does, such as being kind, helpful, sentimental but also quite clumsy. As mentioned in *The Annotated Alice*, while some point that the White Knight is a humorous and burlesque imitation of Don Quixote, it is generally agreed upon that Carroll portrays the White Knight as a caricature and representation of himself (Carroll and Gardner 234). As a matter of fact, Jeffrey Stern ultimately reveals through Carroll's own illustrations and notes that "we know for certain that Carroll *did* portray himself as the White Knight" (qtd. in Carroll and Gardner 236). Carroll and Gardner point out the similarities between the White Knight and Carroll in the following lines:

> Like the knight, Carroll had shaggy hair, mild blue eyes, a kind and gentle face. Like the knight, his mind seemed to function best when it saw things in topsy-turvy fashion. Like the knight, he was fond of curious gadgets and a "great hand at inventing things." He was forever "thinking of a way" to do this or that a bit differently. Many of his inventions, like the knight's blotting-paper pudding, were very clever but unlikely ever to be made (though some turned out to be not so useless when others reinvented them decades later). (236)

Apart from the similarities in their physical appearance, Gardner underscores how the White Knight reflects Carroll's nonsensical logic and inventive spirit. Even though the White Knight defines himself as being "a great hand at inventing things" (*Looking-Glass* 248), his inventions are quirky, not used in conventional ways, and often result in being impractical, such as keeping a box upside down so rain cannot get in which causes the objects inside the box to fall out (*Looking-Glass* 244). The White Knight's unique inventions align with Carroll's interest and passion for playfulness, games, puzzles, riddles, mathematics, and photography. Hence, the White Knight's clumsy yet gentle character mirrors Carroll and reflects how he perceived himself as an awkward and unconventional individual.

The White Knight's emotional farewell to Alice in *Looking-Glass* reflects Carroll and his sentimentality towards Alice Liddell to whom he originally told the story of Alice and her adventures in Wonderland. It is the first and only instance in either novel when a character properly bids farewell to Alice. Usually, the creatures in both realms do not care for Alice and see her as a nuisance, which results in them ignoring her. The White Knight, however, departs by reciting a burlesque of William Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence" (Carroll and Gardner 245), shaking hands with her and riding into the forest from which he initially emerged. The sentimentality of the acquaintance between Alice and the White Knight is illustrated with the following:

> Of all the strange things that Alice saw in her journey through the Looking-Glass, this was the one that she always remembered most clearly. Years afterwards she could bring the whole scene back again, as if it had been only yesterday- the mild blue eyes and kindly smile of the Knight- the setting sun gleaming though his hair, and shining on his armour in a blaze of light that quite dazzled her- the horse quietly moving about, with the reins hanging loose on his neck, cropping the grass at her feet- and the black shadows of the forest behind- all this she took in like a picture,

> as, with one hand shading her eyes, she leant against a tree, watching the strange pair, and listening, in a half-dream, to the melancholy music of the song. (*Looking-Glass* 251-52)

Alice's parting with the White Knight gains a symbolic meaning as it can be perceived as a reflection of Carroll's sentimental feelings towards Alice Liddell's transformation into adulthood from childhood, which is vividly demonstrated through Alice turning into Queen when she was Pawn. Thus, this "melancholy farewell" can be interpreted as a parting not only between Alice and the White Knight, but between Alice Liddell and Lewis Carroll as well, hence, signalling Liddell's ascension to adulthood from childhood (Carroll and Gardner 237). So, while Carroll parodies the rigidness and authoritativeness of Victorian adult figures, the White Knight does not take a position among them, as he demonstrates the understanding, gentle, and caring adult figure who embraces imagination and absurdity and encourages these qualities onto children in place of morality and didacticism.

To tie the given examples of parody in Carroll's work, Hutcheon's statement that "[p]arody is a perfect postmodern form, in some senses, for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies. It also forces a reconsideration of the idea of origin or originality that is compatible with other postmodern interrogations of liberal humanist assumptions" (*A Poetics* 11) can be applied to the *Alice* novels. In this context, parody not only imitates texts, events, or people, but also subverts them, encouraging readers to question the authority of figures and institutions. Hutcheon's arguments align with Carroll's use of parody, as Carroll not only mocks Victorian didactic texts and morality, the legal system, and strict adult figures, but also encourages children and adult readers alike to interrogate the meanings behind these norms. Moreover, Carroll deliberately demonstrates these parodies in an overtly nonsensical, absurd, and comical manner, further drawing attention to the absurdities that Victorian conventions and norms upheld.

On other note, through his employment of wordplay, nonsense language, and playful experimentation with narrative and structure, Carroll demonstrates the postmodern element of playfulness throughout *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass*. Carroll

exemplifies linguistic playfulness through wordplay, puns, and riddles while portraying structural playfulness through intertextuality and subversion of narrative form, all of which are striking characteristics of postmodern literary technique. By using puns, riddles, and by subverting traditional narratives through intertextuality and structure, Carroll challenges and undermines established language and meaning of the Victorian Period, and hence, his aim aligns with postmodern thought.

There are ample examples of wordplay in *Looking-Glass* reflected through puns, riddles, and the play with words through characters such as the White Knight, the Red Queen, Humpty Dumpty, and more. As Alice tries to advance to the last square of the chessboard that would turn her into Queen, her interaction with the White Knight reflects postmodern wordplay. The White Knight perplexes Alice with his inventions, such as using pudding for blotting-paper, and mistakes her confusion as sadness to which he offers to sing a song in order to cheer her up. The White Knight tries to explain the name of the song to Alice which results in a comical and perplexing conversation:

> 'The name of the song is called "*Haddocks' Eyes*".'
> 'Oh, that's the name of the song, is it?' Alice said, trying to feel interested.
> 'No, you don't understand,' the Knight said, looking a little vexed. 'That's what the name is *called*. The name really is "*The Aged Aged Man*".'
> 'Then I ought to have said, "That's what the *song* is called"?' Alice corrected herself.
> 'No, you oughtn't: that's another thing. The *song* is called "*Ways and Means*": but that's only what it's *called*, you know!'
> 'Well, what *is* the song, then?' said Alice, who was by this time completely bewildered.
> 'I was coming to that,' the Knight said. 'The song really *is* "*A-sitting on a Gate*": and the tune's my own invention.' (*Looking-Glass* 251)

