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Alice's Vacillation between Childhood and Adolescence in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

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In the novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, the protagonist Alice is a seven year-old girl. She falls down a rabbit-hole chasing a White Rabbit with a waistcoat and ends up in Wonderland, a place where logic no longer applies and animals talk. We follow her on her adventures and encounters with absurd characters such as the Cheshire Cat, the Mad Hatter, the Queen of Hearts and the Caterpillar.

In the world of literature, novels are categorized in different genres. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* belongs to the genre of fantasy, which itself can be divided into different classifications. The novel includes elements from several fantasy genres and therefore can be classified as mixed fantasy "which includes journey, transformation, talking animal [sic], and magic" (Gates, Steffel and Molson 7). At the same time, it has certain similarities to a Bildungsroman (even though it may not be the most typical one) which constitutes another special genre of books with child protagonists and is defined by Ross Murfin & Supryia M. Ray as: "A novel that recounts the development (psychological and sometimes spiritual) of an individual from childhood to maturity, to the point at which the main character recognizes his or her place and role in the world" (31). It is first of all a children's book as it has a child protagonist; however, it also appeals to adult readers with its advanced logical reasoning, witty puns and trenchant satire of Victorian society.

However, while Alice is supposed to be seven years of age, the reader can perceive her as older than that and get the impression that she has entered adolescence. Alice vacillates between being a child and striving to act like an adult in her various encounters in Wonderland. In this essay, I will examine Alice's emotional and intellectual phases in her search for identity, and show the different levels according to developmental theory. I will demonstrate that while the book does not trace her development as such (i.e. it is not a typical Bildungsroman), it nevertheless highlights a child's development by juxtaposing different developmental stages. The scientific and realistic functions of developmental theory may at first seem haphazard in the analysis of a literary character in a fantasy world. But, this essay illustrates Carroll's professional familiarity with his child protagonist through the logic and consistency of his depiction of Alice.

The definition of childhood has changed over time. Childhood corresponds to the first age of life. According to the historian Philippe Ariès, previous to medieval times there was probably no place for childhood and children were looked upon as small adults (31). Only in the thirteenth century were a few types of children defined that might resemble the ones of the modern concept of childhood (Ariès 32). During the nineteenth century, when *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was published in Victorian England, childhood was "a privileged

age and a particular division of human life" (Ariès 29). The seven year-old protagonist Alice is regarded as a little child by other characters in the story based on her looks and behavior. She is frequently mentioned by the omniscient narrator, as well as by her older sister, as "little Alice". The adjective *little* has a diminutive function, here used to bring into focus her childlike qualities. As Alice lies asleep, her older sister reflects on childhood picturing to herself how "little Alice" one day will be a grown woman and may have children of her own (Carroll 109-10). Another character who emphasizes Alice being and acting like a child is the King of Hearts. His wife, The Queen of Hearts, wants to have Alice beheaded as she had answered back to the queen "loudly and decidedly" (Carroll 68). But the king tries to explain and excuse Alice's rebellious behavior and save her life by telling the Queen, "Consider, my dear: she is only a child" (Carroll 69). If Alice were an adult, she would have been responsible for her actions and been subject to capital punishment immediately. However, thanks to the King's pleading remark and the Queen's pardon, she survives. Interestingly, the Queen of Hearts had greeted Alice and addressed her in the following manner just a little earlier, "What's your name, child?" (Carroll 67).

