Masarykova univerzita
Filozofická fakulta

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Bakalářská diplomová práce

Jana Raszková

2011
Masaryk University
Faculty of Arts

Department of English
and American Studies

English Language and Literature

Jana Raszková

Challenging Victorian Girlhood in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-glass

Bachelor’s Diploma Thesis

Supervisor: Bonita Rhoads, Ph. D.

2011
I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently, using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.

........................................
Author’s signature
I would like to thank Bonita Rhoads, Ph.D. for her significant help and advice.
Table of Contents

1. Introduction..................................................................................................................6
   1.1 Portrayal of Victorian Alice in Carroll’s Classics: Education and Status....8
   1.2 Who am I? : Identity Quest................................................................................16
2. Male and Female Characters in Carroll’s Classics....................................................24
   2.1 Harsh Queens and Submissive Kings....................................................................25
3. Alice’s Rebellion against Stereotypical Victorian Requirements of a Woman......31
   3. 1 Ambitious Alice: The Desire to Attain Power.....................................................36
   3. 2 From Dreamland to Reality...............................................................................40
4. Conclusion...................................................................................................................41

Works Cited.....................................................................................................................43
1. Introduction

The focus of this thesis is on Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871) which were published during the Victorian period. I argue that Carroll represents Alice primarily as a Victorian girl who follows social norms of that time by referring to her education and status throughout the books so that these social aspects are reflected there in spite of the fact that both of his works are considered to be the greatest achievement of children’s fantasy literature. Thus, even though the main audience to whom these books are devoted consist of children who enjoyed the play language and colourful imagination of the given events, it is still plausible to claim that adults may trace a socio-cultural legacy in these works. At the same time Alice is presented as an innocent child, her characterization interrogates the social norms of the period in which Carroll’s books were produced. Michael D’Ambrosio remarks that, “Basically, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is a graphic account of the adult world as viewed by a child. Alice examines the conventions of the adult world and finds this world abounding in rules and regulations, many of which seem nonsensical” (1074). Alice functions also as a kind of child critic who points out obvious deficiencies of the characters in Wonderland, who deviate from what Alice knows from the above world norms, but who are presented as exemplifying and then somehow ridiculing them.

To outline the social expectations and hierarchies of Victorian society, I draw on Deborah Gorham’s *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* and on Joan N. Burstyn’s *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood*. The former book is a study which describes middle-class girlhood and the presentation of femininity as required by Victorian society whereas the latter deals with ideology of womanhood in relation to social and economic situation in Britain during the period in question. All of these
issues are crucial to the understanding of the main character’s development, and therefore they above all frame the basis of this thesis as such.

When Alice appears in a world which far from similar to the one she comes from, she strives to achieve personal ambitions which are unacceptable in her society. Because Alice is a girl, she is bound by her social position which requires obedience to Victorian morals and expectations which are placed on a woman. Carroll implies that Alice is searching for, and then asserting her identity in both books by distancing herself from some of the Victorian requirements of a woman. Being a female maverick, Alice becomes more self-confident and active in pursuing what she really wants and not what other characters dictate her to do in order to finally understand her place in the world. Clearly, Lewis Carroll challenges Victorian conventions about gender and social roles in general and womanhood in particular in both of his classics. With respect to Carroll’s main purpose of his writings, according to the survey of British Children’s Writers, 1800-1880: “Both of the Alice tales give voice to the Victorian desire to overcome restrictive environments, demonstrated to some degree through Carroll’s use of parody to open traditionally closed literary formats” (64).

In addition, some of the characters, especially the queen and the king, do not comply with stereotypical aspects of gender roles which are essential in constructing one’s personality in Alice’s society. Often Carroll shows the female figure as cruel and enraged and the male character as passive and facile. Consequently, both Alice and the narrator comment on these figures which exhibit rather unacceptable behaviour and disparate personal traits.

Nevertheless, Carroll retains a sense of reality in his books which brings Alice back to her own world with its conventions to which, it is implied, she should adhere to in order to lead normal life which is desired by the society, especially when she grows
up into a woman. Then, Alice should inevitably come to terms with the fact that her duty is to be representative of an ideal womanhood which fosters the cult of domesticity because these would be two major ambitions celebrated by the majority of Victorians. Clearly, the framing reality goes along in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass.

1.1 The Portrayal of Victorian Alice in Carroll’s Classics: Education and Status

Regardless of Alice’s character as mainly a heroine of her adventures in fantasy worlds, in this chapter I will concentrate on Carroll’s representation of Alice in terms of her social status and education. Taking into account the fact that Alice is a little girl at the age of seven, she is right at the beginning of her compulsory learning which, however, rightly depends on her social standing and on the fact that she is a woman. As a result, a study of Alice should also deal with the fact that her intellectual development is socially prescribed according to her gender, and, more importantly, is thus distinct from schooling of boys. Nevertheless, being a very curious child, Alice is gradually showing her general knowledge in a form of meaningless repetitions by which she attempts to show at least some competence to interpret what she has learned. In addition, her access to education is inseparable from her rank because it determines quality, duration and location of her lessons. Alice’s presence in the fantasy worlds and everything what happens there exercise her mind, cultivates it, and thus enhances her possibilities there which, on the other hand, would be normally repressed in the above world because women were encouraged not to surpass men in these matters.

First of all, right at the beginning of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, Alice asks herself after observing her sister’s study materials and being still in her real world, “‘and what is the use of a book,’ thought Alice, ‘without pictures or conversations?’” (11). Apparently, Alice is interested in literature which abound in illustration and
frolicsome talks which are more appealing to a young girl by their vivid imagery rather than complicated and serious words on which she has to focus and make an effort to understand. Then, throughout both tales Alice has interesting conversations with other characters which are very attractive from a descriptive and imaginative point of view. Therefore Carroll highlights this point by acknowledging what children are particularly delighted with and at the same time setting them in contrast to a female adolescent, Alice’s sister, who is very close to reaching maturity. Consequently, there are two different generations foreshadowed to the reader in order to point out the clash between those two in the books. On one hand there is a human child before who there unfolds totally new world into which she enters, and on the other hand there are creatures which probably stand for adults, bearing close resemblance to behaviour typical of them.

With regard to Alice’s reiteration of certain information which means by itself almost nothing to Alice, but which evidently appears to her to represent a well-educated person, Carroll remarks about her that, “(Alice had not the slightest idea what Latitude was, or Longitude either, but she thought they were nice grand words to say)” (13). In this way, it almost seems as if Alice was imitating pieces of knowledge which are more relevant for older people or for male scholars than for her, supposing that girls scarcely learnt geography at that time and age. Again, by revealing Alice’s ignorance of this subject Carroll draws the reader’s attention to the fact that Victorian education was rather boring and required that an ideal girl-child would have only a certain amount of education. However, this example is likely to illustrate the fact that Alice will further on take interest in profound learning of the world around her which would arguably set her apart from the Victorian model of a girl. As far as this primarily female ideal is concerned, “In Alice and Wonderland: A Curious Child”, Nina Auerbach reveals that, “Alice herself, prim and earnest in pinafore and pumps, confronting a world out of
control by looking for the rules and murmuring her lessons, stands as one image of the Victorian middle-class child” (32). Thus, Auerbach stresses the reality that Alice falls into the unknown where everything she has learnt in her home country loses its significance and validity while it offers her many good opportunities to make progress in other aspects of her individuality. Additionally, Auerbach suggests Alice’s social standing, which defines her educational possibilities as well.