While this scene functions as amusement and entertainment, it also reflects the postmodern technique of playfulness and how it plays with the variability of language and meaning. The White Knight's insistency on distinguishing what a song is, is called, and what its name is called reflects the instability of language and how meaning created from language is fragmented. In relation to this instance, Derrida's term 'différance,' which refers to meaning being unstable and undecidable, thus, being devoid of truth (qtd. in Sim 247) can be used to analyse this linguistically complex scene. The White Knight's comic and complex explanation aligns with the postmodern thought that words do not

bear one meaning but bear many and how their meanings can change depending on how they are used. In this instance, words do not convey a solid message, but make things ever more confusing for Alice. This interaction, therefore, should not be perceived merely as comical as it can be analysed through a postmodern lens since it undermines the certainty of language and the validity of the meanings it produces.

Once again, the Red Queen's ironically humorous exchange with Alice illustrates how language can be ambiguous and unreliable, as words shift with meaning depending on context, an idea central to poststructuralist thought. After Alice completes the last step of the chess game and becomes the Queen, she joins a feast in which she is placed between the Red Queen and the White Queen. After an uncomfortable silence, the Red Queen breaks the silence by introducing Alice to the leg of mutton[10] served as a dish on the feast table, to which the "leg of mutton got up in the dish and made a little bow to Alice; and she returned the bow, not knowing whether to be frightened or amused" (*Looking-Glass* 268). Trying to be polite and not knowing the ways of the fantastical world, a bewildered Alice asks if the two Queens would care for a slice of mutton, to which the Red Queen rebukingly responses with "[c]ertainly not…it isn't etiquette to cut anyone you've been introduced to" (*Looking-Glass* 268). In this instance, Carroll plays with the double meaning of the word 'cut,' which other than its literal physical action, also means "to pretend not to recognise" someone (*Looking-Glass* 288) which creates a humorous moment for the readers who possess an acknowledgement of both meanings of the words. While analysing the scene from a postmodernist perspective, it should be underlined that postmodernists argue that language is ambiguous, constructed, and open to endless interpretations. Hence, by employing wordplay through linguistics, Carroll creates a comical misunderstanding from the instability of meaning when analysed from a postmodern lens.

Furthermore, Alice's exchange with Humpty Dumpty also reflects postmodern playfulness and how it contributes to undermining meaning through language. After meeting the conceited Humpty Dumpty, Alice engages in a rather heated discussion with him about the definition and meaning of the word 'glory,' objecting to his unconventional

[10] The Cambridge Dictionary defines 'mutton' as "the meat from an adult sheep eaten as food".

definition of it, which happens to be "a nice knockdown argument" (*Looking-Glass* 223). Humpty Dumpty objects to Alice's objection with the following:

> 'When *I* use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean- neither more nor less.'
> 'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean different things.'
> 'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master- that's all.'
> Alice was too much puzzled to say anything... (*Looking-Glass* 223)

Through Humpty Dumpty's subjective approach to the meanings of words, Carroll playfully illustrates the idea that words and their meanings are not fixed or stable, but rather fragmented which can result in a ray of different meanings and interpretations, varying from time, culture, and experience which is seen in postmodern and poststructuralist theory. Even though the meaning for a word, in this case 'glory,' is precisely what Humpty Dumpty chooses it to mean, the meaning of the word alters when thought by Alice, making it fragmented, unstable, and unreliable. Humpty Dumpty's assertion that words mean whatever he chooses them to mean echoes Federman's claim that "fiction is as much what is said as what is not said, since what is said is not necessarily true, and since what is said can always be said another way" (12). This highlights how, because language relies on interpretation, the meaning behind these interpretations shifts from person to person. Each interpretation can be true, yet none hold absolute truth at the same time. Bishop and Starkey also point to the instability of language:

> At the heart of postmodernism is the unreliable nature of language. What we think we're saying is never what we actually say. What others hear us saying is never exactly what we intended. If all writing is essentially an act of miscommunication, postmodernists argue that we might as well celebrate, rather than lament, that failure. (133)

Bishop and Starkey's observation aligns with Humpty Dumpty's arbitrary definitions, as language creates more confusion than clarification in this instance. Nevertheless, Carroll, like postmodernists, playfully invites readers to embrace this confusion. By celebrating the unreliability of language, meaning is transformed into something fluid and

fragmented, something to be played with, reinterpreted, and continuously reshaped. Humpty Dumpty's dialogue with Alice thus aligns with the postmodern idea that language is not a means for absolute truth, but creates endless interpretation and meanings instead, thus destroying any possibility of objective language.

Moreover, Humpty Dumpty's idealisation of being master over everything else reflects the idea that language can be used as a tool for exercising power. His assertive attitude mirrors Foucault's thoughts on how language can be used as a tool to assert control and power (Foucault 23). Humpty Dumpty's claim to control the meanings of words thus reflect the idea that language is also a means for power. Humpty Dumpty continues with his assertive attitude towards language in the conversation that follows:

> 'They've a temper, some of them- particularly verbs, they're the proudest- adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs- however, *I* can manage the whole lot! Impenetrability! That's what *I* say!
> 'Would you tell me, please,' said Alice, 'what that means?'
> 'Now you talk like a reasonable child,' said Humpty Dumpty, looking very much pleased. 'I meant by "impenetrability" that we've had enough of that subject, and it would be just as well if you'd mention what you mean to do next, as I suppose you don't intend to stop here all the rest of your life.'
> 'That's a great deal to make one word mean,' Alice said in a thoughtful note.
> 'When I make a word do a lot of work like that,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'I always pay extra.' (*Looking-Glass* 223-24)

Once again, Alice is confused by Humpty Dumpty's unconventional yet overly confident understanding and definitions of words, in this case 'impenetrability,' which has a dictionary meaning as "the quality of being impossible to see through or go through" ("Impenetrability"). Nevertheless, Humpty Dumpty does not give the common definition of the word and makes a new and unrelated definition of it instead. In this scene, by using playfulness, Carroll demonstrates the flexibility of language and how it is prone to being unstable, which is an aspect of postmodernism. Once again, Carroll's playful technique can be viewed as a subversion to the universal and established belief that language is an objective and fixed system that reflects truth. Instead, Carroll portrays language as being fluid and shifting, which strengthens the postmodern idea that language has no single and objective meaning.