A great deal of Alice's actions and utterances in response to her interlocutors confirm her acting as a seven year-old. She would conform to the concrete-operational stage, ranging from 7 to 12 years of age, according to the developmental stages of the psychologist Jean Piaget. In this stage the child shows symptoms of strong cognitive self-righteousness, believing that s/he is smarter than the adults and that the latter can be easily deceived, due to their lack of knowledge (Evenshaug and Hallen 129). Alice regards many of the adult authority figures she meets as irrational and unreliable. Carolyn Sigler refers to Carroll's depiction of adulthood as an "autocracy of fools, in which meaningless didacticism is wielded as a weapon, rules of behavior and decorum are hypocritical and contradictory, and the threat of punishment always looms" (58). The protagonist does not find the adult characters amusing but becomes frustrated with them as she has to mind her manners and keep her temper. The child's feelings are in turmoil due to the illogical ways of the adults. Elsie Leach sums it up concisely, "They aren't consistent and they aren't fair" (92). Alice does not approve at all of her interlocutors contradicting her. The Frog-Footman questions her right to enter the Duchess' house, "only Alice did not like to be told so" (Carroll 48). The Caterpillar also tells her off, and the narrator comments that "she had never been so much contradicted in all her life before, and she felt that she was losing her temper" (Carroll 42).

Another characteristic of the concrete-operational stage is the child's need for bragging (Evenshaug and Hallen 129). S/he brags about skills and achievements with sciolism[1] as a likely by-product. Alice is very fond of showing off her knowledge. She gladly informs the Duchess that "the earth takes twenty-four hours to turn round on its axis" (Carroll 50). The protagonist's need to show off her knowledge is so compelling that she even must repeat various facts in her solitude. In addition, she takes pride in using what she acknowledges as grand words, e.g. *longitude* and *latitude* (Carroll 3), and *juror* (Carroll 93), even though she might not have a correct command of them. Throughout the novel Alice is being tested by various adult figures on knowledge she has learnt in school. She is asked to recite poems based on rote memorization. The Victorian ideal of "exact encyclopedic knowledge" required great oration, recitation and memory skills (Patten 137). Alice does not mind being put to the test even though she may feel quite insecure sometimes about the veracity of her answers. An understanding of the subject was not necessarily required. The Mock Turtle's reflections on recitation reveal his view on the matter, "What *is* the use of repeating all that stuff … if you don't explain it as you go on? It's by far the most confusing thing *I* ever heard!" (Carroll 91). A disadvantage of the child's need to brag and show off results in her tendency to easily become offended when others criticize her errors and her lack of knowledge.

Like other children her age Alice is strongly governed by rules. Rules are explicit sets of conduct which are meant for everyone to follow to maintain order. Roni Natov discusses in the article "The Persistence of Alice" how many of the rules can be "essential and comforting" for the child (54-55). Alice persists in searching for rules in troubling situations for guidance on conduct, and if there are none she invents new ones that can provide relief. When facing the problem of her not being able to enter a small door, her imagination conjures up the perfect solution which would make her able to shut up like a telescope in order to get through it. However, she expects the existence of a book of rules for that very purpose, which ought to help her "at any rate" (Carroll 5). Alice is drilled to learn and obey all the rules and act upon them and therefore does not rely on her own problem-solving skills.

Games and competitions play a central role in the plot of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, amongst them the Caucus Race and croquet. The Caucus Race is the activity which the group of animals together with Alice choose to perform to get themselves dry after the swim in the Pool of Tears (Carroll 19-21). In a game or a competition, the rules form the foundation and every game or competition normally has a winner. The games that Alice

[1] A superficial show of learning (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary 090420).

comes across in Wonderland are different as the same rules do not apply as the ones at home, nor are they followed by the contenders. In the extreme cases, they do not have any rules at all. And a game without clearly defined rules is bound to cause a child's frustration. The logician Bernard Patten on the other hand argues in his book *The Logic of Alice: Clear Thinking in Wonderland* that a game without rules could be pure childhood play: "a game, in which satisfaction comes from playing itself, rather than from winning" (145). Kids play and do as they please in a social game of having fun together as a group where everybody wins. Alice ought to be amused and laughing, but she is rather confused, not knowing what to think. Nevertheless, she is not as frustrated as she might have been about the Caucus Race, even though she finds the whole thing "very absurd", as all contenders are denominated winners and they all receive prizes (Carroll 21). The solution appeals to the child's sense of justice. At the Queen's croquet ground, however, it is very upsetting for Alice that the rules are not followed. All contenders of the game of croquet except the protagonist humour the Queen of Hearts, fearing for their lives, and therefore they let her win undeservingly. Alice complains to the Cheshire Cat that the other participants do not "play at all fairly" and how "they don't seem to have any rules in particular; at least, if there are, nobody attends to them" (Carroll 72). Cheating appals her, including moments when she herself has cheated: "once she remembered trying to box her own ears for having cheated herself in a game of croquet she was playing against herself" (Carroll 7).

