

Grow Up Alice: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* Read as a Bildungsroman

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## Abstract

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871) have been continuously read and analyzed since their publications. Critics have done a considerable amount of research on the novels, yet that research has not fully recognized the growth of Alice as a Bildungsroman over the course of both novels. Critics have emphasized Carroll's ability to satirize the era, Alice's contribution to feminism, and a plethora of other critical analysis; yet very little emphasis has been put on the development of Alice through the course of the novels. Some critics have mentioned Alice's identity development, or the lack thereof, which fails to fully accept the Alice novels as a Bildungsroman due to her young age. However, Alice's development throughout both novels, while including identity development, also includes social skills, self-confidence, and a plethora of other defining traits that make these novels interesting candidates for a Bildungsroman. In three chapters, this paper explicitly identifies the characteristics of Bildungsroman used to analyze Alice, followed by an analysis of her development in both imaginary worlds of Wonderland and Looking-Glass.

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## Chapter 1

### Curiouser and Curiouser: A Not So Typical Bildungsroman

#### An Overview of the Bildungsroman

Lewis Carroll's best-selling series *Alice in Wonderland* follows a young girl on two whimsical journeys through the worlds of Wonderland and Looking-Glass. Alice's experiences in these worlds influence her growth and maturity as a character. Through encounters with the inhabitants of these worlds, Alice develops as the protagonist, finding her own identity, voice, and confidence. Journey, trial, growth, and development of the protagonist are defining characteristics of any Bildungsroman, and these novels do not fall short of that. Alice is a young curious girl in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* who would rather rest under a tree, dreaming of an entire imaginary world, than listen to her older sister read. This dream takes her underground and through many trials that test her ability to cope with anxieties about growing up and older. *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* introduces us to a precocious Alice, though still as curious and imaginative as before. This time Alice is more goal oriented and that is reflected in the world she finds herself in. Though the Alice novels are not typical Bildungsroman, both of her experiences can be read this way. Her development throughout the novels reflects the structure of a Bildungsroman, her maturity is notable both times.

The Bildungsroman genre has its own specific guidelines. At first, readers are introduced to the protagonist and given hints that a change is soon to come, this is the starting stage of the protagonist's story, usually childhood into teenage years. The character then faces many obstacles, physical and mental, that are leading up to the final stage of the coming-of-age story. During this period the main character faces fears, conquers demons, learns from a mentor, along



with many other things. At the end of the novel that same protagonist crosses the final threshold into adulthood. In most novels, the character returns home where their family and community are awaiting them. At this point the main character has gained a new identity and is now accepted among his peers. Though this is the typical format of the Bildungsroman, the Alice novels do not follow this format. Alice does not age beyond seven years old in her novels, this already makes her journey significantly different than her peers. Her age may stay the same, but the amount of growth and development throughout this series is worth considering Alice as a Bildungsroman character. The main goal of the Bildungsroman is to explore the development of the character throughout their lifespan, Alice's development happens over a few months. Within these imaginary worlds, Alice grows into a mature protagonist who's able to face fears and conquer obstacles that reflect her anxieties about growing older.

The male centered Bildungsroman follows a specific set of guidelines. At first, readers are introduced to the protagonist and given hints that a change is soon to come, this is the starting stage of the protagonist's story, usually childhood into teenage years. The character then faces many obstacles, physical and mental, that are leading up to the final stage of the coming-of-age story. During this period the main character faces fears, conquers demons, learns from a mentor, along with many other things. At the end of the novel that same protagonist crosses the final threshold into adulthood. In most novels, the character returns home where their family and community are awaiting them. At this point the main character has gained a new identity and is now accepted among his peers.

While this explains the traditional construction of a Bildungsroman with a male protagonist, those that feature female protagonists follow a different structure. Like male featured coming-of-age novels, female coming-of-age novels also feature a beginning and

middle aspect, where they differ is the inclusion of the ending or adult life. Where male-centered Bildungsroman features an adulthood aspect, female-centered Bildungsroman does not. Female-centered novels often have the same storyline, the protagonist meets a young man, they get along well, and then they marry. Female Bildungsroman are often laid out in a similar pattern, perhaps even more consistently than their male counter: it is announced or proclaimed that she is not of an age which she can marry, she spends a good portion of the novel searching for a suitable husband, and she either becomes engaged and “Reader, I married him” as in *Jane Eyre*, or she dies as in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*. During this beginning period, the protagonist is introduced to many suitors while also trying to figure out who she is or what her purpose may be.

Eventually, the protagonist is married off and this is where the story ends. Readers are not given a sense of whether the protagonist is even accepted back into society or not. It can be argued that in many female-centered Bildungsroman like *Sense and Sensibility*, readers are told that the protagonist lives a happy life within her role as housewife. After trial and error with other suitors, Elinor, the protagonist of the Jane Austen novel, finally marries Edward. Austen’s novel reflects the typical characteristics of female Bildungsroman; if a female protagonist was featured, her story ended at her marriage as if women’s lives ended here. As we know, they don’t but that was the standard for female protagonist. After marriage women go on to live out significant roles such as mother, wife, worker, grandmother, etc. It is important that literature is as inclusive and reflective of its audience of women as it is for men. Men centered stories often follow men up until and beyond marriage, focusing more on other milestones in their stories (i.e. the integration of these men back into society). The Bildungsroman highlights the life of the character collectively. Of course, we read through the lifetime of the protagonist, but no real attention is paid to those transitional moments in their life. Most attention is put on that initial moment that

the protagonist undergoes some event that prompts them to take off on their journey and that final moment when the protagonist is assimilated back into society as an adult (wife for women). Under further and closer analysis, liminality would highlight those moments of transition from one stage into another. The actual act of becoming older or getting married, for example. Though it is a part of the coming-of-age novels, these are very significant moments that often get glossed over for the moral message of the novel. However, reading a Bildungsroman novel through the lens of liminality allows for proper and closer examination of the protagonist and its story. Paying close attention to these moments of transition allows readers to get a better understanding of the character and perhaps a clearer vision of what the author was trying to say with their novel. Though liminality is not the focus of my thesis, the concepts work well with the Bildungsroman. The idea that there is deeper meaning within the transitional stages of a protagonist's story is worth taking a look at.

Through the influence of Grimm and Perrault and others, there was a shift from pious and instructional literature to a more fantastical type of literature. In the mid-nineteenth century the concept of childhood changed and with it the literature directed towards them. Paulin Dewan states that

even though not written specifically for children, fairy tales have subsequently been adopted by them because they are a particularly concrete, visual, and cinematic form of writing, a genre in which place is all-important [...] fairy tales work by externalizing and rendering abstract concepts concrete, they focus on an outer rather than inner landscape, an orientation particularly important for children. Children's literature does not make use of psychological analysis of motive and behavior to the same extent and in the same explicit manner as many adult works do. Like the fairy tale, children's fiction uses place to project outwards the inner thoughts and ideas of characters. (2)

Dewan argues here that fairytales, although originally intended for adults, have become increasingly popular for children because they are suited for them. She claims that children instinctively grasp the concepts of people and place because they are looking for clues in the

fictional environment (2). This concept of visual projection is found in children's literature, often as that child character's imagination becoming reality. Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is a wonderful example of this. The young protagonist, Haroun, embarks on an adventure to save his dad; however, the adventure takes place in a dream world of his own creation. This imaginary place mimics Haroun's thoughts, feelings, and emotions. The world he creates challenges him, pushing him beyond limits and ideals he, as a young boy, would not understand. This is no different than many children's novels with young protagonist, such as *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (L. Frank Baum), *Caroline* (Neil Gaiman), and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Lewis Carroll) to name a few. Dewan's main argument being of special attention on location in children's literature, as it is one of many keys to understanding the logic of the novel. Though place and location play a significant role in novels in general, in children's novels location is used concretely to relay messages and give meaning to moments and scenes within the context of the story. This is an important concept because as children and adolescent lives border the thresholds of youth and adulthood, those inner landscapes are often reflected in the outer landscapes described in novels.