Furthermore, with regard to knowledge as such, it is an essential element in the lives of every human, and therefore it is a great deal more important for a child who is growing up, being under external influences which attribute to its sound development and recognition of the surrounding elements. As Alice is constantly exploring and acquiring new experiences, so the self does shape itself and construct Alice’s person in Carroll’s classics. Nonetheless, she has to advance towards knowledge through an initial symbol of a door which mediates a connection to it. In the following excerpt the narrator gives an account of the surroundings in which Alice finds herself at the outset of her adventurous journey by disclosing that, “There were doors all round the hall, but they were all locked...she knelt down and looked along the passage into the loveliest garden you ever saw” (16). Clearly, there are many entrances to the unknown world but the narrator implies that they are very difficult to reach since their access is impossible at the beginning but which conceals valuable information for those who get in. The symbol of the locked doors suggests an inlet to knowledge while the garden represents the fruitful discoveries of knowledge. According the Dictionary of Symbolism, “transition and metamorphosis are the most common ideas represented by the symbol of the door...It is abandoning the old and embracing the new; an open door signifies welcome and invites discovery and investigation, while a closed door represents rejection, protection, secrecy, exclusion, and imprisonment.” Everything that is stated in
this passage may be associated with Alice’s experience in spite of the fact that at this time she is only allowed to peep into the new world which awaits her, but which seems not to be inviting her because she may face to formidable challenges and feel excluded from a different environment which she longs to invade. However, this turns out to be so attractive for her that she eventually finds the way to that place, which enables her to undergo what is termed in *Dictionary of Symbolism* as metamorphosis. All in all, these symbols introduce Alice into both her thrilling adventures and individual exploration.

Another notable example of Alice’s learning and curiosity is depicted by an event during which she ponders the way to speak to a mouse even though it is an animal and she would not normally talk with it. For illustration, the narrator recounts the train of Alice’s thoughts on this subject by saying that, “(Alice thought this must be the right way of speaking to a mouse: she had never done such a thing before, but she remembered having seen, in her brother’s Latin grammar, (A mouse-of a mouse-to a mouse-a mouse- O mouse!))” (26). Alice has evidently looked into her brother’s study materials which consisted of learning Latin grammar and now she attempts to apply it to completely strange situation. Regarding the narrator’s remark on Alice’s brother’s education, Joan N. Burstyn suggests that, “Familiarity with Latin and Greek was the hallmark of a gentleman” (17). In particular, the fact that these two classical languages were basic subjects for boys presupposes that they were privileged in their social position, and furthermore it set them apart from not only lower classes whose aim was to gain much more useful education, but also from female learning. In other words, men were encouraged to strengthen their minds in higher and profound knowledge while women were not encouraged to attain a classical education. Thus, there were separate subjects for boys and girls who had pre-established curriculums according to propriety and social preference for each sex in order to maintain this clear gap between them. As
far as Alice is concerned in this situation, as she is not aware of the manner which would facilitate her conversation with a mouse so she is basically ignorant of the usage of Latin language since it is highly unlikely that she has acquired serious knowledge of it, and therefore she assumes that it is applicable in unfamiliar situations so this is why she associates it with communication with an animal because she cannot think of any other solution at that moment.

With respect to Alice’s education which she has passed so far, she talks on this topic with the Mock Turtle, comparing her subjects with his and evaluating its quality. For example, the following paragraph introduces their conversation which goes like this,

“I’ve been to a day-school, too,” said Alice. ‘You needn’t be so proud as all that.’ ‘With extras?’ asked the Mock Turtle, a little anxiously. ‘Yes,’ said Alice: ‘we learned French and music.’ ‘And Washing?’ said the Mock Turtle. ‘Certainly not!’ said Alice indignantly. ‘Ah, then yours wasn’t a really good school,’ said the Mock Turtle in a tone of great relief” (101).

So, at this point in the book it is evident that Alice has gone to school where she has probably learnt standard curriculum with extra subjects such as French and music. However, these particular subjects are not generally favoured by men who, “feared that contemporary teaching with its emphasis on French, music, and art was responsible for the neglect of truly feminine subjects” (Burstyn 38). Hence, it is indicated that Alice’s intellect is trained by this schooling and makes her more sophisticated than other girls from different social classes regardless of the fact that these ornamental subjects are theoretical and not very much attributing to a practical training of a girl. However, they are in accordance with appropriate notions of Victorian education for upper-middle
class women. The narrator stresses the fact that Alice gradually deviates from one-sided rigid social norms for women which underlie the Victorian society.

On the other hand, taking into consideration the fact that the narrator’s aim is to raise these issues and to some extent ridicule them by reflecting social ideals on Wonderland characters, the Mock Turtle then not only represents the name itself but also male gender with its opinions. Consequently, he articulates his attitude towards appropriate education for women which establishes that, “The ideal woman was to be responsible for organising the household, bringing up the children, and providing tranquillity to which men returned as to a haven of peace from the turbulent world outside” (Burstyn 32). Apparently, the only Victorian female concern is her household and welfare of her family, a husband whose needs are the priority for a wife who is expected to be submissive and inferior in terms of intellectual matters. Specifically, the Mock Turtle wishes to know whether Alice has taken lessons in washing, but the narrator purposefully implies that she decidedly deprecates it. This dismissal of household chore is likely to mean that Alice wants to pursue her personal ambitions which consist of managing her intellectual development by freeing herself of domestic confinement.

Moreover, Alice again shows her knowledge from the books at most of the places where she appears. For the first time Alice participates in a law suit and the narrator observes that, “Alice had never been in a court of justice before, but she had read about them in books, and she was quite pleased to find that she knew the name of nearly everything there” (114). She applies the theoretical information about a court and its parts as they function in her society by transferring nomenclature to the Wonderland court, which on one hand may fit well, but on the other hand its legal rules are contrary to worldly law, and thus incomprehensible to Alice. Nevertheless, the fact that she
actually joins the suit demonstrates that Alice becomes a part of public sphere from which women would preferably be excluded since it is mostly associated with masculine affairs in the period in question.

Not only does become Alice progressively goal-seeking, but she is also supported in this pursuit by the creatures which she meets with during her adventures. Specifically, in *Through the Looking-Glass*, the powerful Queen encourages Alice to try harder in order to move ahead and achieve her ambition by edifying her that, “Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that” (174)! This excerpt is a good example of the way Alice should act if she strives to make progress in her position because it is generally known that if one wants to be successful, one must make an effort and be many times better than others in order to reach the predefined goal. Hence, Alice is energetically aiming at being the Queen herself in the second sequel of Carroll´s tales but this journey is difficult and requires preparation in which she is obliged to demonstrate her capability for the position. So, before the final coronation another Queen elucidates to her that, “You can´t be a Queen, you know, till you´ve passed the proper examination. And the sooner we begin it, the better” (264). Repeatedly, the female figure stresses the importance of testing Alice´s knowledge so that she would be able to undertake this function, implying that they should not lose time in examining her.