A child's mental abilities are not fully developed at the age of seven, especially hypothetical thinking which is enhanced first during adolescence. Hypothetical thinking allows for the young person to "take the perspective of others by enabling him or her to think through what someone else might be thinking or feeling, given that person's point of view" according to Laurence Steinberg (64). The lack of advanced hypothetical thinking affects the child's ability to view something from the perspective of others. This is rather obvious when Alice meets the Mouse in the pool of tears. She does not want to accept its dislike for cats and dogs as she insists on praising her cat Dinah as "a capital one for catching mice", even though she apologizes when she realizes the Mouse's distress (Carroll 15). In the same dialogue she relates about a nice dog belonging to a farmer nearby, saying "it's so useful, it's worth a hundred pounds! He says it kills all the rats and - oh dear", thus making the same mistake again (Carroll 16). The Mouse is not the only character in Wonderland Alice makes offensive remarks to, even if it is done unintentionally. To the motley group of the Caucus Race, of which some are birds, she says that Dinah would "eat a little bird as soon as look at it" (Carroll 23). Alice insults the Caterpillar for his height: "three inches is such a wretched

height to be" (Carroll 42). In this developmental state, the child does not seem to be able to take the perspective of her fellow companions, thus revealing an apparent lack of understanding. Most likely, it is not the protagonist's intention to be mean to others, and based on the reactions of her interlocutors, she often apologizes to them after realizing that she might have hurt their feelings.

The child's lack of advanced hypothetical thinking also encompasses difficulties with abstract concepts like "puns, proverbs, metaphors, and analogies" (Steinberg 64). A child tends to take words literally. However, one linguistic phenomenon in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is the polysemy of words, i.e. words that have slippery meanings. For instance, the word *mad* has ambiguous meanings as it is synonymous with both *angry* ("Mad," def. 1) and *crazy* ("Mad," def. 2). And the metaphors "as mad as a hatter" and "as mad as a March hare" must have been the inspiration for Carroll's two characters with the same name in Wonderland. The metaphors seem to cause our child protagonist as much confusion as the characters she encounters. Another abstract concept that has been a source of great puzzlement for Alice and constant amusement for the reader is the frequent use of homophones throughout the novel. Examples of homophones in the story are *not* and *knot* (Carroll 23), *lesson* and *lessen* (Carroll 84), *porpoise* and *purpose* (Carroll 88), and *axis* and *axes* (Carroll 50). A most charming misunderstanding and word-play is Alice's idea of the Mouse's "long and a sad tale" (= story) being a "long tail" (= body part), leaving her perplexed how it could be sad (Carroll 21-22).

So far we have seen examples of Alice that seem to fit her given age of seven. However, Carroll's portrayal of Alice vacillates between a seven year-old child and a young girl in her adolescence. *Adolescence* is derived from the latin word *adolescere* signifying "to grow into adulthood", and is a "period of transitions: biological, psychological, social, economic" (Steinberg 6). The inventionists claim that adolescence is a modern social invention and that it comprises a distinct period between childhood and adulthood. According to them, adolescence as concept did not really exist until the Industrial Revolution of the mid-nineteenth century (Steinberg 97). There are no clear-cut age boundaries between childhood and adolescence, but there is general agreement that adolescence can be divided into three periods: early adolescence (about ages 10-13), middle adolescence (about ages 14-17) and late adolescence (about ages 18-21) (Steinberg 7).