Riddles also serve as examples of wordplay in both *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass*, reflecting the postmodern idea of using playfulness as a technique to undermine established meaning and logic. Carroll's playful attitude is clearly seen through The Hatter's famous riddle "Why is a raven like a writing-desk?" (*Wonderland* 91). Gardner points out how this short riddle was the topic of discussion by Carroll's contemporaries (Carroll and Gardner 71). The riddle is not answered in the novel which resulted in a variety of possible answers by prominent figures such as "American puzzle genius" Sam Loyd, poet James Michie, English writer and philosopher Aldous Huxley,[11] and many more (Carroll and Gardner 71). The answer of the riddle was debated on so much that in the 1986 edition of *Wonderland*, Carroll made up an answer which he considered best:

> Enquiries have been so often addressed to me, as to whether any answer to the Hatter's Riddle can be imagined, that I may as well put on record here what seems to me to be a fairly appropriate answer, viz: "Because it can produce a few notes, though they are *very* flat; and it is nevar[12] put with the wrong end in front!" This, however, is merely an afterthought; the Riddle, as originally invented, had no answer at all. (*Wonderland* n.p.)

What reflects the postmodern attitude of playfulness is that the riddle is quite nonsensical and is deliberately given with no answer to it. The fictional Alice and so many others amongst the audience have taken it seriously, trying to find a logical answer to the illogical riddle. Carroll's *little* riddle paved the way for a range of intellectual thought, which ironically was in vain as the riddle was intentionally designed to have no answer, hence, undermining the search for meaning. By intentionally designing the riddle to be illogical and bear no answer, Carroll goes against the idea of logic and unified meanings in a playful manner. Similar to Hatter's riddle, the White Queen's "lovely riddle- all in poetry- all about fishes" (*Looking-Glass* 269) is also left unanswered in the novel:

> 'For it holds it like a glue-

[11] Huxley argues that metaphysical questions such as "Does God exist? Do we have free will? Why is there suffering?" are as meaningless as the Hatter's riddle (qtd. in Carroll and Gardner).

[12] It is noted in *The Annotated Alice* that Carroll deliberately spelled the word 'never' as 'nevar' which is a clever backwards spelling of the word 'raven'. It was, unfortunately, corrected in later publications as 'never,' as it was perceived as a spelling mistake, destroying the ingenuity of Carroll's answer, as Gardner puts it (Carroll and Gardner 72).

> Holds the lid to the dish, while it lies in the middle:
> Which is easiest to do,
> Un-dish-cover the fish, or discover the riddle?' (*Looking-Glass* 270)

The answer to the riddle is not given by Alice or other characters throughout the novel. However, in *The Annotated Alice*, it is mentioned how an answer to the riddle was submitted to Carroll, which happened to be 'an oyster,' and was accepted by Carroll himself (Carroll and Gardner 264). The two unanswered riddles in both novels portray the postmodern technique of encouraging readers to participate in the interpretation of the meaning of the texts. Hence, by creating playful ambiguity and enabling thousands and millions of interpretations to be born, the objectivity and stability of language and meaning is undermined in both novels, with a postmodern approach.

The postmodern technique of playfulness is also seen in *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* through the employment of intertextuality, experimental, and subversive narrative structures. The first expression of 'intertextual theory' was made by Julia Kristeva, who combined Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's as well as Russian literary theorist M. M. Bakhtin's principles (Allen 2-3). Intertextuality is a "typical postmodern practice" (McHale 51) whereby quotes or material are drawn from older and/or canonical texts. Forms of intertextuality include "imitation, parody, travesty, translation, adaptation, and allusion" (Broich 249). Even though intertextuality existed in literature "of all ages" and was not invented within postmodernism, postmodernists employ it in literature in a different and new way that "serves new function," which is to, ultimately, deconstruct (Broich 253). Postmodernists celebrate this "volatile mix of the old with the new" or "cultural recycling," and they take pride "in manipulating the cliché, the citation, the allusion or the ready-made object" by rendering it the material of artistic work (Van Den Abbeele 17).

The postmodern technique of intertextuality is evident in Carroll's use of existing texts in the White Knight's ballad. The White Knight's farewell ballad to Alice "I'll tell thee everything I can…" (*Looking-Glass* 252) is a burlesque of William Wordsworth's poem "The Thorn" as well as a jab at Thomas Moore's love lyric "My Heart and Lute" (Carroll and Gardner 246) which were both written under the influence of Romanticism. Alice is

aware that the White Knight's poem is not his own invention, but a playful interpretation of Wordsworth's and Moore's poems, as she thinks to herself "'[b]ut the tune *isn't* his own invention,' … 'it's "I give thee all, I can no more"' (*Looking-Glass* 252). Notably, Alice notices this intertextuality when she first hears the melody of the White Knight's ballad. Therefore, the postmodern technique of intertextuality is demonstrated in this instance through Carroll's use of existing literary texts and with Alice's acknowledgment of these references which draws allusions to the narrative's connection with the life outside of the novel's fictional world. While the White Knight's poem acts as a burlesque of Romantic era poetry and their exaggerated sentimentality, it also questions the idea of originality in literary texts, which is at the core of postmodernists' use of intertextuality.