At this point, the focus of this paragraph is on Alice´s social status which is discernible from the textual evidence. Having fallen down the rabbit hole to the Wonderland, Alice refers to her social standing the moment a white rabbit mistakes her for a person she is not, “‘He took me for his housemaid,’ she said to herself as she ran. ‘How surprised he´ll be when he finds out who I am! But I´d better take him his fan and
gloves- that is, if I can find them” (38). Obviously, Alice resents the fact that the rabbit thought her to be a servant, which suggests that she does not belong into a lower class. Moreover, she immediately ascribes herself a great importance by emphasizing her identity, which, she assumes, will take the rabbit by surprise since he has identified her with a lower class status. On the other hand, Alice does not oppose his order and obediently tries to search for the garments. Consequently, with regard to gender roles in this respect, suggesting the fact that the Rabbit takes on the aspects of patriarchal role, he dictates Alice and assumes she should respect it because she is a female and as such she is bound by her sex to obey the more superior sex. To sum it up just for now, Alice does rank among higher social classes if one considers the fact that she has a strong opinion of her but she is still only a female figure affected by a social oppression. On the contrary, it is Alice who has been surrounded by the servants so far, which is deducible from the following statement. While she leads a conversation about the naming of different things, Alice firmly believes that, “the governess would never think of excusing me lessons for that. If she couldn’t remember my name, she’d call me ‘Miss,’ as the servants do” (185). First, Alice has been taught at home by a governess, which reveals another aspect of her education as well of her status because Joan N. Burstyn points out that, “Only the upper middle classes, however, could afford governesses or boarding schools” (24). Both Alice’s schooling and rank are relatively of high level since she certainly lives a very comfortable life in the world outside the tales. However, it is a matter of argument whether she enjoys more free growth with her advantageous position among Victorians, or whether is she influenced by their adherence to feminine idealism. In her fairy tales, she is enabled to behave more openly and self-confidently since she realizes that she is disembodied from reality into less strict and unearthly world.
1.2 Who am I? Identity Quest

Having discussed Alice’s education and social standing which are inseparable parts of her character, I will focus on the development and formation of her personality. Alice questions her identity while striving to find an answer to the puzzle of whom she really is and where is her place in the world. Drawing on Jung’s concept of the *anima*, Judith Bloomingdale asserts about Alice that, “She figures in the drama of Wonderland-Looking-Glass as a positive *anima* who moves from innocence to experience, unconsciousness to consciousness” (379). Throughout both of the books Alice undergoes a transformation, leading her to becoming self-aware and reaching an understanding not only of other aspects of her own life but also of different attributes and behaviours of different characters, which actually make her person complete and fulfilled. It is well to be said that Jung’s concept somehow supports the fact that Alice, since she is a little innocent girl at the beginning, becomes eventually more mature while progressing in the stories as well as she gradually realizes her own personal significance.

First, the narrator refers to Alice’s character formation as rather strange “for this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people” (18). So, it is implied that her person is ambivalent but the question arises why is it so? There may be more reasons why Alice is presented as having her identity in fragmentation. Above all, since the narrator foreshadows her duality, it presupposes her split between two worlds in which she is about to participate; the former controls her logic and behaviour whereas the latter opens up new horizons which she is yet to discover. As a result, Alice is not at first able to become the whole entity because she is simultaneously acting according to these environments which constitute her identity, and therefore she finds herself caught somewhere between them and is bound to search for the way to settle this problem.
Second, the narrator’s initial purpose of Alice’s double identity predefines her ensuing disparity between gender stereotypes. That is, her vacillation between the ideal submissive girl from the beginning and the self-absorbed ambitious one later on. However, Alice comes to realize that since she has appeared in Wonderland, the self has diverted itself from its original state. For illustration, she faces to this problem by speculating that, “But if I’m not the same, the next question is ‘Who in the world am I’” (22)? That is, Alice’s self is seriously affected by her fall to the Wonderland and she is bound to cope with this dramatic change. Therefore she poses an essential question to herself regarding her identity in the other world with which she will yet familiarize herself, and meanwhile she will start to pursue the matter further. Her acknowledgement that she is different from her above world personality predicts her advancement in the second sequel towards an experienced and self-assertive girl.

Furthermore, realizing that there is a remote chance that she would be young forever, Alice also contemplates about her growing older because it will have a great impact on her whole life in her society in particular, and thus she inquires that, “Shall I never get any older than I am now? That’ll be a comfort, one way-never to be an old woman-but then-always to have lessons to learn! Oh, I shouldn’t like that” (40). She rejoices over the possibility that she would remain a young girl as she is at present because it would at least postpone her transition into an adult woman whose fate in Alice’s society is actually prescribed by mores and duties. Interestingly enough, her rejection is stressed by the narrator’s putting an emphasis on the word never which demonstrates the fact that her youth would be permanent and this brings her relief. Admittedly, being forever young would mean that Alice is compelled to be constantly educated, but this she expressly abhors. Not surprisingly, taking into an account that she is still only a child, it would be understandable. However, the narrator may have also
incorporated some social criticism into this statement which points out female refusal of education as a means of progress for her, which was dictated by the social laws. It seems as if the narrator is both castigating them and giving them as an example in order to emphasize the fact which has already been stated about her two-fold personality, and thus it is illustrated by the former Alice’s contradictory statement. As far as a question of female identity in the Victorian society is concerned, Deborah Gorham points out that,

“Victorian conceptions of the idealised role of women are epitomised by Coventry Patmore’s poem The Angel in the House, the title of which captures its essence. The ideal woman was willing to be dependent on men and submissive to them, and she would have a preference for a life restricted to the confines of home. She would be innocent, pure, gentle and self-sacrificing. Possessing no ambitious strivings, she would be free of any trace of anger or hostility. More emotional than man, she was also more capable of self-renunciation” (5).

Victorians placed much emphasize on ideal womanhood since the society was patriarchal, and therefore its working dependent on a superior-inferior relationships between the sexes within it, which was a subject of strict social surveillance. Gorham summarizes the basic virtues and characteristic graces of the female sex which the society associated not only with women but they were already ingrained into the minds of little girls as well during the period in question. Hence, it is then easier to pass on further generations these idealized views which generally delineate that a respectable woman’s nature should display diffidence, passivity, docility and her major concern is the said to be domestic sphere where she is required to nurture her family. Also, her
other personal traits correspond to the title of Patmore’s poem in which the word angel is assigned to a woman in order to describe her gentle and peaceful behaviour in relation to others. All these attributes suggest the fact that the woman had not much room of her own in order to develop into her full potential as a full-fledged human being with her own desires, needs and ambitions, and therefore self-repression was inevitable. There was not much outlet for them outside of the household, and therefore Victorian woman’s development of identity was rather constrained and shallow, concentrating on other people’s well-being and neglecting her person in terms of both mental and physical strength which is necessary for a sound human being regardless sexual category. On one hand contribute to Alice’s confusion about her personality but on the other hand they will undoubtedly facilitate her self-definition during her subsequent adventures.