Adolescents gain in cognitive ability and refine their thinking processes during this period. In Piaget's formal-operational stage from 12 years of age and over, their "[a]bstract reasoning abilities increase substantially" (Passer & Smith 437). One noteworthy process is

metacognition, which involves the person's thinking about thinking itself. Metacognition encompasses the monitoring of thoughts, e.g. learning and mnemonic strategies, where the subject consciously uses them with the purpose of maximizing his or her learning experience. Mnemonic strategies are strategies meant to help the person remember what s/he once has learnt, and they usually link to playful associations, e.g. abbreviations, poems, songs, rigmaroles, rhymes, maps, and other memory devices. Adolescents therefore are more aware of their thinking than children, and they also can explain not only *what* they know but also *why* in order to work more effectively with problem solving than the latter. In descriptions of Alice and of her actions and way of speaking, one can deduce that she has reached a fairly advanced level in her cognitive abilities. Alice is very mature in her thinking from time to time. However, she does not show any signs of using mnemonic strategies. At times she feels quite insecure of her acquired knowledge from school, but then she tests herself and thinks critically about her cognitive potential. For instance, in the midst of all confusion after having met the White Rabbit in the hall, Alice puts herself to the test: "I'll try if I know all the things I used to know". An enumeration of trivia makes her realize that she has "ever so many lessons to learn", and an air of humility is pressed upon her rather than the child's sciolism (Carroll 12). The learning strategies Alice applies are mainly based on experience and the concept of learning by doing. John Dewey makes the following observation on experiential learning: "Abstract thought is imagination seeing familiar objects in a new light and thus opening new vistas in experience. Experiment follows the road thus open and tests its permanent value" (202). This abstraction is seen when Alice draws on previous learning experiences. The second time she is in the long hall with the golden key on the glass table she feels more secure about the imminent challenge she has to take on and says to herself, "I'll manage better this time" (Carroll 65).

Three related metacognitive processes that increase during adolescence are introspection, self-consciousness and intellectualization. Introspection is the act of looking within, i.e. to think about one's own emotions (Steinberg 65). Like an adolescent, Alice manages to look upon herself from a distance, saying to the Gryphon "it's no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person then" (Carroll 88). She reminds herself of trying to answer politely even though her interlocutors fail to do so. She also decides not to react impulsively in some situations. And if she does, she scolds herself for not being able to behave in an orderly manner.

Self-consciousness is to think about what others think about you (Steinberg 65). Alice is fairly self-conscious as she thinks about what others, especially adult characters, might think

about her. The girl is careful about not giving others the impression of being an "ignorant little girl" (Carroll 3), something that would inflict shame and disgrace upon her. On Alice's journey through Wonderland she keeps seeking confirmation from adults.

Metacognition is an umbrella term comprising a variety of strategies regarding a human's thoughts, emotions, learning processes and linguistic awareness. Intellectualization is one of these processes. A person who intellectualizes analyzes actively his or her own thoughts, usually with the purpose of optimization (Steinberg 65). As regards intellectualization, Alice makes many efforts to think critically and maturely. Once she fantasizes about her feet and talks to them as if they were personified, but she realizes the insanity of the situation and points out to herself, "Oh dear, what nonsense I'm talking!" (Carroll 10). The girl often reflects on her actions and decorum, she strives to ascertain facts and she comes to general conclusions. To Alice, her sense of self-assertion is rather strong as she forcefully claims in her discussion with the Duchess that she has the "right to think" (Carroll 78). She hones her argumentation skills by taking different sides in conversations with herself and she answers her own questions.

Leonard S. Marcus argues that all the characters figuring in Wonderland are ones that Alice creates in her dreamworld, representing her alter egos. She discovers them within herself, which he explains as "[a]ll are her and not her" (Marcus 184). Marcus's conclusion is that the young protagonist actively chooses to wake up from her dreams when the insight of "such difficult self-knowledge" was more than she could handle (Marcus 184). This way of hypothetical thinking about one's possible selves is highly characteristic of the identity development of an adolescent, and places Alice in this demographic (Steinberg 269). It is however true that Alice has created these characters in her dream world but they do not necessarily need to represent her alternative traits. They can merely be figments of her imagination and constitute a natural response to her confusion about adulthood and growing up. The absurd and unreasonable figures may very well satirize adults that Alice comes across in her daily life who affects her one way or another, e.g. tutors, parents' acquaintances, politicians, royalties, etc.