The postmodern technique of intertextuality is also seen through the characters of Tweedledee and Tweedledum as well as Humpty Dumpty in *Looking-Glass*. These characters are not Carroll's inventions and as they have their origins in traditional English nursery rhymes dating back to the eighteenth century (Opie 418). Carroll reinvents these characters, in a way, by placing them in a new narrative, which, in this case, is the world of *Looking-Glass*. This act of deconstructing and reconstructing existing cultural and/or literary texts and material defines the postmodern technique of intertextuality, which is what Carroll does by placing the already existing characters from the nursery rhymes into his surreal, absurd, and nonsensical world. Today, Tweedledee and Tweedledum are known as symbols for two competing rivals (Opie 418). The original nursery rhyme follows as:

> Tweedledum and Tweedledee
> Agreed to have a battle,
> For Tweedledum said Tweedledee
> Had spoiled his nice new rattle.
> Just then flew down a monstrous crow,
> As black as a tar-barrel,
> Which frightened both the heroes so,
> They quite forgot their quarrel. (qtd. in Opie 418)

Alice cannot stop herself from reciting this nursery rhyme in its original form as she meets the two characters labelled as "Dum" and "Dee" (*Looking-Glass* 192), whom she instantly recognises as the nursery rhyme characters Tweedledee and Tweedledum.

Carroll's reinvention of Tweedledee and Tweedledum, who "looked so exactly like a couple of great schoolboys" (*Looking-Glass* 193), reflects humorous and absurd instances where they constantly bicker and contradict each other or Alice, while intellectualising on philosophical matters on what truly exists and what does not (*Looking-Glass* 201). Like Tweedledee and Tweedledum, Humpty Dumpty is also widely known and recited worldwide. It is considered being one of the most known nursery rhymes, known in different names in various countries such as Switzerland, Germany, France, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland (Opie 215). The nursery rhyme tells the short story of an egg which falls and cracks into pieces:

> Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
> Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
> All the king's horses,
> And all the king's men.
> Couldn't put Humpty together again. (qtd. in Opie 213)

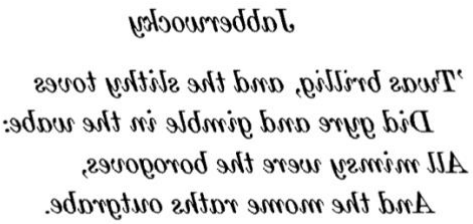
After Alice encounters Carroll's version of Humpty Dumpty in the realm of *Looking-Glass,* she repeats this poem under her breath, for fear of being heard by Humpty Dumpty who gets quite offended of being called an egg (*Looking-Glass* 218-19). Even though Alice knows that Humpty Dumpty is an egg, which is the reason why all the king's men could not put him together again, and that he is destined to shatter to pieces, Carroll's Humpty Dumpty is not aware of his predestined fate. As a matter of fact, he finds it "*very* provoking" to be called an egg (*Looking-Glass* 218). Nevertheless, Alice uses her knowledge of the nursery rhyme to navigate through her conversation with Humpty Dumpty and convince him to go down the high wall he is sitting on top of. Alice cannot help him escape his fate as the stubborn Humpty Dumpty persists on his spot:

> 'Why, if ever I *did* fall off- which there's no chance of- but *if* I did-' Here he pursed his lips, and looked so solemn and grand that Alice could hardly help laughing. '*If* I did fall,' he went on… '*the King has promised me- with his own mouth- to- to-*' 'To send all his horses and all his men,' Alice interrupted, rather unwisely. 'Now I declare that's too bad!' Humpty Dumpty cried, breaking into sudden passion. 'You've been listening at doors- and behind trees- and down chimneys- or you couldn't have known it!' (*Looking-Glass* 219-20)

Alice's knowledge of the rhyme enables her to foresee Humpty Dumpty's future which is an example of intertextuality, as Carroll borrows material from prior literary texts. Humpty Dumpty's fate is already determined in the nursery rhyme, to which Alice points out with "[i]t's in a book" (*Looking-Glass* 220). Thus, Carroll uses the existing texts to create a playful new story. He adds a conceited and stubborn attitude to the Humpty Dumpty who has been known for centuries throughout the world in order to create humour and entertainment in his novel.

Furthermore, experimenting with narrative structure, which is a common postmodern practice, is evident in both *Alice* novels. The postmodern technique of experimental narrative structure is employed in order to challenge traditional and conventional narrative structures. According to Hoffmann, experimental narrative structure offers "endless possibilities of branching out, turning, reversing the direction, and combining freedom, necessity, and chance" (309), thus signalling how a plot does not have to follow a singular and linear path. Even though Carroll's experimentation with the structure of the novels were utilised in order to engage and captivate young Victorians, it corresponds with postmodernism's experimentation with storytelling. One of the examples of experimental narrative structure is the reversed poem "Jabberwocky" which attracted serious as well as playful discussion by scholars (*Looking-Glass* 286). In *The Annotated Alice*, Gardner states that there is an agreement by many critics on Carroll's poem being "the greatest of all nonsense poems in English" (Carroll and Gardner 148). It gained such popularity that it has been translated into various languages, including two versions of Latin (Carroll and Gardner 151). The poem is a parody of Beowulf which illustrates the story of a hero who successfully battles a creature named the Jabberwock, thus parodying traditional epics while using made-up and nonsensical words. What makes the poem so strikingly nonsensical is its use of invented portmanteau words, terms that carry double meanings by "telescop[ing] several ideas into one word" (Skinner 16). Examples in the *Alice* novels include "slithy" (a blend of 'lithe' and 'slimy'), "brillig" (meaning four o'clock in the afternoon), and "mimsy" (a combination of 'flimsy' and 'miserable') (*Looking-Glass* 226). As mentioned before, because Alice goes through the mirror in *Looking-Glass*, everything is reversed, even her moves. For this reason, she initially sees

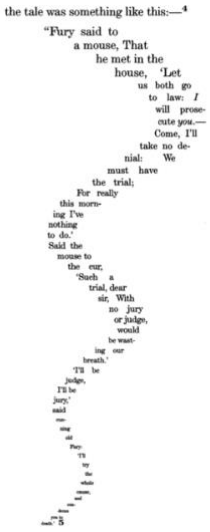
the poem in reversed, which leads her to think "-for it's all in some language I don't know" (*Looking-Glass* 166). Before realising that it's a "Looking-Glass book, of course!" (*Looking-Glass* 167) and holding it up to a mirror so the reflection would reveal the words in their proper structure, Alice sees the reversed poem as follows:



The first verse of "Jabberwocky" (*The Annotated* 148)

By playfully presenting the poem in a reversed and mirrored form, Carroll demonstrates experimentation with narrative structure. The peculiar poem causes a disrupt in the flow of the story and invites readers, as well as Alice, to try to reconstruct the poem into its original structure. In doing so, the reader becomes active in creating the meanings behind the text and interpreting the given material, which is a technique often employed by postmodernists. Combined with the nonsensical words within the poem, the mirrored "Jabberwocky" aligns with the postmodern stylistic technique of experimentation with narrative structure.

