POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVES IN SELECT WORKS OF LEWIS CARROLL

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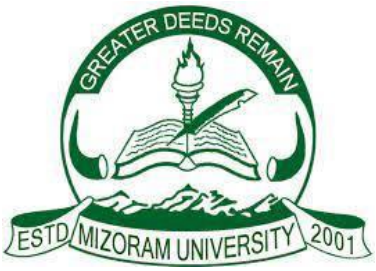

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POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVES IN SELECT WORKS OF LEWIS CARROLL

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Submitted

In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English and Culture Studies of Mizoram University, Aizawl.

MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **"Postmodern Perspectives in Select Works of Lewis Carroll"** is the bonafide research conducted by Nancy Lalhlimpuii under my supervision. Nancy Lalhlimpuii worked methodically for her thesis being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English and Culture Studies, Mizoram University. This is to further certify that she had fulfilled all the required norms laid down under the Ph.D. regulations of Mizoram University. Neither the thesis as a whole or any part of it was ever submitted to any other University.

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DECLARATION

Mizoram University

July 2023

I, Nancy Lalhlimpuii, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to do the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute.

This is being submitted to the Mizoram University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English and Culture Studies.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Revisiting Lewis Carroll in the Postmodern Context

> As the subject is quite inexhaustible, there is no hope of ever coming to a regular finish. - Lewis Carroll (qtd in Collingwood 52)

Associating Lewis Carroll, a writer of children's fantasy books of the Victorian era with postmodernism may seem outlandish and daunting. A close analysis of his works, however, reveals that within the seemingly simple structure of his fantasy works is a tapping into complex philosophical issues. His representation of chaotic nonsensical worlds, characters, relations, communications and circumstances significantly engage questions of identity, meaning, life and existence. Postmodernism as a critical intellectual movement started in Europe and America in the 1960s with a sceptical attitude to critique and unsettle the metanarratives and worldviews based on concepts of stable centre, language and structure, identity, faith and fixed morality. It is well known that Lyotard and Foucault among others have deconstructed grand theories that circulate and shape the cultural and global worlds. Finally, Derrida came to deconstruct the modern narratives in terms of signification, structure, parody, and free play, and consolidated the deconstructive movement as an intellectual revolution since 1966. Some of their critical premises have been useful to open up fresh insights into Carroll's thought and creative works.

Postmodernism may be one of the most unruly and perplexing terms among a number of literary terms in use today. The debate surrounding postmodern discourse is excessive and even the most basic discussion of its most prominent points would exhaust the scope of this study. Therefore, this study bases on the premise that postmodernism is a state of mind rather than a precise cultural period; say a state of mind to unsettle the settled assumptions; a rejection of the possibility of unmediated reality or objectively rational knowledge, and an acceptance that all

interpretations are contingent on the perspective from which they are made (Bryant 203). The aim of the study is to critically revisit Lewis Carroll with these postmodern perspectives. His works are often being identified as imaginary and fantastic to interest only children, in the light of the standard Victorian world. However, the present study is an attempt to critically examine and unveil those aspects, which in most studies remained evasive or unattended. And so, the study proposes to view Carroll's creative world from alternative postmodern perspectives and would try to provide reinterpretations of his nonsensical fantasies popularly held as such. The study will also make use of subheadings within chapters so that different ideas may be presented clearly.

Context:

The thesis will begin with highlighting certain aspects of Carroll's life and career which are found to have significant bearing on the objectives of the study. Lewis Carroll was born Charles Ludwidge Dodgson on January 27, 1832 at Daresbury, Cheshire, England and died at Guilford, Surrey on January 14, 1898. His upbringing informs much on the constitution of Lewis Carroll regarding his questioning of established norms and structures. He was the eldest son of a clergyman, Rev. Charles Dodgson (same name as Carroll's real name), and he grew up with his ten siblings in the northern side of England. Carroll's father was known to be a man of humour and was known to have a rare power of telling stories. At the same time, he was a pious and stern man who's "reverence for sacred things was so great that he was never known to relate to a story which included a jest upon words from the Bible" (Collingwood 8). As the eldest son of a Reverend, it is assumable that there was a strong family desire for him to carry on the clerical tradition of the family. In fact, all of his brothers became important members in the Anglican Church. And though Carroll too had studied to be a clergy, he never accepted the final ordination. Instead of following the family footsteps, he pursued fictional writing for children that has as its theme, fantasy and nonsense. His biographer Morton Cohen claims that Carroll developed an ambivalent relationship with his father's values and with the Church of England as a whole (200-202). And

through his fictional works, the writer inquires and prods hypocrisy and injustice which he observed in established customs and structures which have largely remained unquestioned.

At fourteen, Carroll was sent to Rugby school where his antagonism towards oppressive authority clearly amplified. He wrote some years after leaving that no amount of gain would persuade him to go back to the school because of the bullies he encountered in the institution. Carroll did not claim to be a victim of bullying himself but cited little boys as the main targets of older bullies at Rugby. John Skinner writes that at Rugby, it was a common practice to haze new boys, and the educational pattern was like that of Tom Brown (7). Because of this experience, Carroll continued to feel even more indignant towards the accepted injustice prevailing between those in control and those without power. Collingwood claimed that even though the bachelor Charles Dodgson was known to be a gentle and retiring don, he is remembered in his old school as the boy who knew well how to use his fist in order to protect the smaller boys (24). It is clear from these recollections that Lewis Carroll was the kind of person who would not silently comply with what he observed as undisputed oppressive authority.

From a young age, Carroll was gifted with artistry, imaginativeness and creativity. He enjoyed inventing games and stories for the entertainment of himself and his siblings. With the help of the village carpenter and members of his family, he made a troupe of marionettes and a theatre for them to perform in. He also owned, as a boy, a contemporary German puppet theatre (Collingwood 20). Being an imaginative boy, he enjoyed pretend playing with small animals like snails and caterpillars which he endowed with the ability to think and speak (Skinner 6), which foreshadow the talking animals and plants in his later works. In the academic arena as well, young Carroll proved to have an outstanding ability and brilliant creativity. In high school, Carroll had already possessed a tendency to test the boundaries of linguistic structures. For example, his school headmaster wrote that Carroll was “marvellously ingenious in replacing the ordinary inflexions of nouns and verbs, as detailed in our grammars, by more exact analogies, or convenient forms

of his own devising" (Clark 38). Carroll also created the newspapers "The Rectory Umbrella" and "Mischmash" while he was at school and wrote and illustrated for these papers. One issue contains a whimsical writing about the ability of photography to change negative to positive which perhaps reflects his inclination towards opening up perspectives in his fictional works.

The pseudonym Lewis Carroll is derived from Latin, and is a reverse of his first and middle name: Lutwidge = Ludovicus = Lewis; Charles = Carolus = Carroll. In creating his pen name, Carroll reversed the order of his name Charles and Lutwidge, and omitted use of his paternal name. This choice could have been made by reason of convenience, however, knowing how Carroll meticulously planned around his life, it is conceivable that it was a conscious choice made to omit what was a symbol of tradition and authority. It could also have been his way of foiling expectation. The splitting of logic which propels the nonsensical exchanges of his fantasy books are often used by the man in his correspondence. He wrote,

> In some ways, you know, people that don't exist are much nicer than people that do. For instance, people that don't exist are never cross; and they never contradict you; and they never tread on your toes! Oh, they're ever so much nicer than people that do exist. (Green 207)

There is also a funny anecdote which has been said about Carroll's encounter with the Queen of England. The story goes that in the year 1865, Queen Victoria having been really delighted by *Alice in Wonderland,* requested that she be given a copy of Carroll's upcoming book. What Carroll published right after *Alice in Wonderland* was a formidably technical book on Mathematics called *Condensation of Determinants* (Holquist 149). It might not have been expected by the Queen. It is clear from the above accounts that the man himself seems to enjoy throwing a curve ball at accepted norms.

Even though it is not an attempt of the thesis to engage in the fascinating study of the author's apparent duality (Dodgson – a Mathematics teacher and Carroll – a fantasy book writer), a few aspects of the discussion prove

beneficial for the proposition of the thesis. Though he is the creator of one of the most delightful fantasy books ever written, the whole professional career of Lewis Carroll, in a way, can be perceived as a quest for order. He began his career as a student of Mathematics, and for many years, he worked as a teacher of the subject in Christ Church College, Oxford. And in his later years, he turned to symbolic logic. There are many amusing stories that can illustrate his compulsive orderliness. For instance, when he would wrap packages, he would draw really precise diagrams that show to a fraction of an inch just where the knots should be tied. He put a number of thermometers in his apartments and set his room temperature to a specific reading so that the temperature never rises above or fall below a specific point. He is said to have received over one hundred thousand letters and kept a file of all his letters, registered each letter in a ledger and recorded the date of his answers (Skinner 10). He would often invite his friends to his room for dinners and parties. For each invitation, he would keep a floor plan showing where each guest would sit and he even prepared a menu book of the food he served. And when he would go to a friend's house for the like event, he would take his own sherry bottle and would ask to be served only from his own supply (11). He had refused to accept the first proofs of *Alice in Wonderland* because they were not clear enough. When going over the bookplate illustrations of his last books, *The Hunting of the Snark* and *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*, prepared by the artist Harry Furniss, he put them under a microscope in order to count the lines in the etchings. He also compiled an index for his works all arranged from A ("Accelerated velocity, causes of") to W ("wilful waste, etc., lesson to be learnt from") (Holquist 148). It is interesting that the man who was apparently preoccupied with finding order in his own life at the same time leaves a legacy of works that are more or less overrun with nonsense. It can be inferred from evidence that perhaps this preoccupation with order leads him to confront the underlying random nature of life and existence which forms the basis of all his fantasy works.

Significance of the study:

Lewis Carroll was not included in the editions of *Victorian Fiction: A Guide to Research* (1964 and 1980) and *Victorian Poets: Guide to Research* (1956 and 1968). There could be many reasons why the editors, even in mid twentieth century did not pick out his works or decided to omit him from writers with merits for further research. It is likely, however, that maybe Carroll was not considered a weighty enough writer, and one with no significant foothold in the mills of academia. Yet "curioser and curioser" (Carroll 26), fascination with Carroll's life and art seems to escalade in the past few years. Following is Robert Douglas-Fairhurst's comment on the *Alice* books in his piece for *The Guardian* in 2015,

> Since the first publication of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* 150 years ago, Lewis Carroll's work has spawned a whole industry, from films and theme park rides to products such as a "cute and sassy" Alice costume… The blank-faced little girl made famous by John Tenniel's original illustrations has become a cultural inkblot we can interpret in any way we like.

Indeed, there have been a plethora of literary retellings, a number of stage, movie and television adaptations of the *Alice* stories including Walt Disney pictures production in 2010 and 2016. The books have never been out of print and have been translated in to more than 170 languages (Douglas-Fairhurst 2015). *Alice*'s influence extends beyond stage and screen. There are countless references to characters of the *Alice* books in comics, graphic novels, manga (comics or graphic novels originating from Japan), animation, visual art, music, computer and video games, roleplaying games, food and even in science and technology. Game Boy by Nintendo (a Japanese multinational video game company) released "Alice in Wonderland" video game in 2000; John Lennon attributed the fantastical imagery of the Beatles' song "Lucy in the Sky with Diamond" (1967) to his reading of the *Alice* books (Sheff 182); and Taylor Swift, in her song "Wonderland" (2020) muses about the rabbit hole and the Cheshire Cat. Then there is "Alice in Wonderland" syndrome in psychiatry with its symptoms of macrospia and microspia, perception in which things seem larger or smaller or far away and extremely close. A simple search on the internet will show that passages from the books have been used as

chapter headings by writers of fiction, non-fiction, songs, scripts for movies or tv, logicians, theologians, scientists and philosophers. These are only some of the examples of Carroll's influence in contemporary culture. Besides the popular culture influence of the *Alice* stories, several eminent writers have accomplished a remarkable number of biographical, critical, psychological and structural analyses of the author. For instance, Anne Clark's *Lewis Carroll: A Biography* (1979), Morton Cohen's *Lewis Carroll: A Biography* (1996), Donald Thomas's *Lewis Carroll/A Biography* (1996), Karoline Leach's *In the Shadow of a Dreamchild: A New Understanding of Lewis Carroll* (1999), and Jenny Woolf's *The Mystery of Lewis Carroll* (2010) are among the works on Carroll that have informed about different biographical and critical aspects of the writer and his works.

What Carolyn Singer finds after examining an extensive body of critical scholarship on Lewis Carroll from 1983 through 2003 is that Carroll's life, his creative work as a writer and a photographer and his influence, not only on Victorian culture but also on modern culture and aesthetics have largely accelerated in the past 20 years. She also comments that recent criticism has examined Carroll's works from political, material, cultural, psychological, historical, and rhetorical perspectives, and finds that there are critical avenues to explore, not only regarding "Carroll's engagement with nineteenth-century debates about class, gender, and national identity, but his continuing relevance to our own critical questions and theoretical controversies" (375). Indeed, more critical readers are turning not only to the *Alice* books, but to his lesser-known works. His books are being studied in courses in Victorian literature, children's literature, linguistics and philosophy (Guiliano 263). However, despite the many studies on Carroll, he and his creative works remain an enigma, and the creator retains his reputation as an evasive human being who has so far defied comprehension (Cohen xxi). Carolyn Sigler calls him "elusive, compelling, and unknowable as a Snark" (376), and Elizabeth Sewell feels a "strong sense of unfinished business" (541) when it comes to the writer.

After accomplishing a well-researched biography on Carroll, Morton Cohen finds that Carroll provokes curiosity at all times. Even though literary historians and

psychologists have tried to discern what made him tick, their assessments are largely contradictory and no consensus has emerged. In Cohen's *Lewis Carroll: Interviews and Recollections* (1989), we see a huge exposition of Carroll's life in short reminiscences and interviews by family members and friends, Oxford students and colleagues, as well as artists and writers with whom Carroll had worked and been associated with. Interestingly, the Carroll that emerges from these retrospections is vastly multifaceted. He is remembered differently as "a dear friend" (205), "a strange elderly gentleman" (204), "a spoilt child" (225), "the most charming and courteous man" (140), "the product of the old order at Oxford" (320), a vocal "supporter of Women's University" (211), a "most prolific malcontent" (59), "an old mathematical tutor" (68), and "a born story teller" (200). What we gather from the diversity of their accounts is the complexity and range of Carroll's interests, relationships and activities. Although it is often and usually the attempt of most biographers to recover and render the "fundamental coherence, unity or myth to be discovered beneath the rag-and-bone randomness of most human lives" (Frank 501), what is witnessed among many of Carroll's biographers is both, a fascination and disconcertion with their subject's seemingly paradoxical nature. It is no surprise then, that such an enigmatic individual is responsible for creating the most enchanting fantasy stories with endless interpretative possibilities which are revered by both children and adults alike.

And so, with fresh postmodern analytical devices, the present research endeavours to study a Victorian writer of nonsensical fantasies who somehow remains largely significant in the twenty first century culture. The global appeal of Carroll's works also suggest that his stories have values far beyond entertainment, and their continuing relevance point to their significance in addressing contemporary critical questions and theoretical challenges.

Primary Texts:

The primary texts selected for the study are Carroll's works on children's fantasy books, namely *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), *Through the*

Looking Glass and What Alice Found There (1871), *The Hunting of the Snark: An Agony in Eight Fits* (1876), *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889) and *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (1893).

Brief review of selected texts:

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865):

The story begins with Alice sitting on a riverbank on a warm summer day, drowsily reading over her sister's shoulder. She catches sight of a White Rabbit in a waistcoat running by her. She follows the White Rabbit down his hole where she experiences many wondrous, often bizarre adventures with extremely illogical systems and strange creatures. Down the rabbit hole, Alice comes upon a great hallway lined with doors. She finds a small door and she opens the door using a key she finds on a nearby table. She sees a beautiful garden through the door, and begins to cry when she realizes she cannot fit through the door. She finds a bottle marked "DRINK ME" and as she drinks it, she shrinks down to the right size to enter the door, and then finds a cake marked "EAT ME" which causes her to grow to an inordinately large height. Still unable to enter the garden, Alice cries again, and her giant tears form a pool at her feet. As she cries, Alice shrinks and falls into her pool of tears. As she swims the pool of tears, she meets a Mouse. The Mouse accompanies Alice to shore, where a number of animals stand gathered on a bank. The animals decide to have a "Caucus Race" to dry themselves where the participants run in all directions, with no proper race tract and no particular winner or losers. Alice then meets a Caterpillar sitting on a mushroom and smoking a hookah. After leaving the Caterpillar, Alice tastes a part of the mushroom, and her neck stretches above the trees. A pigeon sees her and attacks her to protect her eggs thinking Alice is a serpent. She then eats another part of the mushroom and shrinks down to a normal height. Alice wanders until she comes across the house of the Duchess. She enters and finds the Duchess, who is nursing a squealing baby. As the Duchess departs to prepare for a croquet game with the Queen of Hearts, she hands Alice the baby, which Alice discovers turns in to a pig. Alice lets

the pig go and re-enters the forest, where she meets the Cheshire Cat again. The Cheshire Cat gives directions to the March Hare's house and fades away to nothing but a floating grin. Alice attends a strange endless tea party with the Mad Hatter, the March Hare and the Dormouse and then journeys through the forest and finally enters the garden which she really longed to reach. In the garden, Alice joins the Queen in a strange game of croquet. The croquet game is played with an unmanageable live flamingo for a croquet mallet and uncooperative live hedgehogs for croquet balls. The Queen randomly calls for the execution of almost everyone present. The Queen then tells Alice that she must visit the Mock Turtle to hear his story and sends her with the Gryphon as an escort. Alice shares her strange experiences with the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon. After listening to the Mock Turtle's story, they hear an announcement that a trial is about to begin, and the Gryphon brings Alice back to the croquet ground. The Knave of Hearts stands trial for stealing the Queen's tarts. The King of Hearts leads the proceedings, and various witnesses approach the stand to give evidence. Alice is unexpectedly called as a witness. When the Queen demands that Alice be beheaded, Alice realizes that the characters are only a pack of cards and all of a sudden, she finds herself awake on her sister's lap, back at the riverbank. She tells her sister about her dream and goes inside for tea as her sister ponders Alice's adventures.

The story is not organized by a well-structured plot, and unlike most fantasy writings, the narrative has no discernible quest. The protagonist does not overcome any trial, there is no battle between good and evil and there are no winners or losers in the end. Alice's adventure is simply propelled by a strong curiosity. The story records Alice's search for meaning in a land that overturns all of her expectations and the inhabitants who endlessly disrupt her attempts at an effective communication. In this fantasy land, Alice and the readers continually find themselves confronted with unfamiliar notions that reverse all aboveground laws. The blurring of reality and fantasy, the breaking down of human and animal status and the 'illogical' rules of Wonderland that continually disrupt expectations of Alice and the reader are found to share common concerns with critical postmodern

thoughts including deconstruction of binary oppositions, the absurd theatre, ecocritical concerns and so on, and will be analysed in detail in subsequent chapters. It is well-deserved that the fantasy book has been credited with helping to bring about an end to the era of didacticism in children's literature (Susina 3).

Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There (1871):

Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There (also known as *Alice Through the Looking Glass* or simply *Through the Looking Glass*) begins with Alice siting in her armchair at home, drowsily watching her pet kitten named Kitty as she plays with a ball of string. She takes Kitty up and begins telling her about "Looking Glass House," an imaginary world on the other side of the mirror where everything is backward. Then, Alice finds herself on the mantelpiece and stepping through the mirror into the Looking Glass house. On the other side of the Looking Glass, Alice discovers a room similar to her own but with several strange differences. She becomes distracted by a book on the shelf, the book is a nonsensical poem entitled "Jabberwocky." Frustrated by the strange poem, she sets off to explore the rest of the house. As she leaves the house, she spots a beautiful garden in the distance, but every time she tries to follow the path to the garden, she finds herself back at the door to the house. Confused, Alice wonders aloud how to get to the garden, and to her surprise a Tiger-lily responds. Other flowers join in the conversation and Alice learns from the flowers that the Red Queen is nearby, and she sets off to meet her. Alice meets the Red Queen, and the two engage in conversation. Alice sees a great game of chess in progress, and tells the Red Queen that she would like to join. The Red Queen tells her that she can stand in as a White Pawn and marks a course for her, explaining that when she reaches the end of the game, she will become a Queen. Alice suddenly finds herself on a train with a Goat, a Beetle, and a man dressed in white paper. Then she finds herself in a forest, conversing with a really big Gnat. After learning the names of the Looking Glass insects from the Gnat, Alice sets off again and discovers that she has forgotten the names of things, even her own name. She comes across a Fawn and the two continues through the forest. As Alice and the Fawn comes out of the forest,

memories of their names and identity come back, and the Fawn runs away in fear of Alice. Alice then meets Tweedledum and Tweedledee, an identical pair of stocky men. The twins notice the Red King sleeping nearby and tells Alice that she exists only as a figment of the Red King's dream. Upset, Alice decides that the two of them speak nonsense. After slipping away from the twins, Alice encounters the White Queen and converse with her. After explaining to Alice that she used to practice the impossible daily, the White Queen suddenly transforms into a sheep in a shop. The Sheep asks a disoriented Alice what she would like to buy. Though the shop is full of curious things, Alice finds that she is unable to fix her eye on any one thing. The Sheep then asks Alice if she knows how to row and before she knows it, she finds herself in a boat with the Sheep, rowing down a stream. The boat crashes into something and sends Alice tumbling to the ground. When she stands, she finds herself back in the shop. She then purchases an egg from the Sheep. As Alice reaches for the egg, she finds herself back in the forest, where the egg has transformed into Humpty Dumpty. Alice has another confusing and aggravating conversation with Humpty Dumpty. Then Humpty Dumpty abruptly bids her goodbye, and Alice storms off, annoyed. All of a sudden, a loud crash disturbs the forest and she watches soldiers and horsemen run by. Alice meets the White King, who explains to her that he has sent all of his horses and men. The King's messenger Haigha informs them that the Lion and the Unicorn are having a battle in the town. Alice sets off with them to watch the battle. After spending time with the Lion and the Unicorn, Alice suddenly finds herself alone again. The Red Knight comes up to Alice and takes her as a prisoner. The White Knight arrives and vanquishes the Red Knight. Alice and the White Knight walk and talk together, and Alice finds a friend in the eccentric White Knight. As she crosses the final brook, she finds herself sitting on the bank with a crown on her head. Alice is then in the company of the Red Queen and the White Queen, who question her on and on before falling asleep in her lap. Then Alice discovers a castle with a huge door marked "QUEEN ALICE." She goes through the door and finds a huge banquet in her honour. Alice sits and begins eating, but the party quickly pass into total chaos. An overwhelmed Alice pulls away the tablecloth and grabs the Red Queen. Alice

wakes up from her dream to find herself holding Kitty. She wonders aloud whether or not her adventures where her own dream or the dream of the Red King.

Here, Alice enters another fantasy land by climbing through a Looking Glass into a world that she sees from the mirror. There she finds that, just like a reflection, everything is reversed, including logic and rationality (for instance, running helps one remains stationary, walking away from something brings one towards it, chessmen are alive, nursery rhyme characters exist, and so on). The reversal of accepted patterns, the abrupt and dream like transition from scene to scene, the inhabitants who completely defy categorization and the continued blurring of reality and fantasy are some of the reasons why the story is found have similarities with some postmodern narratives.

The Hunting of the Snark (1876):

The Hunting of the Snark, subtitled *An Agony in Eight Fits* has an interesting genesis. While taking a solitary walk on a Surrey hillside in 1874, a series of words flashes in Carroll's head out of nowhere. Carroll remarks that what he hears is the line – "For the Snark was a Boojum, you see" and he recognizes the message as a line of verse. In his 1887 essay "Alice on the Stage," he describes his reception of *The Hunting of the Snark*: "I know not what it meant, then: I know not what it means now: but I wrote it down: and sometime afterwards the rest of the stanza occurred to me, that being its last line" (qtd. in Gardner 12). Carroll essentially gives literary space to the unknown, composing a whole poem based on the unknowable and unintelligible Snark and Boojum.

The poem tells of an expedition or a quest undertaken by a group of ten men. The men are identified only by the name of their callings - a Bellman, a Boots, a maker of Bonnets and Hoods; a Barrister, a Broker, a Billiard-marker, a Banker, a Butcher, a Beaver and a Baker. Carroll refuses to explain why all their titles begin with the letter B and the men do not seem to have any other ties that hold them together other than their expedition. The hunting crew, after crossing the sea guided by the Bellman's map of the Ocean (a completely blank sheet of paper),

arrives in a strange land. The Bellman tells them five signs that will help them identify a Snark and warns them that some Snarks are Boojums. The Baker faints on hearing this. Once he is revived, the Baker recalls that his uncle warned him that if the Snark turns out to be a Boojum, the hunter will "softly and suddenly vanish away, and never be met with again" (Carroll 766). After a long time into their journey, the Baker calls out that he has found a Snark rushing ahead of the crew. The Snark proves to be a Boojum, and in the final climactic stanza, the Baker vanishes. Thus, the quest ends in nothingness and confusion.

The Hunting of the Snark has mostly been categorised as a nonsense poem and the narrative adopts its setting, some of its creatures and eight portmanteau words from the "Jabberwocky" poem in *Through the Looking Glass*. Like the "Jabberwocky" poem, the *Snark* poem predominantly refers to unknowable/absent referents. The poem estranges places, characters and language itself and is found to show similar components that characterize modern/postmodern discourse especially with deconstruction and the theatre of the absurd.

Sylvie and Bruno (1889):

The novel has two main plots: one story line takes place in Outland, a curious land which is presented as not wholly real nor wholly fictional, and another takes place in Elveston, a place in London. The story is related by a disoriented narrator whose presence and role in the book is never clear. The story begins midsentence – "- AND then…" – and opens with a crowd in the middle of a protest. As the narrative proceeds, we come to learn that the people are instigated to form a riot by the Sub Warden, his wife and the Chancellor in order that they may overthrow the reign of the Warden. The crowd of people in fact, are unsure of their demonstration and keep shouting different words. Sylvie and Bruno, we learn are children of the Warden of Outland. The Warden has to leave on important business and leaves his children under the guardianship of his brother who is secretly conspiring against him. Even though the book sets up an atmosphere where the reader fears that the children may be in peril at the hands of their uncle and his wife, the conspirators

are not actually crafty evil schemers and no real harm befalls the children. The children are also often accompanied by a man only referred to as the Professor, who is also a friend of their father. The Professor is a curious character: even though he is held at a high esteem by other characters, his bright ideas are most often nonsensical and incomprehensible. The narrator also sometimes takes an active part in conversations, but at times, he appears like a guest observing the party remaining unseen; and still at other times, he literally becomes invisible to the crowd of people. The Outland story mostly follows the adventures of Sylvie and Bruno with the Professor and the narrator, as well as the various antics of the Sub Warden's wife and her idiotic son named Uggug. Later on in the story, we are introduced to a new character simply referred to as the Other Professor, who has even more bizarre ideas than the Professor. The adventures of the children even take them to other fantasy lands like Elfland, Fairyland, and Dogland.

The other plotline begins abruptly with the narrator finding himself in a train to visit his friend Arthur in Elveston. In the train he meets Lady Muriel, who turns out to be the love of Arthurs life, but due to several mischances, she is engaged to Arthur's cousin, Eric Lindon. The Elveston plotline mainly follows the love triangle among Arthur, Eric and Lady Muriel with the occasional discussions on heavy topics like religion, philosophy and so on. The abrupt transition of scenes remain throughout the book and the narrator continuously wavers between reality and fantasy. As the story proceeds, the narrator begins to perceive strange echoes of the dreamworld in the real world. And as the boundary between waking and dreaming grows thinner, the scene begins to shift more erratically, with a sentence begun by one character in one world sometimes being finished by another character in another world.

Sylvie and Bruno Concluded (1893):

Sylvie and Bruno Concluded is largely a continuation of the plotlines in the first volume. Bruno's undermining of relentless didactic tradition of the Victorian society continues here with even more ferocity. We are introduced to a new character

called Mein Herr, about whom there is a strong suggestion that he may be from another planet. Mein Herr has even shared the strange and unusual systems he has experienced in other planets. After delivering a series of satirical tales of his home place, he vanishes from the narrative, never to be seen again. There are a number of lengthy discussions on metaphysical topics and insoluble paradoxes. The book strongly suggests that the dream characters might be based on the real-world characters. Yet it is often unclear which character is more key and which is the imitation. Any attempt on the part of the reader to separate what is real and what is fiction is disturbed when his dream figures pass into the real world. They transition out of the dreamworld into the real world where they interact with the other set of characters, before journeying back into their own land. As the Fairies interact with the other real-life characters, the assumption that their being is merely figments of the narrator's imagination is disregarded. The books never explain what Sylvie and Bruno really are: if they're fairies, or human children, or both, or neither. The books basically leave the reader in perpetual puzzle and provides no answer except the line "it is love," which, instead of providing a closure, in fact, opens the gate for countless possible interpretations.

Carroll's last two novels grew out of a short story titled "Bruno's Revenge" which Carroll wrote in 1867 for a children's magazine, in between writing *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1872). The story, "Bruno's Revenge" appears in chapters fourteen and fifteen of *Sylvie and Bruno* in virtually unaltered form. Carroll's last two books are boldly experimental which includes an exploring of lives in other planets. The multitude of worlds explored in the books have parallels in heterotopia, a common feature in postmodern fantasy which essentially means "a multitude of discordant universes, deno[ting] the ambivalent and unstable spatial and temporal conditions in fiction" (Nikolajeva 143). The line between the dream world and reality is even more vague in these books than in his other works. Like his other narratives, the *Sylvie and Bruno* volumes are overrun with puns and language play, contain no proper beginning nor definitive closure and are not propelled by a coherent plot line. In Carroll's last two novels, we

see parallels to what can be considered as a constitutive part of the postmodern critical situation: the recognition (and celebration) that reality and fiction are inextricably bound. The books seem to reflect a society similar to what Jean Baudrillard explains as the postmodern society where it is not possible to make the distinction between the real and the imagined, reality and illusion or surface and depth (*Simulacra and Simulation*, 6). The books are also found to reflect human being's split and ambivalent picture of the universe which is also a critical issue in postmodern narratives.

Objectives of the study:

The association of Lewis Carroll with modernism/postmodernism is not a completely new idea. His influence on various fields of literary and visual arts, especially on surrealism has also been addressed in scholarly literatures. A well-known surrealist artist, Salvador Dali has created 12 illustrations for each chapter of *Alice in Wonderland*. As Michael Holquist writes, Carroll's name figures in the first Surrealist manifesto (1924); Louis Aragon has attempted a translation of *The Hunting of the Snark* (1929); Andre Breton has selections from Carroll in his *Anthologie de L'humour Noir* (1939); Henri Parisot publishes a study of Carroll in 1952, in a series called *Poetes D'aujourd Hui* and Antonin Artaud tried to translate the "Jabberwocky" song (146). Distinguished names in the field of modern and postmodern literature have also mentioned Carroll and his works. For example, W.H. Auden in *The Enchafèd Flood* mentions *The Hunting of the Snark*; Jean-Paul Sartre writing about Mallarmé mentions Carroll; Jacques Derrida in *Dissemination* mentions Carroll and made a reference to Alice's cat in his essay "The Animal that Therefore I Am;" Gilles Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense* (1969) includes a textual analysis of Carroll's works and Helene Cixous mentions Carroll's "prophetic deconstruction" (234) in her essay, "Introduction to Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass* and *The Hunting of the Snark*." Mr. Douglas Hofstadter, a professor of computer science, in his Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *Gidel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* has also commented on the paradoxical nature of

time in a “metaphorical fugue of minds and machines in the spirit of Lewis Carroll” (Petersen 427).

Even though Carroll’s significance in responding to contemporary inquiries and theoretical issues is clearly not unfounded, no substantial work of study could be found as attending a weighty analysis on Carroll and his works reflecting on fresh perspectives apparently postmodern. And a study of the Victorian writer in the context of postmodern thought and textuality seems even more compelling and significant, as our writer is still “counted among authors who are universally known and read, commented upon abundantly, but whose place in the canon of English literature remains uncertain” (Marret-Maleval 103). It is not the objective of the study to attempt to place him under any group, in fact, this difficulty in categorizing him may be exactly what the writer had wished to be remembered as. The aim of this research is to explore the patterns of resistance as it exists in the works of Lewis Carroll, specifically those pertaining to his defence against children and other non-human beings which he felt were unfairly oppressed by authorities. It will also focus on analysing his works so as to outline similarities found with themes and techniques used in postmodern narratives.

In 1860, the celebrated British psychiatrist Sir James Crichton-Brown published his groundbreaking essay “Psychical Diseases in Early Life” where he denounced the “pernicious practice” of “castle building” or imaginative fantasy in children (303). The Psychiatrist urged his readers to prohibit children from engaging “airy notions” that comes as a result of daydreaming and fantasizing. He offered the following warning:

> Impressions, created by the ever-fertile imagination of a child . . . are soon believed as realities, and become a part of the child’s psychical existence. They become, in fact, actual delusions. Such delusions are formed with facility, but are eradicated with difficulty, and much mental derangement in mature life, we believe, is attributable to these reveries indulged in during childhood. (303)

Crichton-Browne's assertions were widely accepted by the medical community (Shuttleworth 21). Lewis Carroll, however seemed to disagree with the contention of the medical community for he centred his fictional works around the kind of deluded fantasy "castle building" that Crichton-Browne and many other medical experts warned against. Subverting the authority of the medical community, Carroll used the fluid structure of fantasy to challenge inflexible standards of the society and literature, while at the same time, using the genre to explore the potential of the imagination.

The appeal to link Carroll's books with postmodern discourse is reinforced by this adoption of the fantasy genre, as the genre itself can be interpreted as a game which is "the narrative result of transforming the condition contrary-to-fact into 'fact' itself" (Irwin 4). Maria Nikolajeva comments that "although some important features of fantasy can clearly be traced back to Jonathan Swift, fantasy literature owes its origins mostly to Romanticism with its interest in folk tradition, its rejection of the previous, rational-age view of the world, and its idealization of the child" (138). The interplay between nature and Alice, and the innocence of Sylvie does indicate a Romantic perspective in Carroll's narratives, however, his fantasy seems to have more similarities to postmodern fantasy. In his theoretical introduction to postmodern fantasy, Lance Olsen asserts that postmodernism is an attempt to respond to contemporary experience, an experience that is continually beyond belief. In other words, postmodern art faces the problem of responding to a situation that is, literally, fantastic. No wonder, then, that fantasy becomes the vehicle for the postmodern consciousness (14). He further writes that postmodern fantasy frustrates the reader's quest for meaning and "subverts the notion of endings, casts it [the narrative] into a state of peripeteia, denies its redemption" (99). If endless deferral of meaning and resistance to closure are what enable the imagination to be set free, then the texts of Carroll make the reader consider "as many as six impossible things before breakfast" (Carroll 200). Carroll's narratives, by breaking down the boundary between the possible and impossible, or the concrete and abstract, or the logical and

illogical also accomplish what Olsen emphasizes as the function of postmodern fantasy, that is "a liberation of the imagination" (8).

Carroll is undoubtedly one of the most well-known Victorian writers of children's books in contemporary time. A major factor which inspires this research is the writer's ingenuity in using the genre of children's literature and fantasy writing while subtly subverting the conventional methods. In her essay, "Introduction to Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* and *The Hunting of the Snark*" Helene Cixous writes, "Carroll wasn't an avant-garde theoretician but a scholar, worried by the fact that, in spite of himself, his knowledge was undermining institutions" (234) and this challenging of undisputed authority seems to be an important catalyst that propels his creativity. Most literature intended for younger audience during the Victorian period were written with an instructive aim. For example, one of the most famous representative writers of the time Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1886) concludes with a moral lesson, "do you learn your lessons, and thank God that you have plenty of cold water to wash in; and wash in it, too, like a true gentleman." Other well-known children's book writers of the time such as George Macdonald, Anna Sewell, Catherine Sinclaire, Thomas Hughes and more also wrote with didactic purpose, though their purpose may differ. Carroll's approach, however, seems different from his contemporaries. He parodies and subverts the relentless didactic norms of the period, which he found was oppressive towards children and non- human beings. He relentlessly defies any attempt to define his works and turn them in to allegory. He said, "I can guarantee that the books have no religious teaching whatever in them – in fact they do not teach anything at all" (Green 52). The study does not suggest that other writers of children's fiction during Victorian period were more limited in their vision whatsoever, it, however, finds the manner in which Carroll challenged undisputed norms and fixed structures to be ahead of its time, which inspires this study to explore Carroll's works with new perspectives.