In addition, Alice’s conversations and meetings with other creatures with whom she interacts pose an exciting challenge to her new experience and self-realization through which she is presently getting. Alice comes across the Caterpillar who interrogates, “‘Who are you?’ said the Caterpillar...‘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” (49). The Caterpillar calls into question Alice’s identity at the very beginning of their encounter and she is puzzled at his straightforward behaviour which is also stressed by the doubling of I-I as if she was taken by a surprise by his inquiry. Yet, she claims that she is perfectly aware of who she had been before she ended up in Wonderland environment which has brought about several sudden changes and physical distortions. So, multiply transformations that she has undergone so far caused her distress leading to her identity confusion but which, she speculates, is only a temporary state not lasting for a long time. Consequently, another
Wonderland character, namely the Cheshire Cat, asserts about Alice that she is undoubtedly mad but she asks him to clarify his statement, “‘How do you know I’m mad?’ Said Alice. ‘You must be,’ said the Cat, or you wouldn’t have come here’” (68). Thus, the Cat’s predication that Alice is mad depends on the fact that she has penetrated the other realm which is not governed by the same principles as her own world is, and therefore the Cat attempts to explain to Alice that her original state of mind has been reversed. Also, both the Cat and the Caterpillar may be suggested to represent male gender in which case their characters would raise other issues. Namely, Alice is challenged by both of them in order to enable the narrator to point out the fact that men played a dominant role in self-characterization of women and held the power in their hands which would anyhow modify it. The Caterpillar and the Cat embody a patriarchal authority whose powers set up Alice to face the crucial problem of her female identity and gives her room for contemplation.

Moreover, when Alice has to go through the wood in order to get to the next stage on her journey to queenhood, she feels intimidated by what the Gnat has said to her about losing one’s name there. Having approached that place, Alice ponders a little, “‘This must be the wood,’ she said thoughtfully to herself, ‘where things have no names. I wonder what’ll become of my name when I go in? I shouldn’t like to lose it at all—because they’d have to give me another, and it would be almost certain to be an ugly one’” (185). The wood is another part of Wonderland which is remarkable for its exclusion of naming system which labels things, animals and persons according to some socially prescribed principles. Therefore, Alice feels apprehensive because there is a good possibility of her losing her name and this means also losing her identity in the society. Also, once lost, her name would be substituted for another one which would not suit her since her name Alice characterizes her personality. Then, it raises the issue
whether people construct their self-identification by ascribing names not only to each other but to their deeds as well, or whether the essence of every human being simply depends on their mental growth and health which each of them experiences and which completes the whole being. The narrator criticizes the fact that Victorian society puts a great emphasis on labelling rather than knowing and understanding of what is fundamental in each person. Thus, at this moment Alice’s self-recognition is still governed by these prescriptive rules which define her individuality.

The following passage from *Through the Looking-Glass* is significant in her self-characterization because it brings a male figure into an indirect conflict with Alice. The narrator introduces a conversation between Tweedledee and Alice by reporting that, “‘It’s only the Red King snoring,’ said Tweedledee...‘He’s dreaming now,’ said Tweedledee: ‘and what do you think he’s dreaming about?’ Alice said ‘Nobody can guess that.’ ‘Why, about you!’ Tweedledee exclaimed...‘Well, 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” (197-198).

Apparently, Alice implies that it is impossible to predict what is the Red King dreaming about because no one is able to look into someone else’s mind and say what thoughts and images are in there. Despite this fact, Tweedledee is surprisingly the one who knows that the Red King dreams about Alice. Further on, Tweedledee stresses the fact that Alice is unimportant and unreal because she is actually only a fragment in the King’s dream, nothing else. To put it differently, Alice appears in a masculine mind which invents her and which can easily destroy her person. Hence, with regard to the gender relations, the narrator demonstrates that men are at the top of power.
relationships which enable them to manipulate with the weaker sex, and that women are so vulnerable as to be deprived of their own significance and uniqueness. Consequently, showing a greater resistance against masculine oppression even though it is only in a dream-like state, which may also allegorically promote the perfect Victorian social order in terms of gender stereotypes, Alice does not come to terms with the fact that she is insignificant in the world by revolting against Tweedledee’s idea, and then she replies fervently that her personality is meaningful and certainly valuable to be recognized.

Further on, Alice leads a soliloquy in a contemplative mood, remarking that, “‘So I wasn’t dreaming, after all,’ she said to herself, ‘unless-unless we’re all part of the same dream. Only I do hope it’s my dream, and not the Red King’s! I don’t like belonging to another person’s dream,’” (245). Alice seems to be torn between reality and the dream at this time, and therefore suggests that people in general, or it would be notable that the pronoun we may stand for women in particular, perhaps belong to the Red King’s dream, too. In fact, here it seems as if Alice did not like the notion of having the exclusive place in the Red King’s dream, and by inviting others she empowers herself. However, then she clarifies that it would be preferable for her that if other human beings are to be the part of the dreaming process, it should be her dream, coming out of the female mind, not the male one. Consequently, taken into account the fact that Alice’s choice group to share her dream are women, it is not entirely surprising that she abhors the idea of the Red King exercising his mental powers over them, and thus extenuating the female internal strivings of self-expression. Finally, Alice’s ultimate exclamation once again indicates that she personally is dead set against being put into existence by another’s mind. Altogether, this passage supposes that there are no distinctions in terms of personal identity whether one lives in real social world or fantasy tale. Moreover, each human being, a woman in particular, regardless social or
historical background holds the right to construct one’s own independent identity which comes out from inner emotions and general perspectives on the world without any interference of another person who would force its ideologies on.

Alice exhibits her split identity which is significant in understanding and determination of her actions and goals in the books. Throughout, she attempts to reconcile her character dilemma by searching for assertion of her own identity which is unbound by social limitations ascribed to female gender. For her as a Victorian woman, it is unimaginable to be deprived of her name with which she identifies herself as being a member of the society in question, which means that she is still aware of the above world reality which drives her perception of the events which surround her throughout the tales. At the same time, having admitted her double consciousness, Alice defies the principles of patriarchal society, which sees women only as subordinate people whose identity above all depends on their male companions, by voicing her opposition against the Red King determining her existence according to his will.

2. Male and Female Characters in Carroll’s Classics

At this point I will turn my attention from Alice’s major figure towards minor characters which also play an important role in Carroll’s novels because they are directly in contact with her and stimulate Alice’s behaviour, her thinking, and moreover they generate conditions which are necessary for subsequent steps which Alice has to take in order to go through her personal transformation. Also, looking into this issue would be quite revealing because it gives another perspective on what message does the narrator strive to convey by depicting his creatures in relation to Alice’s portrayal. With regard to the minor characters, it has been already pointed out that several characters occurring either in Wonderland or in Looking-glass realm may be talked of as being male/female gender, and according to these distinctions it is then congruous to assume
that the narrator’s purpose is to illustrate the complexity of gender roles which project the foundation of Victorian society but which may not be valid in the other worlds. Hence, Carroll’s queens and kings in particular belong to female and male sex respectively but clearly definable gender qualities which correspond to these sexes are reversed in terms of socially determined personal traits and gender stereotypes.