Those landscapes in children's novels are traveled by young protagonist who have left the life they know to embark on a journey of growth. The dominant theme in children's literature is of growing up and crossing the threshold into adulthood. This theme is found in Bildungsroman novels, which typically follows a young protagonist through their childhood into their adult life. German in origin, 'bildungs' means formation, and 'roman' means novel, when put together the word translates to formation novel. The term Bildungsroman was first introduced in a lecture titled "On the Nature of the Bildungsroman" by Karl von Morgenstern in 1819; however, scholars such as Tobias Boes suggests in his article "Modernist Studies and

the *Bildungsroman: A Historical Survey of Critical Trends*,” that the genre of Bildungsroman got its official start in 1906 by the German scholar Wilhelm Dilthey. Morgenstern is noted as being the first to acknowledge the nature of the developmental novel suggesting that

we may call a novel a Bildungsroman first and foremost on account of its content, because it represents the development of the hero in its beginning and progress to a certain stage of completion, but also, second, because this depiction promotes the development of the reader to a greater extent than any other kind of novel. (Morgenstern 655)

Morgenstern’s suggestion that a novel can be considered a Bildungsroman based on content and whether it helps readers develop as well is not far off from what the Bildungsroman has come to mean in the present day. He also suggests that “the objective of the Bildungsroman is pleasurable, beautiful, and entertaining depiction of the formative years of the protagonist, free of didacticism (Morgenstern 655). Just as before, this characterization of the Bildungsroman falls in line with the current theme. Morgenstern’s view of the Bildungsroman is of a universal subcategory of the modern novel, his argument strongly tied to the novel being of developmental aid of the reader. On the other hand, Dilthey sees the Bildungsroman as a historically and nationally delineated developmental novel. His argument is tied to the novel that emphasizes “inwardness” and “personality” at the expense of social concerns and interpersonal relations” (Boes 648). In other words, Dilthey’s Bildungsroman gazes inwardly at the development of the protagonist, while Morgenstern’s Bildungsroman put the gaze onto the audience and out of the novel entirely. It wasn’t until mid-century that Bildungsroman became widely known in both England and the United States, and properly introduced by English scholar Susanne Howe in her 1930 work *Wilhelm Meister and his English Kinsmen: Apprentices to Life*.

Simhachalam Thamarana suggests, the Bildungsroman is meant to enrich readers as the protagonist journeys through physical and psychological maturity. He states that maturity occurs

along a specific pattern in which the protagonist leaves home, growing through stages of conflict, trials, and love affairs to finally find acceptance (22). This is a common pattern that shows up in fictional novels. Though the ideal Bildungsroman follows this pattern, the focus of the lesson in the novel will often differ depending on where it is written and who it was written by or about. In relation to location and author, Bildungsroman written by German authors and English authors tend to have differences. Although Bildungsroman can be found in every language, the structure subtly shifts depending on the cultural consideration. For instance, German novelists usually concentrate on internal or psychological struggle, whereas English novelists complicate the protagonist's battle with various outside conflicts to establish an individual's identity. These patterns are prominent in stories written by Victorian novelists. In his article "Bildungsroman", Wylene Rholetter clearly explains the English Bildungsroman stating that the protagonist leaves home, acquiring knowledge and wisdom through experience and trial. The defining characteristics of the Bildungsroman Rholetter describes is heavily influenced by Goethe.

Rholetter states

The Victorians adapted Goethe's model for their purposes and expanded the definition of the bildungsroman in the process. In contrast to the more narrowly defined German bildungsroman, the nineteenth-century English bildungsroman was represented in a variety of forms that shared certain traits.

In other words, the Victorian Bildungsroman is derived from the German Bildungsroman. The protagonist of the German Bildungsroman goes through a few roadblocks, with considerable help from supporting characters, achieving maturity in the end while the protagonist of the English Bildungsroman sets out on a quest or journey with little to no help having to face more internal battle than physical ones just to arrive at an ending that is neither concrete nor clear. To clarify, the formation novel constantly captured the protagonist's transformation from childhood into adulthood through a series of events and experiences and much like real life, these

experiences are never the easiest to understand or interpret. This is the same for both the Victorian and German Bildungsroman. The major difference being that one looks inward at the character and the other looks outward at the reader.

In his article, “The Victorian Bildungsroman: Towards A Fictional Typology”, Petru Golban’s focus is also on the Victorian Bildungsroman, its certain characteristic features, principles and devices, and several structural elements correlated within one fictional pattern. He suggests that the “the Victorian Bildungsroman involves the principle of crisis, revelation and change leading to the formation of personality” (Golban) or development of maturity. He further suggests that

every Victorian Bildungsroman focuses on the individual that can be defined by the experience of the past and the growing self. The essential experience is that of childhood, and the essential mode of operation of the hero’s psyche is memory. (Golban)

What he is arguing here is that in the Victorian Bildungsroman the protagonist (or hero) finds completeness when their story comes to an end. Their formation is complete because they are able to find a suitable ending compared to their beginning, it’s a full circle formation. This is only one of many scenarios that Golban presents in his article, however, his argument of completeness does remain the same.

Boes, Rholetter, Golban and others have all presented the nuances of the Bildungsroman, stating that it is reflective of a protagonists’ growth. Whether that growth is physically or mentally, each character becomes a different version of themselves that they were not in the beginning. In most cases, the growth is positive and usually results in the protagonist becoming an exceptional member of society. The Bildungsroman novels are most often centered around coming of age stories for little boys, following a protagonist who has grown from boyhood into the society and wealth of manhood. However, Bildungsroman with a female as its protagonist are

not uncommon; though, different in structure. Charlotte Goodman's article, "The Lost Brother, the Twin: Women Novelists and the Male-Female Double Bildungsroman" explain how male and female coming of age stories differ, shedding light on the role of female protagonist in male centered stories. Goodman coins the term "male-female double Bildungsroman" suggesting that this type of novel involved the coming-of-age stories of both males and females, though the story often focused mainly on the male. Goodman suggests "the paired male and female protagonists in each of these novels appear to function as psychological doubles [...] as "brother" and "sister" are reunited at the end of each of these novels, the reader is made aware of the radically different kind of "education" each has undergone; only in this final meeting is this fragmentation of the androgynous-self healed through the alchemy of the authors art" (31-43). In other words, these two protagonists, although usually separated during their young years, grow up together in the novel to be reunited at a significantly older age. Throughout the novel, readers are made aware of their different upbrings, with focus on the male. This focus is usually on him because it is his story and because the outcome of women in novels usually result in the same thing: marriage. This structure of the male-female double Bildungsroman is observed in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. It tells the story of both Catherine and Heathcliff, following them through their joint childhood, period of separation as adolescence, and their reunion in adulthood. Another example of this structure being *The Mill on the Floss*, which follows the same structure as described.

