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Research Question: In what ways does Carroll in "Alice in

Wonderland" and "Through the Looking Glass" create a dual audience of
children and adults?

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ABSTRACT

Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass by Lewis Carroll are literary works filled with imaginary details and constructed with metaphorical language that creates dilemmas about their genre and audience. Carroll's imaginary characters, places and occasions, along with nonsense and poetic devices appeal children while content of these novels also address to the adult audience. Evolving from that, the idea that he has a dual audience of adults and children arose. This essay focuses mainly on the question:

In what ways does Carroll in “Alice in Wonderland” and “Through the Looking Glass” create a dual audience of children and adults?

The scope of this essay is mostly based on these two novels while secondary sources that investigate the audience are used as supplements, including literary commentaries, articles that lead the evaluation to be done based on characterization, imaginary elements, poetic and philosophical devices and content of the novels. The limitation of this essay is that it does not investigate what pushes Carroll to have a dual audience, or whether he specifically aimed to have one. Further research, or if possible, an interview with a close relative that knows the real story behind these novels might also be examined.

This essay concludes that Carroll uses fantasy and poetic devices, sense and nonsense and characterization of the characters, Alice in particular, to target children's fun-loving sides and curious minds; whereas content of the novels and their plots, philosophical interpretations of events and characters are utilized to inspire and excite adult audience. The essay acknowledges the techniques Carroll used to appeal

both children and adults and answers the question of how he addresses to dual audience in his works, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Alice in Wonderland tells the story of Alice's unexpected journey to Wonderland. Alice, the protagonist, encounters with fictional characters, like the white Rabbit, the Mad Hatter and the March Hare, the Cheshire Cat, Caterpillar who help her solve the mystery of Wonderland and forces her to question her identity. After her adventure which represents a journey of maturation and growth for adult readers, Alice wakes up near her older sister and realizes that Wonderland, just like the life itself, nothing more than a dream.

Likewise, in Through the Looking Glass, Alice accidentally finds herself in a Looking Glass world where everything is same but just the opposite. Through the Looking Glass tells what Alice encounters like Humpty Dumpty and the White Knight during her journey in the chessboard-like Looking Glass World. Eventually, when Alice can control the chaos erupting at her banquet, she returns to the rationale world and wakes up from her dream again.

Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass, are two of Lewis Carroll's famous children books. However, when considered in literary senses, those books are generously filled with 'Carrollisms', symbols and philosophical point of views only sophisticated readers are able to understand. Thus the following research question arises:

In what ways does Carroll in "Alice in Wonderland" and "Through the Looking Glass" create a dual audience of children and adults?

Children's literature is made up of ambivalent texts and addresses children who want to be entertained or possibly informed and adults with different tastes and literary expectations. In this case, those two books could be considered to have a 'dual

audience', a text where the implied reader is simultaneously both child and adult, therefore they should be evaluated together. Resulting from these criteria, my approach to the research question is shaped: First, I will investigate the way Carroll achieved reach both children and adult reader. In both works, use of fantasy, characterization of the protagonist, use of poetic devices and concept of nonsense appeal children audience. On the other hand, content of the novels and their plots, some characters and interpretation of those with philosophical lenses appeal to adult audience.

II. CREATING AN AUDIENCE

a. Creating the Child Audience

Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass are Carroll's two of the most read novels, which target 'children' as particular audience. Carroll's use of language, plot development and the content of the works are interpreted differently by the audience, which make them appealing for both adult and children audience.

In the 1860s, when the two Alice books were produced, "*Fantasy took flight on its own wings*"¹ states John Rowe Townsend. The use of fantasy, to depict imaginary creatures, events, and world, appeals childish minds, creating children audience. Alice, in her journey, encounters with loads of fascinating creatures, including a caterpillar with a hookah: "...of a large blue caterpillar, that was sitting on the top with its arms folded, quietly smoking a hookah..." (Carroll 48) Depiction of the caterpillar, a non-existing creature in the real world leads the child to the world of fantasy. The description of the Looking Glass World, which seems to be 'alive' and just the opposite of the rationale world, captures children's attention. Literal pools of tears, talking animals, playing golf with flamingos are elements of fantasy. Wonderland is full of impossible thing. Imaginary creatures and events are likely to be irrational while they embrace children audience by exposing the implausible side of life. The sentence of Mad Hatter, "*It's always 6 o'clock now.*" (Carroll 75) shows the irrational time concept in Wonderland. Also, Carroll employs several irrational characters such as the king and queen of Wonderland which are just deck of cards