Other instances of the postmodern technique of playfulness through experimental narrative structures can be seen in the winding structure of the "Mouse's Tale" poem as well as the use of small font to present the tiny voice of the Gnat, both of which challenge conventional narrative forms. While swimming "in the pool of tears which she had wept when she was nine feet high," Alice meets an easily offended Mouse who promises to explain its history and reveal why he hates cats and dogs (*Wonderland* 49). "Mine is a long and sad tale!" (*Wonderland* 55) the Mouse starts off, which causes Alice to envision the tale in a literal manner, as a physical rat's tail winding down the page, instead of a tragic tale:



"The Mouse's Tale" (*The Annotated* 34)

The shape of Carroll's poem mimics the physical appearance of a mouse's tail, turning the mouse's *tale* into the mouse's *tail*. It is added in *The Annotated Alice* that "The Mouse's Tale" is "perhaps the best known-example in English emblematic" which is a figured verse in which poems are written or printed in a specific manner to resemble the subject matter of the poem (Carroll and Gardner 34). Even though this practice goes back to ancient Greece, as Gardner mentions (Carroll and Gardner 34), it can be analysed through a postmodern lens as it challenges traditional narrative structures and forms with its experimental visage. While the spiralling and shrinking poem disrupts the flow of the storytelling, it also playfully engages the reader to make effort and interpret the text; hence, the readers actively and simultaneously participate in the reading process. Hoffmann sheds light onto the active involvement of the reader by proposing a need for a "sense of free participation in the writing/reading process" is needed to renew the "system of reading," in which the reader is set free "to equate randomness with order and to open multiple and simultaneous ways of reading" (68).

The conversation between Alice and the Gnat similarly displays Carroll's experimentation with conventional narrative forms. The small insect's dialogue with Alice is presented in quite an unconventional manner, with the font of the Gnat's words being considerably smaller than the rest of the text throughout the novel:

The little voice sighed deeply.[11] It was *very* unhappy, evidently, and Alice would have said something pitying to comfort it, "if it would only sigh like other people!" she thought. But this was such a wonderfully small sigh, that she wouldn't have heard it at all, if it hadn't come *quite* close to her ear. The consequence of this was that it tickled her ear very much, and quite took off her thoughts from the unhappiness of the poor little creature.

"I know you are a friend," the little voice went on: "a dear friend, and an old friend. And you wo'n't hurt me, though I *am* an insect."

"What kind of insect?" Alice inquired, a little anxiously. What she really wanted to know was, whether it could sting or not, but she thought this wouldn't be quite a civil question to ask.

The Gnat's textual representation (*The Annotated* 172)

Carroll reduces the size of the font to visually reflect the smallness of the Gnat which adds a playful layer to the text. Nevertheless, even though this playfulness was merely for the amusement of children, Carroll's use of the small font subtly disrupts the flow and conventional form of narration. Hence, even though Carroll was not writing during the postmodern era, his utilisation of experimental technique such as emblematic poetry and playing with the font size aligns with the postmodern technique of manipulating narrative structure and form in order to deconstruct traditional forms.

Another example of postmodern playfulness through the subversion of conventional narrative structure is seen through the metafiction of *Wonderland*, where the story draws attention to its own fictional existence in two instances. Metafiction occurs when a fictional work "self-consciously and systematically" (Waugh 2) draws attention to its artificiality through techniques such as "breaking through the 'fourth wall' to address the reader, fragmentation, and lack of closure" (McHale 9), in order to question the boundary between fiction and reality.

In the scene of the Caucus-Race, Carroll disrupts the storytelling and breaks the fourth wall, the moment when a character or narrator directly acknowledges the audience or the fact that they are a part of a fictional story. The invisible line between fiction and reality is broken by reminding the readers of the text's fictionality:

> 'What *is* a Caucus-race?' said Alice; not that she much wanted to know, but the Dodo had paused as if it thought that *somebody* ought to speak, and no one else seemed inclined to say anything. 'Why,' said the Dodo, 'the best way to explain it is to do it.' (And, as you might like to try the think yourself some winter day, I will tell you how the Dodo managed it.) (*Wonderland* 53-54)

Here, Carroll, or in this case the narrator, directly addresses the reader through the parenthesis which contains additional information for young Victorians. This technique breaks the fourth wall as it reminds the readers of the text's fictional and constructed nature. Carroll, as a narrator, once again steps outside the fictional framework by breaking the fourth wall while he introduces the Gryphon, a mythical creature that is half eagle half lion, with the following: "[t]hey very soon came up a Gryphon, lying fast asleep in the sun. (If you don't know what a Gryphon is, look at the picture)" (*Wonderland* 113). Through Carroll's comment in the parenthesis, which interrupts the flow of the narrative, the readers are, thus, reminded through this practice of metafiction how the text is fabricated and should be read with this information in mind. While these interruptions were intended by Carroll for the sake of playfulness and for capturing the attention of young readers, it additionally aligns with postmodern techniques of playful experimentation in order to subvert conventional narrative structures.

3.2 LACK OF CONTINUITY, COHERENCE, AND AIM

The lack of continuity, coherence, and aim are other postmodern techniques used by Carroll in *Wonderland* alongside *Looking-Glass*. Since postmodernism is, in its most general definition, a reaction against established forms, a postmodern perspective also subverts coherent and conventional structures. Similarly, the *Alice* novels do not revolve around a coherent and organisational plot or structure. Both novels take into account Alice's conversations and interactions with the characters in *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* after she falls asleep and starts dreaming. However, there is no continuity, coherence, and aim within Alice's actions or her interactions with the other characters. The more characters she meets and incidents she experiences, the more nonsensical and absurd Alice's time becomes in the fantastical worlds. Carroll's purpose in lack of continuity, coherence, and aim in both novels is due to his reaction against the cautionary and instructional children's literature of the Victorian Period. Instead of focusing on

didacticism and moralism of children's literature, Carroll's *Alice* novels do not have such an aim, other than to solely entertain children.