In her article, "The Feminine 'Bildungsroman': Education through Marriage", Elaine Hoffman-Baruch argues that the female Bildungsroman is a search for self, founded on the idea that the female gets married at the end of their story:

the central theme of the bildungsroman is the education of the hero who is brought to a high level of consciousness through a sense of experiences that lead to his development [...] the novel presents a search for self, an education of the mind and feelings [...] the feminine bildungs takes in or on the periphery of marriage. (335)



Baruch further supports the idea that male and female Bildungsroman differ in structure. She argues that male centered Bildungsroman allow the space for the protagonist to develop through the stages of childhood into successfully accepted adulthood, while female protagonist do not get this same treatment. Instead, these protagonists are expected to shrink and conform to roles that have already been put into place for them, such as obedient housewife. Carol Lazzaro-Weis validates this idea in her article “The Female ‘Bildungsroman’: Calling It into Question”, which connects the female Bildungsroman to the overarching concept of coming-of-age novels. Lazzaro-Weis suggests that “the female Bildungsroman demonstrates how society provides women with models for ‘growing down’ instead of ‘growing up’ [...] what is integral to the Bildungsroman [...] is its questioning of the narrator’s and ultimately the readers capacity for reflexivity and its concern to articulate the values and assumptions upon which human experience rests” (17-20). Lazzaro-Weis’s argument further supports the idea that female Bildungsroman were regressive rather than progress. Unlike male centered novels, these novels promoted conformity. Females were expected to do as they were told, while males got to dream and be imaginative. Goodman quotes Pratt and Barbara White who state that one major difference between the two Bildungsroman is that the female protagonist

does not choose a life to one side of society after conscious deliberation on the subject; rather, she is ontologically or radically alienated by gender-role norms from the very outset. Thus, although the authors attempt to accommodate their heroes’ bildung or development to the general pattern of the genre, the disjunctions we have noticed inevitably make of the woman’s initiation less a self-determined progression toward maturity than a regression from full participation in adult life. (Goodman 29)

This further supports the idea that female bildungsroman can be regressive rather than progressive. Female Bildungsroman are structured around societal rules and expectations; those expectations being that a woman marries and take care of the house. The idea that women cannot do more or be more beyond a housewife is regressive. Idette Noome provides yet another

complementary idea of the female Bildungsroman as she explores the presentation of the female quest, concluding that some novels for girls move towards an exploration of personal development (child to mature). This is not much different than male centered novels, but as Noome suggest in her article, “Shaping the Self: A *Bildungsroman* for girls?”, criteria for female Bildungsroman should be adjusted to be more inclusive. A novel in which females are granted more than the ideal coming of age.

### **An Overview of Alice’s Bildungsroman**

In general, the female Bildungsroman features a young protagonist that comes of an age suitable for marriage and then experiences discontent that sends the heroine on her journey of personal growth and trials, ending with the heroine being accommodated into society through marriage. This, however, is not always the case in female centered Bildungsroman. In the Alice novels Alice does not mature in the way typically represented in Bildungsroman. Alice does not ever age beyond seven years old, but her growth and maturity are not to be ignored. Our protagonist is seven in *Wonderland* and no more than seven and a half in *Looking-Glass*. Her Bildungsroman is so unusual because she does not age much physically, she rather matures quickly on her journeys. This makes her coming-of-age story less about the endgame acceptance into society, and more about her maturity and understanding of the world around her. In his article, “Alice's Adventures in Wonderland: A Feminist Bildungsroman” Christoffer Forss situates *Wonderland* as a feminist Bildungsroman, exploring how the novel functions as a Bildungsroman while also demonstrating how the novel has a coming-of-age aspect based on feminism. He provides an interesting perspective of active versus passive aids that help characters as they journey in their novels. He suggests that “actively, the characters function as

advisors who literally give the main character pieces of advice so he or she can mature” while the “passive approach, the minor characters influence the Bildungsroman by their verbal and nonverbal actions” (4). In novels, active aids would be the more mature characters such as Dumbledore in the Harry Potter series, who actively advises Harry on several occasions. Characters such as Hagrid, the Weasleys, and Snape all passively aid Harry throughout his journey; sometimes through conversation, others through physically protecting him. What’s interesting about Forss’ theory is the use of active and passive aids in the Alice novels. Carroll’s use of passive and active aids helps Alice significantly as she travels. Haley Coster reads *Through the Looking-Glass* as a Bildungsroman in her article “Through the Looking-Glass: Alice’s Coming of Age”. With this particular interpretation, readers gain an understanding of the pressures of coming of age in Victorian society through the eyes of a little Alice. Coster suggests that Alice is “still purposeful, but more emotionally mature” in *Looking-Glass* (69). In other words, instead of the emotionally unstable, irritable young girl from *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, readers are introduced to an Alice who has gained control of her herself. In *Through the Looking-Glass* Alice is more discipline than when she’s first introduced in *Wonderland*, making her trip through this imaginary world easier to navigate.

In her article, “Imaging the World through Alice’s Eyes the Adventures of Lewis Carroll’s Alice as Bildungsroman” Alessandra Avanzini also advocates for the Carroll novels as Bildungsroman novels. She discusses how Carroll’s *Wonderland* can be considered a Bildungsroman, affirming the idea that *Wonderland* is the first of a trilogy which includes *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass; Wonderland* presenting the first fundamental stage of Alice’s journey. However, scholars such as Brittani Allen do not agree. In her three-chapter analysis “Grown Up, Alice: Identity Development through Nonsense

in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*," Allen explicitly highlights the relationship between society, language use and communication, and Alice's identity development suggesting that society and language aid in the development of her fundamental identity. Allen argues that the Alice novels cannot be considered Bildungsroman because Alice has "yet to achieve the stage of her development where she forms an identity and determines who she will be in her ordinary world" (73). Allen's argument suggests that outside of the worlds of Wonderland and Looking-Glass, Alice has no identity and that only in her imaginary world was she able to begin the formation of one. I do not agree with Allen's argument that the Alice novels cannot be considered Bildungsroman. Alice has the identity of curious child inside and outside of the imaginary worlds of Wonderland and Looking-Glass. It is within those worlds that Alice can discover herself more. She brings what she learns from Wonderland into Looking-Glass, and what she learns there she brings back to her real world. To say that Alice is lacking in identity is not accurate. Alice cannot be expected to have a fully developed personality and identity at the age of seven. Allen provides some clear and agreeable points about Alice's identity development however, stating that her "experiences with different societal expectations and language rules provide her with the necessary encounters to contribute to her foundational identity" (Allen 53). The mixing of these societal expectations and language rules do help aid Alice on her journey; however, unlike Allen, I believe they aid her beyond her foundational identity. The lessons learned in these worlds will become an integral part of who Alice will grow to be. Using Erikson's eight stages of development, Allen states that though the novels do not quite fit the Bildungsroman criteria, but rather an incomplete Bildungsroman, Alice still goes from learner to teacher in the novels (9-11). To support this idea of an incomplete Bildungsroman, Allen argues that since