From the verses he wrote as a boy, we see a satirical approach towards copybook codes of conduct. For example, "Rules and Regulations" (1845) and "My

Fairy" (1845), poems he composed at only thirteen years of age are parodies of instructive children's literature of the time. All of his subsequent works as an adult continues this subversive approach towards oppressive authorities and inflexible standards. He parodies serious subjects of children's books and use them in a playful, humorous and ironic way. The technique of parody itself has become an important feature of postmodern narrative. Carroll's use of parody seems to correspond to Linda Hutcheon's comment, "parody is a perfect postmodern form, in some sense, for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies" (11).

Besides figuratively standing up against the paternalistic rationale which subjugated children to the whims of the adults through literature, Lewis Carroll also largely challenged the scientific authority of his time which he felt was oppressive towards animals and other non-human beings. His anti-vivisectionist writings are highly subversive of the scientific authority of the period which justified experimenting on the 'lesser beings' in their quest for knowledge and advancement of the human civilization. His fictional works are, to a large extend, an extension of this concern for the welfare of the non-human lives as they are heavily grounded on breaking down the barriers between different beings and species. In fact, a critical element of his writing rests on blurring the lines between different binaries such as rational and irrational, concrete and abstract, possible and impossible, reality and fantasy, presence and absence, high class (royalty) and middle class, which calls to mind Derrida's deconstruction of binaries.

Carroll's works also heavily rely on playing with the English language for humour, to disrupt meaningful communications, to destabilize meaning and to bring out the instability of linguistic structures. In Carroll's narratives, a sentence "sounding well" (Carroll 723) does not promise that it is able to communicate an understanding. The reader is often implicated, almost instinctively, through the process of attempting to make sense of the contradictions and puzzles throughout the texts of his fantasy works. The very last line of *Through the Looking Glass* literally leaves the meaning of the whole story in the hands of the reader by asking the

question, “Which do *you* think it was?” (271) as Alice is not able to figure out if it is all a dream of the King’s or is it hers, or rather, if it is all even a dream or reality. Carroll delights in leaving the interpretation of his works in the hands of the readers. In one of the letters which he wrote some years after *The Hunting of the Snark* was published, Carroll says:

> In answer to your question, ‘What did you mean the Snark was?’ will you tell your friend that I meant that the Snark was a Boojum. I trust that she and you will now feel quite satisfied and happy. To the best of my recollection, I had no other meaning in my mind, when I wrote it; but people have since tried to find the meaning in it. (Skinner 15)

Carroll refuses to provide any satisfying answer or closure to his narratives. He instead welcomes the readers to pursue their own reading and form their own meaning:

> Of course, you know what a Snark is? If you do, please tell me: for I haven’t an idea of what it is like. (15)

When asked if he would share his intentions when he wrote the *Alice* books, Carroll answered, “What? Answer that question for once and for all and deprive thousands of readers of the joy and pleasure of spilling barrels of ink? or perhaps electrons?? in writing their own interpretations? Absolutely not” (Brown 11). This suspension of closure in Carroll’s narratives corresponds to Derrida’s concept of *the freeplay of signs*:

> Sign will always lead to sign, one substituting the other (playfully, since “sign” is “under erasure”) as signifier and signified in turn. Indeed, the notion of play is important here. Knowledge is not a systematic tracking down of a truth that is hidden but may be found. It is rather the field “of *freeplay*,” that is to say, a field of infinite substitutions in the closure of a finite ensemble. (Spivak 20; original emphasis)

Through language, Carroll creates a playful universe, a world of nonsense and games where every sign leads to another sign and so on and so forth. Recounting one of the major concepts of Derrida's *Of Grammatology* in the words of Gyatri Spivak, "such is the strange 'being' of the sign: half of it always 'not there' and the other half always 'not that.' The structure of the sign is determined by the trace or track of that which is forever absent" (Spivak 18). Derrida's account about the sign, half of which is always not there can describe not only Carroll's treatment of language but also reflects the way he created his stories. The writer claims that all his writings come from ideas and fragments of dialogues that came to his mind, and he notes them down so that he may not forget them. However, he never seems to be able to trace the idea back to a precise cause. He mentions this in the preface to *Sylvie and Bruno:*

> Sometimes one could trace to their source these random flashes of thought - as being suggested by the book one was reading, or struck out from the "flint" of one's own mind by the "steel" of a friend's chance remark - but they had also a way of their own, of occurring, *a propos* of nothing - specimens of that hopelessly illogical phenomenon, "an effect without a cause." (277)

The trace or track of his creation is always 'not there,' and such too is the creation of his famous *Alice* books:

> I added my fresh ideas, which seemed to grow of themselves upon the original stock; and many more added themselves when, years afterward, I wrote it all over again for publication . . . but whenever or however . . . *it comes of itself…Alice* and *The Looking Glass* are made up almost wholly of bits and scraps, single ideas which come of themselves. (Skinner 15,16)

The creative process reflects the way he creates his characters, and thus, Alice, or the Snark, or the fairy children Sylvie and Bruno become "signs," in Derrida's sense: either they are there, or they are not. The 'signs' themselves do not know if they are there or even who they really are.

It is not only the disturbance of meaning or the subversion of tradition that makes the works of Carroll an interesting topic for study in the postmodern context, but the freeing of imagination and the opening up of possibilities that rise at the wake of his undermining of patterns. To note a critical point here, a nineteenth century author Carroll's so-called fantasy discourse could be explained by Heidegger's positive deconstruction:

> But this destruction is just as far from having the *negative* sense of shaking off the ontological tradition. We must … stake out the positive possibilities of that tradition … to bury the past in nullity [Nichtigkeit] is not the purpose of this destruction; its aim is *positive*; its negative function remains unexpressed and indirect. (44)

The books do not end with all chaos being resolved. The randomness that rules Carroll's universe perpetuates. In fact, none of Carroll's books end in proper closure. At the same time, the world Alice confronts is a world of possibilities rather than a world that ends in despair. And the chaotic and puzzling world of Sylvie and Bruno does not end in nothingness but the narrative fades with a suggestion: "it is love" (749). Love is an abstract notion, and a notion with multifaceted interpretations, but nonetheless, an abstract notion of hope rather than despair. The essence of reality and meaning are often left to perception rather than something imposed from cosmic or outside. By accepting the randomness and ambiguity of the universe, Carroll's creations find delight in the possibility of the free-play of meaning and the joyous creation all minds are capable of conceiving. It is the belief of the study that Carroll's works centre on challenging undisputed structures so as to bring light to the potential emancipation of creative power when unbound. Within Carroll's universe, ambiguities need no resolving, because the inhabitants of his universe somehow find delight in accommodating contradictions. With the bedrocks of meaning/structure destabilized, Carroll's characters move on, propelled by curiosity, finding pleasure in the limitless possibilities of exploring. And the opening up of perspectives somehow raise the reader's consciousness for a more humane life.

Through careful examination of Carroll's works, the research aims to establish the merits and intelligent fantasy works of Carroll on areas that have not yet been substantially validated. By exploring and analysing Lewis Carroll's subversion of didactic trends in Victorian children's literature, his fluid representation of the subject, his destabilizing of linguistic structures, and the breaking down of barriers between fantasy/reality, human/animals and so on, the study will attempt to establish the Victorian writer as anticipating many aspects of postmodern debates. The outcome is simultaneously hoped to serve both as a mirror and a window for contemporary readers.

Methodology:

For this study, a judicious selection of interdisciplinary approaches will be utilized with a focus given more on postmodern critical assessments. Critical concepts and premises from Derrida, Martin Esslin, Cixous, Wittgenstein, Heidegger and others will be useful to this study. The study will explore the relevant aspects by six chapters, while exploring the areas of correspondence between Carroll's works and the ideas developed in postmodern narratives.

Chapter one as has been discussed, includes an introduction of the study, a brief biographical sketch of the writer, significance of the study, objectives of the study and a brief introduction of Carroll's works in the context of the nineteenth century fiction and fantasy writing with a concise analysis of the texts in the postmodern context. The aim of chapter two is to explore Carroll's subversion of relentless didactic trope of children's literature during the Victorian period using parody and humour. This chapter will also explore the inversion and disruption of logic and reason in Carroll's fantasy lands and highlight the similarities with the fundamental absurdity of the human condition as expressed in drama of the absurd theatre. Chapter three aims to bring out Carroll's foreshadowing of the postmodern ambiguous subject and his blurring of the lines between human/animals or species/species. The breaking down of hierarchies between man and animals, the depiction of animals with sound intellect, and voices given to plants and animals

certainly prefigures many features of postmodern discourses including ecocritical concerns. Chapter four will focus on exploring Carroll's "prophetic deconstruction" which Cixous among other postmodernist emphasize (234), and his propensity to play with linguistic structures which serves to disrupt meaningful communication among the characters of his narratives as well as the readers. It will also explore Carroll's tapping into the dissolution of meaning which is found to have similarities with some modern/postmodern discourse especially with the absurd theatre. Chapter five will aim at exploring Carroll's treatment of the quest pattern in his narratives and closure endlessly being suspended in his works. The chapter will also aim to bring out that the suspension of closure is not seen as an attempt to end the narratives in chaos, but rather a way into finding delight in living with ambivalence which is found to have similarities with what Brian Attebery mentions in *Strategies of Fantasy*, which is that the acceptance of the ultimate liberation of meaning and possibility brought about by deconstruction has "enabled writers to take pleasure in indeterminacy, coincidence, and the story-teller's traditional freedom of invention" (40). Chapter six, being the concluding chapter will briefly summarize the focal points of each chapter and outline the ways in which the chapters have defended the purpose of the researchpaper, which is to examine postmodern perspectives in Lewis Carroll. The final chapter will highlight the findings of the thesis which explain the continuing relevance of Lewis Carroll in contemporary culture.

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CHAPTER TWO

Subverting Custom and Inverting Patterns

> … every "egotistical" practice (selfish things! Alice exclaims, whom the twins don't invite to shelter under their umbrella) is denounced, even in its everyday manifestations. (Cixous 234)

The works of Lewis Carroll are highly subversive of inflexible standards existing not only in social environments but also in literary domains especially within children's literature. Defiance against rigid tradition and reversing established customs constitute the most illustrative features of his fictional works. The aim of this chapter is to explore and analyze how Lewis Carroll both installs and subverts; uses and abuses many of the conventions of Victorian children's literature in his fictional works.

The Victorian Age was a time of rapid and wrenching social and economic changes that had no parallel in earlier history. These changes had made Britain, in the course of the nineteenth century the leading industrial power and the British empire had occupied more than a quarter of the earth's surface (Abrams 328). An important characteristic of the age was optimism, pride, and a strong sense that everything would continue to improve and expand. However, beneath the public positivism and optimism, it was also an age of paradoxes and uncertainties. Creative writers of the Victorian period are influenced by philosophers with wide range of different opinions. Analyzing the different influential thoughts and philosophies of the time would more than exhaust the scope of our study, and so, with an utmost attempt to be objective in our inquiry, the chapter would examine only those thoughts and beliefs pertaining to the purview of the study.

Children's literature as a medium of instruction:

A marked characteristic of the Victorian Age is that literature seems to be motivated by a definite moral purpose - "Tennyson, Browning, Carlyle, Ruskin, - who and what were these men if not the teachers of England, not vaguely but definitely, with superb faith in their message, and with the conscious moral purpose to uplift and to instruct" (Long 583). Many Victorian ideals are largely influenced by the evangelical theology, and it helped establish norms in morality. The English people believed in "the Bible as the source of infallible truth" (Young 24) and supported the Christo-centric religion and its prescriptions for a good and correct life. This was also abundantly expressed in many literary works across ages (Houghton 4). Social standing was another important requirement of the middleclass Victorians, and a rather important ingredient of social standing was respectability. To be a "gentleman" or a "lady" required cultivated manners and that suggested respectability (Best 263). Moral righteousness, good manners and "socially accepted behaviour" thus became an important component to be a respectable individual in the Victorian society.

Plato, in his *Republic* stated that creating a society must start with the education of the young as early childhood is the character moulding stage of life when "the desired impression is more readily taken" (377). Thus, according to Plato, it is important that stories and tales told to the young should show triumph of good, virtue, bravery, and order because, to achieve the desired society, educating for proper behaviour is necessary (376-377). Two millennia after Plato, a highly influential English philosopher John Locke reinforced the same idea that childhood should be regimented and that the youngster should receive only the ideas and beliefs adults have selected for him (*An Essay* 22). As the young mind is perceived as yet unprejudiced and understanding, the adult writer has the responsibility to communicate character forming qualities in the child reader, "for white paper receives any characters" (111). It became the duty of the adult to educate the child towards proper modes of thought and behaviour, "because the ignorance and infirmities of childhood stand in need of restraint and correction" (Locke, *Second Treatise* sec. 68). In concert with the view, Jean Jacques Rousseau also asserted that

young people are more pregnable than the older ones because they have fewer stronghold opinions (402).

The theories of these philosophers seem to reinforce the inclinations of the Victorian parents. The careful and dutiful adult chose materials that would reinforce ideals of the existing society in all spheres of children's world. Authors of children's books became hostages of the times in which they wrote so that most children's literature of Victorian England was written with a didactic aim (Duncan 24-25,30,50). Writers of children's literature practically became the "organizers of the human race - its past, present, and future" (Starbuck 9). It can be argued that the best of authors somehow transcended the society that moulded them. Though that judgement may be valid, only a minute number of those who wrote for children's literature would be in that category.

Most works intended for younger audience contained an instructive aim. The stories are "usually heavily moral, full of 'good' children and didacticism" (Carter 275). They usually represent characters intended as role models, and situations are aimed to direct the child to proper behaviour. The stories are generally characterized by clearly constructed story and unambiguous representation. The most popular ones during the time such as, Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857), family sagas like *The Daisy Chain* (1858) by Charlotte M. Yonge, Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1865), and animal stories such as *Black Beauty* (1877) by Anna Sewell are a few examples. Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857), which was still widely read in the 1870's and 1880's depicted the Victorian idealized school. The novel is primarily didactic and was not written to be an entertainment. Hughes wrote in the Preface:

> Several persons, for whose judgment I have the highest respect, while saying very kind things about this book, have added, that the great fault of it is 'too much preaching'; but they hope I shall amend in this matter should I ever write again. Now this I most distinctly decline to do. Why, my whole object in writing at all was to get the chance of preaching! When a man comes to my

> time of life and has his bread to make, and very little time to spare, is it likely that he will spend almost the whole of his yearly vacation in writing a story just to amuse people? I think not. At any rate, I wouldn't do so myself. (xxi)

Hughes' assessment seemed to have been shared by many adults of the period. Several magazines and periodicals catering to younger audience with an intention to mould and shape manners and morality were also founded during the time. *Good Words for the Young*, launched in 1868, had as its first editor Dr. Norman Macleon, who was succeeded by George Macdonald. Charles Kingsley and William Gilbert were among its contributors. The magazine had been described as "one of the finest magazines ever aimed at youth" (Goldman 48), aimed to offer "such literature as will not ignobly interest nor frivolously amuse, but convey the wisest instruction in the pleasantest manner" (quoted in Lang 22). There were other periodicals with similar purposes such as *The Youth's Monthly Vistory* founded in 1823, which later was called *The Youth's Miscellany of Knowledge and Entertainment*, *The Magazine for the Young* which began in 1842, *The Monthly Packet of Evening Readings for Younger Members of the English Church* (1851-1899), Rev J. Erskine Clark's *The Children's Prize* founded in 1863 and *The Chatterbox* in 1866, Margaret Gatty's *Aunt Judy's Magazine* founded in 1866, *Little Folks* (1871-1932), *The Boy's Own Paper* (1879-1967) and so on. The flourishing of children's periodicals makes apparent the amount of importance given to children's literature to serve as a platform for guidance and education. From the above examples, it is safe to conclude that the main purpose in writing for children during the Victorian period had more to do with teaching and instructing rather than delighting and cultivating their imagination.

This chapter will attempt to explore the various ways in which Carroll's works subvert the relentless didactic convention. The chapter will also examine Carroll's use of 'literary nonsense' and whimsical inversion of patterns in order to undermine the insistence on order. The result of his ironic approach is seen as bringing out the instability and arbitrariness that underlies rigid foundations. The approach and subversion by the Victorian writer are further observed as displaying what has become an important undertaking in postmodern writings.

Parody of the "good fairies:"

Victorian children's books we have perceived, is widely didactic in tone. A popular theme explored by some of the most well-known Victorian writers of children's books is a moral lesson taught by the firmly good fairies. Catherine Sinclaire's fairy named "Teach-all" in *Holiday House* (1839) and Charles Kingsley's fairies namely, "Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby" and "Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid" in *The Water-Babies* (1863) are fitting examples. Fairies in children's literature look like models of Victorian instructors. It appears that Lewis Carroll, from a young age, has developed an ironic view towards fairies that come with copious instructions. A poem he wrote at thirteen years of age, titled "My Fairy" is expressly satirical of the relentless didactic tradition. Carroll directs his frustration at the fairy who doles out endless rules and instructions in order to for him to become a good Victorian. The fairy teaches the importance of proper manner and moderation in every single conduct, such as - One must not sleep too much; one must not be too expressive when happy or sad; must not quaff his drinks even if he is very thirsty and must not get in to fights for whatever reason. Basically, the fairy tells him that he needs to maintain a proper manner under any circumstances and his emotion must always be moderate. Tired of the unending tasks, the boy at length cries out, "What may I do?" to which the fairy quietly replies, "You must not ask." Parodying the popular style of ending stories with a moral, young Carroll ends his poem with an ironic line: "You mustn't" (Carroll 779).

Another poem that young Carroll wrote titled "Rules and Regulations" also takes a subversive approach towards the instructive tradition in children's literature. The poem uses irony to banter the codes of conduct a proper Victorian must follow such as - one must not stammer, must be well-educated, be able to sing sweetly, be enterprising, must love early rising, must have ready quick smiles, must eat healthy and must abstain from bad things. The poem continues with a lengthy rule of conduct a child must follow and ends with a clearly ironic moral: "Behave" (785). At only thirteen years of age, Lewis Carroll, through excessive parody, was already poking fun at the tireless doling out of advice in children's literature.

The attack on the wearily didactic fairy in literature is also broadly explored in the *Sylvie and Bruno* stories. The novels imitate the tradition of good-all fairies in children's narratives but the imitation ends there. From the very beginning, the narrator plainly invites the reader to contemplate on the idea that perhaps set rules and regulations, projected in the form of teaching fairies, could be prejudiced and need to be questioned and challenged too:

> In the first place, I want to know – dear Child who reads this! – why Fairies should always be teaching *us* to do our duty, and lecturing *us* when we go wrong, and we should never teach *them* anything? You ca'n't mean to say that Fairies are never greedy, or selfish, or cross, or deceitful… (387)

The parody books subvert and challenge the popular teach-all kind of fairies, which is suggested in the original title itself, "Bruno's Revenge" - Bruno being the little fairy. As the narrator approaches the fairy and asks him the reason for his action, we soon learn that Bruno clearly deviates from the likes of moralistic fairies in other children's books. After conveying to the narrator how "teach(ing) children to be good" all the time is a "dreadful bother," Bruno savagely tears the hearts ease in two and tramples on the pieces (393). Unlike other fairies who are tenderly mild and moderate at all times, Bruno brazenly asserts his irritation at the expectation to always be "proper" (529). Bruno is not only different from other familiar fairies; he undermines and challenges what they represent through his argumentative and occasional discourteous behaviour.

Undermining the aggrandizing of moral teaching:

The works of Lewis Carroll, even though categorised among children's writing, contains no overt moral or instructive intent. Characters and narratives are propelled by ambiguities. Writing in the midst of the most didactic period in children's literature, Carroll non-traditionally gave his art liberty and blatantly parodies the attempt to put undue emphasis on morals in literature and culture. A good example is Alice's encounter with the Duchess in Chapter IX of *Alice in Wonderland*:

> "Tut, tut, child!" said the Duchess. "Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it" …
>
> "…flamingos and mustard both bite. And the moral of that is - Birds of a feather flock together."
>
> "…there's a large mustard-machine near here. And the moral of that is - The more there is of mine, the less there is of yours."
>
> "…as pigs have to fly; and the m__" But here, to Alice's great surprise, the Duchess's voice died away, even in the middle of her favourite word 'moral.' (96-99)

The Duchess' remark resonates with the Victorian understanding that everything should result in a lesson of some sort. The absence of anything substantial to be found in her remark au contraire clearly points at the writer mocking the convention of unflagging pedantry. And her voice dying away in the middle of her favourite word "moral" distinctly highlights the very intention of the author to undermine and subvert the aggrandizing of moralizing in children's world.

There are also many instances in the *Sylvie and Bruno* books that highlight Carroll's rejection and subversion of unremitting moralizing directed towards children. In chapter twenty-four of *Sylvie and Bruno*, Bruno recites a story during a celebration of the Frog's birthday. The story is a long and confusing one. Being the good Victorians that they are, the narrator and Sylvie intently listen to every line in order to figure out what lesson is to be learnt from the story (487). However, when the story is finally finished, they remain confused and troubled, and they are not able to tell "whatever is to be learnt from it" (495). The teller of the story, on the other hand, could not be the least bothered about the moral of his story. Fanning the flames even further, the frogs, for whom Bruno related his story, seemed quite content "Moral or no Moral" (495). The chapter perceptibly highlights Carroll's rejection of the emphasis put on literature to always teach.

Chapter five of *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* continues this undermining of moralizing tradition. The two characters are in a dimension where they are not fairies but real children. A farmer's hospitable wife offers a cake to the children, and specifically tells Bruno not to waste the crust. She then asks him if he knows "what the poetry-book says about wilful waste" (560). When Bruno declares that he is unaware of the proverb, the lady asks her daughter to teach him. Bessie then proceeds to recite the adage,

> For wilful waste makes woeful want… and you may live to say 'How much I wish I had the crust that then I threw away!' (560)

In a clear banter of the wife's insistence that Bruno must learn the proverb, the boy repeats the lines and ends it with a gibberish, "For *wifful* – sumfinoruvver" (560). When the "good woman" persisted that he must at least remember the lesson even if he does not remember the saying, Bruno insisted that he is unable to figure out the moral of the lesson.

At the climactic dramatic scene of *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*, the well-respected Professor attempts to tell a story to the children and begins, "Once upon a time there was a Boojum-", he stops suddenly, and remarks, "I forget the rest of the Fable" (742). In a clear attack of the didactic tradition, the Professor continues, "And there was a lesson to be learned from it. I'm afraid I forget *that*, too" (742). And when Sylvie suggested that the lesson of his fable be, "to try again!" (echoing a popular poem of the period about perseverance and conscientiousness) Bruno replied "No" with great decision and added that the "Lesson are 'not to try again'!" (742). Carroll's fiction expressly undermines the relentless moralizing tradition.

This is not to suggest that Lewis Carroll was against the teaching of morality and manners in children whatsoever. Indeed, several significant writers of the time used their works to call for social reform. Charles Dickens, George Macdonald, Oscar Wilde, Shaw and Wells through their works propagandised for the need for social reform. Fiction writing in the late Victorian England became, "an instrument with social use" (Young 168). Carroll's discord seems to do more with the tasking of

children's literature to always instruct and to always contain a moral teaching. The writer's aversion seems to be against the pointing out of these moral teachings in a superior and manipulative way rather than in a compassionate way. The Victorian society is clearly adult, in the sense that before it, the child is an empty basket needing good consumables to fill which will save them from being greedy, or selfish, or cross, or deceitful. As a writer for children, Carroll stood up against the oppressive standard which subordinated children to the whims of their authoritative adults. By giving space to the child's mind, vision and imagination, Carroll brings the invisible but inconvenient aspect to open questions.

Subverting uppish mannerism and hypocrisy:

An essential part of the paradox of the Victorian age was the contrast between social unrest with the moves towards change, and "the affirmation of standards and values which are still referred to as 'Victorian values'" (Carter 244). The Great Exhibition of 1851 was probably the high point of Victorian success and self-esteem. It was held in Crystal Palace in London which was specially built to display the achievements of Britain at home and abroad. The exhibition was intended to show Britain at the height of its power, wealth and influence (249). The Queen's husband, Prince Albert was the guiding spirit behind this demonstration of England's industrial and commercial domination. He contended that the exhibition should not merely be useful and ornamental; it should preach a high moral lesson (249). This didacticism underscores the feeling of superiority in mid-century Britain, the duty the Victorians gave themselves as leaders and exemplars of moral.

Lewis Carroll extensively employs ironic parody as a subversive tool against what can be perceived as the Victorian superior moral attitude. A number of poems in the *Alice* books are parodies of popular didactic poems in the Victorian society and are highly subversive of the unrelenting instructions of cautionary tales. "How doth the little crocodile" (Carroll 29) is a parody of the moralistic poem "Against Idleness and Mischief" (1715) by Isaac Watts. Alice originally attempted to recite Watts' poem that begins with "How doth the little busy bee." In the original poem, the bee is

exemplified as a model of hard work. Carroll's parody, on the other hand, is about a devious crocodile who lures little fishes into its mouth with a welcoming smile. While the original poem commends the exemplary diligence of the little bee, the crocodile's corresponding "virtues" are predation and deception, themes that recur in many of the poems in the *Alice* books.

The Duchess' "Speak Roughly" (Carroll 68) is clearly a parody of William Wallace's poem "Speak Gently" (1854). The original poem advises the reader to show kindness, gentleness and affection to everyone as it leaves a lasting imprint in the heart of the receiver. The original poem encourages the reader to "rule by love" and not fear. Carroll's parody on the other hand underlines the violent nature of the Duchess. "Speak Roughly" effectively highlights the blaring chaos of the whole environment of Carroll's fiction.

"'Tis the Voice of the Lobster" (Carroll 111), a poem that Alice recites to the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon is a parody of "The Sluggard" (1715), a well-known moralistic poem by Isaac Watts. Watts' poem depicts the distasteful lifestyle of a lazy individual and condemns his sluggish ways of wasting his hours and money. The poet judges the sluggard for not spending his time reading the Bible or spend it thinking. The poem ends with the poet being righteously thankful that he is raised with the right principles and virtues to not end up like the sluggard. Carroll's parody on the other hand, describes a vain and fashionable lobster who boasts of his courage and fearlessness of the shark. His courage against sharks, however, is revealed to be present only in dry land, in the absence of sharks. The poem follows the theme of hypocrisy that is common in Carroll's parodies.

The poem, "the Walrus and the Carpenter" (Carroll 183) recited by Tweedledum and Tweedledee to Alice clearly explores this theme of hypocrisy. The Walrus and the Carpenter, after misleading the group of oysters with a story, ends up eating all the oblivious oysters. The Walrus we notice expresses some compassion towards the oysters, but eats them anyway. When Alice expresses that she likes the Walrus better than the Carpenter because "he was a *little* sorry for the poor oysters,"

the twins are quick to point out his hypocrisy that “he ate more than the Carpenter, though” (188). The deceptive Walrus even betrayed his partner by hiding from him the number of oysters he had eaten. Alice then chooses to side with the Carpenter because “he didn’t eat so many as the Walrus.” Here, the twins quickly remind her that he may eat a little lesser but he still ate “as many as he could get” (188). The two predators, though they may present themselves as being courteous and compassionate to the oysters, ended up devouring all the oysters. The hypocritical world with its serene acceptance of pecking-order and duplicity is a theme extensively explored in Carroll’s tales. This method of disrupting and subverting, transgressing limitations set by the dominant narrative, which operates throughout Carroll’s novels foreshadow one of the major concerns of postmodern writings.

In the *Alice* books, we are reminded many times that etiquette and manners, like all attempts to impose order on existence, contains paradoxical and arbitrary elements. When she encounters Tweedledum and Tweedledee, Alice is confronted with a problem of rules of conduct: “You’ve begun wrong!” cried Tweedledum. “The first thing in a visit is to say ‘How d’ye do?’ and shake hands!” (182). After asserting this, the two brothers gave each other a hug, and then they both held out the two hands that were free to shake hands with Alice. As the twins were each holding out their hands at the same time, Alice did not know which hand she would shake first for fear of hurting the other one’s feelings. Thinking of a way to politely meet both their invitations at the same time, Alice hands out one hand to one twin and the other hand to the other twin. What follows next is that they find themselves ridiculously dancing around in a ring. The effort to always maintain manner ends the social exchange with an absurd scene. Another incident happens when the Red Queen offers a biscuit to Alice. Alice really does not feel like having the awfully dry biscuit, however, as the Victorian proper manner would deem it “not civil to say no” (166), Alice takes and eats the very dry biscuit, and it ends up nearly choking her. Her attempt to keep up manners nearly cost Alice her own life.

When she reaches the Looking Glass place, Alice has learnt to question the arbitrariness of etiquettes. When the Queen instructs her to only “Speak when you’re

spoken to!" Alice shrewdly replies, "But if everybody obeyed that rule…and if you only spoke when you were spoken to, and the other person always waited for you to begin, you see nobody would ever say anything, so that…" (250-251) thus pointing out the paradoxical nature of courtesies, customs and commands. In another parody of manners gone to the extent of the absurd, the Red Queen says to Alice, "Curtsey while you're thinking what to say. It saves time" (162). We witness that Alice's parodies often circle back to subvert and mock snotty adherence to manners and conventions.

The parody of manners and etiquette in the *Alice* books seems like an attack on the nineteenth century's mannerism that put so much emphasis on the socially accepted behaviour which may be oppressive of natural propensities in the human. Through his parody, Carroll can be read as subverting the Victorian mannerism and snubbish attitude grown out of much of wealth and power possessed from colonized domains. This criticism of the superior mentality of the Victorian society, subversion of its snobbish mannerism and undermining of its self-imposed right to dominate over any weaker beings is a theme explored though Carroll's parodies and tales. In this manner, Lewis Carroll can be perceived as an unconscious precursor of postcolonial discourse. In addition, this use of the subversive potential of parody as a strategy to question dominant narratives has become an important feature of postmodern discourse. Carroll's practice of parody it appears, corresponds to Linda Hutcheon's comment, "parody is a perfect postmodern form, in some sense, for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies" (11).

Carroll's nonsense and "irrational" logic:

At the opening poem of *Alice in Wonderland*, Carroll proclaimed that "There will be nonsense in it!" (13) and this rings true of all his creative works. Subversion of rational thought, or rejection of systematised reason is a common theme examined in his works. A good example of Carroll's literary "nonsense" that completely disrupts patterns and subverts systems of meaning is seen in the parody poem "Father

William" (56-57). The poem is a parody of a well-known didactic poem by Robert Southey, of the Romantic age, titled "The Old Man's Comforts and How He Gained Them" (1805). The original poem in general is about a young man who, when seeing a cheerful old man asks him different questions on how he manages to stay fulfilled and gratified at such an old age. The old man gives answers for his contentment that are evidently resulting from a devout and righteous life he led in his youth. Carroll's parody completely mocks the sanctimonious manner and snobbish judgment of the old man in Southey's poem. Instead of the old man who is brimming with wisdom from God, Carroll's Father William claims he has no brain to injure and has a habit of incessantly standing on his head. Up front, there is a conflict between rational or conventionally "correct" way of thinking and thinking that departs from the norm. This is depicted in terms of standing on one's head, or in other words, seeing the world from a completely different perspective. The poem also features a denial of the brain or in other words, a ground of logic and rationality. While the original Father was pious and righteous, Carroll's old man cunningly attempts to take advantage of the questioner's curiosity by trying to sell him ointment. While Southey's old man is sullen and moral, Carroll's Father William is facetious and sarcastic - he asserts that the strength of his jaw comes from his endless bickering with his wife in his youth. And finally, while the old man in the original poem is mannerly and polished, Carroll's man rowdily threatens to kick his interviewer "down-stairs" if he is not off with his incessant questions. In his essay, "Worldbackwards: Lewis Carroll, Aleksei Kruchenykh and Russian Alogism" (2004), Professor Nikolai Firtich has observed that at the heart of the poem "Father William," there exist a clash between "useful" and "sensible" activity and what from a utilitarian viewpoint seems to be "nonsensical" and "useless" manner of conduct (596). Carroll's parody, Hugh Houghton comments, "undermines the pious didacticism of Southey's original and gives Father William an eccentric vitality that rebounds upon his idiot questioner" (307). The poem is a good example of Carroll's use of nonsensical logic to undermine the superior moral standards of Victorians.

The fantasy world of Wonderland also exhibits a recurring instability that constantly inverse usual patterns. The "Mad Tea Party" illustrates this point in different manners. At the centre of the "tea party" is the theme of madness, in other words, a denial of so-called common sense and rationality. While exploring Wonderland, Alice comes across the Hatter having a tea party with the March Hare and the Dormouse. The absurdity of the whole situation is established in the beginning of the chapter by the puzzle addressed to Alice by the Mad Hatter: "Why is the raven like a writing-desk?" (75). The Hatter asks the nonsensical question and proceeds without caring for the answer. The riddle seems to exist not for a game but simply to bolster disorder and confusion. Another notable theme witnessed at the party is the theme of behaviour that violates the limits of the socially acceptable. Though their tea table is very large, Alice finds the three all crowded together at one corner. As they see Alice approaching them, they cry out that there is no room although there are lots of empty seats. Alice however sits uninvited, and the March Hare offers her wine which they do not have. Everyone behaves rudely to one another, and the party continues with an endless succession of pointless conversations. And the whole episode is presented in an atmosphere of total absurdity. It has been observed that the eccentricity of the "Mad Tea Party" is expressed by the anti-social behaviour of the participants, which may be seen as an ironic comment on the artificiality of Victorian manners" (Firtich 600). At the "Mad Tea Party," it is not only the social conventions that becomes inverted, but every ordering principle of the universe itself is dropped and denied. Besides its interpretation as a critique of the Victorian culture, Carroll's rejection of rationality, logic and social conventions in his works is found to have similarities with some of the features that characterise the Theatre of the Absurd. According to Martin Esslin,

> The Theatre of the Absurd shows the world as an incomprehensible place. The spectators see the happenings on the stage entirely from the outside, without ever understanding the full meaning of these strange patterns of events, as newly arrived visitors might watch life in a country of which they have not yet mastered the language. The confrontation of the audience with characters and happenings which they are not quite able to comprehend

> makes it impossible for them to share the aspirations and emotions depicted in the play. (5)

From our analysis, Carroll surely possesses similarities with critical aspects of the Absurd Theatre.

The "Caucus Race" illustrates another anti-rational shift in Alice's world. After swimming out of the pool of tears, the animals need to dry off and the Dodo recommends that they perform a Caucus race. The racecourse is marked out in a sort of circle but not really circle as "the exact shape doesn't matter", and the participants were placed along the track, "here and there". There was no "one, two, three, and away!" and the animals simply "began running when they liked and left off when they liked" (Carroll 37). The race has no rules and all the participants run haphazardly in no particular direction. The animals progress nowhere, and the race arbitrarily ends without any clear conclusion just as it began. And Dodo's result on the race, "*Everybody* has won, and *all* must have prizes" continues to subvert Alice's expectation of lawfulness and rationality. The Caucus race with its disorder and fun chaos stands as a contrast and rebuke to Alice's world of proper order and manners.

The croquet game in chapter eight of *Alice in Wonderland* provides another subversion of rationality. The game has been anticipated from the very first chapter with the Duchess receiving a privileged invitation from the Queen to play croquet. Alice has also mentioned to the Cheshire cat her readiness to receive an invitation to the game. As the game finally begins, Alice's eagerness turns in to confusion and apprehension as every aboveground order becomes reversed. The croquet ground is first of all full of ridges and furrows; the croquet balls are live hedgehogs; the mallets are live flamingos, and the card-soldiers make the arches. The mobility of all the participants involved leads to a very disorganized game where it is practically impossible to manage any order. The players all played at once without waiting for turns and they quarrel all the while fighting for the hedgehogs. Everyone involved in the game runs around as their wish and there is no proper ending to the game just like the Caucus Race. Alice is frustrated by the absence of rigidity and is annoyed by the mutability of this irrational game. Wonderland and its inhabitants nonchalantly

continue to undermine the need of the human child to reduce things to the most mechanical level.