There is discontinuity in the structure of both novels as they consist of disjointed episodes, meaning that the majority of the chapters do not follow or build on each other and would remain coherent if read outside of the chronological order offered in the novels. Hoffmann states that the focus in postmodern fiction has shifted towards non-plot (306). For this reason, postmodern writers avoid linearity in their plots (Hoffmann 280). Similarly, Harvey posits that "the most startling fact about postmodernism" is its embrace and employment of discontinuity (44). Because the majority of the incidents in the *Alice* novels do not heavily rely on the cause-and-effect pattern, they can be read as individual nonsensical fantasy stories on their own and still produce the same playful effect on readers. In each chapter of both novels, Alice encounters new characters and new absurd situations through loosely connected episodes. It can be interpreted that this technique may have been favoured by Carroll in order to capture and maintain the curiosity as well as attention of young readers. For instance, Alice participates in a Caucus-Race, then attends the Hatter's tea party, and finally finds herself amongst the midst of chaos inside the Queen of Heart's court in *Wonderland*, while she listens to the nonsensical and absurd tales of characters in *Looking-Glass* such as Tweedledee and Tweedledum, Humpty Dumpty, the White Knight, and many more, chapter after chapter. Alice jumps from one bizarre event to another without clear transitions, and this technique can be aligned with postmodernism's tendency to deliberately create discontinuity in narratives as a challenge to established structures. The discontinuity of narrative in the *Alice* novels is demonstrated by McHale as a "linger, then pause again, and then pause some more" (57), which signals a disruption of traditional narrative flow and invites the reader to engage more critically with the plot.

Carroll further disrupts the continuity of the narrative in *Looking-Glass*, by placing a dinkus-like pause for unconventional reasons. A dinkus is a symbol added between sections of the text to emphasise a pause, break or shift, and is generally marked by placing three asterisks next to each other. Carroll's preference, however, was to use an array of star-shaped asterisks instead of three, which reflects his playful approach on narrative structure and form. Moreover, Carroll uses his peculiarly structured dinkus to

display Alice's moves across the chessboard in *Looking-Glass*, instead of using it in instances where a pause or break is needed. This can be seen throughout the novel, such as in chapter "Wool and Water," when Alice goes on a boat trip inside the Sheep's shop:

"I wonder *why* it wouldn't do?" thought Alice, as she groped her way among the tables and chairs, for the shop was very dark towards the end. "The egg seems to get further away the more I walk towards it. Let me see, is this a chair? Why, it's got branches, I declare! How very odd to find trees growing here! And actually here's a little brook! Well, this is the very queerest shop I ever saw!"[20]

* * * *
* * *
* * * *

So she went on, wondering more and more at every step, as everything turned into a tree the moment she came up to it, and she quite expected the egg to do the same.

(*The Annotated* 206)

Gardner points out in *The Annotated Alice* that "Alice has crossed the brook by advancing to Q6. She is now on the square to the right of the White Knight" (Carroll and Gardner 206), giving insight on the purpose of the dinkus-like structure. Regardless of Carroll's intention of using them as a dinkus or not, they create a disruption in the continuity and flow of the narrative. Moreover, Carroll does not provide any information suggesting that the stars reflect Alice's movements across the enormous chessboard. It is supposed to be the job of the reader to decipher and figure out this association for themselves, similar to the engagement of reader with the text in postmodernism.

Lack of coherence, which is another postmodern stylistic literary technique, is seen throughout both novels through the illogical and nonsensical events that leave Alice, as well as the reader, confused and perplexed. As mentioned in Chapter I, the realms of *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* have their own unique and peculiar set of rules and logic, and postmodernism might even argue that they do not have any at all. This reflects

Hoffmann's argument that postmodern art "abandons its hierarchical organization" in favour of more fragmented and non-linear structures (52) which mirrors the arbitrariness of Carroll's fictional worlds.

A discursive analysis of the absurdity and lack of coherence in the novels presents the postmodern tendency to challenge established truths and meanings, thus allowing space for multiple meanings and truths instead. A stylistic analysis, however, questions how incoherence in both novels adds layers to the text in relation to experimentation and active reader participation. For instance, the Hatter's tea party and his confusing riddles as well as Humpty Dumpty's play with linguistic meaning can all be analysed as lack of coherence as they defy conventional logic and leave meaning open to the interpretation of readers. This aligns with D'haen's observation that "traditional (including modernist) models of coherence and difference have been discarded or at least questioned" in postmodernism (177), which displays the idea that ambiguity and disjunction are not defects but intentional literary techniques, which are reflected through Carroll's narration. In light of this view, Hoffmann similarly notes that postmodern literature represents a departure from "linearity, linear causality, and qualitative difference" and shift into "disorder or arbitrariness" (64), which is evident in the narration of the *Alice* novels. The two fantastical yet nonsensical worlds are filled with absurd characters, meanings, and events, which push the reader to create their own meaning within the ambiguity of the novels in order to engage deeper with the text.