Alice is young and has not established an identity, the novels cannot possibly fit into the category of Bildungsroman...because qualities of Alice's identity cannot be listed after reading the novels, it is clear that Alice is an incomplete Bildungsroman [though it is clear] Alice is not struggling meeting developmental milestones. (54-58)

Allen's main argument here is for Alice's lack of identity. For the theory Allen used, this argument is valid; however, it is a little absurd to suggest that a seven-year-old would have a fully developed identity and to then base her own coming-of-age story off that lack of identity when the purpose of the novel is to in fact develop some form of identity. Instead, Allen suggests "as an incomplete Bildungsroman, she [Alice] is using her social and linguistic experiences in her ordinary world, Wonderland, and Looking-Glass world to contribute to the development of her foundational identity" (74). Allen's argument provides an interesting reimagining of Alice; however, the use of Erikson's stages hinders true analysis of the novels making it incomplete.

In the context of this thesis, I will read the Alice novels as Bildungsroman novels. While Alice does not age into adulthood by the end of her story, she feels like she has; this changes the concept of the Bildungsroman for Alice. Where the coming-of-age novel focuses on physical growth as well as maturity, Alice's novels focus mainly on her maturity. Her journeys take place in imaginary worlds; however, it is in these worlds the level of maturity she reaches is best obtained. The purpose for those worlds is so that Alice, a seven-year-old, can make sense of the nonsense around her. Although Alice could very well get these lessons in the real world, they would either come much later for her and possibly in much harsher situations. Alice goes into Wonderland and the Looking-Glass world as a young curious girl and leaves still young but more defined. Upon her entrance to Wonderland, Alice is curious but confused and unsure of herself. Through multiple experiences, Alice leaves Wonderland self-aware. Her curiosity does not dissipate in *Through the Looking-Glass*, Alice enters the Looking-Glass world even more curious, and this time determined to discover all it has to offer. As before, Alice leaves this

imaginary world, even more self-aware and confident. For Alice the lessons she learns manifest in the real world for her in the way she speaks to her cat Dinah, the way she speaks about her adventures in the imaginary world, but even more so in her interactions with the inhabitants of these worlds. Though it has been argued that Alice's story is an incomplete Bildungsroman, I argue against that. Alice's Bildungsroman is complete based off her level of maturity by the end of each novel. This observation is further examined in chapters two and three where I read the novels *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, by Lewis Carroll, as Bildungsroman with emphasis on how they are not traditional coming-of-age novels.

The scope of this project adds to the existing conversation involving the consideration of the Alice novels as Bildungsroman. Critics have argued that these novels cannot function in the manner of a Bildungsroman because Alice does not exhibit the qualifying traits of the Bildungsroman. Their arguments are built from the characteristics of a traditional Bildungsroman that looks at the development of the character through the course of their life and only focuses on the development of the character. Alice's stories do not lead the reader through her lifespan, she does not age but six months through the course of her novels. For Alice, the identifying traits of the Bildungsroman while emphasize the mental development of the character and the development of the reader. This opens the conversation to there being more than one way to read the Alice novels and the Bildungsroman. This thesis allows space for both to expand beyond their strict and defined structures.

## Chapter 2

### “Who are you?”: Alice’s Development through Wonderland as a Bildungsroman

#### Alice’s Evidence: Alice in the Context of the Bildungsroman

Widely loved British children’s book, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, was published in 1865 by Charles Dodgson, known as Lewis Carroll. The story was originally told to the Liddell sisters, Lorina, Edith, and Alice (who the novel and main character are named after), one sunny afternoon. Alice Liddell enjoyed the stories so much she requested that he write them out for her, he did and delivered them to her where they were discovered and later published. Carroll wrote this story, formally titled *Alice’s Adventures Under Ground*, appeared a time when children’s literature was intended to teach moral lessons. Though its bizarreness shocked critics, children loved how ridiculous the story was as it mimicked their own minds. Carroll understood how children’s minds work through his connection with Alice and captured that effortlessly within this novel.

*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* is a fantastical story that follows a young Alice of seven years old on an adventure through an imaginary underground world. Alice goes on an outlandish adventure encountering extremely strange and illogical creatures, often changing sizes, and losing her sense of self and identity. Much like a card game, the rules, and regulations here are flakey and unclear, leaving Alice to learn the game on her own; and she does. By the end of the novel Alice has learned more than how to play the game, she has found her sense of self and matured into a confident young girl who is not afraid to speak out. Carroll’s novel is about more than the freaky adventure he writes about, it was a lesson for not only Alice Liddell but all children on how to navigate the anxieties around growing up. Though Alice does not

physically age in this novel, the amount of growth she goes through is remarkable, making this an excellent Bildungsroman.

In Nina Auerbach's article, "Alice and Wonderland: A Curious Child," Auerbach suggests that behind a curious, dreamy child, "lie two Victorian domestic myths: Wordsworth's "seer blessed," the child fresh from the Imperial Palace [...] and the pure woman Alice will become" (31-32). In other words, Auerbach is saying that Alice represents a combination of child and woman. She is child first, as Victorians saw little girls as pure, but she will become a fallen woman. Auerbach suggests 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" (31). Her description of Alice best describes the middle-class Victorian female. Middle class children were expected to meet a certain criterion. They were to look the part, dressed in the appropriate attire, and gain a certain level of education. Though Alice's imagination maybe at question, her ritualistic mannerisms make her closer to perfect as a developing young girl can get. This is quite opposite of little boys as Auerbach states that "little boys in Victorian literature tend to be allied to the animal, the Satanic, and the insane. For this reason, novels in which a boy is the central focus are usually novels of development, in which the boy evolves out of his inherent violence, "working out the brute" in an ascent (44-45). While Auerbach's argument is clearly structured around the male persona, the images of violence and insanity have often been used to describe Alice through the lens of female subjectivity.

