

Through the Looking Glass

Lewis Carroll's fiction entitled *Through the Looking Glass* invites and transports the readers to the world of pure imagination, beauty and magic. The novel is open to all types of readers as it is meant for all as Carroll claims ". . . thou wilt not fail/ To listen to my fairy- tale"(11-12). The fairy-tale has an irresistible appeal which helps the children connect to the world of Alice. The adults can identify themselves with Alice by sailing back to the days of childhood. Carroll appears to be poking fun at adult intellectualism. *Through the Looking Glass* help one mature. It reflects on the theme of growing-up. The fictional tale makes one wiser and enriches one's perception. In the very beginning of the fiction, the writer muses on:

Child of the pure unclouded brow
And dreaming eyes of wonder!
Though time be fleet, and I and thou
Are half a life asunder,
Thy loving smile will surely hail
The love-gift of a fairy-tale. (1-6)

The work deserves to be an important document of memory study by unveiling a world beyond the mirror. The thrilling experience of reading Carroll's work remains unforgettable as the writer says its : ". . . echoes live in memory yet,/ Though envious years would say 'forget' (17-18). The themes of this fiction outlive ages.

Through the Looking Glass provides a reflection of the actual world for Alice to explore. Alice falls asleep at the beginning of *Through the Looking-Glass*, just as she did at the outset of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, so that the resulting fantastical adventures occur in her dreams. Within the looking-glass, everything is backwards. Text is reversed: Alice reads the poem *Jabberwocky* backwards. Space/direction is inverted: Alice must walk away from where she wants to go in the garden in order to actually get there. Ideas are also inverted, which is plain in many of the conversations that Alice has with the characters encountered in the looking-glass world. Tweedledee and Tweedledum are mirror images of each other. The White Knight talks about putting a right foot into a left shoe. In the railway carriage, Alice is traveling in the wrong direction.

Carroll seems to believe that dreaming is the ideal, especially for young children, as suggested by the poem at the very end of the book. He goes as far as to suggest that there might not be any set reality at all, and that life is just the stuff of dreams. At the end of the fiction he says: "Life what is it but a dream?"(21). The precocious Alice takes everything in stride. In a way, her vast imagination allows Carroll to expose the reader to a multitude of fantasies. And because Alice never ultimately passes judgment to the point of denying these whimsies, the author is able to bring his reader into an intricate world entirely of his own invention. Alice remains Carroll's dream-child. In *Through the Looking-Glass*, Alice is a child not yet eight years old. She has been raised in a wealthy Victorian household and is interested in good manners, which she demonstrates with her pet, Kitty. Alice treats others with kindness and courtesy, as evidenced in her various interactions with the Looking-Glass creatures. She has an extremely active imagination but seeks order in the world around her. Alice fights to understand the fantastic dream world that has sprung from her own imagination, trying her best to order her life experiences and connect them to the unusual situations she encounters in Looking-Glass World. Alice's maturation transforms into a game of chess, in which her growth into womanhood becomes a quest to become a queen.

Alice's journey is represented as a pawn to queenhood. She undergoes many experiences that can be seen as crucial for development, such as the discovery of identity that is demanded by the situation in the wood of forgetfulness. Many of the poems recited focus on the theme of passing youth. However, the incompetence and immaturity of those that may be considered adult characters in the book calls the idea of a progression into question. Alice often proves to be smarter, more thoughtful and more resourceful than the "adults" she encounters in the looking glass.

In *Through the Looking-Glass*, language has the capacity to anticipate and even cause events to happen. Alice recites nursery rhymes on several occasions, which causes Tweedledum and Tweedledee, Humpty Dumpty, and the Lion and the Unicorn to perform the actions that she describes in her rhymes. Rather than recording and describing events that have already happened, words give rise to actions simply by being spoken. Tweedledum and Tweedledee's quarrel begins only after Alice recites the rhyme about the broken rattle. Similarly, Humpty Dumpty's fall does not happen until Alice describes the events in the classic nursery rhyme. Language covers actions in Looking-Glass World, rather than simply describing them. The flowers reinforce this principle by explaining that a tree can scare enemies away with its "bark." In our language, there is no relationship between the bark of a dog and the bark of a tree, but in Looking-Glass World, this linguistic similarity results in a functional common ground. Trees that have bark are thus able to "bark" just as fiercely as dogs.

Loneliness is an important issue in this tale. Alice feels lonely, which motivates her to seek out company that she can sympathize and identify with. She creates a structured imaginary world that she can control, and creates Looking-Glass World in order to connect with other individuals and seek out company that she feels comfortable with. She desires a family and in the beginning of the book uses her pets as a substitute family in the "real" world. Once she enters Looking-Glass World, she seeks compassion and understanding from the individuals that she meets, but she is frequently disappointed. The flowers and Humpty Dumpty treat her rudely, the Red Queen is brusque, and the Fawn flees from her once it realizes that she is a human. She receives little compassion from others and often becomes sad. The one character who shows her compassion is the White Knight, who must leave her when she reaches the eighth square and must take on her role of Queen. Alice's dreams deal with the anxieties of growing up and becoming a young woman. Since Alice believes that loneliness is an inherent part of growing up, even in her dreams she must face the transition into womanhood alone.