2.1 Harsh Queens and Submissive Kings

Martin Gardner notes in his introduction to *The Annotated Alice* that, “In the Alice books the most obvious mother symbols, the Queen of Hearts and the Red Queen, are heartless creatures, whereas the King of Hearts and the White King, both likely candidates for father symbols, are amiable fellows” (xvi). Clearly, Gardner has disclosed the fact that the ideal of feminine and masculine parental roles does not agree with the female and male sexes which are represented in the Classics. To put it differently, there is a reversal of personal attributes which establish appropriate behaviour of men and women in the society which functions on these principles. Hence, the chapter will unroll from Gardner’s statement which summarizes the vital points which will be presently examined. Drawing on Gardner’s remark, in the following excerpt the narrator gives an account of a conversation between Alice and the Duchess who answers her in an embittered way, “‘It’s a Cheshire-Cat,’ said the Duchess, ‘and that’s why. Pig!’ She said the last word with such sudden violence that Alice quite jumped; but she saw in another moment that it was addressed to the baby, and not to her” (62). Even though the Duchess is female character, she apparently speaks very rudely and has a negative approach towards her parental duties since she calls her baby a pig. In showing such an unpleasant relationship between mother and a child the narrator violates not only the social laws which concede that, “the Victorian middle-class mother was encouraged to exhibit an unprecedented amount of concern with the
child-rearing process’” (Gorham 65), but also the natural bond between these two beings, which is unprecedented. Hence, sanctity of this bond is no longer retained here, and therefore the essence of the female caring nature is undermined and the focus of a Victorian woman on the family is dismissed.

In addition, there is a very unequal relationship between the Queen and the King in terms of power and personal nature. Carroll’s purpose through the established voice of the narrator is to highlight feminine impropriety which is embodied by the Queen and masculine effeminacy which underlies the character of the King. Besides, the Queen appears to be the centre of the public life in the Wonderland because the narrator depicts her as retaining much stronger and peremptory voice in the book than any other characters, especially the male ones. Thus, Carroll disparages the assumption in which Joan N. Burstyn argues that, “the injunction that women should be silent in public was part of the wider belief, expounded by opponents of higher education for women, that they should be modest in all things, including intellectual attainments” (146). Even though the queenhood is at the top of public and social life in the Victorian world, the Queen in Wonderland is still a female figure in a fantasy realm, and therefore Burstyn’s point is applicable to her personage in order to contrive that she is both noticeable in public and quite severe in judgement towards the characters encircling her. The narrator reports the event in which Alice annoys the Queen, depicting that, “The Queen turned crimson with fury, and, after glaring at her for a moment like a wild beast, began screaming ‘Off with her head! Off with-,'...The King laid his hand upon her arm, and timidly said ‘Consider, my dear: she is only a child’” (86)! The Queen is depicted here as feeling extremely enraged and indignant with what had Alice previously told her. As a result she reacts violently to the former event, being as infuriating as to order even death for the aggressor which has incited her outburst of anger. On the other hand, the
King has a tendency to calm the Queen down and appeases her by stressing the fact that Alice’s inconsiderate behaviour must have come from her childish nature, and therefore the Queen should have an understanding of this child before she shows her negative temper towards her. Normally, if a masculine character showed the Queen’s manners, it would be much more acceptable and understandable than if a feminine figure treated others in this authoritative way because women are supposed to act as docile and calm beings whereas men are naturally more harsh and outrageous when they have an argument with other people. This fact is undermined in the description of the Queen and the King, and so are the gender stereotypes which operate in the Victorian society.

Taking into account the Queen’s quick temper, her intimidating nature and the Duchess’s neglecting personality, Nina Auerbach introduces her concept of the fallen woman which may be associated with both of characters, referring also to Carroll’s Alice by stating that,

“Alice is both outcast in and creator of her newly expanded world, and like the world of some of the blood-stained fallen women we shall meet later, Wonderland is ruled by potentially murderous women. The Queen of Hearts, the Duchess, the Cook, and the Cheshire Cat (insofar as it functions as a dream-version of Alice's female cat Dinah), all suggest the varieties of female fury a pure girl's fall can energize” (39).

Auerbach well defines some of the points which are revealing in Alice books. She concedes that Alice is at the same time alienated from her fantasy realms because she still clings to her Victorian way of thinking, but she is also the main actor in her adventures. Moreover, Auerbach adds that the female characters are portrayed as being
unnerved and aggressive, which she ascribes to the fact that Alice has lost her innocence which is inseparable from her Victorian girlhood, but which means that she is on the way to maturity. The furious women in Carroll’s Classics are dead set against her developing nature which leads towards independence and self-understanding in the tales, but in the Victorian society towards confinement? If a loss of Alice’s innocence has an impact on their submissive nature, is it then because they want to prevent her from becoming a woman, and thus being one of those socially perfect women whose prospects are limited by household chores? If it is so, their desire is to keep Alice as long in her childhood as it is possible because otherwise she would quickly enter into womanhood. Interestingly enough, the role of those female creatures is to prompt Alice into action which would, first of all, facilitate her mental progress before it is too late.

On the other hand, it almost seems as if the narrator ridiculed the masculine qualities which are in fact repeatedly perceived as the guidelines for the majority of the members of the Victorian social system. For illustration, the following passage clarifies the intellectual aspect of the King, describing that, “There was a general clapping of hands at this: it was the first really clever thing the King had said that day” (126). Evidently, the King is being mocked in this statement for not showing a good intellectual capacity. This fact is rather humiliating for him, assuming that he holds an office as the King who represents an ideal of masculinity and who charms others with his wisdom. In the above realm society, men are considered to be intellectual superiors in comparison to women, and despite this reality the King from the Looking-Glass world is far from the perfect image. Again, in contrast to the King’s nature stands his female companion, the Queen, who is characterized as highly influential and authoritative woman who makes that clear to Alice by explaining that, “I don’t know what you mean by your way,” said the Queen: ‘all the ways here belong to me—but why
did you come out here at all?’ she added in a kinder tone. ‘Curtsey while you’re thinking what to say. It saves time’” (170). Obviously, the Queen is fully aware of her privileged position and demonstrates it by stressing the range of her possession. Thus the Queen opposes the fact that Alice should appropriate anything for herself, and moreover she outspokenly commands Alice about proper behaviour. So, this particular illustration demonstrates relationship between a woman and a girl, in which the former is in superior position whereas the latter is in inferior state. In addition, being possessive and bossy, the Queen’s personality exhibits conventional masculine traits rather than the feminine ones.