In certain passages the reader gets the impression that Alice even takes on characteristics of adult behavior in order to master uncomfortable situations. When she shows up uninvited to the tea-party at the March Hare's house, the Mad Hatter and the March Hare tell her that there is no room for her, yet Alice sees empty seats. Indignantly she contradicts them by saying that there is "*plenty* of room" and sits down in a large armchair at one end of the table (Carroll 57). That position at the table is customary for the person of highest rank in the

group, e.g. the chairman of a meeting. A large armchair is also a piece of furniture normally associated with adults. By choosing to sit there she consciously assumes authority over the party. Alice is also treated like an adult by the Mad Hatter and the March Hare. She is offered wine, an adult drink, by the March Hare and looks for wine on the table and cannot see anything but tea. However, she does see a can of milk for the tea but does not want any. Alice thinks it is uncivil of him to make such an offer and he thinks it is uncivil of her to come uninvited to the party (Carroll 57). The adjective *civil* is defined as to be "polite in a formal but not very friendly way" ("Civil," def. 4). Civility and formality seem to be important for Alice and her hosts at the mad tea-party. She is trying hard to be civil and make polite and mature conversation, but finds it challenging due to the personal remarks and offensive comments she receives in return. The narrator describes Alice's actions at this event using detailed expressions like "Alice gently remarked" (Carroll 62), "Alice replied very readily" (Carroll 59), and "Alice said with some severity" (Carroll 57).

The concept of identity is highly related to an adolescent's socio-emotional development. Strange events in Alice's encounters with the other characters in Wonderland cause her to question her own identity. In one early episode after having experienced dramatic transformations in size by eating and drinking, she meets the White Rabbit in the hall. She asks herself, "I wonder if I've been changed in the night? Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is, Who in the world am I? Ah, *that's* the great puzzle!" (Carroll 11). In another passage, Alice is in confusion about her own development and wonders if she will keep on growing after having drunk from a bottle in the White Rabbit's house: "What *will* become of me?"(Carroll 27). Later on in her adventures, the protagonist meets the Caterpillar who asks her who she is. She has a hard time answering that question and becomes irritated by him. She explains to him that she knew who she was when she woke up that morning but that she had changed several times since then, and at that present time she does not know. And the Pigeon accuses Alice of being a serpent, but to her it matters "a good deal" whether she is a little girl or a serpent (Carroll 45). The protagonist herself equates Wonderland with a realm of transformation where she chooses to stay until she either turns into somebody else or is given an identity (Carroll 12-13). According to the psychiatrist Erik Erikson's model of a child's socio-emotional development, her thoughts of identity belong to the fifth stage of psychosocial crisis, ranging from early adolescence from about 13 or 14 years-old to about 20. In this stage the youth learns to identify himself or herself and answer the question of "Who am I?" "satisfactorily and happily" (Child Development Institute). Alice is learning to

identify herself, but she cannot answer in this secure manner and therefore, according to Erikson's model, she would be in transition between her early and middle adolescence, around 13 to 14 years old. Children younger than this, e.g. 7 year-olds, know who they are and would not question their identity.