Auerbach's idea of a kept Alice falls in line with both Romera and Ren who talk about female subjectivity. In the article, "Revising Alice in Wonderland: An Analysis of Alice's Female Subjectivity in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland", Sara Bermejo Romera suggests that we read Alice as the creator of a new female subjectivity different from the ideal gender role encouraged



by Victorian society. Romera suggests that “Victorian education made children, precisely young girls, very aware that the strict gaze of society would determine if they would be considered socially acceptable or outcasts depending on the attainment of specific attitudes and behaviors” (Romera). For many scholars, Carroll was on the right track during this time, creating a space for pushback to generalized gender roles that women were beginning to get tired of. Aihong Ren brings an interesting perspective to the Alice novels arguing that by subverting the ideal woman image, Carroll gives expression to the repressed feelings of the women in his society. Ren suggests that there are “four main stereotypes of women in Victorian society: “the angel, the demon, the old maid, and the fallen woman” (Auberach 63), no doubt the angel is the most dominant image [...] the angel was passive, meek, charming, graceful, gentle, self-sacrificing, pious, and above all pure [...] even the little girl, a miniature angel in the house is portrayed differently in fantasy” (2061) and Carroll seems to capture this through Alice. These scholars all seem to agree, as Romera suggests, that “a good way to challenge those gender roles in such an oppressive society was through fictional narratives. Adding elements that challenged the strict patriarchal hierarchy in realistic stories could result in censorship or punishment from governmental authorities. To avoid that, authors would “create the subversive fantasy of females seeking autonomy and independence by means of the fantastic mode” (Ren 2014) so as to escape from social sanctions. Ren says it best that Alice “insists on independence and refuses to be dominated by creatures, thus showing herself as a little girl of great wit, courage, assertion and strong-will. She is adventurous, even aggressive as a male hero, the very opposite of the ideal girl” (2063). This is true of Alice; throughout her experiences in both Wonderland and Looking-Glass Alice stands her ground. She is faced with different trials and characters that test her identity and confidence. This is not uncommon of female Bildungsroman; however, it is less

common. For Alice and her readers this is step toward inclusivity. Depicting a young female character exactly as she is, adventurous, curious, strong-witted, dares readers to see young females how they are, children.

In her article, "Adult Realm v. Childhood: A Critical Examination of the Victorian Realm's Ideal Young Adult," Jewels White suggests that through its puns, miscommunication, confusing mannerisms, and cultural disconnection between Alice and the inhabitants of Wonderland, preach a rejection of the Victorian adult realm. To back this argument, White states that "Alice's adventure represents the foreshadowing of something new, a rejection of the adult Victorian realm...the character of Alice represents an (almost) ideal Victorian youth, but her inabilities, confinement, and limitations in Wonderland suggest a cultural clash and foreshadowing changing times" (38). Her suggestion that Wonderland is nothing more than a rejection of Victorian society only stresses more the incredibly strict social customs and manners that children had to undergo at the time. Flair Donglai Shi's feminist approach to the Alice novels graze the tips of White's argument. In his article, "*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as an Anti-Feminist Text: Historical, Psychoanalytical and Postcolonial Perspectives.", Flair Donglai Shi argues that Alice's unfeminine characteristics do not imply Carroll's enthusiasm for women's liberation from marginality and domesticity, instead they reveal his fear of adult women and his mourning the loss of girlhood innocence (179). While he does agree with and mention the most common arguments made about Alice's role as a subversive female character, his arguments go beyond this idea to include a psychoanalysis of Carroll and his role as the author, suggesting that the stories do reflect Carroll's own ideals surrounding women's roles in society. He emphasizes the fact that Alice is a little girl, separating the societal norms of Victorian girls and Victorian women. Shi states that liberal education for women emphasized

how “women were inferior to men and, from a young age, were constantly educated and thus socialized to believe and act according to principle (183). “Strong-minded” women were labelled as dogmatic, presumptuous, disagreeable in manner, and undesirable by Victorian society. Women were taught to act a certain way and any behavior other than that would deem them undesirable. Alice’s status as a feminist icon, as suggested by Shi, should be revised in the context of the Victorian era in which the novel was written. Not only that it should be rethought through the mind of the Victorian male who wrote it.

In her article, “England in Wonderland”, Valarie Zis reveals how Alice in Wonderland embodies the confusion and disorganization that infiltrated Victorian England during the era. She does so by mentioning how “Carroll’s portrayal of his female characters exemplifies the expected behaviors of women in England and their attitudes toward their role in society” (Zis). The submissive woman or the “angel in the house” is mentioned yet again; she argues that the “uncertainty in the sense of self becomes apparent in works like Wonderland, when Alice’s confusion through her journey in Wonderland mirrors the internalized fears of the generalized populace” suggesting yet again that women are more powerful than they were led to believe at the time. However, scholars such as Elena Soler Huici takes an entirely different approach to the novels than mentioned above. The aim of Elena Soler Huici’s article “Satire in Wonderland: Victorian Britain through the Eyes of Lewis Carroll” is to demonstrate that one of the underlying intentions of the author was to satirize the Victorian age. She does this seamlessly through examples from the novel tying perfectly rules and regulations from the Victorian era to *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*.

As stated in chapter one, the female Bildungsroman features a young protagonist that comes of age suitable for marriage and then experiences discontent that sends the heroine on her

journey of personal growth and trials, ending with the heroine being accommodated into society through marriage. However, Alice is no usual character, making her Bildungsroman unconventional. While the Bildungsroman novel is read through the childhood of the protagonist, few move past adulthood. In traditional Bildungsroman, we watch the protagonist grow up from childhood to adulthood. During this time, they would usually undergo physical growth as well as mental growth. This looks like tests and trials set against them that helps the development of their thoughts and emotions. Novels such as *The Catcher and the Rye*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and *Gone with the Wind* serve as exceptional examples of Bildungsroman novels that follow the protagonist throughout their childhood into adulthood. In each of these novels the protagonist encounters obstacle (physical and mental) that promote the growth and maturity of the character. These obstacles do not show up as physical obstacle courses, but rather life's hardships (i.e. the struggles of finding a suitable husband or being accepted into society by its standards). Wonderland presents a different playing ground for the development of the Bildungsroman. Alice is only seven years old, and she does not age beyond that. However, the amount of maturity she undergoes in her imaginary world Wonderland is significant. This changes the focus of the Bildungsroman here from maturity through lifespan to maturity through circumstances. It is the journey that prompts Alice's growth, resulting in a seven-year-old whose more ready than before to face the real world.

### **“What size do you want to be?”: A Changing Alice**

In Chapter One I discussed how early children's stories were often presented as folklore and fairytales. Although *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) is not strictly a folklore or a fairytale in structure or context, Carroll plays with and includes many traditional British

fairytales for Alice to wander through while learning about herself in Wonderland. In *The Art of Place in Literature for Children and Young Adults: How Locale Shapes a Story* (2010), Pauline Dewan examines place and the influence it has on children's literature. She focuses her studies on fairy tales arguing they provide the best visual and cinematic form to writing for children. Dewan illustrates how authors of children's novels use landscapes in a variety of ways to create powerful and meaningful text. She claims, "to go through a door is to enter a new realm and encounter possible risks and perils [...] doors in children literature often lead to otherworldly places that present hazardous environments" (Dewan 274). While this may be true in some children's literature, it can be argued that Wonderland is unhazardous to Alice, and in fact promotes her development. Alice's home life does not present itself as dangerous in this novel and besides a few threats from the Red Queen in *Wonderland*, Alice stays unharmed on her journey. In Wonderland, Alice faces challenging tasks, but these do not prove to be threatening. Dewan's claims are most useful for the claims she makes about the appearance of doors in children's novels. In *Wonderland* we see this doorway to Wonderland appear as an abnormally large rabbit hole.