Also, lack of coherence can be seen through the inconsistency of characters and their actions. The White Rabbit, for instance, is constantly on the run and appears and disappears in almost all chapters. While this causes a digression in the flow of the narrative, it also creates ambiguity in relation to the plot. His first introduction starts with his muttering "[o]h dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!" (*Wonderland* 38), creating ambiguity around the character and what his purpose is. Throughout the novel, the erratic and urgent rabbit is seen running and hiding from place to place in an inconsistent manner. Even when he appears in scenes, his presence does not add meaning or contribute to the plot as he arrives either to mistake Alice for his maid Mary Ann (*Wonderland* 59), or scurries across the Queen of Hearts' garden in terror (*Wonderland* 103). His sudden

appearance and disappearance are also illustrated by Tenniel in the Queen of Hearts' garden:

(*The Annotated* 82)

Even though the White Rabbit is not voiced in this scene where Alice meets the King and Queen of Hearts and their court, he is seen, almost in an Easter-egg manner, on the far right by his hind leg through Tenniel's illustration. Tenniel's illustration adds to the White Rabbit's inconsistency in the novel, which strengthens the lack of coherence element within both novels. Similarly, Humpty Dumpty's inconsistency also adds to the lack of incoherence in the text as he chooses words to mean whatever he wishes, without a logical explanation. These examples produce an incoherent plot by disrupting the flow of the narrative and creating more questions rather than answer them. As Broich explains, "a postmodernist text is no longer meant to have closure, homogeneity and unity," but instead aims for "open, polyphonous, dissonant and fragmented" structures (252) which reflects the unpredictable and inconsistent characters in the novels. The unpredictability of the characters and their actions add further ambiguity to the novel which leaves the readers perplexed and unsure of their roles, just like Alice. Hence, these examples can be viewed from the postmodern lens of challenging consistent and clear plots or purposes.

Lack of aim is another postmodern technique which can be traced in the *Alice* novels, especially in *Wonderland*, where Alice's journey is quite directionless and even aimless at times. Alice enters the mysterious world of *Wonderland* on a whim, as she impulsively and recklessly follows the White Rabbit down the hole. She does not know what to do or where to go and follows the procession of events as she encounters the creatures of the realm which ultimately take her to the Queen of Hearts' garden. She advances throughout Wonderland with curiosity and confusion rather than a purpose. Moreover, even though Alice has a purpose in *Looking-Glass*, which is to successfully complete the chess game and become Queen, the nonsensical and absurd events and characters she encounters along the way do not contribute to her goal and/or achievement. McHale draws attention to the lack of aim in the *Alice* novels with the following:

> Notice that *Through the Looking-Glass* is subtitled, not "what Alice did there," but what she "found there," emphasizing accidental encounters and passive receptivity over purposeful action…While she does have a definite purpose in Looking-Glass – to become a queen when she reaches the Eighth Square – Alice seems powerless to affect her progress toward that goal very materially. Though she is permitted a bird's-eye view of the chessboard and players from the hill at the beginning, once she descends to the level of the board she literally loses sight of the narrative in which she participates; she is, after all, only a pawn in someone else's game. (57)

McHale's observation highlights the lack of aim in *Looking-Glass* as Alice does not do much there but rather finds many things out of her will. The subtitle of the novel thus suggests how Alice does not have an active role in the plot with clear goals and intentions, but aimlessly roams around the world, hoping to reach the last square of the chessboard. She nonetheless impulsively advances through the world, meeting characters and engaging in incidents that appear irrelevant to Alice's goal of becoming Queen such as Tweedledee and Tweedledum's quarrel over a broken rattle, the two Knights' comical battle over Alice, and many more. Also, after she becomes Queen and completes the chess game, her achievement is left unresolved and uncelebrated as she suddenly wakes up from her dream. McHale points out that the "weakly narrativized" *Alice* novels are "literally pointless" in terms of making a point and carrying across a message (57). He continues that they also lack aim since, unlike most children's literature of the time, the novels, by

Carroll's "conscious design," do not teach morals, "deliver no warning, [and] offer no model of behavior," aligning with the postmodern technique of challenging established narrative structures or established norms such as didacticism (57). These examples from both novels align with the postmodern literary technique of deliberately rendering plots and narratives aimless in order to subvert conventional structures in storytelling.

In conclusion, the *Alice* novels reflect postmodern literary techniques through their use of parody, playfulness, and a deliberate lack of continuity, coherence, and narrative aim. These elements subvert traditional literary conventions and reflect concerns of postmodernism, such as the instability of meanings, language, and the subversion of fixed structures. Through parody, Carroll not only mocks Victorian didactic literature, moral values, the legal system, and authoritarian adult figures, but also invites child and adult readers to question the meanings behind these norms. Additionally, by reimagining fictional characters with new traits and purposes, Carroll challenges the concept of textual originality and demonstrates the postmodern view that meaning is constantly reshaped through repetition and reinterpretation. The unpredictability of characters and events further adds to the novels' ambiguity, leaving readers as well as Alice uncertain about the story's direction and aim. These divergences can be viewed through a postmodern lens as a subversion of narrative coherence and linear progression, even if Carroll's original intention was simply to entertain young readers. Even though Carroll predates postmodernism and most likely did not intend to challenge authority and traditional narrative structures, his playful and experimental style nevertheless aligns with many techniques used in postmodern literature to undermine meaning and challenge literary norms.

CONCLUSION

"But what better name have we to give this curious age?
The Atomic, or Space, or Television,
or Semiotic, or Deconstructive Age?
…Or better still, shall we simply live
and let others live to call us what they may?"
(Ihab Hassan "The Question of Postmodernism")

This thesis discusses Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* through a postmodern lens, suggesting that these two celebrated children's novels display several elements associated with postmodernism. Carroll wrote the novels during an age, the Victorian Period, which prioritised teaching children sets of conduct rules through rigidly moralistic, and didactic texts in order to shape them into 'proper' members of the society, instead of inspiring their imagination. As opposed to enforcing moral codes and lessons on young Victorian boys and girls, Carroll prioritises entertainment, imagination, and creativity through his creation of fantastical, nonsensical, and illogical worlds, Wonderland and Looking-Glass. For this reason, Carroll's *Alice* novels differ greatly from the dominant children's literature of his time, thus catching the attention of many children alongside adults.

The *Alice* novels are suitable for a postmodern reading, as postmodernism is essentially the reaction against overarching theories, truths, ideologies, and meanings, as postmodernism derived from the scepticism that grew out of modernism. Instead of a single grand narrative, meaning, truth, convention, identity etc., postmodernism argues for and embraces plurality and multiplicity, opening the door to many meanings, versions, and outcomes. In postmodern theory, "a" gets replaced with "many", highlighting flexibility and variety. Postmodernism no longer lingers at the centre but shifts focus to the margins, where all perspectives, whether people or ideas, are welcomed and considered valid.