Recalling the affirmation of order at legal trials in the aboveground world, the reader, along with Alice hopes that the disorder and confusions of Wonderland will become settled at the court proceeding towards the end. As she surveys the room, Alice excitedly identifies the different components of the court of justice as she has read about in books. The resemblance of the Wonderland court to the aboveground court reassures her hope that the trial will result in an establishment of order and justice. However, she soon realizes that the trial is only a continuation of the absence of meaning prevailing in Wonderland. The Knave is accused of a trivial thing but none of the witnesses are able to provide coherent evidence, and the whole proceeding turns in to an absurd scene. The King, who is also the judge repeatedly asks for a verdict, but a coherent result never materializes. The trial proceeds in a haphazard manner and never determines the guilt or innocence of the accused. Adding to the enveloping absurdity, the one figure of authority, the Queen, repeatedly passes a sentence to behead her subjects for the most illogical reasons. But we see that her sentences are as meaningless as her reasons:

Its' all her fancy that: they never executes nobody, you know. Come on! (101)

The whole court scene cannot help but bring to mind Kafka's *The Trial* (1925) where Joseph K. is accused of a crime, but the nature of the crime is revealed to him nor to the reader. The "the fundamental principle" of Lewis Carroll's nonsense, according to Holquist is satire (153). Indeed, the writer clearly makes use of "nonsense" as a weapon of destruction for order making system. Carroll's principle of nonsense aims at the finer sense for natural order as opposed to the man-made system that makes order mannered and unnatural and exploitive.

The whole story of *The Hunting of the Snark* is also a subversion of systematised rationality. Michael Holquist states that the best way to understand the *Snark* poem is to perceive it as "a structure of resistance to other structures of meaning which might be brought to it" (156) and that the poem is simply a fiction, a

thing that does not seek to be "real" or "true" and the moral of its story is that it has no moral (164). Indeed, from a conventional viewpoint, none of the means, motivations and conducts of the hunting crew make sense. The poem is characterized by non-specific unrecognizable characters who are presented almost like mechanical puppets with extremely questionable motivation. First of all, the ten crew are only recognized by their qualifications and none of them are identified by their names – a Bellman, a Boots, a maker of Bonnets and Hoods, a Barrister, a Broker, a Billiard-marker, a Banker, a Butcher, a Beaver and a Baker. Rejecting logic and reason, the crew have no interest in a map that can show them "Mercator's North Poles and Equators, Tropics, Zones and Meridian Lines" because "They are merely conventional signs!" (760). The map that they could all understand, a map that makes them all happy is "A perfect and absolute blank!" (761). Then the crew shortly finds out that their trusted Captain knows no other way to cross the ocean than "to tingle his bell" (761).

In the fifth Fit, we see a tending way in which the poem sets up resistance to system of meaning. When the Butcher sets out to prove that two can be added to one, he makes the following argument:

> Taking Three as the subject to reason about –
>
> …We add Seven, and ten, and then multiply out
>
> By One Thousand diminished by Eight.
>
> The result we proceed to divide…
>
> By Nine Hundred and Ninety and Two:
>
> Then subtract Seventeen, and the answer must be
>
> Exactly and perfectly true. (771)

When put in an equation, it looks like this: [(3) +7+10)] x (1000-8)/992-17 =? The "perfectly true" equation is a process which essentially begins with no content and ends with no content. The poem does not try to make sense, in fact, the whole poem undermines sense and meaning making system.

The literary works of Lewis Carroll are replete with expectation and an intent to overturn the fixed or anticipated expectation. Everything that happens makes it clear that they are not driven by rational motivation. Things happen randomly or happen through the nonsensical caprice of an unaccountable force. As a result, Carroll allows himself room for the creation of a new, free, artistic space to which rational laws cannot be applied. Professor Firtich has observed that "such a "penetration" into these other realms is accomplished by creating works of art that appear, from the conventional viewpoint, to be either totally nonsensical, or, at least, semantically enigmatic" (595). Carroll's consciousness responds to a human being's experience that is continually beyond belief, and his art becomes the vehicle to express that consciousness.

Disruption of linearity:

In the early nineteenth century, during the time of Lewis Carroll's life and writing, there were several new technologies of regularized time. By the time the *Alice* books appeared (1865,1872), railways and their timetables recently required the regularizing of time all through the whole of England (Beer xxix). Watches, along with the factory clock, became instruments that controlled industrialized labour and the new technology enhanced the time sense during the period that Carroll was writing. There are also many references to time in the *Alice* books. First, Wonderland is preceded by an illustration of the well-dressed White Rabbit earnestly consulting his watch:

> There was nothing so *very* remarkable in that; nor did Alice think it so *very* much out of the way to hear the Rabbit say to itself 'Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late! [. . .] but when the Rabbit actually *took a watch out of its waistcoat-pocket* [Carroll's italics], and looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket, or a watch to take out of it, and, burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it. (Carroll 18)

This is an animal that speaks, but that is not what Alice finds remarkable; it is his possession of a watch that startled her. Being in a hurry, anxious about being late and physical props like the watch all point to an individual under the domain of time regulated society. However, the impartial mechanical precision associated with the concept of time is disrupted in Wonderland. A major theme of the "Mad Tea Party" in Wonderland is the debunking of traditional perception of time as a linear progression. Alice finds out that at the "Mad Tea Party", time stays fixed at six o'clock which means that they exist in a perpetual teatime: "If you knew Time as well as I do," said the Hatter, "you wouldn't talk about wasting *it.* It's *him*" (78). In Wonderland, time becomes an animate being that can be persuaded to go faster or slower. The precision of regularized time is no longer reliable as it is no longer an abstract "it" but a subjective "him."

The denial of time as a linear process is reiterated in *Through the Looking Glass*. The very beginning of Alice's adventure into the Looking Glass land foreshadows the negation of time's linear procession. As she begins looking about the place, one of the first things she notices is that the clock, instead of having hands, has a grinning face (148) indicating that in this place, the concept of linear time has become irrelevant. An important characteristic feature of Carroll's books is that the stories do not follow a linear chronological order. It has been suggested that the *Alice* stories "can be read backwards (starting from the last word) without affecting the semantics of the story" (Firtich 601). Just as in Wonderland*,* Alice at the beginning of *Through the Looking Glass* acts as an explorer of a new space, bringing along with her preconceived notions on meaning and the order of the world. As she enters the Looking Glass land, Alice discovers that the room on the other side of the mirror is nearly identical to the side she is familiar with, which shows the motif of inversion that recurs throughout the text. The alternate dimension is not just a mirror image, but a comprehensive inversion of Alice's assumptions and preconceptions. As Helene Cixous suggested that the mirror motif "make(s) possible an *inverted reading* of the world" (238). In this land, "it takes all the running *you* can do, to keep in the same place" (Carroll 166). The following lines do remind a reader of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953): "Why, I do believe we've been under

this tree the whole time! Everything's just as it was!" (165). However fast they went, "the trees and the other things around them never changed their places at all (164). The narrator of *Sylvie and Bruno* experiences a similar situation. He describes, "I tried my best to walk a few steps: but the ground slipped away backwards, quite as fast as I could walk, so that I made no progress at all" (452). The Looking Glass land altogether shifts logical connections, and the accepted pattern of causal relation is nullified. People are being punished and put in prison before the trial even begins. In the order of crime and punishment, it is "the crime (that) comes last of all" (198). Here, one can experience the consequence of an action before committing the act, like when the White queen feels the pain of being pricked by her brooch moments before she is actually pricked (199).

The Queen has mentioned to Alice that in Looking Glass land, one has the ability to live "backwards" (197). This idea of "living backwards," in a manner of freely moving back and forth in time, in fact, has found its reflection in many popular works of literature such as H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895), F Scott Fitzgerald's *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (1922) and many popular works of contemporary period like *The Time Traveller's Wife* (2003) by Audrey Niffenegger or George Mann's *Doctor Who: The Lost Planet* (2017) and so on. In fact, the concept of moving back and forth in time has become a very popular theme in contemporary Movies and Television shows. Carroll can be viewed, in this area, as an unconscious precursor for the age and authors ahead.

The advantage of living backward, the Queen asserts, is that one's memory works both ways, that is, the inhabitants are able to remember things before and after they happen (Carroll 197-198). Alice's ability to remember things only after they have happened is a "poor sort of memory" in this land. The place maintains its denial of linearity. When Alice asserts that one cannot "believe in impossible things," she is told that within the realm of the Looking Glass land, the inhabitants are perfectly open to believing in "as many as six impossible things before breakfast" (200). Alice's attempt to approach the nature of the land with reason is met with the logic of the land that disrupts all of her preconceived notions.

The subversion of linearity is noticed to be a very significant component of the writer's experimental attitude. The well-known nonsense poem "Jabberwocky" in *Through the Looking Glass* is written from the last line. The entire verse of *The Hunting of the Snark* is likewise written from the very last line - "For the Snark was a Boojum, you see". The writer claims that without knowing what it meant, and still not knowing what it means, he develops the whole poem starting from the very last line (Gardner 12). Carroll's works undermine chronological linearity and the narrative flows freely in any direction. Marret Maleval has accurately explained Carroll's exploratory spirit: "(in) the scientific approach that informs the writing of Alice…intuitions about "logical impossibility" and the subject of the unconscious, excluded by science, are deployed at the same time" (101). The theme of exploring impossible possibilities takes the central place in Carroll's fictional lands and his fantasy worlds cannot be approached from a conventionally logical viewpoint.

Carroll's last two books, titled *Sylvie and Bruno* and *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* have confused and disappointed both critics and casual readers (Gubar 372). Many Carroll critics are of the opinion that the books are "disastrous" and if "interesting", are still failures (Hudson 287). Walter Crane, a contemporary artist and book illustrator of Carroll refused to illustrate for the books and commented that Carroll's new project "was of a very different character from *Alice* - a story with religious and moral purpose, with only an occasional touch of the ingenuity and humor of *Alice*, so that it was not nearly so inspiring or amusing" (qtd. in Green, 148). And yet, a prominent figure of contemporary philosophy, Giles Deleuze calls it an underappreciated "masterpiece" (Gubar 372). The reason for the general unfavourable reception of the two *Sylvie and Bruno* books may be explained in Deleuze's comment that "in comparison with *Alice* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, [it] displays a set of entirely new techniques" (43). This technique, as perceived, are examined in the lines that follow.

Lewis Carroll has effectively blurred the distinction between genres in his *Sylvie and Bruno* stories. Even though the books are categorised under children's literature and are analysed in the same trail, the subject matter, size, and tone of the

stories suggest “contrariwise.” The two volumes are interwoven throughout with a number of weighty monologues and dialogues on morality, Theology, Philosophy, Science and Mathematics which poses a true challenge to the book’s supposed young target audience. The books can be interpreted as fantasy, children’s stories, philosophical treatise, or romance book all at once, or they are not any of that. Despite the intermittent serious topics, the underlying theme of *Sylvie and Bruno* is still summarized in the comment “We lapse very quickly into nonsense!” (Carroll 463). Explaining the source of his creative inspiration, Carroll has stated that his materials come from, “specimens of that hopelessly illogical phenomenon, ‘an effect without a cause’” (277) and there are good chances that the resulting book might be “slightly fragmentary” (283). Without following a single, unifying plot, the *Sylvie and Bruno* books ambiguously follow the lives of different people without any proper beginning or closure. The stories are narrated through a very disorienting vision of an elderly gentleman and follow two very perplexing plots where one plot trails the life of two fairies and their adventures in a fairyland while the other plot attends to the life of real residents in England. The book itself begins midsentence, and many chapters begin and end in the middle of a scene. At times, a statement made by a character in a fairy land would be answered by another in the real world (463). And then there are chapters that haphazardly appear discussing a completely random incident featuring completely random people that renders no particular bearing to any of the story lines in the book such as chapter eleven subtitled “Peter and Paul.”

In the philosophy with which Carroll creates his fictional worlds, there is no coherent order that links actions and effects. For instance, the Other Professor in *Sylvie and Bruno* has a friend, who, “if you burnt him with a red-hot poker… would take years and years before he felt it!” The man himself may not feel the pinch in his lifetime but, “his grandchildren might” (370). And like the plot of his stories, the tales inside the stories do not follow any chronological pattern. The Other Professor’s tale has an introductory verse at the beginning as well as at the end. When Sylvie is confused that a tale can have an introductory verse at the end, the Professor simply replies, “Wait till you hear it…then you’ll see. I’m not sure it hasn’t some in the

middle, as well" (724). The books completely negate the classical unities – unity of action, unity of time and unity of place.

Narrative Authority:

A cutting-edge characteristic of Carroll's writing that validates the writer's creativity being ahead of his time, is witnessed in his demythifying of the author. In explaining the genesis of his works, Carroll comments that the story so produced "should be utterly commonplace, should contain no new ideas whatever…" (Carroll 278). The writer admits that in creating *Alice in Wonderland*, he was "no *conscious* imitator in writing it," he acknowledges however, that he does not know if it was "an *original* story" because since he has written the book, he has noticed "something like a dozen story-books… on identically the same pattern" (279). Carroll lets Lady Muriel express the same sentiment in *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* when she comments about the art of music,

> …when one comes to think of it, there are no new melodies, now-a-days. What people talk of as 'the last new song' always recalls to *me* some tune I've known as a child! (594)

The discussion then continues in to writing books where the narrator suggests that "Instead of saying '*what* book shall I write?' an author will ask himself '*which* book shall I write?" (595). Lewis Carroll erases the "creator" aura and understands that, consciously or unconsciously, his creativity does not escape the influence of pre-existing discourse.

A significant concept noticed in the *Sylvie and Bruno* books is Carroll's approach to storytelling that omits a narrative authority. This has been witnessed in his previous works as well. For instance, a reader has to form his own interpretation of Alice's character with an impression collected from the different creatures she met with in Wonderland and in the Looking Glass. The resulting analysis thus comes from several minds and perspectives which result in the varying interpretation of Alice even in popular culture and in critical writing. Likewise, the *Sylvie and Bruno* books completely omit the possibility of an omniscient perspective. The narrator himself is so superfluous to the plot that even though everyone always seems happy to see him and calls him a dear friend, the closest

thing he gets to a name is “Mister Sir” given by Bruno. In addition, he is constantly in a state of disorientation and is often unsure of his own reality. Furthermore, the figure of authority in the realm of Outland, the Warden in the *Sylvie and Bruno* books is also practically irrelevant to the plot of the stories. Not only is he absent for the most part of the novels, his unexpected reveal and return at the end of the story changes nothing regarding the outcome of the story.

Helene Cixous observes, “If all Carroll’s tale is only a discourse, so that discourse is character, subject, plot, reality etc., it is only so in a state of dissolution,” (236) and this stands true of all his works, including his last two novels. Like discourse, Carroll’s tales do not get stuck with any orderly interpretation as the only truth or systematized logic is open to perception, and like discourse, his tales parody all fixed truths/ meanings.

Critics of Carroll have attempted numerous interpretations of his works as an allegory. Louis Aragon, in a 1931 article in *Le Surrealisme au Service de la Revolution* does a Marxian interpretation of the Alice books; William Empson has combined Freudian and Marxian techniques in his reading of the *Alice* books; A. L. Taylor reads the *Alice* books as a Christian allegory; Martin Gardner suggests an existential reading of the *Snark* poem, and even W. H. Auden has said that the Snark is a “pure example” of the way in which, “if thought of as isolated in the midst of the ocean, a ship can stand for mankind and human society moving through time and struggling with its destiny” (Holquist 154,155). However, Carroll firmly resists attempts of readers and critics to turn his works into an allegory. The writer insisted, “I can guarantee that the books have no religious teaching whatever in them - in fact they do not teach anything at all” (Kibel 611). Michael Holquist comments that as Victorian children’s books were “drearily and relentlessly didactic”, readers of Carroll’s works have not been able to accept that “the most famous representative of the class is without uplift of one sort or another.” Holquist continues to analyse that any unprejudiced reader would however be easily convinced of Carroll’s distinctness from his contemporaries if they only do a quick comparison of Carroll’s works with that of the age’s representative like Charles Kingsley’s *The Water Babies* (155).

Carroll openly and characteristically attempts to insure through his works that his fictions can be perceived only as what they are and resist the attempts of readers and critics to turn it into an allegory. Carroll apparently and purposely contends that his reader cannot be sure of anything except his storytelling. Lewis Carroll's ingenuity and his inquisitive mind has prefigured a significant characteristic of postmodern fantasy which has become "a mode of radical skepticism and hesitation that believes in the impossibility of total intelligibility" (Olsen 117).

Carroll's friction against authoritative dictums seems to have its root way back in his upbringing as he finds his creative insight often in dispute with his highly conservative grounding. John Skinner states that Lewis Carroll, in spite of his orthodox upbringing, was known to be unorthodox in religion and disliked the Anglican tenets which disapproved of ministers who attended the theatre or were interested in secular activities (11). Indeed, Carroll seems to have written most of his stories as an apparent expression of animosity against set rules and rigid standards, veiled in the affable form of parody and whimsy. This pattern of resistance is noticed in all his fictional works. And it is fitting that he has been credited with helping end an era of didacticism in children's literature and inaugurating a new era in which writing for children aims more than just to teach (Susina 3). The philosopher Wittgenstein, in talking about Carroll's works has once said that "a serious and good philosophical work could be written that would consist entirely of jokes" (Pitcher 593). Indeed, Carroll's ironic view and playful inquiries have unsettled accepted beliefs. With his experimental spirit, he has replaced the certainty of realistic conventions of the Victorian Era with an ironical uncertainty that subverts the realistic conventions.

An important undertaking of postmodern fantasy is to disrupt categories and patterns so as to subvert systems of meaning which is understood as providing a false sense of significance (Hardcastle 421). And a prominent aspect of post structural theories is that they are posed in opposition to inherited ways of thinking in all areas of knowledge. That is, they expressly "challenge" and undertake to "destabilize," and in many instances to "undermine" and "subvert," what they identify as the

foundational assumptions, concepts, procedures, and findings in traditional modes of discourse in Western civilization (Abrams 293). In the stories of Lewis Carroll, we see that there are no fundamental conflicts to resolve, there are no patterns to follow and there are no combats between good and evil that is common in most children's stories. Instead of providing the audience with a moral certainty, Carroll's works challenge the reader to find fun in non-sense and perceive with laughter the fundamental absurdity, after all, life is most often unpredictable, absurd and random. His act of subversion directly undermines conventional canons of representation. Through his ironic, "contrariwise" approach and subversive parodies, Lewis Carroll has contradicted and reversed the values and standards of a demanding culture. At the same time, he has laid down an attack on the public morality and blind loyalties in the society. In a very significant way, Lewis Carroll has deconstructed established social and moral order, and has opened up reader's perception to question rigid customs and practices. By expressly destabilizing and undermining what he observes as the foundational assumption in conventional modes of discourse, Lewis Carroll seems to have prefigured many aspects of postmodernism in his art. Though his works may not make sense in the obvious or conventional way, they give expression to some of the most basic issues and problems of humanity such as life's impossible paradoxes.

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CHAPTER THREE

The Ambiguous Subject and the Interspecies Relation

> "What-is-this?" he said at last.
>
> "This is a child!" Haigha replied eagerly, coming in front of Alice to introduce her… "We only found it to-day. It's as large as life, and twice as natural!"
>
> "I always thought they were fabulous monsters!" said the Unicorn. (Carroll 229)

A discernible theme observed in the works of Lewis Carroll is the exploring of identity. His inquiries often challenge and destabilize the notion of a stable

identity in favor of hybrid and indeterminate beings that continually escape fixity. The aim of this chapter is to examine Carroll's representation of ambiguous beings and fluid interspecies boundaries which is seen as prefiguring some postmodern and post humanist concerns. Obviously, Carroll's investigation starts with the child, who by nature is curious, and promises an evolution from innocence to experience, from doubts to answers. But this growth is not linear or univocal, rather reveals an uncertainty and ambiguity of what is socially fixed as human. Additionally, Carroll's sense of indeterminacy engenders criticism of the scientific sense of authority in relation to human's relationship with other non-human beings.

Childhood in Victorian literature:

Literary depiction of childhood in the Victorian period seemed to be influenced by the notion of childhood innocence. The idealization of the child is seeded in the Bible where Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me" (Luke 9:48), and "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). The idea of childhood as pure and innocent gained ground during the Enlightenment. In early eighteenth-century England, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, a tutee of John Locke expressed the belief in his *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711) that man has a natural inclination for virtue, the exercise of which would result in his and the society's happiness. The idea is seen in Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* where he depicts the foundling Tom Jones asleep in Squire Allworthy's bed "in all the beauty of innocence" (Book I, Ch. 3) and in general shows childhood as the time when "natural goodness of heart" either flowers or is shed (Book 3, Ch. 4). Such views were reinforced with the publication of Rousseau's *Emile, or On Education* (1762) where the opening line writes, "Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man" (37). The book expounds the innocence of man in his natural state.

The image of innocent childhood developed and flourished in England with the Romantic idealization of the child. "It was Blake who declared the 'vast majority

of children to be on the side of Imagination or Spiritual Sensation,'" Peter Coveney says, and added that in Blake "we have the first coordinated utterance of the Romantic imaginative and spiritually sensitive child" (51). The child as naturally innocent and close to God is also seen in Wordsworth. In "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" (1807), the poet suggests that children arrive in to the world "Trailing clouds of glory…From God, who is our home" and regards youth as "Nature's Priest" attributing it with a redemptive role. Though their approach may be different, Blake and Wordsworth give the pure, joyful and inspirational figure of the child heightened by its contrast with the world of experience which lies in wait.

This vision of the child as innocent and redemptive continues in many works of the Victorian period. It is central to the themes of major novels such as Charles Dicken's *Oliver Twist* (1838) and *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841) as well as George Elliot's *Silas Marner* (1861). The idealised and redemptive child character is found in children's literature such as Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857), George Macdonald's *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871), Dinah Maria Craik's *The Little Lame Prince and His Travelling Cloak* (1875), Richard Jefferies' *Wood Magic* (1881) and *Bevis: The Story of a Boy* (1882) and Frances Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1888).

Alice's identity troubles:

Lewis Carroll's Alice, it appears, also stands as an image of the idealised Victorian middle-class child, earnest and prim in her pinafore and pumps, confronting a world out of control by looking for rules and reasons. In Tenniel's illustration to the first chapter of *Through the Looking Glass*, Alice sits snuggly in a chair, encircled by a protective armchair, a kitten and a ball of yarn in her lap. She dreamily muses on the snow outside, herself enclosed happily and safely, suggesting the self-containment of innocence and purity. The charm of her appearance brings to mind Wordsworth's "seer blest," the child arriving from the "imperial palace" and maintaining a contact with "that immortal sea." A closer look at the disposition of Alice, however, reveals a rather fluid and enigmatic self. While displaying an

appearance of a nice and cautious Victorian child, her encounters often expose her as the "fabulous monster" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 243).

Other little girls travelling through fantasy lands are most often preoccupied with finding out where they are. Princess Irene in George Macdonald's *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and Dorothy Gale in L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) repeatedly ask "*where* am I?" Alice's main concern, on the other hand, is a question of who she is rather than where she is. From the beginning of her adventure, the little girl turns her inquiry inward, perceiving that the mystery of her surroundings corresponds the mystery of her identity. As she enters Wonderland, Alice asks herself a question that weaves throughout the story,

> I wonder if I've changed in the night? Let me think: *was* I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is 'Who in the world am I?' Ah, *that's* the great puzzle! (Carroll, *Complete Works* 28)

The only consistent answer she is able to find seems to be a fragmented sense of identity. She thought to herself, "it's no use now…to pretend to be two people! Why, there's hardly enough of me left to make *one* respectable person!" (24). Baffled at her ambivalent sense of self, Alice "began thinking over all the children she knew that were of the same age as herself, to see if she could have been changed for any of them" (28). As she recognizes her own instability, Alice then begins to consider alternative set of identities that are available to her. She considers being Ada, but then dismisses because "her hair goes in such long ringlets, and mine doesn't go in ringlets at all" (29). She then contemplates being Mabel but quickly refutes "for I know all sorts of things, and she, oh, she knows such a very little!" (29). After deliberation, she decides that she will choose to be Mabel, but with a condition that she will change who she is if she does not like the present one. She tells herself that she will stay down where she is and if anyone calls her to come up, "I shall only look up and say 'Who am I, then? Tell me that first, and then, if I like being that person, I'll come up: if not, I'll stay down here till I'm somebody else…'" (30). Being unable to conceive

of a consistent self, Alice considers the idea that her identity may not be as unified as she hopes to be, but is in fact fluid and shifting.

Hoping that her past may help her establish a coherent sense of identity, Alice decides to recite poems she had memorized before. Suggesting a disconnect with the nice Victorian girl she had been, Alice finds that she can only repeat them as an absurd parody of the original poems. The didactic poems come out as strange verses of nonsense and subversion of the originals. Even her own voice sounded "hoarse and strange" (30) as she unsuccessfully attempts to repeat her lessons. Alice's already troubled self-identity becomes further disoriented as her connection with her past becomes disrupted.

The Caterpillar, who is himself, a metamorphic creature reminds Alice of her uncertain sense of being. He asks her in a languid, sleepy voice, "Who are *you*?" (53). This apparently simple and straightforward question has Alice baffled as she finds herself unable to explain who she is:

> Alice replied, rather shyly, "I-I hardly know, Sir, just at present-at least I know who I *was* when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then."
>
> "What do you mean by that?" said the Caterpillar, sternly. "Explain yourself!"
>
> "I ca'n't 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 ca'n't put it more clearly," Alice replied, very politely, "for I ca'n't understand it myself, to begin with…" (53-54)

Try as she may, language seems to fail her to express her true self. She then explains to the Caterpillar that the unexpected and perpetual change in size causes confusion over her self-identity. This innocent dialogue with the Caterpillar even sounds similar to the philosophical question that the Western metaphysicians may raise: *Who am I?* They too have failed to answer this question succinctly over the centuries. It seems Carroll cannot put high philosophy into a child's mind or would not like to falsify her age or image with metaphysics. The Caterpillar then offers her a mushroom and says,

"One side will make you grow taller, and the other side will make you grow shorter" (59). Alice takes a closer look at the mushroom and notices that the mushroom is perfectly round. It is not possible to figure out which side is which and the Caterpillar provides her no clue. The uncertainty of her change is only reinforced by the gift of the ambiguous mushroom.

In an ingenious fashion, *Through the Looking Glass* touches upon how the calling name given to a person constitutes an intrinsic part of being. As Alice enters the wood where things have no names, she realizes that she too has lost her own name. The forest underlines the motif of destabilized selfhood. Unable to remember her name, Alice immediately circles back to the question, "'And now, who am 1? I *will* remember, if I can! I'm determined to do it!' But being determined didn't help her much" (177). Her identity is perceived here as inextricably linked with her calling name and losing her name has reinforced her destabilized self.

Alice's sensing of her fluid identity in fact, precedes her adventure into the strange lands:

> She generally gave herself very good advice (though she very seldom followed it), and sometimes she scolded herself so severely as to bring tears to her eyes; and once she remembered trying to box her own ears for having cheated in a game of croquet she was playing against herself, for this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people. (24)

The pun on "curious" points to her ambiguous nature and fluctuating personality. Lewis Carroll's own illustrations for the original *Alice's Adventures under Ground* (1864) represents Alice's indeterminacy perfectly. This Alice has an ambiguity about her and it is ingeniously reflected in the shifting colours of her hair. In some artworks, she is shown as a deep brunette, in others, she is distinctly blonde and still in others, light from an unknown source touches her hair so that she could either be brunette or blonde.

In addition to her uncertain sense of self, description towards Alice is undoubtedly nuanced throughout the books. Her stance in the stories is not without an undertone of dark trait. In reply to a letter from a child, Carroll has written that

while he had forgotten the story of Alice, he thinks "it was about 'malice'" (Hatch 49). Kincaid comments, "The necessarily ambivalent attitude toward Alice reinforces a rhetoric which shifts the direction of its hostile wit and therefore, as in *Gulliver's Travels*, makes it impossible for the reader to find a consistent position or a comfortable perspective" (93). Along with Alice, the reader learns that the little girl has the potential to accommodate the most contrasting of selves.

The episode with the Pigeon highlights the undercurrent of dark trait in Alice's character. Alice finds her neck extremely stretched out after eating one side of the mushroom and feels concerned in the beginning. But almost instantly, her worry turns in to excitement as she finds that her "neck would bend about easily in any direction, like a serpent" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 60). Knowing the magnitude of the evangelical influence in the Victorian ideals and considering how the Bible was considered "as the source of infallible truth" (Young 24), this Victorian girl's comparison of herself to a serpent seems deliberate and ironic. The Bible is replete with metaphors for evil that presents itself like a serpent: Satan the devil (Genesis 3:1; John 8:44; Romans 11:3, 14; 16:20; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Revelation 12:9 ; 20:2); Treachery (Genesis 49:17); Deadly, subtle, malicious (Psalm 91:13; Isaiah 14:29; Jeremiah 8:17; 46:22; Luke 10:19); The wicked (Psalm 58:3-4 ;140:3; Isaiah 59:5; Micah 7:17) and so on. The comparison of Carroll's sweet protagonist with a serpent clearly suggests an acknowledgement of a much more ambivalent attitude towards Alice. This is further complicated by Alice being a repressively uncanny reminder of a female spirit like Eve in the present.

In addition to her own comparison, the Pigeon also mistakes her for a serpent. As before, Alice does not have a solid coherent answer to explain who she is:

> "Ugh, Serpent!"
>
> "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."
>
> "You're a serpent; and there's no use denying it. I suppose you'll be telling me next that you never tasted an egg!"
>
> "I *have* tasted eggs, certainly," said Alice… "but little girls eat eggs quite as much as serpents do, you know."
> "but if they do, then they're a kind of serpent: that's all I can say." … "You're looking for eggs, I know *that* well enough; and what does it matter to me whether you're a little girl or a serpent?" (61-62)

The serpent simile clearly suggests a subversive and critical perspective on Alice. Besides highlighting the dark trait of Alice, the episode also evokes the thought that from the perspective of the weaker being, the one inferior and exploited, it does not matter if the oppression comes from purposeful malignity or from apathetic egoism which often pass for kind and virtuous. The notion cannot help but call to mind the attitude of colonial England.

Alice's hesitation at calling herself a "little girl" is also felt by many other critics. She has been called "both child and adult – and a person in transition" (Kincaid 93). And according to Helene Cixous, a close observation of her character makes one feel that "there exists in Alice a certain duplicity which is hidden by a pretence of 'politeness'" and "the only thing childlike about Alice is her age" (237). Most often, Alice's role in the books is very hard to fix, sometimes shifting within a single episode. For instance, in the chapter "Pig and Pepper," it appears at first that Alice, the child may be in danger as she enters the residence of the Duchess. The atmosphere in here is chaotic, with the angry cook and the volatile Duchess with her random remarks like "talking of axes…chop off her head!" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 68). However, as it unfolds, we recognize that Alice seems more like the adult attempting to regulate the chaos of a bizarre environment. And at the trial in Wonderland, we ironically find Alice feels pretty much at home and "quite pleased to find that she knew the name of nearly everything (in the courtroom)" (114).

Indeed, Alice appears not so much as the generalized child but "as a representative of humanity, carrying the unconscious values and assumptions of us all into a freer and more questioning land so as to expose their full viciousness" (Kincaid 93). She is a curious wonderer/wanderer in Carroll's fictional lands, her aboveground linear mind opened up by the places and the inhabitants to accommodate the possibility of believing in "as many as six impossible things before breakfast" (Carroll 200). Even though she began her journey looking to find solidified meaning and her coherent self, she gradually learns to welcome unpredictability, uncertainty and irrational logics. She open-mindedly shares different worldviews and has become "so well used to queer things happening" (73).

According to Lovell-Smith, Alice "challenges the Romantic Wordsworthian notion of child as pure hearted innocent, growing up nurtured by a fundamentally benevolent nature" ("Eggs and Serpents" 28). She is portrayed as neither thoroughly good nor thoroughly evil. Carroll clearly invites doubts and hesitations regarding her identity. The Wonderland lake that almost drowns her is made up of her own tears and she may very well be part of the Looking Glass dream that threatens to annihilate her. As has been suggested, "she is both the croquet game without rules and its violent arbiter, the Queen of Hearts" (Auerbach 34). Helene Cixous writes, "Alice is not and does not want to be either on one side or on the other but here or there, as a visitor, as a tale-teller, as neither a child nor a grown up, neither out nor in, but in fact, in the same way as portmanteau words which are made up of embedded elements…" (239). Alice comes to accept and embrace the notion that her identity is a portmanteau, fluid and shifting. Thus, when the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon ask her about her adventures, she simply remarks, "…it's no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person then" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 110).

Carroll's fairy children in the two volumes of the *Sylvie and Bruno* books are also perplexingly portrayed. The two beings are curiously portrayed as both fairies and human children. As the story opens, Sylvie and Bruno appear as two normal children whose father is the Warden of a kingdom called Outland. With their father having to go to a faraway land on business, the reader easily fears for the children as

they are left among those that conspire to overthrow their father's Wardenship. However, as the conspirators turn out to be harmless and in fact, quite comical, the children, especially Sylvie often appear as the grown up one. The story barely unfolds and the narrator suddenly awakes in to the setting of another story where Sylvie and Bruno appear as fairies. Towards the end, they reappear in this other setting as fairies posing as children. In fact, the story never makes clear which identity of them is the "real" one. They are simply both fairies and human, or they are neither.

The Professor in the *Sylvie and Bruno* books is another strangely mutating character. Only addressed by his profession, the Professor is a respected, adored and highly-esteemed character among the people living in Outland. He is often disoriented and confused about his identity. Waking up from his slumber, the Professor asks a familiar subject matter of Carroll's stories, the subject of his identity: "Would you have the kindness to mention … whereabouts we are just now and who we are, beginning with me?" (440). After the narrator points out that the people with him are Sylvie and Bruno, he replies that he knows the children well enough, and continues to address his main issue - his uncertain sense of self: "It's *myself* I'm most anxious about" (440). It is significant here that Carroll italicizes words that imply confusion about his identity. The ambiguity of his identity becomes even more profound as we reach *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded.* Within a very short span, the identity of the Professor is witnessed endlessly being deferred:

> now he was the Professor, and now he was somebody else! By the time he had reached the gate, he certainly was somebody else. (576)

Carroll's fictional worlds accept and embrace a person's changeableness and the fluidity of identity. In here we have a man, who wholly "seemed to be transformed, as if he had grown fifty years younger in a moment of time" (620). Characters from different worlds strangely merge, such as when Lady Muriel curiously turns in to Sylvie (451), and sometimes, identity confusion even crosses boundaries of gender, such as when Bruno mistakes himself for Sylvie (356). In fact, throughout the two

books, the characters often easily and unexpectedly switch in to another character so that the reader can never tell which character we see at the moment. Towards the end of the second book, character swap becomes so frequent that it is practically impossible to differentiate between the characters.

Carroll's portrayal of characters that are undergoing constant transformation, his representation of identities which are open to contestation, and the rejection of any ultimate referent seems to prefigure what Docherty explains in the context of postmodernism,

> Postmodern characters typically fall into incoherence: character traits are not repeated, but contradicted... At every stage in the representation of character, the finality of the character, a determinate identity for the characters is deferred as the proliferation of information about the character leads into irrationality, incoherence, or self-contradiction. (140)

And that in postmodern characterization, "the narrative trajectory is from the assumed homogeneity of identity...towards an endlessly proliferating heterogeneity, whereby identity is endlessly deferred and replaced by a scenario in which the 'character' or figure constantly defers from itself, denying the possession of and by a self and preferring an engagement with Otherness" (143).

Motif of Shifting Size:

In the *Alice* books, it is evident that Alice's sense of self is deeply destabilized by her frequent change in size: "How puzzling all these changes are! I'm never sure what I'm going to be, from one minute to another!" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 62). In addition to underlining her ambivalent self, the intermittent changes in her size underlines the instability of the superior-inferior hierarchy since turning big or small often decide becoming prey or predator. The constant shape shifting is a reminder that empowerment and vulnerability, enslavement and mastery are transient states for Alice as well as the animals in Carroll's fictional lands.