Dewan argues that dream vision works as a connection between the inner and outer world of characters, she mentions dream vision, traveling and transportation as she states that "the text as dream vision provides a number of links between the inner and outer frames [worlds]" (283). She provides a number of examples of transpiration, including trains, in which she states, "time spent on a ship, train, or car is a threshold experience allowing for emotional, psychological, and spiritual adjustment, preparing characters for the difficult transition from childhood to adulthood" (Dewan 301-02). Although our protagonist Alice is not using traditional modes of transportation to move around Wonderland, her walks alone still take her where she needs to be.

These moments of transportation allow Alice to take in and reflect on the scene she has just left and prepare for the next, even if she's never sure what will happen while in Wonderland. Though Dewans main analysis is focused on the transition of children to adulthood, this book is essential in not only understanding the spaces created within children's literature, but also Alice's journey through her own development. Dewan's book works well to connect Alice's reactions to her environment. As previously discussed, place and location play a significant role in children's literature and the imaginary world of Wonderland is no different. Alice's imaginary world reflects the world above ground, the difference here is that Alice is learning to become comfortable with her changes here. It is in this world we see Alice become a mature protagonist.

*Wonderland* is a masterful presentation of a dream-like world where everything you thought you knew is false and everything you ever questioned is a possibility, a world where you can change with the bite of a cake or the sip of a drink, and things are simultaneously exactly what they appear to be and nothing like what you think they are. In *Wonderland*, Alice is seven, an age in which the world can still seem like a big magical place, but inner anxieties about growing up begin to arise; she is just beginning to question herself and the world around her. She doesn't come to these questions alone, the creatures in Wonderland often prompt these questions asking her things such as "Who are you?" and although Alice thinks "I know who I was when I got up this morning" she's just not sure while she's there (*Wonderland* 27). The trip to Wonderland, disguised as an exciting adventure, is the inner dialogue with herself and her actively going through the stages of maturity. This maturity of her inner-dialogue shows readers that Alice is actively developing adult-like habits of thinking. She is questioning herself, wanting to know if she is still herself or becoming someone, she cannot recognize. Not only that, it is

through these interactions within her own mind that Alice and readers can see the process in which Alice goes through into maturity.

From the start Carroll makes it clear that Alice is naïve to adult customs. As she sits by the bank with her sister who is reading a book, she thinks “and what is the use of a book without pictures or conversations?” (*Wonderland 1*). Her only concern is with whether or not she should get up and make a daisy chain (*Wonderland 1*). This is the first hint that Alice is still mentally childlike. She has no care or responsibility and instead of passing time furthering her intellect, her options are to make a flower chain or continue to lazily sit there. This distinction is further enhanced when we are introduced to the White Rabbit, an inhabitant of Wonderland. It is this peculiar character in a waist-coat, holding a pocket watch, and Alice’s curiosity that prompts her to jump down a rather large rabbit hole after the rabbit. The fall down the rabbit hole is representative in a few ways here: first as a physical gateway into Wonderland, and secondly as a physical transitional gateway into a more mature Alice.

Though it is known that Alice is asleep and the whole journey was nothing but a dream, we don’t figure that out until the end of the novel. Carroll presents a way into Wonderland that should be physically impossible. The rabbit hole, once inside, is larger than what you would imagine and filled with things that should be somewhere else. She falls past bookshelves, cupboards, maps, and pictures hung on the walls (*Wonderland 2*); it is as if Alice’s life is passing her by. This is important to note as Alice is only seven years old, her life has yet to really get started. Things move so quickly past Alice that she hardly has the time to process that she’s falling at a rate that should frighten her, instead she’s seemingly unphased. Alice’s fall down that hole is longer than one might suspect as she “began to get a bit sleepy” and when she lands, she’s

not even the slightest curious how she was able to land so softly, not a scratch on her body or a hair out of place (*Wonderland 3*). The way in which things move quickly by Alice, but also seems to take ages to come to an end is reflective of life itself. Life can seem like it is passing by so quickly to adults, but to children, life seems to take its time. Readers get a sense of that with Alice in this scene.

Above ground Alice is surrounded by family, friends, and pets; however, this transition is stripping all those comforts away from her, much like what would happen if Alice were a part of a tribal ritual (Turner). Even though these things are clear to us, Alice does not see her fall down the rabbit hole this way in the slightest. As I mentioned before, she is completely unphased by this trip. Instead of panicking, she wonders if she'll "fall right through the center of the earth" making mention of people that "walk with their heads downwards", going as far as naming them "antipathies" (*Wonderland 2*). She even begins to think of her cat Dinah and whether she eats bats or if bats eat cats. This reflects the thoughts of children and shows Alice as the child that she is. We get a glimpse of the unsophisticated nature of Wonderland where nothing makes sense. This sets her coming-of-age apart from other protagonist is that her journey through Wonderland is reflective of her status as a child and nothing beyond that. Alice is portrayed as unsympathetic, unsure of her identity and her ability to make sound decisions, and has anxieties about growing older, these are not uncommon feelings in any child, Alice's anxieties are intentionally more noticeable. Although Alice won't come to these realizations herself, readers will find that as she journeys through Wonderland that she is faced with the creatures of Wonderland who bring these qualities out of her.

Throughout the entirety of her journey, the biggest obstacles Alice struggle with are her identity and her constantly changing physical appearance while in Wonderland. Though most



Bildungsroman look very different from this one, crisis such as identity and physical appearance are some of the qualities often found in Bildungsroman novels. Although *Wonderland* is not a typical Bildungsroman, Carroll still wrote a novel that functions as one. Alice's young age is an indicator that her story will be unlike any other, but even young in age, she manages to learn her lessons all the same. It is important to keep the qualities of the Bildungsroman in mind as we look at a young Alice. Though she does not advance beyond childhood, as in typical Bildungsroman, Alice does mature and adopt adult-like qualities. Her lost identity and changing sizes are important to note throughout this novel because they are the indicators of her growth and changing identity. An identity crisis such as this one shows that Alice has entered a space that is preparing her for growth, that in turn is emphasized by her constantly changing sizes which shows her constant battle with her transition.

As I've previously mentioned, Alice's fall down the rabbit hole was the prerequisite to her growth and maturity. It is her actual existence in Wonderland that sets her growth into motion; her identity crisis plays a major role in making that known for readers. Alice's identity crisis shows us that she is lost about who she is currently and who she is to become. This is common in most coming-of-age stories, so it is no surprise that it would show up here. What is interesting about Alice's story is how intriguingly sporadic it is. We are informed that up until she reached Wonderland, she had a pretty good grip on her identity. In fact, despite feeling a little different, she was herself when she woke up that morning, even the day before. It is the physical changes in Alice that lends the tale to the Bildungsroman, in that unlike traditional coming-of-age stories where the protagonist slowly grows into their societal role, Alice must physically change, again and again. As with each obstacle in life we grow more towards our adult outcomes, with each physical change Alice is able to understand the necessity and absurdities of becoming part of

society. These changes cause Alice to constantly question her identity throughout the novel, struggling to come to grips with what is happening to her. She's confronted many times by the inhabitants of Wonderland who ask often 'who are you' in which she answered often, "I hardly know" (*Wonderland* 27). Alice's inability to identify herself is partially due to her constant changing size. When Alice is so many different sizes, she cannot place herself as child-like or adult-like, her identity gets lost in this inability and navigating the world becomes difficult for her. However, Alice never lets this affect her long.