Besides, another weak aspect of the King’s character is cowardice which is visible in the way he responds to Alice’s suggestion that, “‘Does-the one-that wins-get the crown?’ she asked, as well as she could, for the run was putting her quite out of breath. ‘Dear me, no!’ said the King. ‘What an idea!’” (238). At the thought that he would be deprived of his crown the King’s reason is alert because he comes to realize that otherwise his ruling power would be destroyed. Subsequently, there are two creatures, the Lion and the Unicorn, who compete with each other in order to jeopardize the King’s reign and one of them proposes that, “‘What a fight we might have for the crown, now!’ the Unicorn said, looking slyly up at the crown, which the poor King was nearly shaking off his head, he trembled so much” (242). Not only is the King fearful with their potential menace, but the narrator underlines his incompetency as a ruler in this case because the King does represent neither the title nor the valiant manhood. Finally, the White Queen and the Red Queen are contrasted by the narrator in the following example by the Red Queen observing that, “‘She never was really well brought up,’ the Red Queen went on: ‘but it’s amazing how good-tempered she is! Pat her on the head, and see how pleased she’ll be’” (270)! The White Queen is being
taunted with her good nature and compliance which is enhanced by the Red Queen’s challenge to treat her as if she was a pet and not a human because the last words which the Red Queen uttered resemble the directions which the pets are usually urged to obey. Therefore, having examined the Red Queen’s figure and having obtained at least some perspective on the White Queen, the former acts as a strong, courageous woman whereas the latter stands as a non-assertive, frailer one. In other words, the narrator does not omit the fact that there exist those two different kinds of women, but he inclines to the opinion that the Red Queen’s example is more self-assertive.

Altogether, the gender stereotypes have been challenged by the narrator who takes advantage of his fictive worlds in order to play with issues which may be recognized as inconvenient and avoidable. By exhibiting different gender qualities of a particular sex, the narrator points out the fact that socially constructed aspects of one’s identity likely lose its significance because they cannot be applied to every human being since the self consists of multiplicity of experiences, feelings and identifications which may not comply with the prescribed roles. Also, the female characters do have a strong influence on Alice who constantly wonders at and questions their actions which may sometimes be annoying but which are on the other hand helping her in articulating her own impressions of the world around her and in her final self-realization.

3. Alice’s Rebellion against Stereotypical Victorian Requirements of a Woman

While progressing in both of the tales, Alice gradually becomes more self-confident and self-aware, and thus she becomes a real representative for a stronger female character as such. With regard to this fact, Kincaid acknowledges that, “Her push forward, toward the future, is in part a perky resistance to the cult of femininity we are told the Victorians honoured, the vision of a static woman with no thought of a direction or needs of her own” (289). Having studied Alice’s journey for her social
identity, it is possible to agree with Kincaid’s statement that the main Alice’s objective is to prove to be an equally appreciated person regardless sexual differentiation and any social ideals which needlessly reduce woman’s significance.

Moreover, the fantasy worlds allow Alice for departure from social conventions of the Victorian society because even though the fictitious creatures have their own constraints imposed on their characters which are, however, incompatible with the Victorian ones, less restrictive, and nonsensical in essence, and which, as Alice realizes, do not significantly affect her social behaviour among them since she keeps her mind clear lest she should again become a subject of another social guidelines. Thus, Alice’s self-exploration and self-articulation constitutes a rebellion against any restrictive environments which she would assume to be pressing on her the weight of them. As a result, Alice takes her fate into her own hands and acts as a creator of not only the situations around her but, more importantly, of her inner persona. Meanwhile, staying away from social rules, Alice both talks back to the authorities who try to edify her as well as she shows a burning ambition to pursue the final stage of her adventures which will mark her self-absorbed, ambitious, but stronger nature.

3.1 Ambitious Alice: Desire to Attain Power

It seems relevant to begin this chapter by quoting Jennifer Geer’s remark which she makes about separate spheres which relate to men and women respectively in the Victorian sexual division of labour, demonstrating that,

“Domestic order thus disappears in Wonderland: traditionally feminine spaces such as kitchens, croquet grounds, gardens, and tea-tables are infused with the contentious, competitive values that Victorian domestic ideology ostensibly relegates to the
public sphere. In such a world, Alice can gain happiness only by being rebellious and calculating” (8).

To put it differently, Geer again confirms the fact that conventionally established categories of places representative of a particular gender do surpass usual order. Hence, the already mentioned feminine spaces are pervaded by characteristics which are solely definable as constituting masculinity. Once more, disruption of gender based principles is evident even in the narrator’s description of the settings as well and thus this fact also accompanies the development of Alice’s character in the books, underlying notably the main theme. Geer sums her statement up by ceding that Alice is compelled to survive in this world by acquiring qualities which will properly secure her dominance over the state of things there.

Having spent some time in Wonderland, Alice makes up her mind about the entire fantasy world and its inhabitants. When she meets the Queen of Wonderland which personifies the female authority there rather than the King does, Alice humbly announces that, “‘My name is Alice, so please your Majesty,’ said Alice very politely; but she added, to herself, ‘Why, they’re only a pack of cards, after all. I needn’t be afraid of them’” (85)! It follows from the excerpt that Alice’s nature may be designated also as a bold and cunning person because she as if defiantly responded to the Queen out loud, revealing her name, but then she somehow meditates that she speaks to a card which is neither human nor an animate entity. Alice does not lose her critical thinking and becomes conscious of the fact that she is temporarily residing in an unreal environment which is part of her imagination, but which stands apart from the real world she exists in. In addition, by disregarding the existence of the pack of cards including the Queen, she exhibits first significant marks of opposition to these inanimate objects, which stand for various examples of human conduct, and along with
it Alice forms her own impression of them. Later on in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland Alice has a fierce argument with the Queen who orders her, ‘‘Hold your tongue!’’ said the Queen, turning purple. ‘‘I won’t!’’ said Alice. ‘‘Off with her head!’’ the Queen shouted at the top of her voice. Nobody moved. ‘‘Who cares for you?’’ said Alice (she had grown to her full size by this time). ‘‘You’re nothing but a pack of cards’’ (129)! This statement marks a turning point in the book because Alice unrestrainedly stands out against the superiority of the Queen; that is against powerful entity which triggers Alice’s outburst of indignation which is initiated by the Queen’s impolite command which Alice disapproves of. In response, the Queen again behaves excessively in a furious way when she meets with resentment, and therefore reacts in a familiar fashion by ordering a death warrant for Alice because she both disobeys her and undermines her influential status as a woman. Consequently, along with the Queen, Alice also completely dismisses other card figures, implying that since they are not living objects with ability of thinking and the gift of being alive, they bear no significance at all for her. Alice is still a human being who is a member of the Victorian society whose workings depend on people, and the unliving objects which surround them are only complements which facilitate their living. Hence, there is an every likelihood that Alice starts to think logically about the fantasy realm and impose her human dominance over them. However, the narrator draws our attention to her growth as well which accompanies her rising defiance, and thus signifies her mental capacity for expressing her emotions and formulating her thoughts, which means that her meek girlish nature has unfolded as being really strengthened. Furthermore, the fact that the Queen’s temper and unceasing call for her privileged mighty status may reveal an interesting point about the nature of dominance. In other words, the narrator’s intention is to point out that being overpowered by one’s power may have harmful effects on not
only one’s mental health but also on other people’s perception of a particular powerful person. Naturally, if a person feels that he is jeopardized by that, it is inevitable that he will rightly fight back, and this is what Alice does, having being initially provoked by the Queen. Moreover, Alice opposes the female figure which, taking into account Alice’s increasing wish to become the superior may indicate that she cannot come to terms with assumption that another woman would control her own upward movements.