The very first scene after Alice enters the Looking Glass land calls to attention the central theme of status reversal. She enters the land while being

invisible and bearing the size of a giant, compared to the size of the inhabitants she first encounters. The Victorian child, who would otherwise have been under the subordination of the adult is here, because of her much larger frame, a being of horror to the White King and Queen. Even her attempts at being helpful scares this family to their "whiskers." We see that Alice was anxious to be of use when she sees the White Queen trying to get to her crying baby. With her giant invisible hands, she picks up the Queen and puts her next to her daughter Lily. The rapid journey through the air has the Queen so frightened that "for a minute or two, she could do nothing but hug the little Lily in silence" (150). Attempting to unite the whole family, she then lifts the King up as gentle as possible to avoid scaring him like the Queen. However, seeing the frightened grimace of the King, Alice is unable contain her amusement so that her hand shakes in laughter and she almost drops the King. After putting down the King, Alice wishes to help him further by dusting the ashes off his clothes. The whole episode scares the poor King "cold to the very end of [his] whiskers!" (152). A benevolent action of the child towards the King and Queen, when their sizes are significantly reversed is enough to cause the adults a moment so horrendous which they "shall never, *never* forget!" (152).

Alice's frequent mentioning of Dinah, her cat aboveground, to the frightened small animals of Wonderland has often been interpreted as emblematic of her insensitivity to animals in general. According to James Kincaid, the troubled relation between Alice and the Wonderland animals reflects Victorian society's invasion of animal spaces which parallels the invasion of weaker human civilizations throughout colonization (97). Nina Auerbach calls Alice's general attitude towards the animals she encounters in Wonderland "often of casual cruelty" (37). One cannot deny that Alice at times scares the small Wonderland animals to bristles. On occasion, she brings up how much she misses her cat Dinah in front of those that are potential prey to her, such as when she mentions to the frightened mouse how much she would love for him to meet her (33) or in front of the small birds and animals after the Caucus race (41). Her callous comments may indeed be a result of the aboveground influence regarding indifference towards lesser beings. It is more conceivable, however, that her reference to Dinah underlines the more recurrent theme about

rejection of the possibility of an essential nature in living beings, in favour of the concept of reality being determined by perspective. It appears that Alice's blunder does not stem from calculated insensitivity. For instance, she attempts to start a conversation with the Mouse by mentioning to him how much she misses her cat Dinah, but that makes the Mouse quiver with fright (Carroll, *Complete Works* 32). Seeing how much the topic upsets the Mouse, Alice stops "in a great hurry to change the subject of conversation" (33). And after the Caucus race, when her remark about Dinah scares off all the animals, Alice, sad and alone mentions how she wishes she had not mentioned Dinah. It genuinely upsets her that "Nobody seems to like her down here" because as far as she knows, Dinah is "the best cat in the world!" (42). More than revealing Alice's cruelty towards the animals, Dinah's reference highlights the idea that a sweet cuddly pet to a human is at the same time, a fierce predator to those creatures less than half its size.

The motif of reversal of the dominant-inferior experience owing to difference in size is also felt when Alice meets a puppy in Wonderland. While she has shrunk to a very tiny size, Alice comes across a puppy. The pet looks enormous from the perspective of tiny Alice and the situation necessitates her to worry about her safety, so that "she was terribly frightened all the time at the thought that it might be hungry" (50). She is aware that the puppy is not a fierce animal and she "should have liked teaching it tricks very much, if - if I'd only been the right size to do it!" (52). But being the size that she is, the cuddly puppy becomes a possible beast of prey she must escape from. Alice here steps into the very same position as Wonderland animals who were terrified of her pet Dinah. The human child, now that she has become the size of a potential prey, perceives the "dear little puppy" (52) as a potential predator.

Subverting scientific authority:

Lewis Carroll, we have examined in the previous chapter, subverts in his works the paternalistic dialectic which submitted children to the propensity of the Victorian adults. This defence against the struggle of the powerless extended in the area of the human-animal relationship. Being a "sharp satirist of the self-presumption

of scientific rationality and authority" (Mayer 431), Lewis Carroll fiercely attacked the scientific authority that subjugated powerless animals in the quest for power.

Animals played a varied number of roles in the nineteenth century Britain. The animate beings could alternately serve as "food, symbol of masculine or national power, zoological spectacle, scientific specimen, even domestic pet" (Mayer 432). Collecting specimens of plants and animals, ferns, fossils and beetles, taxonomically arranging them and exhibiting them in emerging museums and galleries represented for Victorians an accomplishment of the rational human mind that is capable of commanding the nonhuman world, which in extension is a way of asserting cultural dominance over lesser beings (Kerchy pt.4). In his defence against the subjugation of helpless animals during his time, especially regarding vivisection, Lewis Carroll wrote pamphlets expressing his thoughts on the controversial matter. It is in fact, an interesting detail that while he mostly published his nonfictional works under his real name - Charles Dodgson, his essays on vivisection are published under the pseudonym Lewis Carroll.

According to Jed Meyer, vivisection was rarely practiced in Britain before 1870, and the accepted and increasing widespread of the practice parallels the rise of the professional man of science. Vivisection acquired a renewed sense of purpose with increased acceptance of Darwinian theory of evolution (432-433). As Hilda Kean observes, "The real growth of vivisection in Britain dated from Darwin's arguing for an understanding of the commonality between species; it also dated from the dissemination of Claude Bernard's pioneering work on physiology within the scientific community" (97). Many advocates of the practice, such as William Rutherford, stressed the power of vivisection to boost Britain's "high moral rank amongst nations; for every step which is calculated to improve the physiological state of the individual must inevitably contribute to make the nation successful in the general struggle for existence" (5). Michael Foster also wrote for the urgency of vivisection in his 1874 essay, "The success of the human race in the struggle for existence depends on man's being well fed; man is therefore justified in slaying and eating a sheep. The success of the human race in the struggle for existence is

dependent on knowledge being increased; man is therefore justified in slaying a dog or a rabbit, if it can be shown that human knowledge is thereby enlarged" (369). The very principles which endorsed such experimentation on animals to upgrade the position of the human is grounded on the belief that man has the right to use 'inferior' beings as tools of knowledge and power.

In such an atmosphere, many concerned citizens voice their critique of the scientific community in endorsing such an operation. With writing against the practice of vivisection increasing, physiologists, as expected, also maintained their sense of compassion for the animals and even claims to be animal lovers. Edwin Ray Lankester went so far as to declare that the "physiologist suffers with his experimental animal," and that both the vivisector and the vivisected, with a great amount of pain, "becomes a sacrifice offered up on the altar of Science" (145). While the scientists may claim of mutual suffering, likely as a way to assuage public concerns about the inhumanity of vivisection, the practice nonetheless calls in to question the species hierarchy structuring the process and practice in science laboratories.

Carroll was highly concerned about the use of live animals as objects for studies in English physiological laboratories. As public debate over the ethics of animal experimentation escalated, Lewis Carroll also wrote pieces challenging the logic which justified the gathering of scientific knowledge at any cost. In his "Vivisection as a Sign of the Times," Carroll laments that in the new age of science, the world "has seen and tired of the worship of Nature, of Reason, of Humanity; for this nineteenth century has been reserved the development of the most refined of all – the worship of the Self" (4). Lewis Carroll, in a rather prophetic tone, contests the rationalization of the exploitation of powerless beings for the purpose of acquiring knowledge and advancement, stressing the will to dominate in the quest for higher knowledge. In challenging the ideology that authorised vivisection in the name of human progress, Carroll links the subordination of animals to the subordination of women and the working classes:

> The enslavement of his weaker brethren – 'the labour of those who do not enjoy, for the enjoyment of those who do not labour' - the degradation of woman- the torture of the animal world- these are the steps of the ladder by which man is ascending to his higher civilisation. (5)

The piece also associates practices of the physiological laboratory with economic, political, domestic and scientific exploitation in the nineteenth century England and Europe, which are all concerned with misuse of power. Carroll challenges the evolutionary superiority of the experimental physiologist over his animal subject, as well as those who advocates for the progress of humanity at the expense of lesser beings. He asks,

> Is the anatomist, who can contemplate unmoved the agonies he is inflicting, for no higher purpose than to gratify a scientific curiosity, or to illustrate some well-established truth, a being higher or lower, in the scale of humanity, than the ignorant boor whose very soul would sicken at the horrid sight? (5)

The writing concludes with a rather foreboding prophecy of the time: "When the man of science, looking forth over a world which will then own no other sway than his, shall exalt in the thought that he has made of this fair green earth, if not a heaven for man, at least a hell for animals" (5).

In his other anti-vivisectionist piece, "Some Popular Fallacies About Vivisection," Carroll challenges the feeling of superiority which believe "that man is infinitely more important than the lower animals, so that the infliction of animal suffering, however great, is justifiable if it prevents human suffering, however small" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 1191). The writer takes a stand against the enterprise of the time and sharply criticises the era's "lust for scientific knowledge" (1192) that exploited animals for profit of an ego-centric culture. He points out this hypocrisy: "A strange assertion this, from the lips of people who tell us that man is twin brother to the monkey!" (1191-1192). Stressing on this kinship, Carroll goes on to question if science will know any limit in its claim for progress. He challenges the assumption that "while science arrogates to herself the right of torturing at her pleasure the whole

sentient creation up to man himself, some inscrutable boundary line is there drawn, over which she will never venture to pass" (1199-1200). Resonating the apocalyptic tone of his previous antivivisection writing, Carroll forewarns "the possible advent of a day when anatomy shall claim as legitimate subjects for experiment, first, our condemned criminals - next, perhaps, the inmates of our refuges for incurables - then the hopeless lunatic, the pauper hospital - patient, and generally 'him that hath no helper'" (1200). Carroll relates his concern that experimentation on helpless animals will soon lead to experimentation on helpless human beings, and the offering will most likely always come from the vulnerable section of the society. He concludes his piece by forewarning of a day when the roles of the experimenter and the experimented may reverse:

> And when that day shall come, O my brother-man, you who claim for yourself and for me so proud an ancestry - tracing our pedigree through the anthropomorphoid ape up to the primeval zoophyte - what potent charm have *you* in store to win exemption from the common doom? Will you represent to that grim spectre, as he gloats over you, scalpel in hand, the inalienable rights of man? (1201)

Carroll here directly makes the connection between human rights and animal rights.

While he was writing his antivivisection pieces, Carroll was also engaged in a composition of his nonsense poem, *The Hunting of the Snark*. The self-proclaimed natural historian among the crew, the Butcher is known for his exceptional abilities in writing and lecturing, and as his name suggests, for his surgical skills. In the "Fit the Fifth," the crew set off to explore "spot unfrequented by man/A dismal and desolate valley" (769) armed only with "paper, portfolio, pens/And ink in unfailing supplies" (771). As a "strange creepy creatures came out of their dens/And watched them with wondering eyes," the Butcher proceeds to write "with a pen in each hand," explaining "all the while in a popular style," which his companion, the Beaver, "could well understand" (771). Like the experimental physiologist of the time, the Butcher attempts to unveil "what has hitherto been/Enveloped in absolute mystery" and writes down his knowledge in a lengthy "Lesson in Natural History" (771). The

mysterious creature is believed to be a Jubjub bird. In a sharp parallel to how exotic animals from foreign lands were received in Victorian England, the Jubjub bird is considered in terms of its economic value as much as it is considered for its scientific value. The Butcher's lesson links the accumulation of knowledge with the accumulation of wealth. Animals may serve as objects of study as well as provide sources of material wealth, and the Jubjub's description by the Butcher emphasizes the linkage. The bird is described in relation to contemporary fashion trends that "Its taste in costume is entirely absurd/It is ages ahead of the fashion" (772), and its value as a source of meat is emphasized,

> Its flavour when cooked is more exquisite far
>
> Than mutton, or oysters, or eggs:
>
> (Some think it keeps best in an ivory jar,
>
> And some, in mahogany kegs. (772)

And of course, the bird is described in terms of preserving its exotic appearance in taxidermy for its worth as an object of vision for display, perhaps in galleries or zoological museums:

> You boil it in sawdust: you salt it in glue:
>
> You condense it with locusts and tape:
>
> Still keeping one principal object in view
>
> To preserve its symmetrical shape. (772)

The crew considers the Jubjub bird exclusively in terms of its value for human use, emphasizing the self-absorbed nature of the Victorian attitude that do not care to transform this "fair green earth" into a "hell for animals." The poem explicitly exposes the affinities between the accumulation of knowledge and the accumulation of power.

Blurring the human/animal divide:

For the imperialistic Victorian, scientific classification of different species of plants and animals had a means of serving as an assertion of cultural and intellectual dominance in newly explored regions. In her comprehensive work on zoological

nomenclature of the nineteenth century, Harriet Ritvo has discussed the various ways in which

> classification represented European possession of exotic territories, as well as intellectual mastery of their natural history. . . Citizens of a prosperous global country like Great Britain easily conflated such metaphorical dominion with more practical or literal modes of appropriation. Thus, naturalists in the mother country automatically claimed the right to classify colonial plants and animals- their subjects in more than one sense. (336)

Classification is clearly a mean by which animals can be exploited for professional gains because "the lists of newly recorded varieties and species increases the bulk and cost of zoological monographs…" (Mayer 438)

The Hunting of the Snark raises a number of ethical issues regarding human dominion over other animals. The Snark is an elusive hybrid creature belonging to no fixed environment. It is at once domestic as well as threatening. The hunt for the Snark is undertaken on a number of different levels. As described in the poem's refrain:

> They sought it with thimbles, they sought it with care;
>
> They pursued it with forks and hope;
>
> They threatened its life with a railway-share;
>
> They charmed it with smiles and soap. (769)

Carefully examined on a minute scale; pursued as a curious delicacy for the feasting fork, threatened by industrial development, charmed, washed and domesticated, the Snark is an indeterminate creature. It can effortlessly shift between the high sea and home garden. The Snark seems like an amorphous figure for the nonhuman animal. The ambiguous nature of the Snark poses a threat to the crew due to the problem of classifying it. Members of the crew anxiously conceptualize the best means of categorizing the creature. The Bellman comes up with the most extensive description of the Snark and mentions in the fifth point a description of "each particular batch"

of the creatures, “Distinguishing those that have feathers, and bite/ From those that have whiskers, and scratch” (763). While describing the different types of Snark, the Bellman warns the crew of a particular kind,

> “For, although common Snarks do no manner of harm,
> Yet I feel it my duty to say
> Some are Boojums-” The Bellman broke off in alarm,
> For the Baker had fainted away. (763)

The mere mention of the name of this type of Snark is enough to cause fear in the hearts of the crew, especially the Baker, because his uncle has warned him of the Boojum. His uncle has told him, “If your Snark be a Snark, that is right:/Fetch it home by all means-you may serve it with greens /And it’s handy for striking a light” (765). Like the Jubjub bird, this kind of Snark is a profitable resource, but then there is the other type:

> “‘But oh, beamish nephew, beware of the day,
> If your Snark be a Boojum! For then
> You will softly and suddenly vanish away,
> And never be met with again!’” (765)

The elusive Boojum poses an existential threat to whosoever is finding it. The Boojum has inspired a number of speculations and interpretations on the poem’s philosophical symbolism. One thing remains however, that this particular class of Snark defies classification.

The false sense of superiority humans hold against the animals is a recurrent theme found in Carroll’s fictional works. His works are overrun with an imaginative merging of human and animals. This confluence of man and animal constitutes an important subject matter in *The Hunting of the Snark.* When the crew lands from the ship, it is not only with their boxes and bags but also with their “portmanteaus” (761). There was one among the crew who was known for the number of things he forgot when he entered the ship. Along with everything else, the man had “wholly forgotten his name” (758). His inability to remember his name affords an opportunity

to explore the instability of his identity. How he was addressed differed depending on who addressed him: “His intimate friends called him “Candle-ends,” and his enemies “Toasted-cheese” (758). “He would answer to “Hi!” or to any loud cry, /Such as “Fry me!” or “Fritter my wig!”/To “What-you-may-call-um!” or “What-was-his-name”/But especially “Thing-um-a-jig!”” (758). He is identified differently by different people. At times he is “the man they called “Ho!”” (764) and at times “the man they called “Hi!”” (766) or “this man, that they used to call “Dunce”” (770). Like the Snark, its pursuer is not easily classified, and like the Snark, he can also serve as food. With each description, the man hunting for the elusive animal sounds more and more like the object of his pursuit. The Jubjub bird, besides its description in terms of its economic and scientific values and worth as an exotic object for display, exhibits some very human features in the Butcher’s account:

> “But it knows any friend it has met once before:
> It never will look at a bribe:
> And in charity-meetings it stands at the door,
> And collects-though it does not subscribe.” (772)

The Jubjub may appear non-human but it certainly shares many of the same qualities with the humans who examine it.

In order to help the crew identify their ambiguous and elusive prey, the Bellman gives “The five unmistakable marks / By which you may know, wheresoever you go, / The warranted genuine Snarks” (762). Like the Jubjub bird, the Snark is valuable as food and the first identifying mark is the taste, “Which is meagre and hollow, but crisp:/Like a coat that is rather too tight in the waist, / With a flavour of Will-o’-the-Wisp” (763). With each subsequent “unmistakeable mark” outlined by the Bellman, the Snark appears more and more like human possessing characteristics that are not particularly appealing. Its second identifying trait is one of idleness. The Snark has a “habit of getting up late” and “frequently breakfasts at five-o'clock tea, / And dines on the following day” (763). Its third identifying mark, like many people, is its lack of humour. The Snark is slow in taking a jest and “Should

you happen to venture on one, / It will sigh like a thing that is deeply distressed: / And it always looks grave at a pun" (763). Its fourth identifying mark is its fondness for material things which is demonstrated by "its fondness for bathing-machines / Which it constantly carries about, / And believes that they add to the beauty of scenes / A sentiment open to doubt" (763). Its fifth and final identifying trait, "ambition," portrays the Snark as an upwardly driven professional man. The human and nonhuman roles become so fluid and changeable that the object of hunt more and more resembles the hunters. And when the Baker finally confronts the creature, he "softly and suddenly vanished away-" (778). The quest ends with the pursuer becoming the pursued. It is perhaps the Snark's similarity to its pursuers that finally renders the crew powerless. And once that "inscrutable boundary line" between species is disturbed, the definition of the pursuer itself begins to blur.

This intellectual apprehension regarding the vulnerability of non-human living beings is in fact, a vital element of humanist/post humanist studies, which engenders the ethical responsibility of humans towards non-human beings, but also enhances the shared trans-species experience of vulnerability such as the fear of suffering, the capacity to feel pain, the inevitability of mortality as well as the impossibility of direct communication with other species (Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* 46). According to Zoe Jaques, while posthumanism exposes and undermines boundaries between human and non-human beings, it also re-establishes such boundaries so as to "facilitate a dialogue as to how these borders might become more fluid" (3). Carroll's challenge against the inhuman treatment of animals in an attempt to minimalize the pain inherent in beings, as well as his challenging of the human-animal boundaries, is a precursor of critical philosophical thought of the twentieth century such as Derrida's ethics of compassionate responsibility (395) as it is based on the desire to establish a more humane relation to anything that can be considered "others" in comparison to us.

In his essay "Alice on the Stage" (1887), Carroll describes his protagonist using positive animal attributes – "gentle as a fawn" and "loving as a dog" (225). Resonating the comment, the *Alice* stories outline a multidimensional human-animal

relationship that recognizes their difference in a way that does not subjugate either of the species. The stories offer a "fanciful and nonsensical perversion of any illustrated natural history" of the Victorian time (Lovell-Smith, "Eggs and Serpents" 29) by the way the denizens of the lands resist the scientific classification of species the late nineteenth century naturalists were obsessed with. Like the Snark, the inhabitants of Wonderland and Looking Glass land display characteristics that problematizes categorization. From *Alice in Wonderland,* we have an amalgamation of man and animal such as Fish Footman and Frog Footman. From *Through the Looking Glass*, we have the writer's invented creatures like Jabberwock, Bandersnatch and Jubjub (which reappeared in *The Hunting of the Snark*). There are also curious compound insects such as "Rocking-horse-fly" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 173), "Bread-and-butter-fly" (174), and "Snap-dragon-fly" (174). A striking feature of Carroll's fictional lands is that the boundary between species is treated as slippery and the lands are filled with curious hybrid animals. In Wonderland, it is possible for a human child to turn in to a pig (70), and the Looking Glass land disrupts the human-animal barrier so that the Queen curiously turns in to a sheep (201), and another Queen possibly turns in to a kitten (269) and the elephants here are able to make honey from flowers just like bees (168).

The Dodo, an animal of Wonderland is often interpreted as a fictional self-portrait of the author because of a speech impediment which often caused him to pronounce his name as Do-do-dodgson. The Dodo is a hybrid creature whose defective wings are complemented by human hands holding a walking cane while offering a thimble as prize to Alice (30). The bird is an odd mixture of civilised intellectual superiority and natural vulnerability. The Cheshire Cat is one of the most enigmatic inhabitants of Wonderland. According to Lecercle, the Cheshire Cat, with its vanishing and reappearing represents language that is both poetically subversive and ideologically manipulative because it differentiates the speaking human from the animals whose inarticulate purring or growling never make sense in terms of human interpretation (Kerchy pt.1). The Cat hovers between the realms of dream and reality, while the illustration depicts a negation of human-animal hierarchy, for we see Alice

gazing up at the Cat with hands folded in her back, willingly and respectfully looking up at the animal. The Cheshire Cat also displays a contradicting disposition, because while looking good-natured, we see that it also has "*very* long claws and a great many teeth" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 71), indicating its ambiguity as a pet or a predator. The chapter "Advice from a Caterpillar" sets up a striking scene for displaying a denial of human intellectual superiority. Alice notices a Caterpillar who sits on the top of a mushroom with an air of nonchalant authority (52). The illustration shows Alice looking up at the animal standing on her tip toes. The only visible features of Alice's face are her eyes which are shown meekly gazing up at the Caterpillar. Visually and verbally, the Caterpillar occupies a dominant role in this encounter. With a curious variation, the position of the observer and the observed becomes interchangeable here as "the identified or named ones (animals) now claim the status of *her* (human's) identifiers or namers" (Lovell-Smith, "Eggs and Serpents" 39). The whole episode foregrounds the fundamentally metamorphic quality of living things. This interchangeableness of beings has already been contemplated by Alice as she falls down the rabbit hole, before her arrival into Wonderland:

> "But do cats eat bats, I wonder?" And here Alice began to get rather sleepy, and went on saying to herself, in a dreamy sort of way, "Do cats eat bats? Do cats eat bats?" and sometimes "Do bats eat cats?" for, you see, as she couldn't answer either question, it didn't much matter which way she put it. (Carroll, *Complete Works* 20)

We see this motif repeated in the scene where Alice finds herself unable to come up with what makes her different from a serpent to a pigeon.

In Carroll's fictional realms, the hierarchisation of man and animal/ man and other species is put through a lens of looking-glass reversal. In the woods "where things have no names" (177), Alice experiences a tender companionship with a fawn. Through this non-discursive, alternative, nonsensical classification that is based on empathic interspecies relationality, a human child can be "grouped with other organisms 'like any other natural species'" (Dusinberre 7). This interspecies

identification is also seen in *Sylvie and Bruno* in which the Professor refers to the child protagonists as "small human animals" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 452).

Alice's encounter with the Lion and the Unicorn also underlines an important theme about interspecies relationship. Looking at Alice, the Lion challenges her humanity by asking a question that destabilizes her existential stance, "Are you animal, or vegetable, or mineral?" (231). The Unicorn's reply, "It's a fabulous monster!" refutes the status of her reality and pushes her towards fictional realm where mythical creatures and human child have an equal amount of mutually dependent empowerment. This is attested by the Unicorn's account to Alice, "if you'll believe in me, I'll believe in you" (229). Alice's sense of self as well as perception of life is not only challenged in Wonderland, the place and its inhabitants significantly destabilize any boundaries set between reality and fiction, and between human beings and animals.

According to John Berger, when a human is "being seen by the animal, he is being seen as his surroundings is seen by him. His recognition of this makes the look of the animal familiar. (But) The animal (also) has secrets specifically addressed to man" (5). What makes the fictional lands of Carroll so appealing is the recognition that these secrets need not be uncovered by means of intellectual or scientific reasoning supposing the supremacy of man. The sanest choice might be the embracing of uncertainty and admittance of our not knowing everything, and of accepting the plurality of perspectives. This ethical viewpoint is highlighted quite explicitly in *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* in a philosophical exchange between Lady Muriel, the Earl and the narrator. There is a hesitation in their conversation about the privilege status of Man as the only thinking animal with "a monopoly of *Reason*" (687). The dialogue contemplates on the mental and perceptual agency required for the "swarm of happy insects, to dance in this sunbeam for one hour of bliss, for no other object, that we can imagine, than to swell the sum of conscious happiness"? (690). They argue for the possibility that "animals have some kind of *soul,* which survives their bodily death" (687). The "logical" conclusion of the conversation is grounded in imagination for the "wisest answer…is to behold, we know not

anything" (687). The group displays a willingness to "accept anything (including the existence of fairies, ghosts and animal souls) on good evidence that was not a priori impossible" (689). We see an embracing of uncertainty as "part of the great Riddle" (687) which correlates to the book's oscillation between a realistic plotline set in Victorian England and a fantasy plotline in the world of Fairyland.

The blurring of human-animal hierarchy, the fusion of different species including humans, and the fantastic animals fluently speaking a nonsense language that often astonishes Alice, communicate a Derridean message, suggesting that

> we are not the auto of autobiography, we are always radically other, already in—or ahuman in our very being—not just in the evolutionary, biological, and zoological fact of our physical vulnerability and mortality, which we share as animals, with animals, but also in our subjection to and constitution in the materiality and technicity of a language that is always on the scene before we are, as a radically ahuman precondition for our subjectivity, for what makes us human. (Wolfe, "Human, All Too Human" 571)

Carroll's in-between creatures, the animals with superior mental agility, the shapeshifting beings and the "nonsensical" rules that undermine the aboveground law all destabilize the dominance of human reason and reclaim the relevance of alternative perspectives of previously powerless lesser life forms. This breaking down of the binary opposition between human rights and animal rights seems to prefigure what Antonio Benitez-Rojo observes as a critical part of postmodern discourse which is "a questioning of the concept of "unity" and a dismantling, or rather unmasking, of the mechanism that we know as "binary opposition…" (154). Carroll has completely unsettled the assumed barrier between human beings and the non-human others, and has significantly highlighted the metamorphic quality of all lives. His challenging of the discriminatory human-animal hierarchies is a precursor of the critical philosophical concern of the twentieth century that speaks now a language of compassion and ethics. Zoe Jaques's assessment rings true when she

comments that Carroll's overall project in his writing was to "displace the naturalised assumption of human dominion over the animal kingdom" (50).

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CHAPTER FOUR

Language Games and Dissolution of Meaning

> Nothingness is my destiny. (Carroll 809)

> …the object of Desire in this Story of Alice is a certain knowledge which cannot be dissociated from language, or perhaps language itself… (Cixous 233)

The quote above from Lewis Carroll signifies deconstruction of the familiar philosophical and religious postulates such as existentialism and an absurdist view of existence. The second quote from Helen Cixous, which is a critically sensitive comment, indicates that Carroll's concern with language is indeed of serious significance for his literary creation. It may be apprehended at the outset that between these two territories of reality and language, Carroll's creative imagination unfolds itself.

A marked characteristic noticed upon reading the works of Lewis Carroll is the way language works. It is a game played between the writer, the characters and the reader. He tests language by deforming it and endlessly playing with its components. As the nineteenth century did not have relevant language theories to crack the hard nut of Carroll's nonsense, it looks reasonable and convenient to use the postmodern perspectives and discourses in order that some meaning or sense emerges out of the so-called nonsense. Alternatively, Carroll's 'nonsense' carries more sense in the overall context of his imaginative vision relating to life and meaning. This present study perceives that Carroll's approach to language in particular, substantially expresses ideas many of which are found to be characteristic of postmodern discourse and literature. And the aim of this chapter is to examine Carroll's treatment of language which is observed to explore and express the dynamism, complexity, fluidity and instability surrounding language and meaning. His observation and articulation are seen as foreshadowing an attitude of postmodern consciousness of language as fluid, slippery and unstable, and at the same time, revealing a mode of understanding the ambiguity of meaning.

Play with linguistic boundaries:

Language is an important institution for the civilized society of men to distinguish man from the nonhuman. Carroll's distinction is in questioning/ subverting this proud model of man. Before delving into his literary works, a brief discussion of his invention of a word game called 'Doublet' will show the writer's fascination with words and his passion for playing with its fluidity which is reflected in his fictional writings. Carroll has mentioned in his diary on March 12, 1878 of his invention of a game called 'Word Links' (his original name for the game) on Christmas Day in 1877. Doublet game basically consist of changing one word in to another by altering single letters at each step to make a different word. The rule of the game is that two words at the beginning and end of such a chain must be of the same length, and they should be related to each other in some obvious way. They must not have identical letters in the same positions and all words in the chain should be common English words, excluding proper names. For example, COLD can be changed to WARM as follows: COLD, CURD, CARD, WARD, WARM. In this way, a signifier may generate a number of signifieds in the similar/paradoxical ways. It seems the game became a parlour craze in London, and has been a much enjoyed and practiced form of wordplay ever since (Gardner, "Word Ladders" 195). The game is basically built upon playing with the fluidity of words which is illustrative of the writer's lifelong passion to explore the dynamic nature of language.

Carroll's fascination with linguistic experimentation includes the creation of new words and even languages. In fact, many of the created words from Carroll's works, especially from the *Alice* books has jumped across, right into the twenty-first century. The invented vocabularies such as "curioser and curioser" (Carroll 26), "much of a muchness" (83), "uglify" (104), "contrariwise" (181) and more still remain in the latest editions of dictionaries like *Merriam-Webster*, *Cambridge, Oxford Learner* and so on.

Deliberately subverting linguistic rules, Carroll alternates the spelling of 'can't' and 'won't' to 'ca'n't' and 'wo'n't' in all his fictional writings. He explains his reason in the Preface to *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded.* The new spelling is an innovation that feels like a more appropriate abbreviation to the words for the writer.

In response to criticism, he simply states that he is "only extending, to other cases, an existing rule" (509 – 510). Through the process of disorienting and manipulating the system of language, Carroll reminds his reader that language is not something we own, not something static, but something alive and continually in a process of becoming.

Absent referents:

Carroll is attributed for inventing portmanteau words that contain several ideas into one word such as "slithy" which means "lithe and slimy" (215), "mimsy" which means "flimsy and miserable" (217) and more. On explaining the creation of these portmanteau words, the writer gives a description that is as arbitrary as the meaning of these compound words. In the introduction to *The Hunting of the Snark*, he explains the playful and ambiguous process:

> For instance, take the two words "fuming" and "furious." Make up your mind that you will say both words, but leave it unsettled which you will say first. Now open your mouth and speak. If your thoughts incline ever so little towards "fuming" you will say "fuming-furious;" if they turn, by even a hair's breadth, towards "furious," you will say "furious-fuming;" but if you have that rarest of gifts, a perfectly balanced mind, you will say "frumious." (755)

The perplexing process thus results in the creation of a new word with an indeterminate meaning by phonologically exploiting the discrepancy between two old meanings. In *Through the Looking* Glass, the self-proclaimed language expert Humpy Dumpty attempts to give an explanation of some of the nonsensical words. However, his explanation still fails to allow a reader to form a coherent representation of the creatures to which they refer:

> "and what are '*toves*"?"

> "Well, *'toves'* are something like badgers – they're something like cork-screws…also they make their nests under sun-dials – also they live on cheese."
>
> … "And a 'borogrove' is a thin shabby-looking bird with its feathers sticking out all round - something like a live mop"
>
> … "and then *'mome raths"*?"…
>
> "Well, a *'rath'* is a sort of green pig: but *'mome'* I'm not certain about…" (217)

These extremely obscure descriptions seem to serve the function of preventing the reader from forming a coherent image of these creatures.

The texts of Lewis Carroll are rife with new words and phrases that mostly refer to absent and even unimaginable referents. *The Hunting of the Snark* is replete with such absent referents. For instance, the Snark has never been represented with an illustration by the author. Sophie Marret-Maleval suggests that Carroll's marvellous "is not based, like Frankenstein or Dracula, on the intuition that anxiety occurs when the object a appears in the real" (110). In fact, the object of quest, as well as the object of fear in *The Hunting of the Snark* never attain coherent expressions and only refer to absence. When the Baker encounters the Snark in the end, we see him disappear while exclaiming, "It is a Boo -" (778). The object of anxiety encountered by the Baker is represented by an unpronounceable signifier. The poem then concludes with the line, "For the Snark was a Boojum, you see" (778). In the end, the reader sees precisely nothing, and is left with two signifiers – a Snark and a Boojum - that fail to represent any comprehensible referent.

The Jubjub bird is another fitting example of Carroll's language game that conveniently restricts a reader to form a definite conception about reality. The mysterious bird is mentioned in both the "Jabberwocky" poem and in *The Hunting of the Snark.* Descriptions used to describe the bird are as ambiguous as the bird itself. In "Jabberwocky," the only detail given about the bird is that you should "beware" of

it (153). In *The Hunting of the Snark*, it is explained that, if ever they meet the bird, they shall need all their strength for the job (768). Its character trait include that it is "desperate" and "lives in perpetual passion"; "It's taste in costume is entirely absurd -, it is ages ahead of the fashion… it knows any friend it has met once before… it never will look at a bribe… and in charity meetings it stands at the door and collects – though it does not subscribe" (772). Much like the Jabberwocky, the Jubjub bird denies the reader to form any coherent idea and image about its own reality. Beckett's treatment of language displays a lot of similarities to Carroll. Afroghe's observation about Beckett's use of language which puts "emphasis on new moves and even new rules for language games, having exceeded and subverted the old rules and limits enabling him to convey meaning through nonsense" (177) could easily have been substituted to explain Carroll's treatment of language.

One of the points of our research is how this (im)possibility of meaning in the works of Carroll resembles postmodernist difficulty at extracting meaning from narratives in relation to theoretical and practical criticism. Michael Holquist asserts that the ultimate effect in *The Hunting of the Snark* is not only to estrange a character or an event, but to estrange language itself (153). Indeed, all of Carroll's fictional works carry the reader along toward a secret place, unexplored, perhaps unexplorable, where language is not satisfactory to express what is. The author himself strongly denied that his works teach anything (Holquist 155) and till the last years of his life, he maintained that he knew not what the Snark meant and insisted that the poem meant anything but Nonsense (Sewell 544).

Lance Olsen asserts that the fantasy genre, and especially contemporary fantasy is a suitable vehicle for the expression of postmodern consciousness as it "is a mode concerned with absences, with what does not exist and what cannot be expressed, ... with 'a gap between signifier and signified'" (20). Carroll's fantasy works have undeniably focused on exploring this concept of "absences, with what does not exist and what cannot be expressed" (20) as explained by Olsen in the context of postmodern fantasy.

Meaning is relative:

The nonsensical exchanges of Carroll's characters often propel the narratives to a succession of language games. For example, during conversation at The Mad Tea Party in *Alice in Wonderland*, the participants endlessly play the game of disrupting the most ordinary statements to come to be open to diverse interpretations:

> "…you should say what you mean," the March Hare went on.
>
> "I do," Alice hastily replied; "at least – at least I mean what I say – that's the same thing, you know."
>
> "Not the same thing a bit!" said the Hatter. "Why, you might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see!"
>
> "You might just as well say," added the March Hare, "that 'I like what I get' is the same thing as 'I get what I like'!"
>
> "You might just as well say," added the Dormouse… "that 'I breathe when I sleep' is the same thing as 'I sleep when I breathe'!" (77)

And when the March Hare offers Alice to take more tea, Alice replies that she cannot take "more" tea because she has not had any yet. However, the Mad Hatter continues to argue that Alice is able to take "more" tea even though she has not had any, since "it's very easy to take *more* than nothing" (81). While the Mad Hatter's argument may appear nonsensical and illogical, it does reinforce the notion of the absent referent. While Alice is able to contemplate only what is present, the Hatter somehow considers a space for "nothing."

Helene Cixous observes that in the stories of *Alice*, language works at all levels. She comments, "the rhymes, echoes and redundancies attract the words and deposit them in phonic layers where meaning attaches itself here and there by accident" (233). The ambiguity of meaning in the text of Carroll as expressed in the above statement is corroborated by the Duchess's comment to Alice, "Take care of the sense, the sounds will take care of themselves" (Carroll 97). Alice's conversation

with Humpty Dumpty gives another fitting insight in to the inconclusive and ambiguous nature of language at play in Wonderland:

> "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 so many different things."
>
> "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all."
>
> … "That's a great deal to make one word mean," Alice said in a thoughtful tone.
>
> "When I make a word do a lot of work like that," said Humpty Dumpty, "I always pay it extra." (214)

Words are treated by Humpty Dumpty as subjective beings with a will of their own that deserve a pat on the back when they do a good job. Underlying his view of language is the perception that any word can be made suitable to express what a person wishes to express, that there is no hard and fast rule that indefinitely binds the signified to the signifier. His mastery of words is basically dependent upon his willingness to manipulate words and meaning.