¹ Koumtoudji, Édith F. *Ranslating Alice in Wonderland for Different Audiences Through the Years*. Rep. Johannesburg: n.p., 2012

which makes it appealing to children. The use of fantasy along with nonsense is a total creation of mind and imagination. For instance, Alice discovers an elephant-bee, the product of nonsense that humorously makes sense to children. “*Here, every impossible, absurd and fantastic thing has an explanation though it might make ‘nonsense’ but the combination of these two helps to gain attention of children even more than just one of them does.*”² To sum up, use of fantasy in Carroll’s novels is a significant tool to reach children audience.

Secondly, characterization of the protagonist is way to appeal to a child audience. Carroll presents Alice as a stereotype of Victorian time, who has simplicity in her actions and passivity of females. With the use of third person omniscient point of view, he contributes to readers’ understanding of Alice’s internal thoughts and feelings which creates a pathway to reach Alice’s childish world. Colloquial language, short and simple sentences are used while conveying Alice’s thoughts. “*She was so much surprised, that for the moment she quite forgot how to speak good English.*” (Carroll 24) conveys Alice’s thoughts and functions as a bridge between children audience. “*I wonder if I shall fall right through the earth! How funny it’ll seem to come out among the people that walk with their heads downwards!*” (Carroll 19) parading a sense of humor, it depicts an example of immature and childish tone. Child and adult point of view differs here, since adults think more rationally in most situations, like falling down a rabbit hole.

Moreover, she is characterized as a naïve and immature child that enables children to empathize with her easily. At the end of *Through the Looking Glass*, she becomes the queen, which is presented, widely accepted and promoted by the society

² Waycaster, Megan. *When Reality Isn't Enough: The Cult of Girlhood in Wonderland and Neverland*. LaGrange College Journal of Undergraduate Research, 2011

as the dream of young girls. Elements of the novels are promoted in the respective society of the children audience in a way that the society has already embraced, which directly influence children of that time. Being a dynamic character, Alice changes and matures throughout these novels, which, with an adventurous tone. To sum up, Carroll creates a stereotypical character that appeals to children readers by her self-indulgent actions and immature tone, and consequently built the most important base to target the child audience.

Additionally, Carroll's use of poetic devices leads to have a child audience. Both novels have lots of verses and lullabies that capture attention with their rhymes. "*The Mouse's Tale*" serves primarily as a visual joy of a tail-shaped poem since Alice thinks that the mouse means 'tail' but not 'tale'. In the lines "*Fury said to a mouse, That he met in the house, 'Let us both go...*" (Carroll 36) use of alliteration and assonance creates tension, which reveals some details about predation and viciousness that are recurring themes in Carroll's poems, including *The Hunting of the Snark*. Those themes reveal the realities of the rationale world about iniquity and brutality to children, which are obvious to adult readers. "*Carroll enjoyed making fun of poetry that told children how to behave- a kind of poetry that was common in 1700s and 1800s. This poem makes fun of a poem by Isaac Watts, one that children may have heard from their parents or teachers.*"³ Bertrand Russell, Paul Auster and Henry Kuttner postulate "The language of Carroll's poem "Jabberwocky" is actually a language understood only by children whose minds have not been structured according to Euclidean logic."⁴. This poem is full of imageries that describe

³ Carroll, Lewis, Edward Mendelson, and Eric Copeland. *Poetry for Young People: Lewis Carroll*. New York: Sterling Pub., 2000

⁴ Carroll, Lewis, and Bruce E. Walker. *Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. New York, NY: Hungry Minds, 2001

Jabberwocky and some other beastlike creatures within their habitats. Also, lots of made-up words are used by Carroll like 'Bandersnatch'.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!

The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!

Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun

The frumious Bandersnatch!" (Carroll 149)

Here, "*The frumious Bandersnatch*" is interpreted to be a swift moving creature with snapping jaws, capable of extending its neck. He also plays with the words creatively in his poems. For instance, the made-up onomatopoeic word 'slithy' which is combination of 'lithe' and 'slimy' sounds like slimy, but also is graceful, because of the inclusion of lithe. By using verses in his novels, Carroll captures children's attention with rhymes and themes they are familiar with and with a grandiloquent language that dwell in children's memory.