Alice goes through physical manipulation. This is the constant changing of her height by consumption of food and drink found in Wonderland. Each time that Alice eats or drinks something while in Wonderland, she either shrinks to ridiculously small heights or grows abnormally large in height. In chapter one of the novel, Alice's height has been altered a number of times. This constant change in size leaves Alice confused and unsure of herself. Any time she grows too small she fears that "it might end [...] in my going out altogether like a candle" (*Wonderland* 5). She becomes so incredibly small that she wonders if she will even be seen, who knows what happens to flames once they're blown out? Though she doesn't say it out right, Alice is questioning if this will be the end of her journey. In the mind of a child, Alice is not too sure she'll see adulthood. Though seemingly irrational, Alice's fears are about regressing rather than progressing, and never becoming an accepted member of society, a fear that many adults also have; but Alice's journey has only just begun. As she navigates this world, she will continue to face her fears.

Although her changing height is a challenge, Alice does not let that stop her as she advances through her stages. Instead of waving the white flag and admitting defeat, Alice quickly gains control of her body, using the same foods in Wonderland that once made her vulnerable to her

advantage. She learns to navigate Wonderland, becoming large or small when necessary. This shows us that Alice is evolving. She is starting to turn away from manipulation and take situations into her own hands. She is deciding when she will be any particular size. In a sense this is a power move, one in which she is finding a sense of herself. In fact, it is after she has had control over her changing size that Alice remembers her own name again. This shows that Alice's journey is linear. Her ultimate goal is to transition into a mature stage in which she can continue to move forward as herself, the only way to do that is to learn the lessons as she goes on. However, mastering her height is only half of the puzzle. Alice's emotions also seem to be attached to her changing height.

Upon her entry into Wonderland, she drinks a liquid that makes her too small and then eats a cake that in turn makes her too large (*Wonderland* 5). She stays this way as she moves through the underground world, becoming too large or too small at the most inconvenient times. Her constant changing in size is a representation of the emotional highs and lows she goes through during this journey. In the second chapter after Alice has grown to an abnormally large size, she becomes frustrated with herself crying, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, a great girl like you to go on crying in this way!" (*Wonderland* 17) as if that fact that she's so big means that she cannot cry or show emotion. It is clear here that Alice associates' size with emotional maturity and emotional maturity with age, therefore, if she's so big she should be behaving in an emotionally mature adult manner rather than crying out of frustration. This, however, is not a logical gauge of emotion here and only fits into the confusion of not only Wonderland, but of the confusing minds of children. It is not uncommon for children to associate size with adulthood, as most adults are larger than children, so for Alice, her large size means to her that she should be behaving in an adultlike manner.

Although Alice tells herself to stop crying, she continues to cry until she has formed a pool of tears. It is after fanning herself with the White Rabbit's fan that she realizes that she is but "two feet high and going on rapidly shrinking" (*Wonderland* 10). This rapid shrinking is a sign of her regression back into a child's mind. While she is in this small form she slips into the pool of tears where she meets a mouse. In this small form, Alice takes on childlike characteristics again. While talking to the mouse she offends it twice mentioning not only how her cat Dinah eats mice, but that her neighbor's puppy also likes to chase mice (*Wonderland* 11-12). Her comments to the mouse are offensive, and like a child, Alice does not notice this. She has only made note of small facts, as children do. After these offenses, she tries to clean it up in only the way a child would, she tells the mouse "Don't be angry about it. And yet I wish I could show you our cat Dinah. I think you'd take a fancy to cats, if only you could see her"; however, the mouse is already offended and swims away from Alice in which she yells out "Mouse dear! Do come back and we wo'n't talk about cats, or dogs either, if you don't like them!" (*Wonderland* 12). To the best of her abilities, Alice tries to mend the severed connection she has made with the mouse. However, because Alice is functioning in a childish mindset, she only makes it worse. Although Alice knew what she was trying to do, her young mind could not put together a more appropriate apology.

This same unsympathetic lack of caution is exhibited when she talks with the Caterpillar in chapter five. Alice states, "I wish the creatures wouldn't be so easily offended!" after mentioning that she didn't want to be three inches because "three inches is a wretched height" (*Wonderland* 33) to a Caterpillar who is exactly three inches in height. Instead of showing compassion and understanding for the Caterpillar, she yells "But I'm not used to it!", frustrated with the little creature. Her tantrum is a typical child-like response when children do not get their way;

however, the Caterpillar does not excuse her anger, he brushes it off as if it does not matter, she'll "get used to it in time" (*Wonderland* 33). In which Alice does, an adult-like quality that she develops. Alice learns to deal with her ever changing size to the best of her ability, like adults learn to deal with what life gives them to the best of their abilities. It isn't until after her conversation with the Caterpillar that Alice gets a handle on her size, eating from two sides of a mushroom when she wants to be either big or small (*Wonderland* 34). Although Alice achieves somewhat her normal size, it didn't come without frustration or offense. Her talk with the Caterpillar revealed two things: first that Alice still had no idea who she is and secondly that she often said offensive things to these creatures without first thinking of how it would make them feel. In this moment, Alice is straddling the fence between adult-like and child-like mindsets. On the one hand, Alice is still working through her child-like behavior and emotions, but like adults, she is learning from her past mistakes and interactions with the inhabitants. This emotional roller coaster does not last long with Alice; however, she gains control over her height, which in turn levels out her emotions. It is not until the end of the novel that Alice's height begins to change on its own again, this is in part due to her change in emotion.

By the end of the novel, Alice has developed into a protagonist who is very much aware of herself and how she fits into the world around her, much like her fellow female Bildungsroman protagonist. She has gone from a loss identity to a newfound one, from uncontrollable physical changes to controlled, from childlike behavior to matured behavior. Though it is a stretch to say that Alice has physically grown up in this novel, it's safe to say that she's well on her way to doing so. The last two chapters of *Wonderland* are the most important in tying her Bildungsroman together. In the court room we see an Alice who has regained her memory and confidence. When she enters the court room, she is immediately able to recognize that she is

pleased with the fact that she knew the name of everything in there (*Wonderland* 73). For readers, this is the first notion that Alice's journey is nearing its end. Throughout the entirety of the novel Alice is unable to recite school rhymes and lessons: she stumbles over words and replaces them with things that hardly make any sense. This frustrates her and lowers her confidence in herself and identity. However, the court room and the people in it come naturally to Alice and she is able to name the people and positions such as 'judge' and 'jurors' that she had read about in a book. This one moment lifts the veil from her eyes, her confidence grows, and she is proud that she can remember this one thing, rightly so, because "very few little girls of her age knew the meaning of it at all" (*Wonderland* 73). This is proving to us that Alice is not as lost as she may seem. In this moment readers glimpse to what extent Alice begins to feel adult. She makes this connection for us in such a way that the scene stands for Alice's reentry back into society. This is the moment in her Bildungsroman that she proves that she has, theoretically, begun to grow up. As the scene continues, Alice's confidence rises. We see Alice interacting with the environment and creatures around her. She gets annoyed by one of the jurors whose pencil squeaks, so she takes it from him (*Wonderland* 74), an action that is almost adult like (i.e. a teacher taking a pencil from a student). This is something that a less confident Alice would never attempt. She has been reserved most of her journey, but she is choosing to no longer hold her tongue. Alice speaks out during the trial calling out to the King about the ridiculous rule he's made up and the nonsense of a poem he tries to pass as evidence.