Alterations in Alice's physical size due to food and fluid intake cause her to frequently re-evaluate the world around her and change her self-perception. Alice eats a morsel of mushroom in the woods and grows tall, reaching to the treetops. A pigeon accuses her of being a serpent with her long neck, wanting to steal her eggs, but Alice denies this and defines herself as "a little girl", meaning a little, innocent and respectful child, though she does it doubtfully (Carroll 45). Obviously, she is insecure about her identity and relates height to maturity. Children are short and adults are tall people, with both categories expected to behave in a certain way. In a shrunken state, Alice allows herself to feel frustration and nervousness. Moreover, she does not hesitate to cry as these actions fit into her definitions of child behavior. The narrator sympathizes with her and feels pity for the "poor child" (Carroll 13). Alice is more intolerant of other characters' looks and conduct when she is small in size. She is quite judgmental regarding first impressions. She thinks that the Frog-Footman is uncivil when he looks towards the sky while he is talking to her, but she changes her mind after a while: "But perhaps he can't help it" (Carroll 47). Alice did not like the look of the Gryphon nor the Pig baby: "If it had grown up … it would have made a dreadfully ugly child: but it makes rather a handsome pig" (Carroll 53). In this state, our child protagonist lacks social conscience and sympathy and believes that a change would be necessary for the other characters in order for them to improve their chances for a better life.

Her feelings seem to change when she grows physically. To Alice, to *grow* and to *grow up* are synonymous. Alice scolds herself for not being able to control her emotional outbursts, being bigger than she normally is: "You ought to be ashamed of yourself … a great girl like you" (Carroll 10). In another passage she looks at her feet which seem to be far away from her, and she cannot help but feel pity for them in a rather maternal manner. The fact that Alice calls them her "poor little feet" and "dears", and that she is planning on what gifts to buy them confirm this statement (Carroll 9). Another sign of adaptation is Alice's tendency to become more rebellious. In order to gain more courage and tackle a future challenging situation better, especially before the Mad Tea Party, she eats more of the mushroom to grow in height to 2 ft tall (Carroll 56). In another episode, Alice wants to grow large again because she is "quite tired of being such a tiny little thing" (Carroll 26), this after having been ordered about by the White Rabbit in his house and asked to repeat lessons. Shortly after this incident she, who had

recently transformed and increased in size, is at that moment defiant and kicks out Bill the Lizard from the chimney since he poses a threat to her.

In the trial scene Alice becomes bolder as she grows without eating or drinking, and she does not hesitate to defy the royalties: "she had grown so large in the last few minutes that she wasn't a bit afraid of interrupting him [the King of Hearts]" (Carroll 105). The climax of her denigrating attitude as well as the climax of her adventures in Wonderland is when Alice grown to her full size, looks down on "nothing but a pack of cards" (Carroll 107) which then attacks her.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is not a typical Bildungsroman. Even though the story is linear without flashback episodes or future visions, it is incongruent with the protagonist's vacillation in behavior. Many times Alice acts as a seven-year old according to developmental theory, but occasionally Alice takes on an adolescent's mindset or in extreme cases the one of an adult. Alice is a capricious protagonist who can be perceived as utterly unstable and unreliable. In one passage she cries and feels pity for herself, and in the following she expresses maternal compassion and care for others. Alice's constant changes in size are puzzling for her, "I'm never sure what I'm going to be, from one minute to another!" (Carroll 46). She seems to strive for stability concerning her identity, but the strenuous vacillation in size and life phases inflicts considerable confusion on her. Alice seeks confirmation from others. She very much wants someone else to tell her who she is and if she likes the answer she would like to return back up to the "normal" world; otherwise she figures she might as well stay in Wonderland (Carroll 12-13). In contrast, at the end of her dream, she does not need others to tell her who she is. Alice ends up growing naturally, outgrowing all the other characters at the trial.