Furthermore, Carroll commonly refers to the concept of 'sense' and 'nonsense'. In the dialogue between Alice and the Mock Turtle, he tells Alice about its school and lessons. Carroll invents such lessons as uglification and derision to create 'nonsense'. Likewise, when Mock Turtle explains why lessons are called lessons, since they lessen from one day to another starting from ten hours, the case stupidly makes sense, which is actually the main purpose of creating 'nonsense'. The lines "...*Tiger-lily said, 'they make the beds too soft- so that the flowers are always asleep.'* This sounded a very good reason, and Alice..." (Carroll 155) show reasoning in Wonderland works irrationally which creates an absurd situation and can be humorous for children audience. Furthermore, in Looking Glass World, also in Wonderland, time and space notion work oppositely: "*There's the King's Messenger. He's in prison now, being punished: the trial doesn't even begin till next Wednesday:*

and of course the crime comes last of all.” (Carroll 190) Here, since it is a Looking Glass World, cause a relationship works in works out reversely. Although this causes logical fallacies, children audience is entertained by the absurdness of it creates.

b. Creating Adult Audience

Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass are targeted to and enjoyed by not only children but also adults. Literary works, in some cases, has dual audience of children and adults. With regard to adults’ attitude towards Alice, Elsie Leach writes:

“...Carroll senses that it is an original work of imagination, with meaning for adults as well as for children. He dismisses as a fantastic diversion for children the plot line – what little there seems to be – and the character of Alice, and he appropriates the witty dialogue as though it were intended for him alone. Thus the part, which is quite peripheral to the meaning of the book – divorced from character and action - he makes central in his appreciation.”⁵

Both novels are considered to have dual audience and appeal adults by providing a gateway, using allegoric devices, offering commonality to adult experience by characterization of characters, using sophisticated logic, symbols, metaphors, and by offering a philosophical way of thinking.

To begin with, since literary works gain meanings and interpreted according to understanding and experience of the reader, adults will derive different meanings from the content of Carroll’s works. Both novels offer commonality to adult

⁵ Koumtoudji, Édith F. *Ranslating Alice in Wonderland for Different Audiences Through the Years*. Rep. Johannesburg: n.p., 2012

experience. Adults, like Alice, are taken to an adventure and offered an escape from the barrier of growing up and facing realities. To start with, both novels can be accepted as an allegory. Growing up of Alice after eating or drinking something symbolizes a period of maturation of a person. Also, Alice's adventures represent a transition from a little girl to a Victorian woman, adolescence and related identity crisis. 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 year-old to about 20.⁶ Through this journey, her identity is questioned not only by herself, but by other characters. She usually feels that she is too tall to be herself, or too small, or that she is another person altogether and it is only when who she is and how she sees herself are no longer subject to the erratic and uncontrollable unknown can she gain a measure of power to deal with the ludicrousness around her. After coming to Wonderland, and growing up and shrinking incessantly, Alice feels uncomfortable because of the perplexity of the new and she starts to question her identity: "...the next question is, who in the world am I? Ah, that's the great puzzle!" (Carroll 26) She has to deal with dramatic changes in her size, which leads to confusion through her first steps into adulthood. These create of 'some labels the heroine cannot escape'⁷ which are interpreted by adult readers as toughness of maturation and puberty in a metaphorical way. Also in the Looking Glass world, Tweedledee and Tweedledum make it clear that she is the result of the Black King's dream. All these tense moments are nothing

⁶ Child Development Institute. "Stages of Social-Emotional Development in Children and Teenagers." Web. 11 March 2009.
<http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/development/erickson.shtml>

⁷ Sâncelean, Andreea-Maria. *Alice's Allegorical Journey Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass. The Allegorist: Character and Narrator*. Working paper. Tîrgu Mureş; n.p., 2012

but stages in the initiation process of identity crisis that Alice goes through. Her journey is defined as:

*“What lies beneath the heroine’s journey is, in fact, the confrontation between the spontaneous childhood, enchanted by play and simplicity, and the world of adults, where everything is dominated by oppression and limitation.”*⁸

