



Experiences of Childhood in the Victorian Cultural and Literary World of Carroll's *Alice in Through the Looking Glass*

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Abstract

Regarded as a sequel to the 'children's fiction' novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* is a bildungsroman that presents the adventures of its girl-child protagonist, Alice, in the fantasy world on the other side of her looking glass. Located in a Victorian cultural and literary context, the novel roots itself in the conflicts of the age to which it belongs, and simultaneously presents a parody of Victorian ways and values, thereby questioning the contradictions inherent in them. This essay historically contextualizes Carroll's novel in Victorian England, and examines Alice as a Victorian middle-class heroine equipped with Victorian values that she uses to confront the Looking Glass world of upturned logic and language. It also examines the way in which Carroll's book not only reflects the conventional prescriptions for the age and genre to which it belongs, but questions and negotiates with them as well. The essay thus looks at the novel as a function of its location in the Victorian cultural context through an examination of the qualitative aspects of children's literature available at the time, the literary representation of children in Victorian texts, and the conflicts with Victorian values as experienced by Alice in such a context. When analyzed through these frameworks, *Through the Looking Glass* presents itself as a text with satiric and subversive possibilities, which are hidden in its upturned language and logic of 'nonsense'. This is what the essay examines.

Keywords: Victorian childhood, Children's Literature, nonsense, satire, selfhood.