Alice's conversation with the Red Queen in the Looking Glass garden of live flowers is another example that demonstrates that meaning and reality are relative and there is no certainty in interpretation:

> "when you say 'garden' – *I've* seen gardens, compared with which this would be a wilderness." Alice didn't dare to argue the point, but went on: "…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."
>
> "…a hill *ca'n't* be a valley, you know. That would be nonsense-"

> The Red Queen shook her head. "You may call it 'nonsense' if you like…but *I've* heard nonsense, compared with which that would be as sensible as a dictionary!" (162 - 163)

The Red Queen's argument throws the seeming definiteness of linguistic structure and understanding of Alice in to an indefinite host of contradicting and undecidable possibilities.

Carroll's characters frequently disrupt an ostensive interpretation of words and sentences and show that they can be variously interpreted in every case. During the trial of the Knave of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland*, "one of the guinea pigs cheered and was immediately suppressed by the officers of the court. As "supressing a guinea pig" is rather a difficult word, Alice explains to the reader how in was done: "They had a large canvas bag, which tied up at the mouth with strings: into this they slipped the guinea-pig, head first, and then sat upon it" (120). Alice is glad that she has seen the process because she has often read in newspaper that at the end of trials, "There was some attempt at applause, which was immediately suppressed by the officers of the court," and she believes she has finally understood what it means now that she has seen a guinea pig being supressed in that manner. Here, Alice clearly thought that the phrase, "supressing a guinea pig" refers to the animal being put in a canvas bag head first and being then sat upon, rather than the animal being supressed from cheering. Alice has clearly misinterpreted the 'ostensive definition' in this scenario.

Carroll's creative mind does raise a significant issue with the meaning making process based on accepted conventions of language. Alice, if designated as a sensitive part of Carroll's creative psyche would stand a testimony to reflecting these points of ambiguity, incongruity and unreliability of language of truth. Carroll does not stop at saying what is nonsensical just in a well-formulated language; he lets the language speak for itself, hence the uncertain is expressed in an uncertain sound chain or series. This may raise a relevant question also, as to why does Carroll remove made-up dresses (i.e., meaningful beauties) off the word? Does he intend to

reach the source or origin of sound? No answer is found to such possible questions. Derrida, among other deconstructionists has categorically denied the logocentrism as tenable in language or reality (11-12). This is Carroll's invention long before postmodernism or poststructuralism could come up with semiotics of signification.

Carroll's narratives often explore the notion that a specific word can signify different contradictory meanings owing to its linguistic construction. The following passage from *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* is relevant to the point:

> "You seem to enjoy that cake?" the Professor remarked.
>
> "Doos that mean 'munch'?" Bruno whispered to Sylvie.
>
> Sylvie nodded. "It means 'to munch' and 'to like to munch.'
>
> Bruno smiled at the Professor. "I doos enjoy it," he said.
>
> The Other Professor caught the word. "And I hope you're enjoying *yourself*, little Man?" he enquired.
>
> Bruno's look of horror quite startled him. "No, indeed I aren't!" he said. (730)

While Bruno easily understands Sylvie's explanation of "to enjoy cake," his interpretation of enjoying himself in the same context is horrifying and far different from the intention of the Other Professor. Carroll's stories repeatedly ask us to pay attention to the ambiguities that lie in a simple sentence, even when the sentence seems clear and specific enough. His works often disrupt the assumption that words are supposed to mean what the speaker intends to mean. This awareness is made clear in the following comment by the narrator of *Sylvie and Bruno*: "For an entirely stupid woman, my Lady's remarks were curiously full of meaning, of which she herself was wholly unconscious" (309). The narrator continues, "whatever accidental meaning her words might have, she herself never meant anything at all" (310).

Language shapes thoughts:

Derrida observes that language is an inescapable structure, without which no idea or meaning is expressible (158). A close inquirer of Carroll's works will notice the writer's observance of how understanding and perception is embedded in language. This concept is clearly articulated in *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* when the characters come across a man who has presumably come from another planet (618). The man they call Mein Herr tells the group that where he comes from, it is possible to store up time. He explains that people store up useless hours and get those stored time out when they happen to need some extra time. The party are befuddled by this information and are unable to grasp the concept of storing up time. When the Earl asks him to explain the process so that they may also learn how to store time, "Mein Herr was ready with a quiet unanswerable reason." He replies, "Because you have no *words*, in *your* language, to convey the ideas which are needed. I could explain it in – in - but you would not understand it!" (580). The episode clearly explains how language shapes one's perception. The party's knowledge and imagination are limited to the language they possess.

Alice's adventure in the Looking Glass wood "where things have no names" (177) is also illustrative of the ways in which language determines experience. Alice sees a Fawn that comes wondering by and the animal looks at Alice with its large gentle eyes, but did not seem at all frightened of the human child. Inside the wood where things have no names, any constructed identifier, in other words, "names" have vanished and hierarchy dissolves so that the fawn and Alice are able to communicate under peaceful atmosphere. But as soon as they leave the wood, the fawn learns that Alice is really "a human child," and flees in terror which suggests the reaffirmation of hierarchy as the identifiers have resurfaced.

Alice's encounter with the Lion and the Unicorn also cleverly subverts the privilege and negative implication associated with certain words. What Alice has learnt from old songs and fairy tales is that Lions and Unicorns are fearful animals for whom the word "monster" may be appropriately used. When the Unicorn first meets Alice, a human child, his first comment is that he has "always thought they were fabulous monsters!" (229). We commonly understand the word "monster" to

denote something strange, frightening or daunting. But in the Looking Glass forest, hierarchies are dissolved and the word "monster" is thrown around like it is the most "fabulous" identifier. Here, there are no negative implication entailed by the word "monster" and Alice is also addressed as "the Monster." And with unfavorable connotations taken out of the word, Alice, in no time, also finds herself "getting quite used to being called 'the Monster'" (231).

Dissolution of meaning:

In his study of literature dealing with void and nothingness in the nineteenth century, Robert Martin Adams claims that this is more of a French preoccupation than the English. He writes, "If the English are backward with regard to Nothing…the French are surpassingly audacious" (243). Yet this concept has been noticed in Lewis Carroll. In his contribution for Henri Parisot's work on Carroll, A.L Taylor writes, "I seem to see him [Carroll] perched on his velociman, raising his top hat and going away, zigzagging, towards *le néant*" (Parisot 238). (The velociman was an invention by Carroll which is a kind of tricycle). Gardner also believes that Carroll had thought a great deal about death and the possibility of his non-existence (Gardner, *The Annotated Snark* 23). On the other hand, Morton Cohen states his belief that the writer's staunch Christian faith would render impossible the belief in an ending of life in the void (410). However, the writer himself has mentioned the opposite in his verse, "Photography Extraordinary," where he writes, "Nothingness is my destiny" (Carroll 809). A close analysis of his works does show the writer tapping on to the notion of nothingness.

Labelled as a "master and surveyor of surfaces" (Deleuze 93), Lewis Carroll, if we do admit that he had referred to nothingness in his works, he did it in a manner that is evasive and tangential. We see example in *Alice in Wonderland* when Alice is afraid that if she continues to shrink after she drinks from a bottle marked "DRINK ME," it might end in her going out altogether, "like a candle" (23). She wonders what she would be like then and tries to fancy what the flame of a candle looks like after it is blown out, but is unable to envision how it all ends. The image of ending

like a candle is also expressed in *Through the Looking Glass.* At a critical moment in the story, Tweedledum and Tweedledee show Alice the sleeping Red King and tell her that she is "only a sort of thing in his dream," and they continue to explain to her that "if that there king was to wake…you'd go out – bang! – just like a candle!" (189).

A stepping on the topic of nothingness is also noticed in the *Sylvie and Bruno* books, with nonsense being the transmitter. The narrator, after spending a strange adventure with Sylvie, Bruno and the Professor comments at the end of the chapter, "we lapse very quickly into nonsense!" (463). The next chapter takes him to a completely different setting with different characters but the thread of thought is continued. Listening to Lady Muriel, the narrator contemplates on how a whole adventure can occupy the space of a single comma in a person's speech. This perception of time and of experience is also felt by Arthur and he makes a comment of how only twenty minutes of conversation between the narrator and Lady Muriel still makes him feel as if he has been talking with her for an hour at least. This makes the narrator feel that just as "time had been put back to the beginning of the tete-a tete…the whole of it had passed into oblivion, if not into nothingness!" (464). Much like anything else, the whole adventure and experience of the three friends easily pass in to a possible nothingness. Confirming the theme of futility in the book, Arthur, in a manner, explains the logic of the *Sylvie and Bruno* world: "For a *complete* logical argument… we need two prim Misses … And they produce …A Delusion" (425). Logic, much like time, experience and language basically ends in a delusion. And at the end of *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded,* the uncomprehended signifier "Boojum" of the *Snark* poem reappears. Reminding the subject of nothingness, the Professor begins to tell Sylvie and Bruno of a fable:

> "Once upon a time there was a Boojum-" the Professor began, but stopped suddenly. "I forget the rest of the Fable," he said. "And there was a lesson to be learned from it. I'm afraid I forget *that*, too." (742)

The Hunting of the Snark, though evasive as ever, maybe the most expressive of Carroll's works on the theme of nothingness. The writer asserts that the last line of the verse came to him while he was taking a stroll on a Surrey hillside in 1874. And sometime afterward, the rest of the stanza came to him (Gardner, *The Annotated Snark* 12). The last stanza runs as follows:

> In the midst of the word he was trying to say
>
> In the midst of his laughter and glee,
>
> He had softly and suddenly vanished away –
>
> For the Snark *was* a Boojum, you see. (Carroll 778)

The rest of the poem, Carroll claims, developed backwards from the last stanza (Gardner, *The Annotated Snark* 12). What we witness from the germ of the whole poem - the very last stanza - is a dismissal of the quest ending in any form of definitive answer. We see an interruption of speech, then an abrupt breaking off in the midst of glee at having believed one has found the object of quest, followed by a soft and sudden final disappearance. Basically, nothingness and void in the end. Martin Gardner, in his Introduction to *The Annotated Snark* mentions, "The Boojum is more than death… It is final absolute extinction… the void, the blank emptiness" (23). W.H. Auden also comments, "worst to all, the dreadful Boojum of Nothingness" (38) and Jean-Jacques Lecercle asserts, "It is easy to unearth the cult of the void and of nothingness in the poem" (Sewell 545). In his explanation about the "Mythic Novel", Lacan also comments on the theme of futility he observes in the *Alice* and *Sylvie and Bruno* books,

> Neither story, nor plot appeal to any resonance of signification that could be called profound. Genesis and tragedy are not evoked in them, nor is destiny." (10)

We can admit that Carroll does seem to have thought a good deal about death or non-existence and the possibility of nothingness, even if under wraps and sheets. This apparent futility of efforts expressed in the works of Lewis Carroll seems to have called the turn on one of the major concerns of postmodern literature as described by MH Abrams:

> Many of the works of postmodern literature undertake to subvert the foundations of our accepted modes of thought and experience in order to reveal the futility of existence and the underlying "abyss," or "void," or "nothingness" on which any supposed security is conceived to be unstably suspended. (169)

Carroll may not be directly expressing existentialist ideas of nothingness, and his nothingness may not be an expression of life's impending void, more than it is an exploration of the limit of language. But his thought and exploration of nothingness is typical, in the sense that he deeply thinks of language and reaches similar ends of nothingness, which remain mostly undefined and unspecified to be called a systematic philosophy.

Language games and evasion of meaning:

At the very beginning of *Alice in Wonderland*, while still falling down the rabbit hole, Alice considers one of her most paramount preoccupations - a problem with semantics: "'Do cats eat bats? Do cats eat bats?' and sometimes, 'Do bats eat cats?' for, you see, as she couldn't answer either question, it didn't much matter which way she put it" (20). Alice's fascination with words is witnessed from the very beginning of her story. She "had not the slightest idea what Latitude was, or Longitude either, but she thought they were *nice grand words* to say" (19). And in the Looking Glass land, she reiterates her conception of the curious nature of language, "Better say nothing at all. Language is worth a thousand pounds a word!" (169). Indeed, exchanges between the characters in Carroll's literary works are often less a conveyor of definitive meaning than a producer of "grand" (19) notes.

The well-known poem "Jabberwocky" which is included in *Through the Looking Glass*, has been translated in to more than seventy languages. The popularity of the poem is even more interesting considering the fact that many of the words in the poem are playful nonsense words of Carroll's own invention without any intended definitive meaning. Lewis Carroll himself seems to distrust the process of his creation as he explains how the words in the poem came about:

> I am afraid I can't explain "vorpal blade" for you — nor yet "tulgey wood," but I did make an explanation once for "uffish thought" — It seemed to suggest a state of mind when the voice is gruffish, the manner roughish, and the temper huffish. Then again, as to "burble," if you take the three verbs bleat, murmur and warble, and select the bits I have underlined, it certainly makes "burble," though I am afraid I can't distinctly remember having made it in that way. (Brown 11)

When Alice first looks at the poem, she is unable to read it, "for it's all in some language I don't know" (Carroll 153). Realizing that she is dealing with a Looking Glass book, she then holds it up to the mirror and this was the poem that Alice read:

JABBERWOCKY

Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe

Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!" … (153-155)

Despite the fact that she can now read the whole poem, the meaning still remains obscure to Alice. Admitting that she could not make it out at all, she reflects, "somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas - only I don't know exactly what they are" (197). The poem therefore is written in a language the meaning of which is vague and not definite. In addition, a looking-glass ordinarily reflects left as right or vice versa. The overtones of words, compounded with unfamiliar terms, and their nuances are turned upside down in this land. Alice's mind tries to construct the meaning received traditionally, but left out with broken threads and nonsensical sounds at least. This proves the fact that language does not reflect the meaning or

reality, and the process signifies a number of unstable and ambiguous sounds only as the poem above denotes. It not only Alice who has problem with the question of meaning, a critical reader is also always baffled by the complexity of situations in Carroll.

Carroll often unsettles the notion that one can be convinced in to thinking that language is stable and reliable enough to pass on "correct" information simply because it is grammatically well-informed and consists entirely of familiar words. He examines that in spite of the seemingly perfect arrangement of words, sentence remains ambiguous and questionable. The conversation during the Mad Tea Party illustrates the point. Using a completely illogical logic, the Mad Hatter explains to Alice why his watch tells the day of the month and not what o'clock it is. After his explanation, Alice remains dreadfully puzzled and makes a significant remark, "The Hatter's remark seemed to her to have no sort of meaning in it, and yet it was certainly English" (77). According to Charles Matthews, a valuable lesson that Alice has learned in Wonderland is to distrust her own language (107), and the study clearly supports the analysis. A similar scene occurs in *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*. The Professor said: "I hope you'll enjoy the dinner such as it is; and that you won't mind the heat - such as it isn't" - which prompts the narrator to make the statement, "The sentence sounded well, but somehow I couldn't quite understand it; and the Other Professor seemed to be no better off" (722-723).

Lewis Carroll relentlessly uses his fantasy works to explore the limitations and constrains of language and logic. Lance Olsen writes that the postmodern imagination "is a mode of radical skepticism that believes only in the impossibility of total intelligibility; in the endless displacement of "meaning;" in the production of a universe without "truth;" in a bottomless relativity of "significance" (3). And within Derrida's theory of deconstruction (of discourse, and thus of the world), any idea of a fixed structure is challenged in favour of the notion that there is no centre or structure, no univocal meaning. He argues that language is not dependent on correspondence between fixed codes and the stable meanings attached to them, instead language exists in an unstable "free play" of signifiers (50). The concept of a

coherent relationship between signifier and signified therefore, is no longer plausible, and instead we have limitless shifts in meaning relayed from one signifier to another. In this light, parallels with Carroll's ideas as expressed in his literary works are particularly revealing.

Michael Holquist asserts that Carroll is "one of the most important figures in the movement Ortega y Gasset has called 'the dehumanization of art'" (152). Indeed, Kafka's reduction of his protagonist to an integer, namely Joseph K. of *The Trial*, has already had its parallel in one of the essays Dodgson wrote on Oxford University issues. In a paper called "A New Method of Evaluation of π," he writes, "Let U = the university, G = Greek, and P = Professor. Then GP = Greek Professor; let this be reduced to its lowest terms and call the result I. Also let W = the work done, T = the times, p = giving payment, π = the payment according to T, and S = the sum required; so that π = S…" (Dechert 44). His satirical comment, "Let this be reduced to its lowest terms…" seems to be the central proposition of his nonsense.

Jean-Jacques Lecercle mentions the three topoi that indicate the principal trend of the discourse on language throughout the 18th century in England:

> In its linguistic practice, Nonsense reflects the discourse upheld by language specialists…the implicit idea that guides this practice is that language is an instrument of communication, the imperfections of which must be corrected, while nevertheless celebrating its powers. These three topoi indicate the principal trend of the discourse on language throughout the English 18th century. (Marret-Maleval 112)

And in *Nonsense: Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature,* Susan Stewart makes an observation about puns. She says that "puns are "terrible" or "awful" because they split the flow of events in time" (161). In Carroll's narratives however, conversations are "continually halted by puns, by a splitting of the discourse into two simultaneous and disparate paths, each followed by a respective member of the conversation" (Beer xxxiv). Conversations in *Alice in Wonderland*

never end in effective communication because of said puns. Following is an example:

> "Edwin and Morcar, the earls of Mercia and Northumbria …found it advisable-"
>
> "Found *what?*" said the Duck.
>
> "Found *it*," the Mouse replied rather crossly: "of course you know what 'it' means."
>
> "I know what 'it' means well enough, when *I* find a thing," said the Duck: "it's generally a frog, or a worm. The question is, what did the archbishop find?" (36)

Even the most basic word such as "it" can completely disrupt meaningful communication in Wonderland. In the like manner, Alice's friendly conversation with the Mouse somehow turns into an aggravating exchange solely because of puns:

> "You promised to tell me your history, you know," said Alice…
>
> "Mine is a long and a sad *tale*!" said the Mouse, turning to Alice, and sighing. "It is a long *tail*, certainly," said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse's tail; "but why do you call it sad?" (39)

Alice no longer pays attention to the Mouse's storytelling because she keeps on wondering about the "sad tail" while the Mouse is speaking, and imagines his story in the shape of a curvy tail. The Mouse then gets angry at her for not attending to his story. Alice, trying to salvage the situation then pretends to follow his story and tells him that she believes he has got to the fifth bend. The disappointed Mouse replies that he "had *not*" reached the fifth bend. Alice continues to misinterpret the pun and thought he said "knot," (41) then offers to help the Mouse undo his knot. The exasperated Mouse feels insulted and walks away from Alice because Alice seems to pay no heed to the sad tale which he recites at her request. Alice's attempt at being friendly and helpful completely backfires, not because of any ill intention or deliberate wrong doing. The fault lies here with language and misinterpretation

alone. A related incident happens in the trial scene at Wonderland court. The evidence of the first witness, the Hatter is disrupted when he inadvertently insults the King due to the mischievous puns:

> "…I hadn't begun my tea…and the twinkling of the tea-"
>
> "The twinkling of *what*?" said the King.
>
> "It *began* with the tea," the Hatter replied.
>
> "Of course twinkling *begins* with a T!" said the King sharply. "Do you take me for a dunce? Go on!" (119)

Just as in Wonderland, the inhabitants of Looking Glass land also do not seem to seek an answer or clarification as much as they seek to confuse words and meaning. The conversation between the Red Queen and Alice is an example:

> "Do you know Languages? What's the French for fiddle-de-dee?"
>
> "Fiddle-de-dee's not English," Alice replied gravely.
>
> "Who ever said it was?" said the Red Queen. (254)

When Alice meets the White Queen, she timidly asks her: "Am I addressing the White Queen?" The Queen replies, "Well, yes, if you call that a-dressing…It isn't *my* notion of the thing, at all" (195). The seemingly simple and straightforward statements are endlessly contradicted and misunderstood. Such is the case with Alice and the King:

> "I beg your pardon?" said Alice.
>
> "It isn't respectable to beg," said the King. (224)

The narratives highlight the underlying instability within language and communication.

In the stories of Lewis Carroll, puns continually disrupt conveyance of information and often cause anger and frustration, such as the "flour" and "flower"

confusion among Alice, the Red Queen and White Queen in *Through the Looking Glass*:

> ...the Red Queen began again… "How is bread made?"
>
> "I know that!" Alice cried eagerly. "You take some flour--"
>
> "Where do you pick the flower?" the White Queen asked: "In a garden or in the hedges?"
>
> "Well, it isn't picked at all," Alice explained: "it's ground-"
>
> "How many acres of ground...You mustn't leave out so many things." (254)

Carroll's language games also device the most delightful humor in the stories. The episode between Alice and the King in the Looking Glass land is such an example. When the King asks Alice if she is able to see either of the Messengers who have gone to the town, Alice replies, "I see nobody on the road" (223). What follows is an amusing chain of misunderstanding about the word "nobody" resulting from the King assuming it to be a person called "Nobody":

> "I only wish *I* had such eyes," the King remarked in a fretful tone. "To be able to see Nobody! And at that distance too! Why, it's as much as *I* can do to see real people, by this light!" (223)

Shortly after, an Anglo-Saxon messenger arrives and the King asks him who he passed on the road. The Messenger replies that he saw "nobody." The King acknowledges that Alice has also seen "nobody" and continues to comment to the Messenger, "so of course Nobody walks slower than you" (225). Assuming that the King is insulting him, the Messenger, in a sullen tone reply, "I do my best…I'm sure nobody walks much faster than I do!" The King, sustaining his misinterpretation replies in frustration, "He ca'n't do that…or else he'd have been here first" (225).

Even more than the *Alice* books, the *Sylvie and Bruno* volumes are interpolated by wordplays and puns. Bruno relentlessly calls attention to ambiguities present in a simple word or statement. When the Professor explains his theory about

a horizontal weather, the Warden admiringly comments: "*Isn't* he learned?... Positively he runs over with learning!" Not wasting an opportunity to point out the double entendre, Bruno replies, "But he needn't run over *me*!" (294). When the narrator encourages Bruno to copy Sylvie for "*She's* always as busy as the day is long!" Sylvie comments that Bruno on the other hand is "as busy as the day is *short!*" Not willing to let the seemingly transparent statement just pass by, Bruno insists on hearing about the difference between the two accounts: "Well, what's the difference…Mister Sir, isn't the day as short as it's long? I mean, isn't it the *same* length?" (371). The boy's inquiry makes the narrator contemplate the fact that he has never considered the question in this light. And when the Sentinel of Dogland asks them to give them their names, Bruno asserts that they'd rather not give their names for they want it themselves (379). And when he hurts himself and bitterly cries as they enter through the Ivory Door, Sylvie kindly says to him, "I'm so sorry, darling! However *did* you manage to hurt yourself so?" Bruno cannot help but insert a play on words. Laughing through his tears, he replies, "Course I managed it!... Does oo think nobody else but oo can't manage things?" (453). Bruno clearly enjoys undermining the supposed grounds of meaning and language and bring out the arbitrariness of words and senses even when they seem straightforward enough. Following is another example:

> "He went more far than he'd never been before," said Bruno.
>
> "You should never say 'more far,'" Sylvie corrected him: "you should say '*farther*.'"
>
> "Then *oo* shouldn't say 'more broth' when we're at dinner," Bruno retorted: "oo should say '*brother*'!" (531)

And these are only a few examples from the books. There are also many instances where an uncomfortable question is evaded with a clever pun such as this exchange between the Lady and the Professor: "What shall you come as, Professor?" … "I shall come as - as early as I can, my Lady!" (305). Carroll's play on words often serve to create the most delightful humour. Here is another example:

> "You seem to think it very remarkable," my Lady remarked with some severity, "that your wife should speak the truth!"
>
> "No, not *remarkable* at all!" her husband anxiously explained. "*Nothing* is remarkable that *you* say, sweet one!"

My Lady then smiled in an approval of the sentiment (310).

In the narratives of Lewis Carroll, language becomes a playfield, overflowing with implications, contradictions and associations. Lois Tyson comments that in our everyday living, most of us ordinarily take language for granted, in the sense that "as a means of communication, we believe in its reliability and effectiveness…Being an integral part of our daily functioning, we often assume in the dependability of language to communicate our thoughts and feelings. However, deconstruction understands language to be more slippery and ambiguous than we realize" (249). MH Abrams also explains that the aim of poststructuralism is to subvert "the foundations of language in order to show that the seeming meaningfulness and reliability of language falls apart, for a rigorous inquirer, into a play of conflicting indeterminacies" (169). For a careful quester, the striking similarities between Lewis Carroll's approach to language and what has been expressed as a postmodern understanding of language cannot go unnoticed.

Lewis Carroll, it is evident from his works, is fixated on destabilizing linguistic foundation and expunging meaning from language. Conversations in the stories of Lewis Carroll often illustrate how words are, if ever, as clear and simple as we assume it to be. The exchanges between characters repeatedly display how communication is in reality uncertain and ambivalent. Carroll's treatment of language undeniably has similarities with Martin Esslin's comment about the attitude to language in the *Theatre of the Absurd*, which in fact explains the larger essence of reality in the sense that,

> The dissolution, devaluation, and relativization of language is, after all, also the theme of much of present-day depth-psychology, which has shown what in former times was regarded as a rational expression of logically arrived at

> conclusions to be the mere rationalization of subconscious emotional impulses. Not everything we say means what we intend it to mean. (12)

And if James Joyce is regarded as "another giant of European literature that must not be omitted from the list" of "decisive influences in the development of the Theatre of the Absurd" (10), his *Finnegans Wake* (1939) is inspired by *Alice in Wonderland* puns and portmanteaus (Beer xxxv, Holquist 146-147). The allusion is clear in these lines from the text: "Though Wonderlawn's lost to us for ever. Alis, alas, she broke the glass! Liddell lokker through the leafery, ours is mistery of pain" (270). This regard for Carroll by James Joyce supports the pursuit of our thought in linking Carroll with modern/postmodern critical issues.

Positive possibilities:

Carroll's language games, we have seen, reveal that the link between a sign and a signifier is understood to be completely arbitrary. And this is the confirmed position of the postmodern thinkers and deconstructionists against the convention of the meaning making. The poem of the White Knight clearly expresses this concept. Before analysing the poem, it is compelling to mention that a drawing of the White Knight is used as a frontispiece in *Through the Looking Glass*, indicating the central focus of the novel: the gentle and comic values that endlessly frustrate definitive meaning and closure. Fittingly, a poem of the Knight's own invention, which he recites for Alice is a perfect representation of the absence of a solid, stable meaning, in favor of a continually changing play of signifiers. Walking through the forest of the Looking Glass, the gentle Knight senses that Alice is feeling sad, and he decides to recite her a song:

> "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 ought not: thats quite 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.'*" (244)

For the frustration of Alice and the reader, the song of the White Knight never reaches the point when it refers to a concept as it endlessly continues in a chain of signifiers. Lance Olsen may have never associated Lewis Carroll with postmodernism, however, his explanation of a key indicator of postmodern fantasy seems to have striking parallels with Carroll's fantasy:

> ... for while almost any narrative carries with it a charge of frustration on some stratum, postmodern fantasy carries with it a terrific charge of frustration on every stratum. In the fantastic mode, . . . anything can happen. And if that is the case, then everything can happen. And consequently, every sentence contains so many possibilities that the reader's expectations are necessarily blocked. Hence, the fantastic text forces her to float in a freeplay of potentialities, unable to imagine a consistent narrative future. (89)

With the stress of attempting to arrive at the ultimate truth being relieved, Carroll's characters intuitively follow their curiosity, finding delight in the limitless possibilities of exploring. The writer himself finds pleasure in story-telling and the narrative act itself finds joy in the endless possibility of creation. In the absence of a definitive meaning, a new temporal meaning can be constructed from the ever-shifting patterns.

It is well known that Charles Dodgson suffered from a speech impediment. Morton Cohen extensively discusses this particular challenge of Dodgson in his biography and remarks at the end of the book, "perhaps his failure to correct his speech impediment was the overarching symbol of his entire life" (533). Deleuze on the other hand has a different assessment about Dodgson's speech impediment. He believes, to stammer and stutter - a phrase he uses for the incoherence of Carroll in

"The Three Voices" can be seen as a way to freedom, to break up old conventions, to make language itself stutter and to open the possibility of becomings and transformations. (Sewell 556)

Language, in Carroll's representation, is an innovative process that is fundamentally slippery, having limitless ways of interpretation with unfinalizable conditions of ambiguity. The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein has said that a serious and good philosophical work could be written that would consist entirely of jokes (Malcolm 29), in that line of thought, Carroll's fantasy works, often categorised under children's fantasy literature indeed contain philosophical depth within their whimsical surface. Lewis Carroll deliberately employs the indefiniteness and instability of language and communication for comic effect as well as to problematize meaning making process. Even though he breaks down language, his words are not meaningless. His representations of circumstances may be absurd and nonsensical but not meaningless or insignificant. However, the fundamental question remains as to what is really meant, like what his works really mean as texts or what the characters represent and how can they be identified. A hypothesis can be made that Carroll's works stay relevant for generations, not because of their meaninglessness but because meaning itself is put on trial. In that vein, it can be said that Lewis Carroll stands as a precursor of the postmodern critical debate on meaning.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Suspended Closure and Fantasy Metaphysics

> "You know very well you're not real"
> "I *am* real!" said Alice and began to cry.
> (Carroll, *Complete Works* 190)

Lewis Carroll was always adamant to not provide a definitive closure or singular interpretation to his stories. When he was asked what the *Alice* story was about, he maintained that he forgot what the story was about and said, "I think it was about malice" (Green 108). *The Hunting of the Snark* was also always shrouded in mystery. In one of the letters which he wrote a few years after the poem was published, Carroll comments,

> In answer to your question, 'What did you mean the Snark was?' will you tell your friend that I meant that the Snark was a Boojum. I trust that she and you will now feel quite satisfied and happy. To the best of my recollection, I had no other meaning in my mind, when I wrote it; but people have since tried to

> find the meaning in it. The one I like the best (which I think is partly my own) is that it may be taken as an Allegory for the Pursuit of Happiness. (Hatch 245)

And ever since their publication, the two volumes of *Sylvie and Bruno* have perplexed readers and critics alike (Gubar 372). We have the writer's word itself that the books "might be slightly fragmentary" (Carroll 283) and must be approached like poetry. Instead of providing conclusive meaning, Carroll was always more interested in involving the reader to actively participate in the meaning-making process of his works. His letter discussing about the *Snark* poem illustrates our point:

> Of course, you know what a Snark is? If you do, please tell me: for I haven't an idea of what it is like. (Hatch 98-99)

Instead of establishing definitive signification, Carroll finds joy in the opening up of possibilities and validates multiple interpretations. He writes, "whatever good meanings are in the book, I'm glad to accept as the meaning of the book" (Collingwood 497). This suspension of definitive closure in Carroll's works seems to have a deeper purpose in responding to the cadences of life. His approach is also observed to have striking similarities with certain aspects of postmodern discourse.

A significant aspect of postmodernism seems to be a recognition of fragmentation as "an exhilarating, liberating phenomenon, symptomatic of our escape from the claustrophobic embrace of fixed systems of belief" (Barry 81). In other words, on a literary level, postmodernism attempts to "break free of many of the established conventions of genre and narrative" (Bradbury 209). Following this, many writers of postmodern discourse seek to disrupt the linear and generic convention of traditional writing so that parody, pastiche, irony, scepticism, playfulness, temporal disorder, multiple endings, and metafiction become the central features associated with postmodern literature (Featherstone 7). And the notion of ending a narrative also "became more intractable by the complication and multiplication of narrative endings" in postmodern writings (De Lang 152) and this complication of narrative endings mirrors the "breakdown of … traditional values"

(Waugh 6). All these can be seen as an expression of the uncertainties and instabilities as they exist in real life. The aim of this chapter is to analyse how Carroll's narrative techniques of suspended closure and multiple endings have similarities with the breaking down of linear and cohesive conventions of traditional writing in postmodern discourse.

Carroll and fantasy:

In his fascinating study of literary theory, *Ellipse of Uncertainty*, Lance Olsen examines the intersection of fantasy and postmodernism. Explaining his theoretical introduction to postmodern fantasy, Olsen writes,

> [F]antasy has begun to compete with the Balzacian mode as the dominant form of fiction…The result ... is the creation of a particularly suitable vehicle for the postmodern imagination since contemporary fantasy may be thought of as the literary equivalent of deconstructionism. It is a mode which interrogates all we take for granted about language and experience, giving these no more than shifting and provisional status. It is a mode of radical skepticism that believes only in the impossibility of total intelligibility; in the endless displacement of "meaning;" in the production of a universe without "truth;" in a bottomless relativity of "significance." (3)

A renowned writer of contemporary fiction, Rosa Montero Gaya has also recognized the significance of fantasy writing which goes beyond that of escapist themes and social commentary into the philosophical and existential realms. Advocating the use of fantasy in her own works and as a general goal of contemporary fiction, she asserts, "What we must do now is come to the rescue of fantasy. This is what I have tried to achieve in my works" (Hardcastle 417).

Predicating on these accounts that foregrounds the significance of fantasy in representing the realities of life and experience, Carroll's choice of the genre as an expression of his creative faculties at the time he was writing enhances his significance that goes beyond his reputation as a writer of children's books. In 1860, five years before Carroll published *Alice in Wonderland,* Sir James Crichton-Brown, the celebrated British psychiatrist published his highly influential essay "Psychical

Diseases in Early Life." The study strongly advised against the "pernicious practice" of "castle building" or imaginative fantasy in children (303). Crichton-Brown commended his readers to stop children from engaging in daydreaming and fantasizing. He cautioned that children, being imaginative and impressionable will believe these "airy notions" as realities, and will "become a part of the child's psychical existence" which will turn in to "actual delusions." It is a difficult task to eradicate such delusions and "much mental derangement in mature life, we believe, is attributable to these reveries indulged in during childhood" (303). And apparently, the medical community broadly accepted Crichton Brown's arguments (Shuttleworth 21). Lewis Carroll, on the other hand, seemed to hold differing opinion regarding the role of fantasy in a child's mind as his fictional works centre around the kind of "airy notions" and deluded fantasy "castle building" which Crichton-Browne and many other medical authorities cautioned against. In fact, Carroll adopted the fluid structure of fantasy to unsettle inflexible standards of the Victorian culture and literature, and at the same time, made use of the fantasy genre to explore the potential of the imagination.

Disruption of quest pattern:

While, fantasy elements may be noticed in the works of many ancient authors such as Homer, Ovid, Virgil etc. and though certain significant features of fantasy can surely be connected to Jonathan Swift, "fantasy literature owes its origins mostly to Romanticism with its interest in folk tradition, its rejection of the previous, rational-age view of the world, and its idealization of the child" (Nikolajeva 139). The plotline of fantasy books usually involves fundamental conflicts and patterns, such as the quest motif or battle between good and evil. Besides most traditional fantasy works, some of the most popular fantasy books in contemporary times such as *The Hobbit* (1937), *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (1954-1955), *The Chronicles of Narnia* series (1950-1956) and the *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007) follow these plotlines. While fantasy is not a homogenous genre category, and features a variety of different types of narratives, the storyline often involves a hero, leaving home, meeting friends and foes, going through trials, performing tasks and returning home

having gained some form of achievement (Nikolajeva 140). The quests of Carroll's narratives, on the other hand, seem to deviate from the norm. An important aspect of Carroll's fantasy is the disruption of the quest pattern leading to closure. Final knowledge and meaning remain suspended in his stories. When Helene Cixous comments that Carroll's story of Alice "never sends you back to any reply but perpetuates itself in interrogation" (233), the observation seems to stand true of all his literary works. Indeed, Carroll's fantasies relentlessly frustrate the reader's quest for meaning and subverts the notion of endings. In this vein, the study individually examine his fantasy works for better clarity.

Alice in Wonderland:

Carroll's fascination with games and puzzles clearly found its way into his fantasy works. Besides being speckled with impossible dialogues and un-concluded riddles, the plotlines of the *Alice* stories follow a game. With the Queen of Wonderland being a playing card, card game becomes the organizing structure in *Alice in Wonderland.* An accepted fact about games is that they are unpredictable and largely relies on chance. Following the concept, the story is mostly propelled by puzzles and curiosity.