This, however, can only be interpreted by adults in that way which makes two novels engaging. Furthermore, lots of symbols to create allegory used by Carroll like Caterpillar’s mushroom which stands for bodily frustrations that accompany puberty since Alice needs to discover its effectiveness and properties to obtain control on her body size. Also, it is interpreted as a hallucinogen responsible for Alice’s surreal and distorted perception of Wonderland. Likewise, the garden symbolizes Garden of Eden, an idyllic space of beauty and innocence that Alice is not permitted to access or the experience of desire that Alice focuses her energy attaining it. Those interpretations underscore Alice’s desire to hold onto her feelings of childlike innocence that she must relinquish as she matures, which can be linked to the major theme of both books: tragic loss of childhood innocence and growing up. Adult readers understand the allegory of growing up, emphasized by symbols, while children enjoy the plots and characters.

Moreover, sophisticated logic is used by Carroll to address adult audience through use of cards, chess games and inversions. Cards and chess make the stories more approachable by children, on the other hand, it nestles deeper analogies for

⁸ Sâncelean, Andreea-Maria. *Alice's Allegorical Journey Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass. The Allegorist: Character and Narrator*. Working paper. Tîrgu Mureş; n.p., 2012

adults. They enhance the statement that ‘life is nothing but a game’ full of arbitrary rules and not as meaningful as it is pretended. This is emphasized deeply in *Through the Looking Glass* where Alice goes through an uncertain journey in order to become a queen instead of a pawn and realizes that being a queen is not glorious as she thinks- just like the life itself, which is a metaphor for growing up. Additionally, as parts of this sophisticated logic used by Carroll, mostly apparent in the *Looking Glass World*, everything occurs inversely. Those occasions are reflections of the rational world and therefore they make her understand different perspectives on life during her maturation journey. This is perceived by adults since they can understand the recently referred connotations behind this sophisticated logic of Carroll. Furthermore, the train imagery suggests the irreversible and unstoppable movement toward adulthood that Alice becomes subject to in her journey through. Both books end when Alice becomes capable of dealing with the difficulties and chaos after realizing that these are nothing but games in fictional worlds. These force adult readers to question the world they live in.

Additionally, some characters serve as a tool to connect adults’ thoughts and feelings with novels. The scene when Alice wakes up from the dream and tells what she has been through to her sister depicts a moment of both nostalgia and a deception from the stifling reality of the world in point of view of an adult, Alice’s older sister. “...*Half believed herself in Wonderland, though she knew she had but to open them again and all would change to dull reality- the grass would be only rustling...*” (Carroll 123). She serves as a connection to the reality that enables adult readers to have a realization of fantasy and reality. The scene depicts that she identifies the whole story as a remembrance of her childhood dreams which will later allow Alice

to retain her childishness inside after she becomes a grown up, a mother, even a grandmother. The mature perspective of Alice's sister reflects the feelings of intense nostalgia for adults' longing for simple pleasures of childhood and their melancholy due to the loss of childhood innocence. Besides, the Cheshire Cat is a representative of adult perspective differing from children. It is an enigma symbolizing the mystery of Wonderland itself because he can appear and disappear instantly and only some parts of his body are shown. "*We're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad ... or you wouldn't have come here*" (Carroll 67) Cheshire Cat says enlightening that it is not possible to understand the mystery hidden behind every inch of Wonderland, though he unveils the most effectual secret of Wonderland that provides Alice an understanding. He is Alice's only companion in the underground world, he helps Alice in her hard times, like when he gets lost in Wonderland, and he is a perfectly depicted metaphor of how nonsense has a way of making sense.

Historically, in great part of 19th century literature, effects of Victorian Era are apparent. The drive for social advancement, a highly idealized -in other words utopic- notion of England which consists of the obsession with 'proper' behavior, which serves as object of satire and rebellion against Victorian 'strength obsessed' system and stereotyped notions, are widely observed in mid or later 19th century literary works, including Carroll's novels. Perceived by adult readers, Queen of Hearts symbolizes the obsession with power in this period and Alice acts as a tool of satire towards this system. Alice constantly emphasizes the importance of education she has had. Children get lost in the fantasy that took flight on its own wings in these books, while they harbor connotations for adults including the era's implications, along with the characterization, that creates 'dual' audience.