Having just referred to the critical moments of Alice’s character, the following discussion will concentrate on the narrator’s portrayal of her unceasing energy to aspire towards the Queen’s position in the second sequel, *Through the Looking-Glass*. Alice moves through the chess board, contemplating the best and the quickest way to get to her desired aim, reflecting that, “‘I think I’ll go down the other way,’ she said after a pause; ‘and perhaps I may visit the elephants later on. Besides, I *do* so want to get into the Third Square’” (178)! Considering the fact that Alice takes part in a serious play, she is at this moment calculating and considering her ensuing steps which would secure her leading position on the chess board. Hence, applying this onto the social scale, her victory would also exemplify her successful potential which solidifies her status as a capable woman in the Victorian world. Clearly, she purposefully postpones her call on the elephants which would delay her approach towards the next square, and therefore Alice now comes to light as being very anxious for persisting in her journey. She cannot allow for any needless obstacles on her rise which would mar her exertion. As a result, Alice’s characterisation is likely to be interpreted as being egoistic, self-absorbed, potent, but also very strenuous and goal-seeking, which are personal attributes incongruous with feminine delicacy. Additionally, the narrator employs the italics for the word *do* in order to emphasize Alice’s burning ambition to advance as a pawn into a much more honourable rank.
Next, being a witness to rather a ridiculous battle between the Red Knight and the White Knight in which the White Knight claims the victory and assumes that she will be his trophy, Alice expounds that, ‘‘I don’t know,’ Alice said doubtfully. ‘I don’t want to be anybody’s prisoner. I want to be a Queen’’ (247). At present, Alice’s resolution to gain power in the game culminates with her determined nature to relentlessly seek its fulfilment. She rejects the White Knight’s claim on her, pointing out that she will not let anybody to take her freedom from her. Alice clarifies to him that she wants to be a Queen, which indicates that she will be above him in the social hierarchy. Again, Alice consciously diminished the White Knight’s significance, because he is a male figure who attempts to reduce her being into a mere object of both his personal ambition and his masculine authority. She shows resistance towards him similar to her opposition towards the dreaming King, both of them being potential male oppressors; the former in a more physical way whereas the latter in a mental way, so both of these male characters represent the fact that a woman was subjugated in both of these manners in the Victorian society. The King and the Knight function as formidable challenges for Alice who bravely take them up, and responds to them in an unyielding manner.

In addition, the White Knight apprises Alice with a distance which she is still to surmount so far as she is firmly resolved to accomplish her primary objective. For illustration, the White Knight describes the way to get to her final position in this manner, “‘You’ve only a few yards to go,’ he said, ‘down the hill and over that little brook, and then you’ll be a Queen-But you’ll stay and see me off first?’ he added as Alice turned with an eager look in the direction to which he pointed” (259). For sure, Alice nears the end of her journey which will mark her superiority on the chess board, but the White Knight defers her succession by asking her to wait for his departure first. In fact, his behaviour may be interpreted as intentionally thwarting her advancement
which would secure her control. Alice rejoices over the idea that she is almost at the end of her long adventures, exclaiming that, “and now for the last brook, and to be a Queen! How grand it sounds” (260)! She feels both excited and self-accomplished when she pictures herself as being in the highest possible status which is a woman capable of achieving. Alice’s euphoria marks her realization of the exploration of her female condition and personal attainment which are the direct outcome of her ability to form her own female character, reaching out across social barriers of her time.

3.2 From Dreamland to Reality

Lewis Carroll employs the dreamland setting in order to enable Alice to meet with creatures and situations which would be otherwise impossible to experience in her real world. However, the most essential thing that Carroll allowed Alice to do is to support her individual discourse during her adventures. In Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass, Alice finds herself in realms which are opposites of her above world, and therefore the social values which control the life of the Victorians gradually cease to exist in her imagination. With respect to the social image of a Victorian woman which seems to be relevant to address now, Judith Bloomingdale reasons about the main female character that, “As a real girl-child, Alice has only the stereotyped future prescribed for her by Victorian mores: if fortunate, a good marriage and motherhood; if unfortunate, spinsterhood” (384). Bloomingdale suggests that Alice has only two choices when she matures in the social world in which she normally lives. No other options are socially acceptable because they would depart from traditionally recognized sexual roles. Thus, Alice will either spend her life by being the angel in the house or she may as well end up as a solitary woman whom the Victorian society will acknowledge but not praise nor give as an example to their offspring. So narrow a prospect and codes of behaviour appear to be very depressing for a human being because one needs to
express oneself in much more ways and play different roles in one’s life so as to widen not only one’s perspective of the world but develop individually. Exactly that range of options does Carroll offer Alice who takes up that freedom and after overcoming her deep-rooted manners and standards she voices an explicit rejection of conventional feminine codes of behaviour about which Morton N. Cohen claims that, “Never since the Middle Ages had woman been worshipped for her innocence and for her goodness as she was in Victorian times. After all, she and her sisters composed a breed of humanity closer to angels than men; they were models of virtue” (63). Morton’s statement is remarkably well defined since he highlights the major moral attributes which constituted a Victorian woman. He equates the woman with an angelic creature and sets her above everything earthly, assigning her with divine nature. So, it would have been unthinkable if the Victorian woman had behaved at variance with her established image. That is, being polluted with malice, defiance, coarseness and violence is absolutely not what the Victorians would accept in a woman. However, Alice practically violates these assumptions about female obedience and purity because she becomes an independent thinker and vigorously argues for her own rights, decisions and will. In the fantasy worlds she will not be seriously punished by nor banished from the social community which is basically only an illusion creating good conditions for outlet of Alice’s true self and needs which she strengthens throughout the time spent there. Nevertheless, Alice’s dreamworld comes to its end when she achieves the greatest success of her young life that is when she becomes a queen but loses her temper with everything what is happening around her that at that point she returns to her homeland.