Alice's understanding of meaning and concepts come from what she has learnt from authorities such as adults, society and schoolbooks. And what she understands from these authorities is the pertinence of order, structure and linearity. Often, Alice appears as a representative of the reader, carrying the unconscious values and assumptions of the reader. However, the fantasy lands continually deny her expectations, and her experiences have thoroughly unsettled the groundworks in to which she has rested her perception of life and existence. Each time Alice or the reader sets the question of meaning, sense gets displaced and transformed. The book is replete with instances where Alice's desire to get to meaning continually remains deterred. One example is the Mad Tea Party. When the Mad Hatter begins with the question, "Why is a raven like a writing-desk?" (75), Alice is readily excited to take part in the riddle as she believes she can find out the answer to the puzzle. Her assumption that the riddle will have a satisfying solution is soon discouraged because

the riddle at the party seems to exist solely to perpetuate confusion and disorder. Without addressing the puzzle, conversation at the party effortlessly moves on to other topics. The one who puts up the question, the Hatter himself is completely unbothered by the lack of answer to his riddle:

> "Have you guessed the riddle yet?" the Hatter said, turning to Alice again.
> "No, I give it up," Alice replied. "What's the answer?"
> "I haven't the slightest idea," said the Hatter.
> "Nor I," said the March Hare. (Carroll, *Complete Works* 77)

Here, suspended closure is all that occurs: no implosion or explosion of senses. Gillian Beer explains, "the lack of an answer infringes all the rules of game time, so dear to Victorian middle-class culture: riddles rely on the pleasurable disappointment when the ingenious (but usually inadequate) answer is reached among the universe of possibilities" (xxxiv). The lack of solution to the puzzle is annoying for Alice with her Victorian expectation of conclusiveness, and she wearily comments, "I think you might do something better with time…than wasting it in asking riddles that have no answer" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 78). However, the party is neither offended nor are they the least bit inspired to seek for certitude. Instead, the conversation moves on to a discussion about time as a subjective entity. Time is humanized and the Hatter explains to Alice that time is actually a "him" who will do "almost anything you liked" as long as "you keep on good terms with him" (78). Alice herself seems to forget her concern as she floats along with the impossible dialogues.

The Caucus Race is another good example of the postponement of closure in Wonderland. The race course, first of all does not have a proper and exact shape. There is no proper beginning to the race as the members simply began running when they liked. Just as there is no actual starting time, there is no proper ending because the members simply left off when they liked. The race does not have a singular winner, in fact, there are no losers and "*Everybody* has won, and *all* must have prizes" (38). Despite the nonsensical rules of Wonderland that relentlessly thwart her desire to get to the bottom of things, Alice continues with her quest for meaning. This quest can be understood as a quest to find the realm of clarity, perhaps a quest for

some definitive answer to life's philosophical questions. But Wonderland clearly has a different philosophy that stands contradictory to her aboveground expectations. Her interaction with the Footman as she knocks on the door of the Duchess is very telling of the Wonderland philosophy. She asks the Footman how she may get inside the house, he replies her without really answering her question and Alice asks again in a louder voice,

> "How am I to get in?" …
>
> *"Are* you to get in at all?" said the Footman. "That's the first question, you know." (65)

Alice's quest "to be let in" is questioned in turn by the Footman and he asks her if she is even "to get in at all."

Her pursuit of meaning is always left off at a question. When she asks members at the Mad Tea Party to explain what happens when the cyclical tea-time comes to the beginning again, the response she receives is, "Suppose we change the subject" (80). Her question is yet again left to hang. Another such instance happens when she asks the Mock Turtle about the curious plan of their lessons that "lessen from day to day" (104). Before the Mock Turtle could venture an answer, the Gryphon interrupts in a very decided tone and says, "That's enough about lessons" (105). And when she recites "'Tis the voice of the sluggard" and the words came all wrong, the Mock Turtle requested that he should like to have it explained. When Alice seems unsure, the Gryphon said, "She ca'n't explain it" and hastily suggested that she goes on to the next verse. The text moves on without seeking or waiting for closure.

One aspect of the story is that ever since her first glimpse in to the garden in chapter one, Alice has sought to reach the place. Her objective, through all of her growing and shrinking, has been to get to the garden, compelled by her quest for meaning and signification. The place seems to symbolize the realization of her dreams. The garden not only occupies a central role in Alice's quest but also in Wonderland. On finally reaching the garden, Alice however, soon discovers that the garden provides no great experience of understanding. The place represents a complete illusion of reality as Alice notices on entering the garden that the flowers

that look really vibrant and beautiful from a distance are in fact, painted. She soon finds out that the rules and practices of the garden are just as paradoxical as the rest of the places she has visited.

The court scene at the end gives Alice hope of some clarity, for in the aboveground world, she has understood the court room be a place where justice is administered and where cases are determined with proper closure. Thus, she anticipates that the Wonderland court will also aim to be a place where an objective and absolute truth will prevail. However, as the court proceeds, Alice quickly realizes that her desire and quest will continue to go unfulfilled. The trial fails to determine the accountability of the Knave and is basically a mockery of the legal process of the aboveground world. The King repeatedly demands a verdict but none ever materializes. None of the witness called out give proper evidence. And the "most important piece of evidence" that will decide the verdict of the whole trial, is a nonsensical poem that provides absolutely no clarity. The poem ends with the stanza:

> Don't let him know she liked them best,
> For this must ever be
> A secret, kept from all the rest,
> Between yourself and me. (127)

Neither the story nor the poem explains who "she" is, who "he" is, or who "them" are. Alice declares that she does not "believe there's an atom of meaning" in the poem (127). The juries have no response to Alice's remark than to reaffirm, "*She* doesn't believe there's an atom of meaning in it" (127). No one finds the need to unveil the confusion. Commenting on the lack of meaning, the King, who serves as the Judge states, "If there's no meaning in it…that saves a world of trouble, you know, as we needn't try to find any" (127). Though the whole trial is an attempt to find out the truth, the Judge himself seems perfectly fine with the lack of any closure. Alice realizes during the trial that it all "doesn't matter a bit" what the jury records or whether the jury is upside down or right side up. None of the conduct and manner in Wonderland have any bearing on a coherent or meaningful outcome. The truth is indeed "a secret, kept from the rest" (127)

Throughout her adventure, Alice continually attempts to make sense of the various situations and characters she encounters. She is shown again and again the futility of trying to make meaning out of nonsense. The evidence that Alice gains in the final chapter seems to be the knowledge that the quest for definitive signification is an illusion. In this context, Carroll's fantastic lore may be read as a commentary on the Victorian system of justice and judgement. At least, to pass the sentence (final judgement) is suspended, since the so-called truth is untraceable or found blurry in Carroll. Instead, the Victorian and modern judiciary structures have been established on the tenets of justice and punishment by final evidence. Carroll's fantasy metaphysics could foreshadow the postmodern deconstruction of law as more forcefully argued by Jacques Derrida. While decisions are mainly viewed to be the result of rational calculation (Rawls 212), Derrida critiques the conventional conceptualization of decision in legal order. Within the legal system, judges pass the verdict, and laws are applied to particular cases. Derrida's take however, departs from these approaches. He challenges the conventional concept of making a decision based on a subjective human, who deliberates and then decides:

> We ask *ourselves* what a decision is and *who* decides. And if a decision is active, free, conscious and wilful, sovereign. (*Politics* xi)

He contends that the ultimate ground of the legal system is ungrounded, and any foundation is inescapably arbitrary. And since foundational authority creates law, legality, it appears, is not able to escape contamination with illegality. Likewise, it is not possible for authority to not be subjective. Derrida suggests that law may be less arbitrary if it acknowledges the non-neutrality of its own verdict:

> For a decision to be just and responsible, it must, in its proper moment if there is one, be both regulated and without regulation: it must conserve the law and also destroy it or suspend it enough to have to reinvent it in each case, rejustify it, at least reinvent it in the reaffirmation and the new and free confirmation of its principle. ("Force of Law" 961)

The Wonderland justice does seem like a representation of Derrida's view in the language of fantasy.

Through the Looking Glass:

Alice's desire to grasp the ungraspable takes a central place not only in *Alice in Wonderland*, but continues with a resolute impulse in *Through the Looking Glass*. In this sequel, the game of chess forms the basis for the novel's structure, and just like the game, the novel entails the possibility of multiple endings.

Just as in Wonderland, the place through the Looking Glass is perfectly comfortable with lack of clarity and closure. Helen Cixous has commented that the thematic operation of the book is from the beginning "diverted to serve the fantasm which prevents meaning from coming into contact with it…" (240). Like Wonderland, the place through the Looking Glass remains evasive. Transition from scene to scene has even become even more slippery than it was in Wonderland. For instance, the White Queen suddenly turns into a Sheep in the middle of their conversation and Alice abruptly finds herself in a little dark shop run by the Sheep. As she attempts to make sense of her experience, she finds that that may not be achieved:

> The shop seemed to be full of all manner of curious things – but the oddest part of it all was that, whenever she looked hard at any shelf, to make out exactly what it had on it, that particular shelf was always quite empty. (Carroll 202)

Being determined to get to the bottom of the puzzle, Alice plans to "follow it up to the very top shelf of all," however "even this plan failed: the 'thing' went through the ceiling as quietly as possible, as if it were quite used to it" (203). Alice's quest continues to be unfulfilled because the "thing" or things that she seeks simply resists coming into contact with clarity.

The object of quest evading grasp is repeated in the next scene when Alice, with bright eager eyes catches sight of the darling scented rushes. Her pursuit and efforts continue to remain frustrated and "It certainly *did* seem a little provoking ("almost as if it happened on purpose," she thought) that, though she managed to pick plenty of beautiful rushes as the boat glided by, there was always a more lovely

one that she couldn't reach" (205). Every time she seems to be on a threshold of knowledge, something will happen that will just prevent her from laying her hands on meaning. In this intent, Alice represents a perfect image of the Victorian who is fixated with finding or even fixing the origin and meaning. Alice's encounters in such situations proves the failure of the Victorian project of meaning making. In this perspective also, Carroll's denial of closure anticipates deconstructionists.

The inhabitants of the Looking Glass land intentionally or otherwise refuse to give Alice the satisfaction of completion she so longs to reach. One example is her encounter with Humpty Dumpty. As Alice recalls the fate of Humpty Dumpty like she has read in a book, she finds herself unable to remember where they have left off their conversation. Humpty Dumpty willingly suggests, "In that case we start afresh…and it's my turn to choose a subject - … He talks about it just as if it was a game" (210-211). Not only is the Egg perfectly delighted with having to start afresh like a game, the conjunction "but" breaks off his own discourse:

"And when I found the door was shut
I tried to turn the handle, but—"

Alice asks him if that is all, Humpty Dumpty replies, "That's all," and abruptly says "Good-bye" (220). Puzzled and dissatisfied as she may be with the Egg, Alice's exit of the chapter with Humpty Dumpty also correspondingly ends with her being distracted mid-sentence: "of all the unsatisfactory people I *ever* met-" and she never finished the sentence (221). She herself often exhibits the ambiguity she is frustrated by.

Her encounter with the White Knight comically expresses another futility of effort and negation of completion. In the chapter titled "It's My Own Invention," the White Knight proudly tells Alice of his various inventions which are practically impossible to carry out or bring to a successful conclusion, such as an upside-down box; a hair made to creep up an upright stick to prevent hair fall; standing on top of one's head to get over a gate and so on. And of all his inventions, the Knight claims that the cleverest one is "a new pudding during the meat-course" (243). At the same time, he also says that his pudding will never be exactly ready. He comments, "I don't believe that pudding ever *was* cooked! In fact, I don't believe that pudding ever

will be cooked! And yet it was a very clever pudding to invent" (243). We somehow feel his excitement and passion even if his invention may never really complete. This is true of Carroll's characters; they find delight in the process even if does not arrive at an ending.

In talking about the symbolic representation of fire in *Through the Looking Glass*, Cixous comments, "As for the fire, it breaks out with an equally ambiguous violence: as a deterrent force, it puts on quite a show: as a volcano it is Lilliputian when it terrifies the king and the queen in chapter two, or it sets fire to meaning and reduces it to ashes, in the language of the Book- reflection, by means of the flaming eyes of the Jabberwock, the monster who is cut to pieces" (241). Indeed, this book of inquiries never sends back a coherent reply, but perpetuates itself in to endless questions. The reader is often invited to make meaning out of the confusion, however, just as the Looking Glass rule is "never jam *today*," (Carroll 197) no day is likely to be a day of meaning for the reader. A pursuer whether it be Alice or the reader can never really lay hands on meaning, but that never stops from finding pleasure in the act of chasing.

The full title of the second *Alice* book is, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There.* The second part of the title suggests that Alice has found something solid and concrete. In that case, one would expect that when she left the Looking Glass house, she would have gained some kind of assurance and understanding. However, what we see at the end of the story is an uncertainty of her experience to the point that she has to turn to Kitty and eventually to the reader to ask for their thoughts on the matter. The text remains unattainable. As Cixous explains "it is with the reader-pursuer who almost lays hands on the es-caped text, but never completely" (237).

Sylvie and Bruno and *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*:

In the texts of Lewis Carroll, the object of pursuit seems to be pursuit itself; and the quest of the texts endlessly eludes grasp. The *Sylvie and Bruno* books strongly reiterate this point. The opening poem of *Sylvie and Bruno* repeats the idea of the randomness of living as well as the unseen end of "Man's little Day:"

Bowed to the earth with bitter woe,
Or laughing at some raree-show,
We flutter idly to and fro.

Man's little Day in haste we spend,
And, from its merry noontide, send
No glance to meet the silent end. (Carroll, *Complete Works* 275)

The whole text is a continuation of the futile effort to grasp this unseen end. The two volumes widely focus on this quest for the elusive. Trying to sample the sweet produce of Fairyland, the narrator tried to pick some, "but it was like grasping air" (326). Such moments recall the narrator's perpetual and futile attempts to catch hold of his dream-children, Sylvie and Bruno. Watching the two walk steadily away from him, the narrator despondently notes, "I knew it would be impossible for *me* to follow. I could but stand outside, and take a last look at the two sweet children, ere they disappeared within…" (383). Scene after scene, the narrator watches helplessly as Sylvie and Bruno "wandered off lovingly together, in among the buttercups, each with an arm twined round the other, whispering and laughing as they went, and never so much look back at poor me" (405).

Arthur's hopeless pining for Lady Muriel echoes the narrator's elusive children. Looking up at the night sky, Arthur longingly comments, "She was like that star to me – bright, beautiful, and pure, but out of reach, out of reach!" (384). The elusiveness of the object of desire is emphasized by the repetition of the phrase "out of reach." The choice of expression used to describe the object of pursuit always point to something elusive and unknowable such as Arthur's "metaphysical young lady" (425) or the narrator's "Dream Children" (523). The first volume thus climaxes with "breathless eagerness" and "trembling fingers," a desire to get hold of a bouquet that closely resembles the dream-rushes, consisting as it does of a "flower (that) fades so quickly after being plucked, that it is scarcely possible to keep its form or colour even so far as the outskirts of the forest!" (442).

The opening scene of *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* continues the theme of elusion. The narrator admits that he finds life "unusually dull and tedious" because

he misses “the companionship of the two Fairies – or Dream-Children” for he “had not yet solved the problem as to who or what they were” (523). The relentless pursuit of the narrator continues in the second volume but the quest will remain unfulfilled. Till the very last chapter, the narrator never manages to solve the problem as to who or what his dream children were. Even though the title of the second volume suggests a proper conclusion to the Sylvie and Bruno story, a reader of the book understands that the conclusion provided by the text contains no actual clarity or closure. In the final scene of *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*, the narrator explains how the vision of the two fairies and the love they represent “was fast slipping from my eager gaze” (749) and in that “last bewildering moment”, as the dream-children drift further and further away, the narrator entertains the idea that perhaps Sylvie is an angel. The narrator thus remains in the space that Arthur occupied in the beginning when he considered Lady Muriel an unreachable star that was and will always be “out of reach.” Just as the fantasy worlds that Alice explores postpone meaning from coming within reach, the world of Sylvie and Bruno will not fulfil the quest of the narrator.

Resonating Alice’s White Knight and his fruitless inventions, the Professor in *Sylvie and Bruno* passionately talks about a wonderful invention he calls, “plunge-bath” which “represents what is perhaps *the* necessity of this Age…” (300). Bathing apparatuses seems to represent for Carroll, a highly degraded aspect of the Victorian cultural values. A history of the Victorian era shows a time of economic expansion. The period witnessed rapid technological development, with a wide range of inventions. As England became the capital of the new philosophy of Free Trade, of new technology and of continuing industrial inventions, the country in no time became the commercial centre of the world and became the world’s banker from the 1870s onwards (Carter 271-271). And bathing machines it appears, depicts the greedy and acquisitive aspect of the Victorian values for Carroll and he has mentioned it in his other works too. In chapter two of *Alice in Wonderland*, Carroll thinks about the British landscape that seems to be blighted by the commercial development, represented in the form of bathing machines and so on, “Alice had been to the seaside once in her life, and had come to the general conclusion that wherever you ·go to on the English coast, you find a number of bathing-machines in

the sea, some children digging in the sand with wooden spades, then a row of lodging-houses, and behind them a railway station" (30-31). Similarly, as the Snark takes more on more on the characteristic of his greedy pursuer, the poem describes his trait, which is "its fondness for bathing-machines, / Which it constantly carries about, / And believes that they ass to the beauty of scenes-" and for the narrator, this is "a sentiment open to doubt" (763). Carroll explores the futility of relentlessly chasing wealth and supremacy and represents them in an absurd parody. And the Professor continues talking about the wonderful idea, he remarks, "my only doubt is, whether the man ever finished making it" (301). His other clever inventions such as a device "for carrying one's *self*" (376) also never gets completed. The theme of futility is repeated here. The Professor's experiments, it seems have become even more absurd as we reach the second volume. As he presents his experiment in front of apparently dignified audiences, the Professor refers to his note book. But owing to insufficient adhesion, some of the labels seem to have come off. Thus, unable to read the rest of the sentence, the Professor concludes, "it *means* that the labels have come loose, and the Things have got mixed-" (707). An experiment he demonstrates during the banquet provides no better understanding:

> "For this concluding Experiment, I will take a certain Alkali, or Acid-I forget which. Now you'll see what will happen when I mix it with Some-" … "-when I mix it with-with Something-"
>
> Here the Emperor interrupted. "What's the name of the stuff?" he asked.
>
> "I don't remember the name," said the Professor: "and the label has come off." (715)

His experiments thus become completely uncertain. Within the realm of the text, the process of even "logical" subjects like Science and Mathematics are destabilized. And if Science and Logic are subject to dispute and confusion, Art does no better in providing clarity: "*Nature* shows us the world as it is. But *Art* - as a Latin author tells us - *Art*, you know - the words have escaped my memory-" (416).

Just as Alice in *Through the Looking Glass* turns to the reader to ask for their opinion because she is not able to make clear sense of her experience, the narrator of *Sylvie and Bruno* similarly invites the reader to contribute their point of view: "1

tried to calculate what this would come to, but it was too hard for me. Please make it out for me, dear Child who reads this!" (409). Just as in Alice's fantasy lands, there is always something that prevents meaning to be suspended in the world of Sylvie and Bruno.

The Hunting of the Snark:

The fantasy metaphysics of Carroll underlies his books. In reading Carroll's works, the reader unfailingly encounters a quest for something that refuses to be caught. Every time the reader expects that a story is being conceived, the narrative structure shifts quite randomly to another account lending no closure for the reader. The end of the quest of his texts are marked by confusion and uncertainty rather than a sense of having achieved a desired result or a sense of understanding. Such is the case with *The Hunting of the Snark.* In the fifth Fit, when the Burcher sets out to prove that two can be added to one, he gave an answer that was "exactly and perfectly true." The equation he gave looks like this:

> Taking Three as the subject to reason about –
> A convenient number to state –
> We add Seven, and Ten, and then multiply out
> By One Thousand diminished by Eight.
>
> The result we proceed to divide, as you see,
> By Nine Hundred and Ninety and Two:
> Then subtract Seventeen, and the answer must be
> Exactly and perfectly true.

The equation is a process which has no end. It begins and ends with no content. And the Butcher has conveniently run out of time just as he is about to explain to the Beaver what his method means, and he leaves off with the comment, "But much yet remains to be said" (771).

The reality and actuality of the Jubjub bird also just manages to miss its confirmation in the course of their journey. When they hear a unique sound of a bird,

the Beaver believes it to be the voice of a Jubjub bird and is compelled to confirm his belief. Remembering that the proof of a truth is complete only if it is stated thrice, the Beaver attends to every word of the bird with scrupulous care. Yet "in spite of all possible pains," the very moment the third repetition occurs, the beaver "had somehow contrived to lose count." And as he had never learnt how to do sums in his earlier years, he was unable to acquire the proof that it was the voice of the Jubjub bird (770).

The end of *The Hunting of the Snark* can also be identified as a subversion of the quest pattern because it eventually ends in nothingness. The quest of the crew is clearly established from the beginning. They have embarked on a quest to capture the Snark:

> They sought it with thimbles, they sought it with care;
> They pursued it with forks and hope… (769)

The crew, though their sole purpose is to hunt for a Snark, none of them have a clear idea of what the Snark is. All they know is that it would be most devastating if the obscure Snark turn out to be a "Boojum," another unintelligible word. After hunting for months, the Bellman happily shouts and informs the crew that the Baker has certainly found a Snark. The excited crew held the Baker "their hero unnamed" and when they hear "It's a Snark!," it "seemed almost too good to be true" (778). Their torrent of laughter and cheers is then followed by the ominous words "It's a Boo-", then silence. The fantastic interchangeability of shapes and realms that cancel out the anticipated truth speaks of the evasiveness and perpetual postponement of the closure. The Snark it turns out was a Boojum, and the Baker vanishes right in the midst of his laughter and glee. Like other texts of Lewis Carroll, *The Hunting of the Snark* breaks down traditional quest pattern through a devaluation of its meaning, and there is failure to impart any definitive purpose, any encapsuled meaning. The key moments of the quest in all of Carroll's texts, those that are expected to reveal an important and significant answer remain unfailingly suspended.

Carroll's technique of leaving his novels off with multiple possibilities of interpretation seem to have striking similarities with critical features of postmodern fantasy as explained by Lance Olsen which is that it frustrates the reader's heroic

quest for meaning and "subverts the notion of endings, casts it [the narrative] into a state of peripeteia, denies its redemption" (99). Olsen observes that deconstruction is the best mode of critique for fantasy studies and concludes that the works of Kafka, Borges and Robbe-Grillet display "literary autism" in their works, or in other words, their characters cannot control their world (28). Meaning is deferred in their texts, and just like meaning in sacred texts "there is no limit to the possibilities of interpretation" (31). And acknowledging the tension between the humanistic longing and the impossibility of its realization, Olsen asserts, "postmodern fantasy becomes a mode of radical scepticism and hesitation that believes in the impossibility of total intelligibility" (117). These descriptions of postmodern fantasy by Olsen curiously seem like appropriate explanation of Carroll's works where the desire to grasp solid meaning remains endlessly postponed.

M.H. Abrams states that contemporary thinkers like Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, and Roland Barthes in his later phase, although in diverse ways, undertook to "decenter" or "undermine" or "subvert" traditional claims for the existence of self-evident foundations that guarantee the validity of knowledge and truth, and establish the possibility of determinate communication (238). Jim Casey similarly points out that "postmodernism's central system of knowing affirms the impossibility of knowing anything for certain" (118). In bringing out the randomness that (mis)rules the universe, Carroll devalues all of the structures, especially Victorian models, that give meanings underlying the quest pattern which clearly foreshadows a postmodern concern.

The writer:

The pattern of circumvention and evasion, of suspended closure, if not a popular theme of children's literature or of Victorian writing, is on the other hand highly becoming of our writer. "Master of hiding and evasion" (Sewell 569), Lewis Carroll clearly spills his personal philosophy in his literary works. Gilles Deleuze calls him the master and surveyor of surfaces (93) and Carolyn Sigler describes him "Elusive, compelling, and unknowable as a Snark" (376). Lacan also comments that "one's curiosity [to know how Carroll managed to do what he did] remains

unsatisfied, for the biography of this man who kept a meticulous diary gives nothing away" (Marret-Maleval 101). Surely, the author himself defies closure because he is both Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, student (or Fellow) of Christ Church, and Lewis Carroll, author of books of nonsense (Holquist 148). Despite the abundance of biographies, commentaries, lectures and articles, Lewis Carroll somehow manages to stay an enigma. In his 1995 biography of Lewis Carroll, Morton Cohen comments that the writer

> has provoked curiosity at all times, and literary historians and psychologists have tried to discern what made him tick. But their efforts have resulted largely in contradictory assessments. No consensus has emerged. Lewis Carroll remains an enigma, a complex human being who has so far defied comprehension. (xxi)

Elizabeth Sewell has also commented that the author "remains a secret, or rather, he retains his secret" (569) and this makes her feel "a strong sense of unfinished business…" when it comes to the writer (541). Indeed, the deliberate refusal to provide closure and definitive meaning in his literary works seem perfectly in agreement with the writer's assertions in his *Symbolic Logic:* "No riddles interest me if they can be solved" (106) or "Nothing intelligible ever puzzles *me*; Logic puzzles me" (103).

Carroll's process of creation and the blurring line between reality and fantasy:

In explaining the merits of fantasy, Professor Anne E. Hardcastle of Wake Forest University has explained a critical dissimilarity between traditional and contemporary approaches to fantasy literature:

> While traditional criticism labels fantasy, with its roots in myth, romance and fairy tale, a conservative, nostalgic and escapist fiction, recent critics have begun to examine seriously the merits of fantasy and of a new current of 20th century fantasy in particular. (419)

Though Lewis Carroll has held a firm place among the first writers who helped establish the tradition of fantasy in literature, his works, it appears, have not been examined among the new current of postmodern fantasy. Contemporary literary critic

and academic, Maria Nikolajeva, who specializes in children's literature marks *Alice in Wonderland* to be different from postmodern fantasy because in postmodern fantasy, "the boundaries between reality and the Otherworld become more elusive, and the passage often subtle, so that the hesitation is amplified" (154) and she observes that such is not the case in Carroll's fantasy. A close study of *Alice in Wonderland*, and in extension, all his other fantasy works, however, shows an apparent problematizing of the clear boundary between reality and fantasy.

With regard to Carroll's creative process, Derrida's account of "the strange 'being' of the sign: half of it always 'not there' and the other half always 'not that,'" and the structure of the sign being "determined by the trace or track of that other which is forever absent" (Spivak 18) seem to reflect its course. The writer insisted that he was unable to locate the source of his materials and contended that he is as much part of the narrative journey as the reader is. He explains in the preface to *Sylvie and Bruno:*

> Sometimes one could trace to their source these random flashes of thought - as being suggested by the book one was reading, or struck out from the "flint" of one's own mind by the "steel" of a friend's chance remark - but they had also a way of their own, of occurring, *a propos* of nothing - specimens of that hopelessly illogical phenomenon, "an effect without a cause." (277)

The trace of his creative process is always 'not there' and 'not that,' and such too is the genesis of his famous *Alice* books. He writes,

> I added my fresh ideas, which seemed to grow of themselves upon the original stock; and many more added themselves when, years afterward, I wrote it all over again for publication…but whenever or however…*it comes of itself…Alice* and *The Looking Glass* are made up almost wholly of bits and scraps, single ideas which come of themselves. (Skinner 15,16)

And thus we have Alice, or the Snark, or the fairy children Sylvie and Bruno becoming "signs," in Derrida's sense, because either they are there, or they are not.

The “signs” themselves do not know who they are, or the reality of their own existence.

In the fantasy worlds of Lewis Carroll, the realm of the real opens up pages of uncertainty within. His narratives often question the status of the real and pushes language and meaning toward a state of dissolution. In place of a realistic convention, his works ask the questions of their own creation and existence and in the process blurs the boundary between reality and fiction.

Wonderland:

Wonderland has taught Alice to accept the inversion of the natural order with the same faith that she might accept new information in her normal day-to-day life. The land breaks down her beliefs about her identity and replaces those learned beliefs and understandings of the world with Wonderland’s nonsensical rules. Alice understands this identity displacement in terms of a fairy tale. She states, “When I used to read fairy tales, I fancied that kind of thing never happened, and now here I am in the middle of one!” (44). Fiction has intruded on her own sense of reality, and she finds herself unable to keep the two separate. Alice is no longer the Alice she knew at home and is not altogether sure of who she is anymore: “I knew who I *was* when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then…I ca’n’t explain *myself*, I’m afraid, Sir…because I’m not myself, you see” (53-54).

Looking Glass:

From the very onset of *Through the Looking Glass*, the boundary between being awake and being asleep is so blurred such that it becomes difficult to tell where reality ends and dreaming begins. At the beginning of the chapter, Alice enjoys a drowsy winter nap near the fire. She leaves her chair only to snatch up Kitty and place her on her knee. Alice dozes off in this position, and her step through the mirror could have happened in her dream. But since she is only half asleep, her experiences combine elements from the waking world and her dreams. As she enters through the Looking Glass, the question that weaves through the book is no longer “who am I?” but “which dreamed it?” The Looking Glass realm has significantly blurred the

boundary between reality and fiction. The land's problematizing of her sense of reality is most clearly demonstrated in her exchanges with Tweedledum and Tweedledee:

> Tweedledee retorted… "Why, you're only a sort of thing in his dream!"
>
> …Alice exclaimed… "if *I'm* only a sort of thing in his dream, what are *you*, I should like to know?"
>
> "Ditto," said Tweedledum.
>
> "Ditto, ditto!" cried Tweedledee.
>
> "…it's no use *your* talking about waking him," said Tweedledum, "when you're only one of the things in his dream. You know very well you're not real."
>
> "I *am* real!" said Alice, and began to cry.
>
> "You wo'n't make yourself a bit realer by crying," Tweedledee remarked: "there's nothing to cry about." (189 - 190)

The question here is aimed at the reality of existence. Carroll has doubted the very force of logic which shouts reality and meaning into existence; the very state of reality hardly holds this assumed closure. And what is reality is put into question. Alice asks that if she is not real and is only sort of a thing in the King's dream, then what about the twins. They reply her with "Ditto," which explains nothing whatsoever. But unlike Alice, they seem perfectly fine with the dilemma, and the question of their reality is "nothing to cry about."

We have witnessed in the fantasy of Carroll, a simultaneous deconstructing and reconstructing of meaning in the quest. And the lands that Alice visits effectively question and challenge external reality and the nature of reality itself. The chapter with the Lion and the Unicorn emphasizes this point. In a reversal of order, the mystical Unicorn have always thought that human children were "fabulous monsters" (229), Alice replies that she too has always thought Unicorns were fabulous monsters too. Upon seeing each other in real life, the Unicorn tells Alice, "Well, now that we have seen each other…if you'll believe in me, I'll believe in you" (229). The reality of their existence thus rest on perception. In place of a solid, stable meaning, what we see is a provisional and fluid reality which is affected by thought

and perspective. Her meeting with the Lion and the Unicorn further blurs the boundary between dream and reality and Alice could not be sure if her experience happened in a dream or if it was a reality:

> "So I wasn't dreaming, after all…unless – unless we're all part of the same dream. Only I do hope it's my *dream*, and not the Red King's!" (233)

The question remains: if Alice is *real* in the *dream*, then does she exist or is she an illusion. The oscillation between dream and reality perpetuates the uncertainty. The question of existence makes it way between reality and fiction toward being, but never coming to a definitive standpoint.

The last chapter titled "Which dreamed it?" puts the question of whether Alice's experience in the Looking Glass house is real or illusionary and if the whole experience is a dream of the King or of Alice. Unable to come to a conclusion, Alice turns to her pet cat, Kitty to help her decide. It is fitting that Alice's ally is an animal, with no means to reply Alice's endless inquiries. The question of the subject is basically put up against a denial of knowledge, and rebounds from it, and moves from point to point till it finally turns to the reader. The question on the reader sharply addresses the reality of the reader's role in the story. The last words address the reader with the same dilemma and appear to ask the reader to decide on the existence or obliteration of Alice: "Which do you think it was?" (271). It becomes up to the reader to decide who is dreaming, and the complexity of the image of Alice makes the choice impossible. The quest for knowledge, the pursuit of meaning rebounds indefinitely. Donald Rackin, in this moment in the narrative comments, "It is as if the narrator and the narrator's gentle, loving voice have crossed over some boundary between reality and fiction, between Alice's adventures and Carroll's telling of them" (41). Helene Cixous' comment affirms this reasoning: "…the text appears less as a patchwork ("discourse in several pieces of which one can reconstitute a coherent version," says Jean Gattegno) than an impossible slide along itself, a track which loses its own way, a slip in as much as the text slips… just as much as it pursues, since the object of this pursuit is pursuit itself as…the very condition of its existence" (233-234). Unlike traditional fantasy, there are no monsters to fight, and there are no treasures to uncover in Carroll's works. The

journey of his protagonist is essentially a quest for the ever-elusive absoluteness of meaning and language.

Outland/Fairyland/Elveston:

In Carroll works, the boundary between the "real" world and the otherworld becomes more and more slippery, and the passage between the different realms become more and more subtle. An abrupt cut off into a different scene, in fact, is a common transitional tool in all of Carroll's works and it makes sense to read his works as one dreams where logic and linearity cease to exist. The very opening poem of *Sylvie and Bruno* suggests the infusion of dream like state with real life. The first line of the poem: "Is all our Life, then, but a dream…" features the same last words as the final three lines of *Through the Looking Glass*: "Life, what is it but a dream?" (272), reminiscent of Prospero's line from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in Act IV: "We are such stuff as dreams are made on." Reasserting the centrality of the blurring lines between dream and reality, the narrator, after his disorienting shift from one world to the other, reflects in the very opening chapter of the novel,

> So either I've been dreaming about Sylvie … and this is the reality. Or else I've really been with Sylvie, and this is a dream! Is Life itself a dream, I wonder? (296)

As the novel opens, the disoriented narrator finds himself in fairyland one moment and back in the real world the next, a circumstance that prompts him to ponder the question of which realm is "a dream" and which "the reality." As the story proceeds, the narrator begins to see curious parallels of the dreamworld in the real world, and towards the end, the passage between the different realms seems to be completely fluid.

If the *Alice* books explore another dimension in the form of fantasy realms, the *Sylvie and Bruno* books have even more openly explored the realm of other Universe. One strand of the plot of the novel chronicles an imaginary country called Outland, where the children Sylvie and Bruno as well as their father, the Warden are conspired against to overthrow them from their rightful rule. Within this very realm, the two children often visit other different dimensions where they are often followed by the narrator. Another plot has as its setting, Victorian England and it involves a

romance between two real-life residents of Elveston, Arthur Forrester and Lady Muriel Orme. Then, in the middle of the book, without having any significant bearing to the plot of the text, a figure appears who is suggested to have come from a different planet (580). Not only has the man come from another planet, he further talks about different other planets, some of which are so small that one could walk right around it in twenty minutes (617); and some that "consisted of a number of *Kings*, and one *Subject*!" (618). And after giving a series of increasingly satirical tales of his home planet, the man vanishes from the narrative, never to be seen again. The multitude of dimensions in his texts can be seen as reflecting Carroll's own split and distorted picture of reality in which he was living.

His last two volumes are utterly sceptical towards any sort of coherent narrative. The Other Professor's tale may sum up the whole narrative pattern - "It has Introductory Verses at the beginning, and at the end" and some in the middle (724). The book itself begins midsentence – "-AND then all the people…" (287) – and many chapters begin and end in the middle of a scene. The author's fancy for insoluble paradoxes finds its way in his last books in abundance. And it is strongly suggested in the book that the dream characters might be based on the real-world characters. Yet it is often unclear which character is more primary and which is the imitation. The narrator's dreamlike state is so much interwoven with reality that it is impossible to separate his mindscape from the real world in which he lives. Such a dreamlike narrative prompts the question of whether it is an external or an internal reality. As the line between the waking world and dreaming grows thinner, scenes begin to shift more erratically, with a sentence begun by one character in one world sometimes being finished by another character in another world. The distinction between the real space and the dreaming experience becomes so infused that the characters Sylvie and Bruno themselves have transited out of the dreamworld into the real world, where they interact with the other set of characters, before journeying back into their own realm.