In philosophical sense, there are some details in the books that only adults are able to perceive. In chapter 5 in *Alice in Wonderland*, there are some claims of readers about that Alice is symbolically Socrates in a world full of sophists. Alice uses her logic in a world of nonsense to discover reality in search for truth and information. This journey is a representative of her search of the ‘truth’. This interpretation can be achieved by adult readers. Furthermore, Plato was a philosopher who believed that everything existing in our world of experience exists as an Idea or perfect form in another plain of existence.

“...A Form, therefore, also does not exist in time or space... In contrast to Forms, particulars are complex, changeable, and imperfect. These important differences suggest that the way Forms and particulars exist is different, and that the existence of the Forms is superior: they are in a way that particulars are not.”⁹

This belief seemed to be shared by Lewis Carroll too, most clearly in the infamous grin of the Cheshire Cat: *“Well! I’ve often seen a cat without a grin; but a grin without a cat! It’s the most curious thing I ever saw in my Life!”* (Carroll 69) According to Plato’s philosophy, a grin might exist entirely on its own, as a non-material being, as a perfect idea of a grin. Since the Cheshire Cat himself may be a non-material being and can exist, possibly without its body not in the world of

⁹ Lacewing, Michael. "Plato’s Theory of Forms." Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, n.d. Web.

<http://documents.routledge->

[interactive.s3.amazonaws.com/9781138793934/A2/Plato/PlatoTheoryForms.pdf](http://documents.routledge-interactive.s3.amazonaws.com/9781138793934/A2/Plato/PlatoTheoryForms.pdf)

experience, not in the shape of particulars but in the world of ideas and in the shape of forms. Also, Simon Blackburn states that one could argue for the existence of something by using an analogy.¹⁰ Alice endlessly compares the fantasy worlds with where she comes from which has no purpose but to exacerbate Alice's ire towards 'nonsense'. She is not able to perceive the reality of those worlds. She approached the situation with her own paradigm and labels everything as 'wrong' or 'rude', which can be explained in terms of relativism in philosophy. However, these don't mean that these worlds are not real or not existing.

“Reality is more than what is simply apparent; it consists of a smattering of concepts and perspectives that provide depth and character to the lives we live. Reality is far too diverse and intricate to be confined to only one denotation. Without its complexities, there would be no mystery in life, no curiosity to be found inside of a rabbit-hole.”¹¹

This philosophical point of views and theories can be interpreted by adults and lead them to a search of truth, existence and the 'ideal'.

¹⁰ Blackburn, Simon. *Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999

¹¹ Strobins, Samantha. "The Philosophy of "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland"" N.p., Mar. 2010. Web.
<http://daydreamtripper.hubpages.com/hub/The-Philosophy-of-Alices-Adventures-in-Wonderland>

III. CONCLUSION

When I investigate the research question: **In what ways does Carroll in “Alice in Wonderland” and “Through the Looking Glass” create a dual audience of children and adults?** I have been convinced that these two books of Lewis Carroll are not only appealing to children, as they have been widely accepted, but also to adults to almost the same extent.

Both novels have engaging parts for children. Alice, the protagonist and consequently the most important component of the novels, also helps to address children audience by her typical childish actions, responses and immature tone. The use of poetic devices full of sound effects and lullabies that children have already heard of and portraying sense and nonsense in a way that is beyond their imagination, contributes to formation of children audience.

Likewise, content of the books significantly benefit the creation of an adult audience. Those books are reflections of adult notions and comments. For example, according to adults, the journeys of the heroine are representatives of the journey from childhood to adulthood and related identity crisis that adults have been through too and only they can figure out. These books are full of metaphors and symbols like the caterpillar’s mushroom. Moreover, Carroll uses sophisticated logic through chess, deck of cards and the inversely portrayed Looking Glass world. As it comes to characterization, for instance, the Cheshire Cat holds deeper significance for adults than it does for children. For them, it is the symbol of Wonderland’s mystery and responsible for both introducing this mystery to Alice and helping her to figure that out. Carroll also presents parts of philosophical views in these books. Cheshire Cat is

also, for some readers, a representative of Plato's theory of Forms through its autonomous existence.

In the end, I come up with this conclusion: By using these components to create adult audience, all of which are bricks only adult readers can bind together and make a perfect fit, Carroll finally achieves his dual audience of both children and adults, and that a literary work should never be criticized by apparent inferences. After all, isn't it the sole aim of an author to create a world hidden behind the reality and appearance?

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