By giving Alice back to her earthly life, it seems as if Carroll refused to let Alice’s indignation go further which would ultimately cause her even some mental damage because it would almost lead to female hysteria when so young a child as Alice
is would not be able to cope with excess of so negative emotions. However, her sudden agitation may be attributed from the most part to her rising influence and power which is likely to go into one’s head and spoil one’s character quickly. So, on one hand it is admirable that a woman is granted such a liberty and personal acknowledgement by a sympathizing author, on the other hand it is his duty towards his child heroine to interfere with her subsequent development in the book which would illustrate that her free will actually saves her from any further harm. Consequently, finding out that she is no longer under the final pressure of the fantasy world, Alice tells her sister about her incredible dreamlike experience. In response to Alice’s narrative, the author gives us the picture of her sister’s train of thoughts by remarking that, “Lastly, she pictured to herself how this same little sister of hers would, in the after-time, be herself a grown woman...and how she would gather about her other little children, and make their eyes bright and eager with many a strange tale, perhaps even with the dream of Wonderland of long ago” (132). In this passage it is apparent that the narrator naturally connects Alice to the Victorian society by basically summing up what awaits her in the foreseeable future since her sexual category biologically predetermines that for her. Besides, the entire excerpt seems as if Alice’s sister was dreaming as well because her imagination has almost divine-like essence, bringing into foreground motherhood, which both the sister and Alice will once experience in reality. Moreover, her sister implies that if Alice does not forget her story which is now still alive in her memory, it will undoubtedly be exciting for her children in case she decides to tell them about it. Perhaps, both the children as well as Alice will be afterwards astonished at the adventures which their mother has gone through because either of them will conceive of it in considerably different ways. In other words, the little ones will hear it out solely as a fabulous tale for their amusement whereas their mother, an adult now, may as well
recognize some social implications in it, which have been stressed in this paper, and which have occurred to her while growing older in the society which may not be entirely in accordance with her individual expectations.

As far as the previous point is concerned, Jennifer Geer summarizes the main features of Carroll’s tales in relation to social requirements of women at that time by stating that,

“Wonderland and Looking-Glass, like many Victorian texts, thus characterize the values inscribed in idealized childhood and its tales as domestic and feminine. The Wonderland frames suggest that the tale of Alice's dream fosters the happy, loving childhood that will enable her development into a good woman and mother, while the Looking-Glass frames anticipate that the tale will create a domestic space powerful enough to keep the stormy world at bay” (2).

Basically Geer agrees that Carroll’s texts comply with conditions associated with an ideal didactic material for the Victorian children in the period in question which concentrated on portrayal of conventional sexual roles, putting a great emphasis on family life which was considered the core of social existence and which creates peaceful life for its members without allowing for any harmful effects which would contaminate this sacred environment. However, as Geer points out, these are the essential frames which actually form the two books but, as I have argued in this paper, closer reading of Alice’s tales unfolds that the plot deals with a female individuality capable of independent judgement, which is the centre of the reader’s attention, and therefore it is not only her social position as a mother and wife that matters.
There are evidently considerable distinctions between the real and the fantasy worlds in Lewis Carroll’s books which are both well delineated and recognizable because we as the readers are able to detect the place setting of Alice’s adventures which is fundamental in defining a particular society and culture that is the Victorian one in contrast to the fantasy one. Since Alice normally lives a life of a young Victorian girl at the beginning of her adventures, she is also returned to this very same life at the end of it. Her wonderful stop in Wonderland and then in Through the Looking-Glass offer her with opportunity to step out of stereotypes and limitations which are so essential to her social world. However, after Alice satisfies her curious and ambitious nature by gaining strength, Carroll sends her back home to her family where she subsequently faces the expected views for her domestic future and where she probably feels in harmony with her relatives since she is still only a child who needs loving care from them.

4. Conclusion

I would like to conclude this thesis by referring to some background information about Lewis Carroll, in his own name Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, in association to Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and its sequel Through the Looking-Glass. Having inferred from general perception of these influential books, they are imaginative fairy tales which are known worldwide both for its untraditional approach towards writing for children which employs mathematical riddles, nonsense conversations and thinking of bizarre creatures which are certainly appealing to youthful imagination, and for the genius author himself whose social background is often related to his literature. For example, a majority of critics believe that he began writing these adventures on the basis of his peculiar attraction to little girls, in particular to the Liddle sisters with whom he met frequently, and on 4 July 1862 Carroll “told the story that became Alice’s
Adventures in Wonderland to Alice Liddell during a boat ride” (Brucolli and Layman 63). Presumably the character of Alice in Carroll’s books corresponds to the name of Alice Liddell by whom he was inspired and most likely in close emotional attachment. What the two Alices have in common are basically the facts that they were little girls living in the Victorian era in the well-off families, adhering to the social conventions by being raised with a common view of motherhood in the future. What probably distinguishes the fictional Alice from the real one is the fact that she leaves her homeland for a change by which she is given a good opportunity for broadening her mind and going through set of tests which examine her character, encouraging her for self-expression. Then, the question whether Alice Liddell was ever recognized as a significant individual in the society in which patriarchy was the foundation of its principles is debatable but at least Lewis Carroll sympathized with his female companions by giving existence to curious Alice who may have been a stimulating example for them.

I have not analyzed only the character of Alice but also other ones which are generally controversial in their demonstration of gender and sexual roles which form the basic issues incorporated in this thesis and which support the main female heroine in her pursuit of important individual aims. Altogether, it is likely that there is a close similarity between Lewis Carroll and his heroine since he as the author seems to be social maverick as well. Being both critics, they openly reject the social restrictions which are dictated by the elites of particular societies, no matter whether they are real or fictional, promoting humanity among all the people.
Works Cited


Gorham, Deborah. *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal*. Bloomington: U of

Annotation

The aim of my thesis is to examine Lewis Carroll’s representation of his main heroine Alice in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* whom he primarily portrays as being a Victorian girl who follows social norms of that time by referring to her education and status. However, Carroll eventually implies that Alice is searching for, and then asserting her identity in both books by distancing herself from Victorian characteristics of a woman. In addition, some of the characters, namely the queen and the king, do not comply with stereotypical aspects of gender roles but are rather in a clear disaccord with them. Altogether, even though Carroll partly conventionalized both the books so that Victorian children could read literature which projected the social expectations of the Victorian society, he also uplifted an insignificant little female heroine who throughout her adventures gains strength and self-assertion at least in fantasy worlds.
Anotace

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá především tím, jak Lewis Carroll popisuje ve svých knihách *Alenka v Říši Divů* a *Za zrcadlem* svou hlavní hrdinku Alenku ze začátku jako ideální dívku, která se řídí společenskými normami zásadními pro Viktoriánskou společnost 19. Století. Nicméně, Carroll dává časem své hrdince prostor na to, aby poznávala, vyvíjela a následně prosadila svou identitu jako žena či dívka, která se postupně osvobozuje hlavně od duševních vlastností a rodinných povinností, které jsou tradičně připisovány ženskému pohlaví v přísně založené viktoriánské společnosti. Nejen Alenka, ale i jiné postavy svým chováním nevyhovují stereotypním sociálním normám, které jsou spojovány s daným pohlavím ve společnosti, ale je zřejmé, že jsou spíše v rozporu s nimi. Na jedné straně Lewis Carroll v podstatě stylizoval obě knihy tak, aby Viktoriánské děti mohly číst literaturu, která promítala společenské normy Viktoriánské společnosti, na druhé straně jeho mladá hrdinka získala aspoň díky jeho pozornosti na vážnosti a dostala možnost prosadit svou osobnost mimo působení patriarchálního prostředí.