Like the *Alice* books, transport is itself a major theme in the *Sylvie and Bruno* books. It is, at one and the same time, a theme of displacement and a theme of passage. The text abruptly shifts from one world to the other often without any

warning and the narrator experiences these unexpected transportations without his knowledge or consent. Not only the reader, but the narrator himself is often left with confusion not knowing what is going on. He often finds himself in "long passages" (378) and was constantly coming on new spaces that he "had never noticed before… and very seldom succeeded in finding the old ones again" (356). The disoriented narrator constantly finds himself in fairyland one moment and in the real world the next. Like Alice, his experiences often leave him with feelings of extreme confusion and his dream like trances completely destabilize the reality and actuality of his experience. The abrupt shift from one world to the other itself seems to convey the thin line between reality and dream, as well as to stress the narrator's confusion—since he himself is often not at all sure what is going on. Carroll has questioned the nineteenth century conception of the reality and world as stable and centralised.

Further emphasizing the thin barrier between reality and fantasy, there are many references in the book that allude to the ethereal nature of Sylvie. Whether as a human child or as a fairy, Sylvie's character is never really human like, in the sense that whereas Bruno is often seen as embracing the different emotions and temperaments of being human, Sylvie always seems more like a fantasy or an ideal. Indeed, there are indications in the book that suggest Sylvie as a representative of love. When her father, the Warden of Outland and Fairy-King offers her a locket and makes her choose either one inscribed with "All will love Sylvie" (326) or one with "Sylvie will love all" (327), the fairy girl chose the latter and explains that though it is very nice to be loved, it is nicer to love other people. And as a human child, she sings with an angelic, dream like voice, a song that tells that love is the answer:

"'Tis a secret: none knows how it comes, how it goes:
But the name of the secret is Love!"
"For I think it is Love,
For I feel it is Love…"

And in further validation to the hypothesis, the narrator's slipping vision of Sylvie in the very last scene makes him feel that it is not Sylvie but an angel that he sees. And the angel/Sylvie leaves off with the words, "It is love" (749). The word love may seem self-evident enough, but not according to the context of the book. If love is the

answer, it certainly is the most elusive of answers. For instance, Sylvie's love locket has a dual reality: "…when you look *at* it, it's red and fierce like the sun and when you look *through* it, it's gentle and blue like the sky!" (749). Even God's love is presented as mysterious and beyond human perception. Dialogue among the group in one of the Victorian settings of the text discusses that God and His perfect justice is "only part of the great Riddle" because within God's design, "innocent *beings* ever suffer" and within God's design, the strong often prey on the weak such as "a cat playing with a mouse…assuming it to have no *moral* responsibility" (687). After much conversation, the group seems to agree that the wisest answer to most debates is *"behold, we know not anything"* (687). If love is the answer, it is ever as elusive and ambiguous as any other metaphysical concepts. It is a concept of multifarious identities and its reality lies in perspective. The study does not suggest that Carroll could have been a Victorian nonconformist in practice. If it seems like he remains skeptical of the Christian faith centered on a God who closes all door to divine questions, his works, however inform of his willingness to embrace uncertainty as the heart of existence. His progressive vision seems to accommodate the possibility of a Devine whose essence surpasses the attempts of the church, religion and individuals to define and understand His will.

According to Brian Attebery, "meaning in (postmodern) literature is not the result of the dutiful recording of perceived reality, but of letting narrative formula shape natural phenomena, lending order and value to experience" (50) and that "…the external world is *interpreted* in and through our 'perceptions' of it" (53). Nikolajeva also writes that in postmodern fantasy, "every concept, every belief, is relative" (145) and Wolfgang Iser also argues that a work's meaning is the reader's imaging of it (8). The stories of Lewis Carroll, we have noticed, cannot arrive at a closure because every concept is relative and "the Objective is only attainable through the Subjective!" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 418).

Many experts consider the basic narrative patterns of fantasy such as the multitude of material worlds and nonlinear time as a twentieth century phenomenon as they are largely dependent on the ideas developed within quantum physics (Nikolajeva 140). Nikolajeva further observes that "Heterotopia" or a multitude of

discordant universes is one of the “most exciting examples” of postmodern fantasy as a tool to denote the ambivalent and unstable spatial and temporal conditions in fiction (143). It is evident from our study that the works of Lewis Carroll explore alternative worlds, nonlinear time, and many other ‘unnatural’ events that are not ascribed to the traditional fantasy plot. His fantasy views parallel worlds as equally real, so that nothing is unquestionably acknowledged as the utmost reality.

Nikolajeva suggests that “existential questions, such as: What is reality? Is there more than one ultimate truth? - are questions pertinent to postmodern thinking” (145). And since fantasy “is a mode of discourse that hovers between ... the marvellous ... and the mimetic” (116), Lance Olsen also assesses that the genre itself seems to relate almost intrinsically to postmodernism. He asserts,

> So postmodernism is an attempt ... to respond to contemporary experience, an experience that is continually beyond belief... In other words, postmodern art faces the problem of responding to a situation that is, literally, fantastic. No wonder, then, that fantasy becomes the vehicle for the postmodern consciousness. (14)

By bringing magic in to real life, and by acknowledging the validity of fantasy, the texts of Lewis Carroll present an acceptance of and positive attitude toward magic in the “real” world. And through his creative works of art, Lewis Carroll has clearly attempted to unsettle the boundary of our reality in order to explore other realms, realities and possibilities. Lewis Carroll clearly questions the legitimacy of “rational” experience. That is, basing it on the “suspension of disbelief”, he makes his readers perceive fantasy and the supernatural, within its own premises, as “true.” And by anchoring the fantastic in to the real world, like a rabbit wearing waistcoat or fairies existing in “real” life, his fantasy confronts the ordinary as well as the fabulous.

Embracing uncertainty:

Carroll always insisted that his work teach nothing and that he did not mean anything but nonsense. At the same time, he did not mean for the reader to receive his nonsense uncritically, for her writes,

> I'm very much afraid I didn't mean anything but nonsense. Still, you know, words mean more than we mean to express when we use them; so a whole book ought to mean a great deal more than the writer means. (Collingwood 497)

Indeed, what makes the texts of Carroll remarkable is not the meaningless position of the narratives but rather what just touches the meaningless. It is that very pursuit that moves the stories and perpetuates its quest. Cixous comments that *Through the Looking Glass* is "*A text which just brushes,* therefore a *text which never stops*" (234), and rightly, his narratives move on without trying to maintain sense or grasp it, yet the pursuit continues on motivated by curiosity. Despite its illogical rules and at times darker elements, the world of Wonderland is not unhappy living with ambivalence. Yet this happiness, though pervasive, is at the same time, elusive. The riddles lack closures yet they move through time without stop. The characters cannot get hold of it; neither can Alice, nonetheless, her curiosity never wavers, driven by the great question which was "What?" (52). Again and again, Alice explores the logic of the fantasy land which only take her to some logical impasse and leaves her frustrated. But being Alice, she continues in hope, propelled by her unquenchable curiosity. The same can be said of the narrator of the *Sylvie and Bruno* books. He understands that he will never catch hold of his dream children, and he has no control over his experience which often leaves him extremely disoriented. Yet, as he "dreamily" drifts in and out of the different worlds, his "whole being … absorbed in strong curiosity as to what would happen next" (323) .

The ends of Carroll's stories are just as hard to grasp as the beginning, and when one feels as if one has grasped something concrete and solid to make a whole sense, then something else happens that disturbs the groundwork again and again so that one is continually left puzzled. There is no end, only a perpetuation of uncertainties and yet the characters seem perfectly fine living with uncertainty. According to Alan Wilde:

> Postmodernists are characterized by a willingness to live with uncertainty, to tolerate and, in some cases, to welcome a world seen as random and multiple, even, at times absurd. (44)

And this is the way Carroll's texts and characters can be best described. Determined as they are to hunt for a Snark, the crew began their quest with a map which is "a perfect and absolute blank" (761). The Wonderland King/Judge's remark points at a willingness to live with uncertainty: "If there's no meaning in it… that saves a world of trouble, you know, as we needn't try to find any" (127). Carroll explores the limit of logic and sense; and in the space of non-signification, nothing is stable so that definite meaning or absolute reality is impossible to attain. His characters are guided by a strong desire to catch hold of meaning, but that sought after knowledge consistently remains unattainable. And yet his characters continue to proceed with the adventure, somehow accepting the absence of definitive meaning and temporality as the essence of reality. Lewis Carroll, through the adventures of his characters, explore the ambivalence of the worlds they find themselves in. According to Anne E. Hardcastle,

> Postmodernism is most often identified as a dual phenomenon, producing two general reactions. The loss of faith in absolutes, whether we call it the liberation of the transcendental signified or the dismantling of metanarratives, brings about a negative result – the deconstructive, nihilistic, radical skepticism about the world and our complete inability to understand or respond to it -; and a positive one – the joyous, playful recognition that the lack of meaning opens up an exciting infinity of possibilities, each as valid as the next. (420)

In *Strategies of Fantasy*, Attebery asserts his own point of view regarding postmodern fantasy, and concludes that "after nothing, however, must come something again" (39). And he believes that the acceptance of the ultimate liberation of meaning and possibility brought about by deconstruction has "enabled writers to take pleasure in indeterminacy, coincidence, and the story-teller's traditional freedom of invention" (40). And in Heidegger's account:

> this destruction is just as far from having the *negative* sense of shaking off the ontological tradition. We must … stake out the positive possibilities of that tradition … to bury the past in nullity [Nichtigkeit] is not the purpose of this destruction; its aim is *positive*; its negative function remains unexpressed and indirect. (44)

Olsen also emphasizes that the function of postmodern fantasy is to bring about "a liberation of the imagination" (8). In Carroll's fantasy works, we are confronted with the uncertainty principle. The texts clearly accept more than one reality and more than one truth. By putting into question what is real, the narratives perpetuate frustration and discontent. Yet this chaos is both disturbing and joyous at the same time because of its serene acceptance of uncertainty. Even though Carroll's works surely entail a nihilistic mode of consciousness, the writer chooses to pursue the positive side of liberation of the individual's imagination. The Carroll metaphysics is revealed in fantastic terms resulting in confusion and suspension of the real and the unreal. He frees himself from logic and rationality and arrange narrative episodes without concern for chronological motivation, and rearranges word order, syllables and so on and create new words and terms in order to explore possibilities. The unruly non-causal sequences experienced in dream propels the works of Carroll and as the result, we have the creation of a new, free, artistic space where one can believe in "as many as six impossible things before breakfast" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 200).

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CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

> Carroll continues to be, in the final words of Morton Cohen's biography, "a man worth writing about." (Sigler 406)

The purpose of this thesis has been to explore and substantiate that Carroll's narratives are worth approaching from an outlook which has yet to find proper grounding when it comes to the writer - from a postmodern perspective. The thesis has shown from postmodern premises how Lewis Carroll shaped his creative art to stand up for those without voice and power in the Victorian society, mainly children and non-human others. He challenged the authoritarian impulses which subordinated them and, in the process, destabilized the paternalistic logic which justified their

subjection. In challenging the meaning-making system of a dominant culture, Lewis Carroll opened up perspectives and possibilities of creative space. His narrative approach in crafting the elements of his story is observed to have similarities with many postmodern techniques. And his challenging of the discriminatory hierarchies within culture makes him a forerunner of the critical philosophical concern of contemporary times that now speaks of a language of compassion and ethics. Some of the modern writers like Cixous and postmodern thinkers like Deleuze have eventually drawn critical evaluations in our contemporary times.

The preceding chapters have categorically examined the goals of the thesis by exploring the different areas of correspondence between Carroll and postmodern discourse. Chapter one, being the introductory chapter discusses the biographical details of the writer which are found to have significance in shaping up his thoughts and creative process. Lewis Carroll had a gift of artistry, creativity and imaginativeness ever since he was a young boy. He invented games and enjoyed making up stories to entertain his siblings. While he was in school, he had already developed a tendency to push the boundaries of linguistic structures by "replacing the ordinary inflexions of nouns and verbs, as detailed in our grammars, by more exact analogies, or convenient forms of his own devising" (Clark 38). He also created two newspapers while at school, and wrote and illustrated for these papers.

Another significant aspect of his upbringing is that even though he came from a family that was highly conservative and highly religious, the writer himself always had an ambivalent relationship with the church. His antagonism was not against the Christian faith per se, his problem was with the opposition or support for practices associated with orthodoxy as well as the active and manipulative manners in which religious institutions attempted to influence societal and political decisions. He was known to be "unorthodox in religion and disliked the Anglican tenets which disapproved of ministers who attended the theatre or were interested in secular activities" (Skinner 11). Further, Carroll is located as especially difficult, rather more complex, among his contemporaries such as Charles Kingsley, Robert Louis

Stevenson, Thomas Hughes, Rudyard Kipling, though popular writers in the Victorian era.

Even though *Victorian Fiction: A Guide to Research* (1964 and 1980) and *Victorian Poets: Guide to Research* (1956 and 1968) did not include Lewis Carroll among poets and fiction writers of the period with potential for further research, interest in his life and works, as well as his influence, not only on Victorian culture but also on modern culture and art have largely increased in the past years. Even though his works have mostly been identified as imaginary and fantastic to engage only children in the light of the standard Victorian world, recent studies have found that there are ample critical avenues to explore not only in the areas of his "engagement with nineteenth-century debates about class, gender, and national identity, but his continuing relevance to our own critical questions and theoretical controversies" (Sigler 375). The present study in this manner have critically examined and unveiled those aspects which in most studies remained evasive or unattended. The thesis views Carroll's creative world from alternative postmodern perspectives and provided reinterpretations of his nonsensical fantasies popularly held as such.

Chapter two, titled "Subverting Custom and Inverting Patterns" explores the manners in which Lewis Carroll subverts the strict standards existing in social and literary domain of the time which he felt was oppressive towards children. He used parody, humour and playful inversion of norms to challenge and destabilize these inflexible patterns. Most literature aimed towards children during the Victorian era was motivated with an impulse to teach and instruct. The stories are "usually heavily moral, full of 'good' children and didacticism" (Carter 275). Characters are typically designed to serve as role models for the readers, and situations are intended to steer the child towards proper behaviour. Some of the most well-known writers of the time, such as Charles Kingsley, George Macdonald and Thomas Hughes wrote in this vein. And there were a number of books, magazines and periodicals published during the time which were intended to provide "such literature as will not ignobly interest

nor frivolously amuse, but convey the wisest instruction in the pleasantest manner" (Lang 22).

A popular didactic tool in Victorian children's literature was to use fairies as an instructive influence on the young readers. Fairy "Teach-all" in *Holiday House* (1839) by Catherine Sinclaire and Charles Kingsley's fairies, "Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby" and "Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid" in *The Water-Babies* (1863) are examples. From a young age, Carroll seemed to cultivate a sceptical view towards these manipulative fairies who come with abundant directions. A poem he wrote when he was only thirteen years titled "My Fairy" takes an ironic approach towards this good-all-fairy tradition. In an excessive parody, the poem mocks the copious directions of the fairy to the boy, from his sleeping habits to his eating habits, to his overall conduct. The fairy basically teaches him of the countless impulses he must repress in order to be a good Victorian boy. The poem ends with a satirical moral: "You mustn't" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 779).

The narrator of *Sylvie and Bruno* even more openly invites the reader to contemplate on the idea that perhaps set rules and regulations, projected in the form of teaching fairies, could be prejudiced and need to be questioned and challenged too:

> In the first place, I want to know – dear Child who reads this! – why Fairies should always be teaching *us* to do our duty, and lecturing *us* when we go wrong, and we should never teach *them* anything? You ca'n't mean to say that Fairies are never greedy, or selfish, or cross, or deceitful… (387)

Carroll playfully parodies the excessive emphasis put on the need for moral lesson in every human domain. Alice's exchange with the Duchess is an example. The Duchess tells Alice that "Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it" (96) and proceeds to tell her of the various morals one can find in life, which seem more and more contrived as she proceeds,

> "…flamingos and mustard both bite. And the moral of that is - Birds of a feather flock together."

> "…there's a large mustard-machine near here. And the moral of that is - The more there is of mine, the less there is of yours."
>
> "…as pigs have to fly; and the m__" But here, to Alice's great surprise, the Duchess's voice died away, even in the middle of her favourite word 'moral.' (96-99)

The Duchess' statement that "everything's got a moral, if only you can find it" echoes the Victorian notion that everything must result in a lesson of some kind. The lack of anything meaningful to be found in the statement of the Duchess clearly points at the writer poking fun at the practice of undue pedantry. The voice of the Duchess dying away right in the midst of her favourite word "moral" clearly highlights the very intent of Carroll to undermine the aggrandizing of moral lesson in children's literature.

The *Sylvie and Bruno* books, in many instances also highlight Carroll's rejection of relentless moralizing directed towards children. Bruno and his frog audiences do not really mind if his story has "Moral or no Moral" (495); he turns the persistent attempt of the farmer's wife to teach him a lesson in to a humorous gibberish (560); and the beloved Professor's has somehow forgotten the moral of his fable which he recites to the children during the climactic scene of the novel. (742)

The thesis does not propose that Lewis Carroll opposed the teaching of manners and morality in children. His friction was more with the directing of these teachings in a manipulative and superior way. Undermining the Victorian superior mentality, parodying the snobbish attitude and rejecting the self-imposed right of the Victorian to dominate over weaker beings is in fact, a common theme explored in all of his stories. In this manner, Carroll can be apprehended as an unconscious precursor of postcolonial discourse.

Carroll declared at the opening poem of *Alice in Wonderland* that "There will be nonsense in it!" (13) and this nonsense forms the basis of his humour and subversion all at once. Denial of rational thought, or refusal of systematised reason runs throughout his fantasy works. Wonderland displays recurring instability that

often runs reverse to the norms. The "Mad Tea Party" illustrate the point. The very beginning of the chapter sets up the whole irrational theme of the party as the Mad Hatter begins with the question, "Why is the raven like a writing-desk?" (75). As she excitedly prepares herself to solve the puzzle, Alice soon finds out that the Hatter does not really wait for an answer and the riddle mainly seem to exist for the sole purpose of casting confusion and disorder. The rest of the party is a continuation of this rejection of logic and social conventions.

The prevailing absence of meaning in Wonderland is summed up in the court proceeding at the end. The court accuse the Knave of some trivial thing, but no witness is able to provide one meaningful evidence. The judge, who is the King of Wonderland asks for a verdict repeatedly, but no coherent result appears. The trial carries on in an erratic manner and the innocence and guilt of the accused remains undetermined. Kafka's *The Trial* (1925) where in the protagonist Joseph K. is accused of a crime, the nature of which is never revealed to him nor to the reader somehow seems reminiscent of the Wonderland trial.

The Hunting of the Snark similarly undermines systematised rationality. According to Michael Holquist, the best way to understand the poem is to look at it as "a structure of resistance to other structures of meaning which might be brought to it" (156) and that the poem is simply a fiction, a thing that does not seek to be "real" or "true" (164). Indeed, none of the means and conducts of the hunting crew make sense from a conventional viewpoint. The crew is made up of ambiguous characters who are cast almost like mechanical puppets. In the first place, the ten crew are only identified by their qualifications and none of them are recognized by their names – a Bellman, a Boots, a maker of Bonnets and Hoods, a Barrister, a Broker, a Billiard-marker, a Banker, a Butcher, a Beaver and a Baker. In a rejection logic and reason, the crew have no interest in a map that can show them proper conventional directions (760). Instead, they bring with them a map that is "A perfect and absolute blank!" (761). In addition, the only way their trusted Captain know how to cross the ocean is "to tingle his bell." (761)

The poem's resistance to system of meaning is further illustrated in the fifth Fit where the Butcher attempts to prove a perfect equation:

Taking Three as the subject to reason about –
…We add Seven, and ten, and then multiply out
By One Thousand diminished by Eight.

The result we proceed to divide…
By Nine Hundred and Ninety and Two:
Then subtract Seventeen, and the answer must be
Exactly and perfectly true. (771)

As an equation, it looks like this: [(3) +7+10)] x (1000-8)/992-17 =? The Butcher's "perfectly true" equation essentially begins with no content and ends with no content. The poem does not aim at making perfect sense, in fact, the whole poem is a rejection of sense and meaning making system in the conventional standard.

Carroll's literary works are brimming with expectation and an intent to overturn the anticipated expectation. The plotlines are not driven by rational motivation and things happen arbitrarily or happen through the caprice of an unaccountable force. In due course, Carroll embraces the possibility of a new, free, artistic space to which rational laws cannot be applied. Professor Firtich observes that "such a "penetration" into these other realms is accomplished by creating works of art that appear, from the conventional viewpoint, "to be either totally nonsensical, or, at least, semantically enigmatic" (595). Carroll's consciousness responds to an experience of a human being that is continually beyond comprehension, and his art becomes the means to express that consciousness.

Chapter three, titled "The Ambiguous Subject and the Interspecies Relationship" examines how Carroll treats the interspecies boundaries to be fluid and the subject to be ambiguous. His challenging of the notion of a stable identity in favour of indeterminate beings that resist fixity prefigures important critical concerns of postmodernism. While other girls who travel through fantasy lands such as Princess Irene in *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and Dorothy Gale in *The*

Wonderful Wizard of Oz (1900) repeatedly ask "*where* am I?" in preoccupation to find out where they are, Alice's major concern from the moment she enters Wonderland is the question of who she is. She correlates the mystery of her surrounding to the mystery of her identity. On entering Wonderland, she asks herself a question that permeates throughout her adventure,

> I wonder if I've changed in the night? Let me think: *was* I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is 'Who in the world am I?' Ah, *that's* the great puzzle! (28)

The only answer she is able to conceive is her fragmented sense of self. She said to herself, "it's no use now…to pretend to be two people! Why, there's hardly enough of me left to make *one* respectable person!" (24). She then reflects on her split sense of being and "began thinking over all the children she knew that were of the same age as herself, to see if she could have been changed for any of them" (28). As she perceives her instability, she begins to consider other set of identities that she may become and considers being Ada, but then dismisses because "her hair goes in such long ringlets, and mine doesn't go in ringlets at all" (29). She then considers being Mabel but quickly rejects "for I know all sorts of things, and she, oh, she knows such a very little!" (29). Alice's recognition of her identity as fluid and shifting is clearly illustrated in this reflection.

Her encounter with the Caterpillar, a metamorphic creature himself, emphasizes the shifting reality of Alice which herself had contemplated before. He asks her in a calm, sleepy voice, "Who are *you*?" (53). Alice, already in the process of recognizing her unstable sense of self 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" (53). The Caterpillar then asks her to explain herself and Alice replies, "I ca'n't explain myself, I'm afraid, Sir…because I'm not myself, you see…for I ca'n't understand it myself, to begin with…" (54). Try as she may, language fails her to express her true self. Through the course of her journey, we see Alice embracing more and more of her incoherent self.

Alice had already sensed, even before coming to Wonderland that her identity is not totally stable: “She generally gave herself very good advice (though she very seldom followed it), and sometimes she scolded herself so severely as to bring tears to her eyes…for this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people” (24). The pun on “curious” is suggestive of the ambiguous nature and shifting personality. Carroll’s own artworks for the original *Alice’s Adventures under Ground* (1864) perfectly embodies Alice’s elusiveness. The hair of this Alice is shifting, in the sense that in some illustrations, she is shown as distinctly blonde, in others, she is deeply brunette and still in others, illumination from an unknown source reflects her hair so that she could either be blonde or brunette.

Besides her own sense of fragmentedness, the book’s description of Alice is undoubtedly nuanced. The stories hint an undertone of darkness in Alice. Carroll wrote in reply to a letter that though he had not quite remembered the story of Alice, he believed it was about “malice” (Hatch 49). The study agrees with Kincaid’s comment that “The necessarily ambivalent attitude toward Alice reinforces a rhetoric which shifts the direction of its hostile wit and therefore, as in *Gulliver’s Travels*, makes it impossible for the reader to find a consistent position or a comfortable perspective” (93). The reader, alongside Alice, learns that the Victorian little girl has the potentiality to accommodate the most contrasting of selves. As perceived, Alice “is both the croquet game without rules and its violent arbiter, the Queen of Hearts” (Auerbach 34). The study has proven Cixous’ observation to be precise, and that “Alice is not and does not want to be either on one side or on the other but here or there, as a visitor, as a tale-teller, as neither a child nor a grown up, neither out nor in, but in fact, in the same way as portmanteau words which are made up of embedded elements…” (239). She is a curious wanderer/wonderer in Wonderland. And though she began her adventure looking to find cohesive meaning, her preconceived notions have undergone such drastic challenges that her mind learns to open up to embrace different perceptions so that towards the end, she has become “so well used to queer things happening” (73).

Carroll's two fairy children Sylvie and Bruno also defy all kinds of categorization. The books curiously portray them as both fairies as well as human. When the story opens, the two appear as two human children living in Outland where their father is a Warden. After their father has left them on business, they go on their various adventures with the narrator whose presence in their lives and in the story is ambiguous throughout, in the sense that he is most often disoriented and though he sometimes takes part in conversations, he is totally invisible to the party at other times. When the narrator is in a different dimension which is like a representation of a real place in London called Elveston, the two children appear here as fairies. And as the story unfolds, they even occasionally appear in this land, posing as real children. The story never explain which identity of them is the real one and which is the imitation, or if both or neither are real. They could be both fairies and human or they are neither. Carroll's fictional land accepts and embraces the changeableness of a person so that throughout the two volumes, characters often deliberately or unexpectedly shift into another character so that the reader can never really tell which character is the main and which character we see at the moment.

Carroll's representation of characters that perpetually undergo transformation, his depiction of identities that continually deny ultimate referent and the author's own invitation of the characters to be open to contestation prefigures what Docherty explains in the context of postmodernism,

> Postmodern characters typically fall into incoherence: character traits are not repeated, but contradicted... At every stage in the representation of character, the finality of the character, a determinate identity for the characters is deferred as the proliferation of information about the character leads into irrationality, incoherence, or self-contradiction. (140)

A "sharp satirist of the self-presumption of scientific rationality and authority" (Mayer 431), Carroll was strongly opposed to the scientific authority that exploited powerless animals in the quest for knowledge and power. In his defence against the subordination of animals during the Victorian era, especially with regard

to vivisection, Carroll wrote essays expressing his beliefs on the controversial subject. In "Vivisection as a Sign of the Times," Carroll expresses his deep concern that in the new age of science and progress, the world "has seen and tired of the worship of Nature, of Reason, of Humanity; for this nineteenth century has been reserved the development of the most refined of all – the worship of the Self" (4). In a rather prophetic note, Carroll challenges the justification of the subjugation of powerless animals for the purpose of gaining knowledge and progress. He emphasized the era's will to dominate in its quest for higher knowledge. He even links the subjugation of animals to the subordination of women and the working classes:

> The enslavement of his weaker brethren – 'the labour of those who do not enjoy, for the enjoyment of those who do not labour' - the degradation of woman- the torture of the animal world- these are the steps of the ladder by which man is ascending to his higher civilisation. (5)

The pamphlet concludes with a foreboding prophecy of the time: "When the man of science, looking forth over a world which will then own no other sway than his, shall exalt in the thought that he has made of this fair green earth, if not a heaven for man, at least a hell for animals" (5).

His other anti-vivisectionist essay, "Some Popular Fallacies About Vivisection," questions the feeling of superiority which justifies "that man is infinitely more important than the lower animals, so that the infliction of animal suffering, however great, is justifiable if it prevents human suffering, however small" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 1191). The writer stands against the initiative of the time and strongly opposes the era's "lust for scientific knowledge" (1192) that abused animals for acquisition of an ego-centric culture. Echoing the prophetic tone of his previous antivivisection piece, Carroll forewarns of a day when the roles of the pursuer and the pursued may reverse:

> And when that day shall come, O my brother-man, you who claim for yourself and for me so proud an ancestry - tracing our pedigree through the

> anthropomorphoid ape up to the primeval zoophyte - what potent charm have *you* in store to win exemption from the common doom? Will you represent to that grim spectre, as he gloats over you, scalpel in hand, the inalienable rights of man? (1201)

Carroll here openly makes the connection between animal rights and human rights.

All his fantasy works also largely deal with the breaking down of the made-up sense of superiority humans hold against other non-human beings. In his essay "Alice on the Stage" (1887), Caroll characterizes his central character using positive attributes of animals, such as "gentle as a fawn" and "loving as a dog" (225). Likewise, the fairy children Sylvie and Bruno are referred to as "small human animals" (452) by the Professor. In Carroll's fantasy lands, the hierarchies as well as other boundaries between species are treated as fluid and the lands are filled with curious amalgamated animals. One of the most intriguing animals of Wonderland, the Cheshire Cat is an animal that hovers between reality and dream. In the illustration, we see Alice looking up at the Cat with her hands enfold behind her back, the whole scene breaking down the man-animal hierarchy. The Cat also exhibits a contradicting nature in the sense that, while it looks friendly and good natured, it also has "*very* long claws and a great many teeth" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 71) which indicates its ambiguity as a predator or a pet. Alice's encounter with the Caterpillar is another instance where the superiority of human intellect is denied. Visually and verbally, the insect assumes a dominant role in this incident. The illustration shows Alice looking up at the insect while she is standing on her tip toes, and it is the animal who is giving advice to the human child which the girl intently listens to. The whole episode illustrates the metamorphic quality of all living things. On the whole, Carroll had a certain concern for the non-humans which the future generations would recognize as ecological sensibility in the late twentieth century.

The Snark may be the most elusive of Carroll's animals. It is a hybrid creature that belongs to no specific environment. It is both domestic as well as threatening. According to the Bellman, there are five unmistakable markers which

will help the crew recognize a genuine Snark. First is the taste "Which is meagre and hollow, but crisp…With a flavour of Will-o'-the-Wisp" (763). With each following description, the Snark appears more and more like its pursuers having several characteristic traits that could easily be those of human, such as its laziness, its lack of humour, its fondness for material possessions and its ambitious nature. And among the crew, there was one who has "wholly forgotten his name" (758). His inability to remember his name opens up an opportunity to explore how fluid one's identity is. How he was identified differed depending on who identify him: "His intimate friends called him "Candle-ends," and his enemies "Toasted-cheese" (758). "He would answer to "Hi!" or to any loud cry, /Such as "Fry me!" or "Fritter my wig!"/To "What-you-may-call-um!" or "What-was-his-name"/But especially "Thing-um-a-jig!"" (758). Like the Snark, its pursuer is not easily categorised, and like the Snark, the pursuer can easily serve as food. With each description, the hunter more and more resembles the object of hunt. And when the Baker finally encounters the creature, he "softly and suddenly vanished away-" (778). The quest ironically ends with the pursuer becoming the pursued.

John Berger observes that when a human is "being seen by the animal, he is being seen as his surroundings is seen by him. His recognition of this makes the look of the animal familiar. (But) The animal (also) has secrets specifically addressed to man" (5). In Carroll's fantasy lands, these secrets need not be uncovered by means of intellectual or scientific reasoning which supposes the supremacy of man. His creations embrace uncertainty as part of existence and accepts plurality of perspectives knowing that the "wisest answer…is to behold, we know not anything" (687). This breaking down of the human-animal hierarchy, the union of different species including humans, and the animals fluently speaking a language of nonsense that often amazes Alice conveys what may be called a Derridean message because it suggests that "we are not the auto of autobiography, we are always radically other, already in—or ahuman in our very being—not just in the evolutionary, biological, and zoological fact of our physical vulnerability and mortality, which we share as animals, with animals, but also in our subjection to and constitution in the materiality

and technicity of a language that is always on the scene before we are, as a radically ahuman precondition for our subjectivity, for what makes us human (Wolfe 571). Carroll's fantasy lands reclaim the relevance of alternative perspectives of previously powerless life forms. The study proves Zoe Jaques's assessment to be true when she comments that Carroll's main project in his writing was to "displace the naturalised assumption of human dominion over the animal kingdom" (50).

Chapter four titled "Language Games and Dissolution of Meaning" discusses the way language works in the texts of Carroll. Language is a game played between the author, his characters and the reader. Carroll tests language by taking it apart and continuously playing with its components. The chapter examines Carroll's treatment of language and meaning as fluid and dynamic and his approach foreshadow many ideas as expressed in postmodern narratives.

Carroll's experimentation with language includes creation of new words and meanings. His texts are speckled with new words and phrases that denote absent referents. The Snark, for example, has never been given an illustration to give the reader an idea of what it looks like. Its description by the Bellman denies any coherent image or idea of what the Snark is. When the Baker finally comes across the Snark, he vanishes while exclaiming "It is a Boo-" (778). The object of fear at the end of their quest is represented by an unpronounceable signifier. This is followed by the concluding line "For the Snark was a Boojum, you see" (778). The reader sees nothing in the end, and what remains is the two signifiers that deny any solid referent.

Beckett's treatment of language in his "Three Dialogues" display similarities with Carroll as he declares, "There is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express" (98). Carroll's narratives carry along the reader toward an unknown place where language is not enough to express what is. Long before Lance Olsen proclaims the potential of fantasy to express the human consciousness as it is "a mode concerned with absences, with what does not exist and

what cannot be expressed, ... with 'a gap between signifier and signified'" (20), Carroll had already explored this critical process in his narratives.

The ambiguity of meaning in Carroll's narratives can be summed up in the following comment by the Duchess, ""Take care of the sense, the sounds will take care of themselves" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 97). Alice's discussion with Humpty Dumpty offers the indeterminate relationship between words and meaning which is at play in Carroll's texts: "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" (214). His view is grounded in the perception that there is no hard and fast rule that binds the signifier to the signified. He is only a "master" (214) of words because he is willing to manipulate the meaning-making system. Alice's discussion with the Red Queen in the garden of the Looking Glass also demonstrates that there is no certainty in interpretation and meaning is only relative. When Alice tells her that she wishes to see the garden, the Queen pats her head and says, "when you say 'garden' – *I've* seen gardens, compared with which this would be a wilderness" (162). She continues to interrupt Alice to bring out how each word can be variously interpreted, "When you say 'hill,'…*I* could show you hills, in comparison with which you'd call that a valley." When Alice comments that it would be nonsense to call a hill a valley, the Queen replies, "You may call it 'nonsense' if you like…but *I've* heard nonsense, compared with which that would be as sensible as a dictionary!" (163). The argument of the Red Queen challenges the seeming coherence of linguistic structure into an indeterminate host of undecidable possibilities.

Identifying the principal trend of discourse on language during the eighteenth-century England, Jean-Jacques Lecercle comments, "the implicit idea that guides this practice is that language is an instrument of communication, the imperfections of which must be corrected, while nevertheless celebrating its powers" (Marret-Maleval 112). What we see in Carroll's narratives on the other hand, as Gillian Beer suggests is that conversations are "continually halted by puns, by a splitting of the discourse into two simultaneous and disparate paths, each followed by a respective member of the conversation" (xxxiv). Discussions in *Alice in*

Wonderland never end in effective understanding because puns disrupt every attempt at meaningful conversation. A small word such as "it" can throw a whole conversation into an endless game of interpretation (36). The *Sylvie and Bruno* volumes are even more infused with puns and wordplays. Bruno practically disrupts every dialogue so as to highlight ambiguities present in a simple word or statement.

Through the process of manipulating system of language and taking it apart, Carroll reminds the readers that language is not something we can own, not something that is fixed but something that is dynamic and always in the process of becoming. In the texts of Carroll, language becomes a playfield, packed with implications, associations and contradictions. His creative mind raises a critical issue with the meaning-making process based on accepted conventions of language. According to Derrida's theory of deconstruction (of discourse, and therefore of the world), any notion of a fixed structure is questioned in favour of the idea that there is no centre to structures and no unambiguous meaning. He asserts that language does not depend on correspondence between stable codes and fixed meanings attached to them, instead language exist in a slippery "free play" of signifiers (50). In this vein, similarities with Carroll's ideas as expressed in his narratives are revealing.

In Carroll's representation, language is an innovative process and a playfield, and because it is fundamentally slippery, it has limitless ways of interpretation. The philosopher Wittgenstein has mentioned that it is possible for a work entirely comprised of jokes to contain good and serious philosophical observation (Malcolm 29). Basing on that thought, Carroll's works, often received as children's literature do contain philosophical depth within their whimsical façade. Even though the impossible dialogues between his characters may appear nonsensical, the words are not meaningless. The underlying question remains, however, as to what his narratives really mean and how his characters are to be identified and what they represent. Carroll resonates with many critical issues of postmodern times not because he created worlds that reject conventional meaning and sense, but because his narratives put meaning itself on trial.