Initial readings of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* lead the reader to believe that total chaos prevails in Wonderland. However, the authors of the book *Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults* claim that Carroll's story is a "marvel of internal consistency" as the underworld of chaos and non-sense actually is rather consistent (Gates, Steffel and Molson 11). There is more logic to Alice's emotional and intellectual progress than what meets the eye. At the beginning of her journey, Alice shows little sign of progress in terms of learning. The golden key remains inaccessible on the high solid glass table after her numerous efforts to reach it. She also keeps committing the same mistakes by insulting her fellow characters, one after another. In a shrunken state Alice suffers from temper tantrums which affect her and the creatures around her. She laughs loudly without consideration for others, regardless of the consequences. Yet, from a long term perspective, Alice's learning curve

shows a positive trend. As she proceeds on her journey, she gradually learns to control and regulate her appetite as well as her emotional outbursts. The fact that Alice is small with the Gryphon and the Mock Turtle shows that she has undergone a psychological development in terms of maturity. She pities the Mock Turtle for his heartbreaking sorrow. Alice realizes mid-sentence what she is saying and corrects herself, from having tasted lobster before to never have been introduced to one, "No, never" (Carroll 84). From this point and on, her exclamations reduce in number and her comments become more elaborate. Patten reflects on the protagonist's later experiences as "a flash of psychological maturity. Alice is more sensitive now to the emotional needs of others" (Patten 281).

Experiential learning is thus a central theme in the novel. The concept of instant growth and shrinkage after consumption is new to Alice and her first encounter with the phenomenon proves her to be a novice. Nevertheless, the girl learns from her mistakes gradually. Initially, she understands that she will undergo some change in size the next time she eats or drinks something in Wonderland, without grasping the exact process. But Alice draws on previous learning experiences and accumulates knowledge. She asks herself the right questions and anticipates the next step in the process. Eventually she can control her consumption, her changes in size and thereby adapt her mindset in order to master the challenges in front of her. Being able to take control of the situation at the end of the novel allows Alice to make conscious choices regarding her role in the events and make a stand towards people who she thinks are unjust. At the trial, she chooses to act in defiance of the adults or the authorities. In addition, she engages in critical inquiry. However, after all the turmoil that has been around her, Alice wakes up from her dream, back to the simplicities of her childhood in Victorian England.

Carroll's depiction of his child protagonist may be quite misleading at first as the reader can perceive Alice as far older than seven years of age from time to time. Initially one might question the author's credibility in terms of his characterization, due to her instability. Further investigation reveals that Carroll was on the contrary very familiar with childhood development. Alice, the small child, differs substantially from Alice, the "giant" adolescent, in terms of behavior and consciousness. Patten's comments read: "Like all good writers, Lewis Carroll wrote what he knew. Like all good teachers, he knew and loved his students" (Patten 307). The author knew his child protagonist.

Alice's adventures in Wonderland reflect the child-adult conflict of Alice on her inner quest for identity. To her the first steps into adulthood, ie. adolescence, include not only psychological growth as in maturity but also physical growth; to grow is to grow up. Her

dramatic alterations in size in Wonderland cause great turmoil and confusion as she senses an obligation to adapt her behavior. By an excessive consumption of food and fluids she changes in size uncontrollably. Eventually she learns how to regulate her appetite and self-control. Only at the end of the novel in the trial scene does she grow naturally without consuming anything, and she discovers a boldness and rebellion within her that she can control.

Alice's personal development in relation to her fellow characters functions as a story about life and its different phases. She does not have high regards of adults, considering how unreliable, unfair and judgmental the adult characters are who she meets. Maybe she suspects that one day, she will become like them. Adults have a great deterrent effect on her and the reader. After having followed Alice through her identity mayhem, the readers have the consolation of knowing that "little Alice" wakes up in her older sister's lap and that Wonderland was just a dream. Whether or not she consciously chooses to wake up remains to be said. But now she can keep on living her life with "simple sorrows" and "simple joys" (Carroll 110). The wheel has come full circle.

In conclusion, a vacillation can be traced between childhood and adolescence in Alice's search for identity. Carroll's depiction of seven year-old Alice is multifaceted as her childlike qualities of curiosity and sciolism are contrasted with adolescent cognitive abilities as she questions her own identity and in her assumption of authority takes control of situations where the adult figures cause chaos. Alice's alterations in size cause her to frequently re-evaluate the world around her and by doing so she progresses on her intellectual and emotional journey through Wonderland.

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