Carroll, as a nineteenth-century writer, did not deliberately pursue postmodern elements and techniques, as postmodernism, a mid-twentieth-century movement, was not at the foreground yet. It is important to note that Carroll's primary aim was to entertain and engage the imaginative minds of young Victorians. In doing so, however, he also challenged the dominant grand narratives of his time. Mingled with amusement, Carroll has left an abundancy of examples in both novels which allow the reader to scrutinise and question the established conventions, of either today, or a century ago, which is a typical postmodern attitude.

This thesis suggests that while Carroll critiques the dominant values of his time, particularly the Victorian grand narratives of didacticism, moralism, and rigid social norms in children's literature, he does so through thematic elements and narrative techniques and that later came to be identified as postmodern. The moral expectations that were imposed on young readers through Victorian children's literature are dismantled and questioned in the eccentric worlds of *Wonderland* as well as *Looking-Glass* through absurdity and reversed logic. Carroll invites the reader into alternative realms where widely accepted societal rules, expectations, and conventions are reversed, inverted, and ridiculed.

In Carroll's eccentric worlds, the existence of many meanings coexists with the existence of no meaning at all which demonstrates postmodernism's subversiveness. Also, through Alice's constantly fluctuating size in *Wonderland* and shifting identity in *Looking-Glass*, Carroll alludes to the postmodern concept of fluid identity which underscores the instability of identity and challenges fixed understanding of the self by embracing multiple and fluid identities. Alice's abundant and flowing identity allows her to enter places, such as the Queen of Hearts' garden, and attain goals, such as transforming into Queen from Pawn, she never could have with a single identity. These examples align with postmodernism's strive for shattering the construction of a single identity by embracing the flowing identity within all. Thus, both novels challenge the Victorian norms while unintentionally adopting literary techniques and philosophical questions that resonate with postmodernism, thus presenting the timeless and subversive nature of Carroll's narration.

The *Alice* novels also challenge narrative conventions and display parody, playfulness, and a disregard for coherent structure, continuity, or narrative aim. Canonical works of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries alongside authority figures such as kings, queens, politicians, and duchesses are playfully rendered powerless and mocked with these techniques. Also, the disruption in the flow of the narrative through disjointed episodes, the inconsistent plot, the shifting behaviours, and unpredictable responses of the characters, as well as Carroll's lack of a clear narrative goal, reflected by Alice's own aimlessness throughout the whimsical worlds, all contribute to reading both novels through a postmodern lens. Carroll, hence, encourages the readers to question meaning and literary conventions.

In conclusion, this study claims that Carroll's *Alice* novels reflect techniques of postmodernism by embracing playful and imaginative storytelling. Although they were written long before postmodernism came about as a philosophical, theoretical, and literary movement, both novels reflect postmodern characteristics such as subversion, scepticism, and multiplicity. The worlds of *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* may appear chaotic and nonsensical, but beneath their playfulness lies the possibility to challenge established literary constructs such as single narratives, knowledge, identity as well as language. Hence, by examining both texts from a postmodern lens, Carroll's children's novels not only transcend their intention of being books just for laughs, but offer new explorations on authority, meaning, and the power of imagination. For more than a hundred years, the *Alice* novels have been read and enjoyed by not only children but adults as well. This proves that Carroll's peculiar and fantastical worlds alongside his playful perspective and attitude on life has been, and continues to be, needed to inspire the imagination of all, regardless of age. Carroll's pursue of imagination guides the reader to view the world in a free and flexible perspective, where everything is possible. The novels enable readers to distance themselves from the conventional and societal norms by 'calling it as they like,' and being as nonsensical and carefree while simultaneously being philosophically engaging, such as the Cheshire Cat and the Hatter. Just as Carroll ends his *Alice* sequence with the open-ended question "[w]hich do *you* think it was?" (*Looking-Glass* 278), postmodernism invites us to respond with an answer that rejects certainty in the spirit of Carroll: anything, everything, or perhaps nothing at all.

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HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞINA

Tarih: 10/07/2025

Tez Başlığı: "Adına Ne Derseniz Deyin": Lewis Carroll'ın *Alice Harikalar Diyarında* ve *Alice Aynanın İçinde*'sinin Postmodern Bir Okuması
Yukarıda başlığı verilen tezimin a) Kapak sayfası, b) Giriş, c) Ana bölümler ve d) Sonuç kısımlarından oluşan toplam 114 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 10/07/2025 tarihinde şahsım/tez danışmanım tarafından Turnitin adlı intihal tespit programından aşağıda işaretlenmiş filtrelemeler uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı %5'dır.

Uygulanan filtrelemeler*:

1. ☒ Kabul/Onay ve Bildirim sayfaları hariç
2. ☒ Kaynakça hariç
3. ☒ Alıntılar hariç
4. ☐ Alıntılar dâhil
5. ☒ 5 kelimeden daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç

Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Çalışması Orijinallik Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılması Uygulama Esasları'nı inceledim ve bu Uygulama Esasları'nda belirtilen azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tezimin herhangi bir intihal içermediğini; aksinin tespit edileceği muhtemel durumlarda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.

Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

Feride Zeynep İşcen

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DANIŞMAN ONAYI

UYGUNDUR.
Doç. Dr. Pınar TAŞDELEN

* Tez **Almanca** veya **Fransızca** yazılıyor ise bu kısımda tez başlığı **Tez Yazım Dilinde** yazılmalıdır.
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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Date: 10/07/2025

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Feride Zeynep İşcen

Student Information		
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	Student Number	N22136067
	Department	English Language and Literature
	Programme	English Language and Literature

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APPROVED
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Tarih: 10/07/2025

Tez Başlığı (Türkçe): "Adına Ne Derseniz Deyin": Lewis Carroll'ın *Alice Harikalar Diyarında* ve *Alice Aynanın İçinde*'sinin Postmodern Bir Okuması

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DANIŞMAN ONAY

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Doç. Dr. Pınar TAŞDELEN

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HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
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I respectfully submit this for approval.

Feride Zeynep İşcen

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