Chapter five titled “Suspended Closure and Fantasy Metaphysics” examines the significance of Carroll’s narrative technique that often postpone closure and provide multiple endings. It also explores the implication of Carroll’s fantasy metaphysics in bringing out the human consciousness. Helene Cixous observes that Carroll’s tale of Alice “never sends you back to any reply but perpetuates itself in interrogation” (233). This analysis is in fact true of all his fantasy works. And the postmodernist would easily recognize this sensibility as deconstructive in the contemporary age.

Alice’s concept of life and meaning comes from what she has learnt from authorities such as society, schoolbooks and adults. What she understands from these instructions is the urgency for order, structure and rationality. Journeying through Wonderland with her preconceived believe system, she is often frustrated by the illogical logic of the place. The Caucus race illustrates the peculiar logic of Wonderland that disrupts any aboveground expectation. Firstly, the race course does not have an exact shape and there is no proper beginning or ending to the race. The participants simply start running whenever they like and leaves off anytime they want. And there are no real winners and losers at the end of the race. Another critical aspect of the story is Alice’s vision of the garden. Ever since she caught a glimpse of the garden at the very beginning of her adventure, Alice has aimed to enter the garden. Her primary objective, though all of her physical and mental changes has been to reach the garden. The place, it appears, symbolizes for Alice a realization of her quest. As she finally reaches the garden, Alice soon finds out that the garden will not fulfil her quest for meaning. The whole place represents a total illusion of reality because one of the first things that Alice notices upon entering the garden is that the radiant flowers that she appreciated from afar are upon close inspection, are merely painted with colours. And the garden provides no hope for clarification because it is as paradoxical and absurd as the rest of her journey. Any hope for closure remains suspended in Wonderland.

Alice’s desire to grasp the unknown continues with a strong impulse in the Looking Glass land. The plotline has the game of chess forming its structure, and

like the game, the story entails the possibility of multiple endings. The full title, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* suggests that Alice has discovered something coherent and solid at the end of her quest. What we come across at the end of her journey here, on the other hand, is a total uncertainty of the reality of her experience to the point that she turns to her pet cat Kitty to help her with the answer, to finally turn to the reader and ask them "Which do *you* think it was?" (271). The narrative, till the very end remains unattainable.

The *Sylvie and Bruno* books continue the theme of the object of quest eluding grasp. The opening poem of the text highlights the notion of the randomness of existence as well as the unseen end of "Man's little Day:"

> Man's little Day in haste we spend,
> And, from its merry noontide, send
> No glance to meet the silent end. (Carroll, *Complete Works* 275)

The whole narrative is a continuation of this futile attempt to perceive the unseen end. Wishing to taste the sweet produce of Fairyland, the narrator tried to reach some, "but it was like grasping air" (326). Moments like this reminds of his continuous and fruitless attempt to get hold of his dream-children, Bruno and Sylvie. As he watches the fairy children walk away from him unwaveringly, the narrator comments in a despondent tone, "I knew it would be impossible for *me* to follow. I could but stand outside, and take a last look at the two sweet children, ere they disappeared within…" (383). Scene after scene, he watches with helpless longing as his dream-children "wandered off lovingly together, in among the buttercups, each with an arm twined round the other, whispering and laughing as they went, and never so much look back at poor me" (405).

The *Hunting of the Snark* most vividly subvert the notion of the quest pattern ending in closure. After hunting for the evasive Snark for months, the Bellman excitedly exclaims and tells the crew that the Baker has finally found a genuine Snark. Their cheer and laughter soon die away because the Snark turns out to be a Boojum – the unknowable word which evaporates anyone who comes across it. The last stanza of the poem thus says:

> In the midst of the word he was trying to say,

In the midst of his laughter and glee,
He had softly and suddenly vanished away –
For the Snark *was* a Boojum, you see. (778)

The critical moment in the quest, the moment that is supposed to reveal the object of the quest thus remains suspended.

The creative process of Carroll has similarities with Derrida's explanation of "the strange 'being' of the sign: half of it always 'not there' and the other half always 'not that,'" and the structure of the sign being "determined by the trace or track of that other which is forever absent" (Spivak 18). In the preface to *Sylvie and Bruno*, he explains the ambiguous course of his creative process:

> Sometimes one could trace to their source these random flashes of thought - as being suggested by the book one was reading, or struck out from the "flint" of one's own mind by the "steel" of a friend's chance remark - but they had also a way of their own, of occurring, *a propos* of nothing - specimens of that hopelessly illogical phenomenon, "an effect without a cause." (277)

Therefore, we have Alice, or the fairy children Sylvie and Bruno, or the elusive Snark becoming "signs," in the sense of Derrida, because they are either there, or they are not. The "signs" themselves are not aware of who they are, and they can never be certain about the reality of their own existence.

Carroll always denied any attempt to define his works or turn them into an allegory. He insisted, ""I can guarantee that the books have no religious teaching whatever in them – in fact they do not teach anything at all" (Green 52). This, however does not mean that he intended his readers to receive his nonsense uncritically. He writes, "I'm very much afraid I didn't mean anything but nonsense. Still, you know, words mean more than we mean to express when we use them; so a whole book ought to mean a great deal more than the writer means" (Collingwood 497). Truly, what makes the narratives of Carroll significant is not the meaningless position of the texts but rather what just brushes the meaningless. It is that chase for the unknown that perpetuates the quest and move the storylines. The puzzles are without closures and yet they move on chasing after that delightful curiosity. The

lack of anything coherent to find often leaves the pursuer in a state of dissolution, but that never stops the characters from finding joy in the journey. His narratives accept more than one truth and recognize a multitude of realities. Alan Wilde comments that postmodernists are "characterized by a willingness to live with uncertainty, to tolerate and, in some cases, to welcome a world seen as random and multiple, even, at times absurd" (44). This is the way Carroll's narratives and characters can be best understood. His fantasy metaphysics that continuously put the status of real into question do perpetuate frustration. Yet, this lack of meaning is never without hope or joy because of its serene acceptance of uncertainty. Carroll unbridled his narratives from logic and rationality and organize narrative episodes without the need for chronological order. As a result, we have the creation of a free, fresh artistic space where it is possible to believe in "as many as six impossible things before breakfast" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 200).

According to Antonio Benitez-Rojo, "what lies at the heart of postmodern literary analysis: [is] a questioning of the concept of "unity" and a dismantling, or rather unmasking, of the mechanism that we know as "binary opposition…" (154). Lewis Carroll not only blurs the line between reality and fantasy, he has created worlds where "binary oppositions" are taken apart. In place of relentlessly instructive literary tradition, he emphasizes subjectivity and relativity. In place of rigid conventional structures, the favourite phrase of his famous little girl Alice remains "Let's pretend" (145), and "let's pretend" opens doors for endless possibilities. To end a narrative with a question like the last line of *Through the Looking Glass* is not to end at all, rather, the invitation of opinion encourages plurality of worldviews.

The narratives, in their ever-shifting pattern and acceptance of ambivalence open up an exciting infinity of potentialities, each as valid as the next. Carroll's concern seems to be to help the reader free the imagination to experience the joy of freeplay which postmodernism has celebrated joyously. And although the texts may oscillate between the chaotic and positive look at life, we always see hope prevailing in the end. Without the pressures of an impossible search for "truth," the narrative act and story-telling moves on unbound, finding pleasure and delight in the endless possibility of creation. So to go along with Lacan, whose comments sound

meaningful, “through his work, Lewis Carroll illustrates and even proves all sorts of truths” (33).

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ABSTRACT

POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVES IN SELECT WORKS OF LEWIS CARROLL

AN ABSTRACT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVES IN SELECT WORKS OF LEWIS CARROLL

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Submitted

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> As the subject is quite inexhaustible, there is no hope of ever coming to a regular finish.
>
> - Lewis Carroll (qtd in Collingwood 52)

Associating Lewis Carroll, a Victorian writer of children's fantasy books with postmodernism may seem outlandish and daunting. A close analysis of his works, however, reveals that within the seemingly simple structure of his fantasy works is a tapping into complex philosophical issues. Of his representation of chaotic nonsensical worlds, characters, simplistic relations, communications and circumstances, a reassessment is necessary, because postmodern concepts and questions of identity, meaning, life and existence significantly unravel subtle dimensions of Carroll's creative vision, mostly which did not happen to the critical awareness in the last century. Postmodernism as a critical intellectual movement started in Europe and America in the 1960s with a sceptical attitude to critique and unsettle the metanarratives and worldviews based on concepts of stable centre, language and structure, identity, faith and fixed morality. It is well known that Lyotard and Foucault among others have deconstructed grand theories that circulate and shape the cultural and global worlds. Finally, Derrida came to deconstruct the modern narratives in terms of signification, structure, parody, and free play, and consolidated the deconstructive movement as an intellectual revolution since 1966. Some of their critical premises have been useful to open up fresh insights into Carroll's thought and creative works.

Postmodernism may be one of the most unruly and perplexing terms among a number of literary terms in use today. The debate surrounding postmodern discourse is excessive and even the most basic discussion of its most prominent points would exhaust the scope of this study. Therefore, this study bases on the premise that postmodernism is a state of mind rather than a precise cultural period; say a state of mind to unsettle the settled assumptions; a rejection of the possibility of unmediated reality or objectively rational knowledge, and an acceptance that all

interpretations are contingent on the perspective from which they are made (Bryant 203).

Carroll's works are often being identified as imaginary and fantastic to interest only children, in the light of the standard Victorian world. However, the present study critically examines and unveils those aspects, which in most studies remained evasive or unattended. The study views Carroll's creative world from alternative postmodern perspectives and provides reinterpretations of his nonsensical fantasies popularly held as such. The primary texts selected for the study are Carroll's works on children's fantasy books, namely *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871), *The Hunting of the Snark: An Agony in Eight Fits* (1876), *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889) and *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (1893).

Methodology: For this study, a judicious selection of interdisciplinary approaches is utilized with a focus given more on postmodern critical assessments. Critical concepts and premises from Derrida, Martin Esslin, Cixous, Wittgenstein, Heidegger and others are pertinent to this study. Relevant aspects are explored by six chapters, analysing the areas of correspondence between Carroll's works and the ideas developed in postmodern narratives. The research also makes use of subheadings within chapters for better clarity of different thoughts.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION: REVISITING LEWIS CARROLL IN THE POSTMODERN CONTEXT

The chapter begins with highlighting certain aspects of Carroll's life and career which are found to have significant bearing on the objectives of the thesis. Lewis Carroll was born Charles Ludwidge Dodgson on January 27, 1832 at Daresbury, Cheshire, England and died at Guilford, Surrey on January 14, 1898. Carroll came from a family that was highly conservative and religious. He was the eldest son of a clergyman, Rev. Charles Dodgson (same name as Carroll's real name), and following the family tradition, his brothers also became important members in the Anglican Church. Though Carroll too had studied to be a clergy, he never accepted the final ordination. Instead of following the family footsteps, he

pursued fictional writing for children that has as its theme, fantasy and nonsense. His biographer Morton Cohen comments that Carroll developed an ambivalent relationship with his father's values and with the Church of England as a whole (200-202). He was known to be "unorthodox in religion and disliked the Anglican tenets which disapproved of ministers who attended the theatre or were interested in secular activities" (Skinner 11).

From a young age, Carroll was gifted with artistry, imaginativeness and creativity. He enjoyed inventing games and making up stories to entertain his siblings. In high school, young Carroll had already possessed a tendency to test the boundaries of linguistic structures. His school headmaster wrote that Carroll was "marvellously ingenious in replacing the ordinary inflexions of nouns and verbs, as detailed in our grammars, by more exact analogies, or convenient forms of his own devising" (Clark 38). Paradoxically, the whole professional career of Lewis Carroll, in a way, can be perceived as a quest for order. He began his career as a student of Mathematics, and for many years, he worked as a teacher of the subject in Christ Church College, Oxford. And in his later years, he turned to symbolic logic. There are many amusing stories that illustrate of his compulsive orderliness. He was even known to have compiled an index for his works all arranged from A ("Accelerated velocity, causes of") to W ("wilful waste, etc., lesson to be learnt from") (Holquist 148). It can be approved from evidence that perhaps this preoccupation with order led him to confront the underlying random nature of life and existence which forms the basis of all his fantasy works.

Significance of the study: Lewis Carroll was not included among writers with merits for further research in the editions of *Victorian Fiction: A Guide to Research* (1964 and 1980) and *Victorian Poets: Guide to Research* (1956 and 1968). There could be many reasons why the editors did not select his works, but one major probable reason remains that maybe Carroll was not regarded a significant enough writer and his works considered to have comparatively lesser to offer in the field of academia. Yet "curioser and curioser," fascination with Carroll's life and art seems to escalade in the past few years. There has been a plethora of literary retellings, a number of stage, movie and television adaptations of the *Alice* stories including Walt

Disney pictures production in 2010 and 2016. The books have never been out of print and have been translated in to more than 170 languages (Douglas-Fairhurst 2015). John Lennon attributed the fantastical imagery of the Beatles' song "Lucy in the Sky with Diamond" (1967) to his reading of the *Alice* books (Sheff 182); and Taylor Swift, in her song "Wonderland" (2020) muses about the rabbit hole and the Cheshire Cat. These are only some of the examples of Carroll's influence in contemporary culture.

Indeed, more critical readers are turning not only to the *Alice* books, but to his lesser-known works. His books are being studied in courses in Victorian literature, children's literature, linguistics and philosophy (Guiliano 263). After examining an extensive body of published research on Lewis Carroll from 1983 through 2003, Carolyn Singer finds that more and more criticism in recent times have started to examine Carroll's works from political, material, cultural, psychological, historical, and rhetorical perspectives, and finds that there are critical avenues to explore, not only regarding "Carroll's engagement with nineteenth-century debates about class, gender, and national identity, but his continuing relevance to our own critical questions and theoretical controversies" (375).

Despite the many studies on Carroll, the writer and his creative works remain an enigma, and the creator retains his reputation as an evasive man who has so far defied comprehension (Cohen xxi). Carolyn Sigler calls him "elusive, compelling, and unknowable as a Snark" (376), and Elizabeth Sewell feels a "strong sense of unfinished business" (541) when it comes to the writer. At the same time, the global appeal of Carroll's works also suggest that his stories have values far beyond entertainment, and their continuing relevance point to their significance in addressing contemporary critical questions and theoretical challenges. Meanwhile, no substantial work of study could be found as attending a weighty analysis on Carroll and his works reflecting on fresh perspectives apparently postmodern.

With new postmodern analytical devices, it is a critical endeavour to study the Victorian writer of nonsensical fantasies who somehow remains largely significant in the twenty first century culture. The research explores the patterns of

resistance as it exists in the works of Lewis Carroll, specifically those pertaining to his defence against children and non-human others which he felt were unfairly oppressed by authorities. It also focuses on analysing his works so as to outline similarities found with themes and techniques used in postmodern narratives. The outcome is simultaneously hoped to serve both as a mirror and a window for contemporary readers.

CHAPTER TWO: SUBVERTING CUSTOM AND INVERTING PATTERNS

The chapter explores the manners in which Lewis Carroll subverts the strict standards existing in social and literary domain of the time which he felt was oppressive towards children. The chapter analyses how Lewis Carroll both installs and subverts; uses and abuses many of the conventions of Victorian children's literature. It also examines Carroll's use of 'literary nonsense' and whimsical inversion of patterns in order to undermine the insistence on order. The result of his ironic approach is seen as bringing out the instability and arbitrariness that underlies rigid foundations.

Parody of the didactic trope in children's literature: Most works intended for younger audience during the Victorian period contained an instructive aim. The stories are "usually heavily moral, full of 'good' children and didacticism" (Carter 275). It was the inclination of parents, writers and most adults of the time to produce "such literature as will not ignobly interest nor frivolously amuse, but convey the wisest instruction in the pleasantest manner" (Lang 22). The firmly good fairies became important models of Victorian instructors. We see examples in Catherine Sinclaire's fairy "Teach-all" in *Holiday House* (1839) and Charles Kingsley's fairies namely, "Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby" and "Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid" in *The Water-Babies* (1863). It appears that Lewis Carroll, from a young age, had developed an ironic view towards fairies that come with copious instructions. A poem he wrote at thirteen years of age, titled "My Fairy" takes an ironic approach towards the relentless didactic tradition. The poem, in an excessive parody of the good-all-fairies mocks the copious instructions of the fairy to the boy, from his sleeping habits to his eating habits, to his overall conduct. The fairy basically teaches him of the countless

impulses he must avoid in order to be a nice Victorian boy. The poem ends with a satirical moral: "You mustn't" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 779).

Carroll blatantly parodies the attempt to put undue emphasis on morals in children's realms. Alice's encounter with the Duchess is an example. The Duchess tells Alice that "Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it" (96) and proceeds to tell her of the various morals one can find in life, which seem more and more contrived as she attempts to point out the moral behind "mustard machine" (97) and pigs flying (98). The Duchess' remark resonates with the Victorian understanding that everything should result in a lesson of some sort. The absence of anything substantial to be found in the Duchess' remark on the contrary clearly points at the writer mocking the convention of unflagging pedantry. And the Duchess' voice dying away right in the middle of her favourite word "moral" distinctly highlights the very intention of the author to undermine and subvert the aggrandizing of moralizing in writings for children. His use of the subversive potential of parody as a strategy to question dominant narratives has become an important feature of postmodern discourse. It corresponds to Linda Hutcheon's comment, "parody is a perfect postmodern form, in some sense, for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies" (11).

The study does not suggest that Lewis Carroll was against the teaching of morality and manners in children per se. His discord seems to do more with the pointing out of these moral teachings in a superior and manipulative way rather than in a compassionate way. And it is fitting that he has been credited with helping end an era of didacticism in children's literature and inaugurating a new era in which writing for children aims more than just to teach (Susina 3). Criticism of the superior mentality of the Victorian society, mocking of its snobbish mannerism and undermining of its self-imposed right to dominate over any weaker beings is a theme explored though Carroll's parodies and tales. In this manner, Lewis Carroll can be perceived as an unconscious precursor of postcolonial discourse.

Carroll's nonsense and 'irrational' logic: At the opening poem of *Alice in Wonderland*, Carroll proclaimed that "There will be nonsense in it!" (13) and this rings true of all his creative works. Subversion of rational thought, or rejection of

systematised reason is a common theme examined in his works. The court proceeding towards the end of *Alice in Wonderland* illustrates the absence of meaning prevailing in Wonderland. The Knave is accused of a trivial thing but none of the witnesses are able to provide coherent evidence, and the whole proceeding turns into an absurd scene. The King, who is also the judge repeatedly asks for a verdict, but a coherent result never materializes. The trial proceeds in a haphazard manner and never determines the guilt or innocence of the accused. The whole court scene cannot help but bring to mind Kafka's *The Trial* (1925) where Joseph K. is accused of a crime, but the nature of the crime is neither revealed to him nor to the reader.

The whole story of *The Hunting of the Snark* is also a subversion of systematised rationality. Michael Holquist states that the best way to understand the *Snark* poem is to perceive it as "a structure of resistance to other structures of meaning which might be brought to it" (156) and that the poem is simply a fiction, a thing that does not seek to be "real" or "true" and the moral of its story is that it has no moral (164). Indeed, from a conventional viewpoint, none of the means, motivations and conducts of the hunting crew make sense. The poem is characterized by non-specific unrecognizable characters who are presented almost like mechanical puppets with extremely questionable motivation. Though they have embarked upon the quest to find the Snark, none of them really have any idea what their object of pursuit looks like, and the map they bring to help them navigate their course is "a perfect and absolute blank!" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 761).

The very beginning of Alice's adventure into the Looking Glass land highlights the negation of time's linear procession. As she begins looking about the place, one of the first things she notices is that the clock, instead of having hands, has a grinning face (148) indicating that in this place, the concept of linear time has become irrelevant. In this land, "it takes all the running *you* can do, to keep in the same place" (166). The following lines by Alice do remind a reader of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953): "Why, I do believe we've been under this tree the whole time! Everything's just as it was!" (165). The narrator of *Sylvie and Bruno* experiences a similar situation. He describes, "I tried my best to walk a few steps: but

the ground slipped away backwards, quite as fast as I could walk, so that I made no progress at all" (452).

Carroll clearly makes use of "nonsense" as a weapon of destruction for order making system. His principle of nonsense aims at the finer sense for natural order as opposed to the man-made system that makes order mannered, unnatural and exploitive. In a very significant way, Carroll has deconstructed established social and moral order, and has opened up reader's perception to question rigid customs and practices. Though his works may not make sense in the obvious or conventional way, they give expression to some of the most basic issues and problems of humanity such as life's impossible paradoxes.

CHAPTER THREE: THE AMBIGUOUS SUBJECT AND THE INTERSPECIES RELATIONSHIP

This chapter examines Carroll's representation of ambiguous beings and fluid interspecies boundaries which is seen as prefiguring some postmodern and post humanist concerns.

The ambiguous self: Other little girls travelling through fantasy lands are most often preoccupied with finding out where they are. Princess Irene in George Macdonald's *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and Dorothy Gale in L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) repeatedly ask "*where* am I?" Alice's main concern, on the other hand, is a question of who she is rather than where she is. From the beginning of her adventure, the little girl turns her inquiry inward, perceiving that the mystery of her surroundings corresponds the mystery of her identity. As she enters Wonderland, Alice asks herself a question that weaves throughout the story,

> I wonder if I've changed in the night? Let me think: *was* I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is 'Who in the world am I?' Ah, *that's* the great puzzle! (Carroll, *Complete Works* 28)

The only consistent answer she is able to find seems to be a fragmented sense of identity. She thought to herself, "it's no use now…to pretend to be two people! Why,

there's hardly enough of me left to make *one* respectable person!" (24). Baffled at her ambivalent sense of self, Alice "began thinking over all the children she knew that were of the same age as herself, to see if she could have been changed for any of them" (28). Being unable to conceive of a consistent self, Alice considers the idea that her identity may not be as unified as she hopes to be, but is in fact fluid and shifting.

Through the course of her journey, the Caterpillar, who is himself a metamorphic creature reminds Alice of her uncertain sense of being. He asks her in a languid, sleepy voice, "Who are *you*?" (53). This apparently simple and straightforward question has Alice baffled as she finds herself unable to explain who she is. She replies, "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." When the Caterpillar asks her to explain herself, Alice replies, "I ca'n't explain myself, I'm afraid, Sir," said Alice, "because I'm not myself, you see" (53-54). Try as she may, language seems to fail her to express her true self.

Carroll's fairy children in the two volumes of the *Sylvie and Bruno* books are also perplexingly portrayed. The two beings are curiously portrayed as both fairies and human children. As the story opens, Sylvie and Bruno appear as two normal children whose father is the Warden of a kingdom called Outland. The story barely unfolds and the narrator suddenly awakes into the setting of another story where Sylvie and Bruno appear as fairies. Towards the end, they reappear in this other setting as fairies posing as children. In fact, the story never makes clear which identity of them is the "real" one. They are simply both fairies and human, or they are neither. Characters from different worlds strangely merge in this land (451), and sometimes, identity confusion even crosses boundaries of gender, such as when Bruno mistakes himself for Sylvie (356). In fact, throughout the two books, the characters often easily and unexpectedly switch in to another character so that the reader can never tell which character we see at the moment.

Carroll's portrayal of characters that are undergoing constant transformation, his representation of identities which are open to contestation and the rejection of any

ultimate referent seems to prefigure what Docherty explains in the context of postmodernism,

> Postmodern characters typically fall into incoherence: character traits are not repeated, but contradicted... At every stage in the representation of character, the finality of the character, a determinate identity for the characters is deferred as the proliferation of information about the character leads into irrationality, incoherence, or self-contradiction. (140)

Subverting scientific authority: Being a "sharp satirist of the self-presumption of scientific rationality and authority" (Mayer 431), Lewis Carroll fiercely attacked the scientific authority that subjugated powerless animals in the quest for knowledge and power. He was highly concerned about the use of live animals as objects for studies in English physiological laboratories. As public debate over the ethics of vivisection escalated, Lewis Carroll also wrote pieces challenging the logic which justified the gathering of scientific knowledge at any cost. In one of his pieces called "Vivisection as a Sign of the Times," Carroll, in a rather prophetic tone, contests the rationalization of the exploitation of powerless beings for the purpose of acquiring knowledge and advancement, stressing the will to dominate in the quest for higher knowledge. In challenging the ideology that authorised vivisection in the name of human progress, Carroll links the subordination of animals to the subordination of women and the working classes (5). The piece also associates practices of the physiological laboratory with economic, political, domestic and scientific exploitation which are all concerned with misuse of power.

The false sense of superiority humans hold against the animals is a recurrent theme found in Carroll's fictional works. His works are overrun with an imaginative merging of human and animals. For example, the Snark is an elusive hybrid creature belonging to no fixed environment. It is at once domestic as well as threatening. Carefully examined on a minute scale; pursued as a curious delicacy for the feasting fork, threatened by industrial development, charmed, washed and domesticated (Carroll, *Complete Works* 769), the Snark is an indeterminate creature. And among the crew, there was a man who has "wholly forgotten his name" (758). Owing to his

loss of name, he was identified by his fellow crew depending on their perception of him. With each identification, the man hunting for the elusive animal sounds more and more like the object of his pursuit. It is perhaps the Snark's similarity to its pursuers that finally renders the crew powerless, for in the end, it is the hunter who has become the hunted.

In his essay "Alice on the Stage" (1887), Carroll describes his protagonist using positive animal attributes – "gentle as a fawn" and "loving as a dog" (225). In Carroll's fictional lands, the boundary between species is treated as slippery and the lands are filled with curious hybrid animals. The Cheshire Cat, one of the most enigmatic inhabitants of Wonderland hovers between the realms of dream and reality. The illustration also depicts a negation of human-animal hierarchy, for we see Alice gazing up at the Cat with hands folded in her back, willingly and respectfully looking up at the animal. The Cheshire Cat also displays a contradicting disposition, because while looking good-natured, we see that it also has "*very* long claws and a great many teeth" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 71), indicating its ambiguity as a pet or a predator. This interspecies identification is also seen in *Sylvie and Bruno* in which the Professor refers to the child protagonists as "small human animals" (452). Carroll's inquiries often challenge and destabilize the notion of a stable identity in favour of hybrid and indeterminate beings that continually escape fixity.

The rejection of human-animal hierarchy, the fusion of different species including humans, and the fantastic animals fluently speaking a nonsense language that often astonishes Alice, communicate a Derridean message, suggesting that "we are not the auto of autobiography, we are always radically other, already in—or ahuman in our very being—not just in the evolutionary, biological, and zoological fact of our physical vulnerability and mortality, which we share as animals, with animals, but also in our subjection to and constitution in the materiality and technicity of a language that is always on the scene before we are, as a radically ahuman precondition for our subjectivity, for what makes us human" (Wolfe 571). Zoe Jaques's assessment rings true when she comments that Carroll's overall project in his writing was to "displace the naturalised assumption of human dominion over the animal kingdom" (50).

Antonio Benitez-Rojo observes that a critical part of postmodern discourse is "a questioning of the concept of "unity" and a dismantling, or rather unmasking, of the mechanism that we know as "binary opposition…" (154). Carroll has clearly anticipated this postmodern thought as his works have significantly unsettled the assumed barrier between human beings and the non-human others, and has critically highlighted the metamorphic quality of all lives. His challenging of the discriminatory human-animal hierarchies is a precursor of the critical philosophical concern of the twentieth century that speaks now a language of compassion and ethics.

CHAPTER FOUR: LANGUAGE GAMES AND DISSOLUTION OF MEANING

This chapter examines Carroll's treatment of language which is observed to explore and express the dynamism, complexity, fluidity and instability surrounding language and meaning. In Carroll's works, language is a game played between the writer, the characters and the reader. He tests language by deforming it and endlessly playing with its components. The texts are rife with new words and phrases that mostly refer to absent and even unimaginable referents. *The Hunting of the Snark* is replete with such absent referents. For instance, the Snark has never been represented with an illustration by the author. Sophie Marret-Maleval suggests that Carroll's marvellous "is not based, like Frankenstein or Dracula, on the intuition that anxiety occurs when the object a appears in the real" (110). In fact, the object of quest, as well as the object of fear in *The Hunting of the Snark* never attain coherent expressions and only refer to absence. When the Baker encounters the Snark in the end, we see him disappear while exclaiming, "It is a Boo -" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 778). The object of anxiety encountered by the Baker is represented by an unpronounceable signifier. The poem then concludes with the line, "For the Snark was a Boojum, you see" (778). In the end, the reader sees precisely nothing, and is left with two signifiers – a Snark and a Boojum - that fail to represent any comprehensible referent. Beckett's treatment of language displays a lot of similarities to Carroll, such as what he writes in his "Three Dialogues,"

> There is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express. (98)

The *Snark* carries the reader along toward a secret place, unexplored, perhaps unexplorable, where language is not satisfactory to express what is.

The nonsensical exchanges of Wonderland inhabitants often propel the narratives to a succession of language games. The ambiguity of meaning in the text is illustrated by the Duchess's comment to Alice, "Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves" (97). Alice's conversation with the Red Queen in the Looking Glass garden is another example that demonstrates that meaning and reality are relative and there is no certainty in interpretation. The Red Queen says to Alice, "when you say 'garden' – *I've* seen gardens, compared with which this would be a wilderness" (162). When Alice replies after a lengthy exchange that comparing a hill to a valley would be nonsense (163), the Queen responds, "You may call it 'nonsense' if you like…but *I've* heard nonsense, compared with which that would be as sensible as a dictionary!" (163). The Red Queen's argument throws the seeming definiteness of linguistic structure and understanding of Alice in to an indefinite host of contradicting and undecidable possibilities.

Within Derrida's theory of deconstruction (of discourse, and thus of the world), any idea of a fixed structure is challenged in favour of the notion that there is no centre or structure, no univocal meaning. He argues that language is not dependent on correspondence between fixed codes and the stable meanings attached to them, instead language exists in an unstable "free play" of signifiers (50). The concept of a coherent relationship between signifier and signified therefore, is no longer plausible, and instead we have limitless shifts in meaning relayed from one signifier to another. In this light, parallels with Carroll's ideas as expressed in his literary works are particularly revealing.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUSPENDED CLOSURE AND FANTASY METAPHYSICS

This chapter analyses the significance of Carroll's fantasy metaphysics and his narrative technique that often suspend closure and offer multiple endings. An important aspect of Carroll's fantasy is the disruption of the quest pattern leading to closure. Final knowledge and meaning remain suspended in his stories. When Helene Cixous comments that Carroll's story of Alice "never sends you back to any reply but perpetuates itself in interrogation" (233), the observation stands true of all his literary works.

Alice's understanding of meaning and concepts come from what she has learnt from authorities such as adults, society and schoolbooks. And what she understands from these authorities is the pertinence of order, structure and linearity. Confronting Wonderland with her preconceived notions, Alice is often left puzzled by the illogical logic of this land. One example is the Mad Tea Party. When the Mad Hatter begins with the question, "Why is a raven like a writing-desk?" (75), Alice is readily excited to take part in the riddle as she believes she can find out the answer to the puzzle. She soon finds out however, that the riddle at the party seems to exist solely to perpetuate confusion and disorder. Without addressing the puzzle, conversation at the party effortlessly moves on to other topics. The one who puts up the question, the Hatter himself is completely unbothered by the lack of answer to his riddle (77). Suspended closure is all that occurs in Alice's encounter with Wonderland inhabitants. No implosion or explosion of senses.

Alice's desire to grasp the ungraspable takes a central place not only in *Alice in Wonderland*, but continues with a resolute impulse in *Through the Looking Glass*. The full title of the second *Alice* book is, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There.* The second part of the title suggests that Alice has found something solid and concrete. In that case, it can be expected that when she left the Looking Glass house, she would have gained some kind of assurance and understanding. However, what is revealed at the end of the story is an uncertainty of her experience to the point that she has to turn to Kitty and eventually to the reader to ask for their thoughts on the matter. The text remains unattainable. As Cixous explains "it is with the reader-pursuer who almost lays hands on the es-caped text, but never completely" (237).

The two volumes of *Sylvie and Bruno* widely focus on the quest for the elusive. Trying to sample the sweet produce of Fairyland, the narrator tried to pick some, "but it was like grasping air" (326). Such moments recall the narrator's perpetual and futile attempts to catch hold of his dream-children, Sylvie and Bruno. Watching the two walk steadily away from him, the narrator despondently notes, "I knew it would be impossible for *me* to follow. I could but stand outside, and take a last look at the two sweet children, ere they disappeared within…" (383). Scene after scene, the narrator watches helplessly as Sylvie and Bruno "wandered off lovingly together, in among the buttercups, each with an arm twined round the other, whispering and laughing as they went, and never so much look back at poor me" (405).

The end of *The Hunting of the Snark* is a subversion of the quest pattern in the sense that the quest eventually ends in suspension. After hunting for months, the Bellman happily shouts and informs the crew that the Baker has certainly found a Snark. Their torrent of laughter and cheers is however, soon followed by the ominous words "It's a Boo-", then silence. The Snark it turns out was a Boojum – the unintelligible word that vanishes anyone it comes across – and the Baker disappears right in the midst of his laughter and glee. The key moment in the quest, one that is expected to reveal a significant answer remain suspended.

With regard to Carroll's creative process, Derrida's account of "the strange 'being' of the sign: half of it always 'not there' and the other half always 'not that,'" and the structure of the sign being "determined by the trace or track of that other which is forever absent" (Spivak 18) seem to reflect its course. The writer insisted that he was unable to locate the source of his materials and contended that he is as much part of the narrative journey as the reader is. He explains in the preface to *Sylvie and Bruno:*

> Sometimes one could trace to their source these random flashes of thought - as being suggested by the book one was reading, or struck out from the "flint" of one's own mind by the "steel" of a friend's chance remark - but they had

> also a way of their own, of occurring, *a propos* of nothing - specimens of that hopelessly illogical phenomenon, "an effect without a cause." (277)

And thus, there is Alice, or the Snark, or the fairy children Sylvie and Bruno becoming "signs," in Derrida's sense, because either they are there, or they are not. The "signs" themselves do not know who they are, or the reality of their own existence.

Embracing uncertainty: Carroll always insisted that his work teach nothing and that he did not mean anything but nonsense. At the same time, he did not mean for the reader to receive his nonsense uncritically. He writes, "I'm very much afraid I didn't mean anything but nonsense. Still, you know, words mean more than we mean to express when we use them; so a whole book ought to mean a great deal more than the writer means" (Collingwood 497). Indeed, what makes the texts of Carroll remarkable is not the meaningless position of the narratives but rather what just touches the meaningless. It is that very pursuit that moves the stories and perpetuates its quest. Despite its illogical rules and at times darker elements, the world of Wonderland is not unhappy living with ambivalence. The riddles lack closures yet they move through time without stop. Again and again, Alice explores the logic of the fantasy land which only take her to some logical impasse and leaves her frustrated. But being Alice, she continues in hope, propelled by her unquenchable curiosity. The same can be said of the narrator of the *Sylvie and Bruno* books. He understands that he will never catch hold of his dream children. Yet, as he "dreamily" drifts in and out of the different worlds, his "whole being … absorbed in strong curiosity as to what would happen next" (323).

According to Alan Wilde, "Postmodernists are characterized by a willingness to live with uncertainty, to tolerate and, in some cases, to welcome a world seen as random and multiple, even, at times absurd (44). And this is the way Carroll's texts and characters can be best described. The texts clearly accept more than one reality and more than one truth. By putting into question what is real, the narratives perpetuate frustration and discontent. Yet this chaos is both disturbing and joyous at the same time because of its serene acceptance of ambivalence. The Carroll

metaphysics is revealed in fantastic terms resulting in confusion and suspension of the real and the unreal. He frees himself from logic and rationality and arrange narrative episodes without concern for chronological motivation. He rearranges word order, syllables and so on and create new words and terms in order to explore possibilities. The unruly non-causal sequences experienced in dream propels the works of Carroll and as the result, we have the creation of a new, free, artistic space where one can believe in "as many as six impossible things before breakfast" (Carroll, *Complete Works* 200).

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

The concluding chapter contains a summation of the focal points of each chapter and outline the ways in which the chapters have defended the purpose of the study. The final chapter highlights the findings of the thesis which is believed to explain the continuing relevance of Lewis Carroll in the twenty first century.

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