As mentioned earlier, she gets this newfound confidence from her returned identity and memory, but the growth spurt she has during the trial also plays a significant role here. Alice had "grown so large in the last few minutes that she wasn't a bit afraid of interrupting..." (*Wonderland* 82). The larger Alice got, the bolder she got. Her physical size becomes larger as

she becomes more confident the “rightness” of her actions and what she is saying in this courtroom. Alice is quite literally becoming adult-like or as close to adult-like as a child’s mind can fathom. She gets as far as to offering sixpence if anyone can prove to her that the poem had any meaning at all (*Wonderland* 82). Of course, no one can prove a thing to Alice, and this only gives her even more confidence. This confidence boost is exactly what Alice needed to stand up against the Red Queen, marking her final act of her evolving maturity. After the queen yells out to Alice to “hold her tongue”, Alice refuses and is sentenced to having her head cut off (*Wonderland* 83). However, Alice has returned to her normal size by this point and has realized that they’re “nothing but a pack of cards” (*Wonderland* 83). Alice has stepped fully into her confidence. She realizes that all along, she had been afraid of irrational fears (being too small, growing up too early, losing her identity). She has gained full control of herself and her actions.

It is important to note the changes Alice have gone through. During this stage we encounter an Alice who loses her confidence and all sense of herself. But to find herself and regain that confidence to embark on a journey that instills growth and character. Before our eyes Alice mentally matures into a young character who is able to stand her own ground. She is now able to make sound decisions, she can now think for herself. She does not rely on those around her or her environment for the things she knows are already inside of her. She may not have physically aged, but it is important to note her growth is just as important here as it would be if this were a traditional Bildungsroman. She entered Wonderland confused and hollow; Wonderland and its creatures reflected that back to her. Through the mind of Alice readers can understand Alice’s development. Readers see how she processes anxieties surround growing up as she finds a way to control her irregular growing. Readers also get an inside look at how Alice develops an identity, develops confidence, and finds her voice. Her encounters with the

inhabitants she creates stand in as what could be considered teachers that she learns from along the way, as they help Alice develop. Alice entered the imaginary world of Wonderland small, feeling exactly how children do at such a young age. Everything surrounding them is larger and much more confusing than what it truly is. As she grew bolder, tougher, regained her identity, the environment around her became smaller, less threatening, she is able to stand her ground. She realizes the “adult” world isn’t so menacing. She can face any trial thrown her way. Her journey comes to an end as she wakes up next to her sister once again. Alice is brought back to her reality. She’s a young girl with a vibrant imagination, curious about the world and how to navigate it. The journey, though a dream, does not and will not leave Alice. It has only prepared her for the next one in which she embarks on a bolder journey through the Looking-Glass world six months later.



### Chapter 3

#### Queen Alice: Alice's Final Stages of Development in *Through the Looking-Glass* as a Bildungsroman

##### “It's my own Invention”: Alice in the Context of the Bildungsroman

*Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, published in December 1871 (dated 1872), was written as a sequel to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll. Carroll first started this series as a form of communication with Alice Liddell, of whose parents he was a family friend. By the time *Through the Looking-Glass* was published, Alice was almost 20 years old, and Carroll's close friendship with the Liddell family had weakened. His sequel can be seen as a fond farewell to Alice as she enters adulthood. In the years after following the release of this novel, Alice married, lived a cultured life in England, mothered three sons, and received an honorary doctorate from Columbia University on Carroll's hundredth birthday.

*Through the Looking-Glass* follows a young Alice, six months older, on another adventure through an imaginary world. This world mirrors her own and like Wonderland is full of illogical behavior, tests, and lessons. Like its predecessor, *Through the Looking-Glass* introduces ideas about identity, confidence, discipline and so much more as Alice navigates this world laid out as a chessboard. Here, Alice, along with the inhabitants, are all pieces of one large game of chess, Alice's ultimate goal becoming queen. She does succeed, but not without trial. Alice navigates this world almost effortlessly, and once awake those lessons she learned do not leave her. Her growth and maturity are what make this novel an interesting one to read as a Bildungsroman. Though Alice does not physically grow, her level of maturity develops well from start to finish.

In his article, “The Victorian Bildungsroman: Towards A Fictional Typology”, Petru Golban’s focus is on the Victorian Bildungsroman, its certain characteristic features, principles and devices, and several structural elements correlated within one fictional pattern. He suggests that the “the Victorian Bildungsroman involves the principle of crisis, revelation and change leading to the formation of personality” (Golban). He further suggests that the Victorian Bildungsroman focuses on the experience of growth and maturity, and when the protagonist has reached adulthood, they reflect on their childhood and symbolically return to the values of the experience of childhood (Golban). What he is suggesting here is that in the Victorian Bildungsroman the protagonist finds a sense of completeness when their story comes to an end. Their transition from childhood to adulthood becomes complete when they can reflect on their beginning and recognize that they have come to a suitable ending compared to their beginning; it’s a full circle formation.

Idette Noomé provides yet another complementary idea of the female Bildungsroman as she explores the presentation of the female quest, concluding that some novels for girls move towards an exploration of personal development (child to mature). This is not much different than male centered novels, but as Noomé suggest in her article, “Shaping the Self: A *Bildungsroman* for girls?”, criteria for female Bildungsroman should be adjusted to be more inclusive. A novel in which females are granted more than the ideal coming of age. Noomé suggests that Bildungsroman written with girls in mind can be a series rather than a one-off novel (5). She uses *Anne of Green Gables*, *Soekie*, and a German series by Magda Trott to explore the idea that a series can function as a Bildungsroman. These protagonists follow the typical characteristics of Bildungsroman, moving from childhood to adulthood; the main idea here being

that the protagonist matures over the course of the novels. Noomé suggests that where female and male Bildungsroman differ is the characters' ability to give up what they most desire:

The protagonists must learn to give up possessions, ambitions and careers. It is perhaps in this point of that novels development with female protagonists differ most from such novels as *Portrait of the artist as a young man*. Male protagonists tend to attain insight into the self and embrace their ambition [...] as part of that selfhood. Female protagonists [...] are expected to recognize a higher self in giving up their ambitions or in shifting their aspirations to meeting the needs of their significant others. (20-21)

What Noomé is saying here is that though there are several Bildungsroman that meet some of the criteria of typical Bildungsroman, very few meet all of the criteria exactly. Female protagonists, much like male protagonists, do have different experiences; however, it is the experience of growth that makes the novel a considerable Bildungsroman.

Much like other critics, G.M.A. Christy states that the English Bildungsroman traces the development of the protagonist through experiences in his society. The Bildungsroman as a genre became popular in Victorian England, following trends of exploring the early years of the protagonist's life and the growth of the character. Christy suggests that the genre of Bildungsroman has these salient features:

1. Development of the mind and character of the protagonist from childhood to adulthood.
2. Tension or conflicts with the outer world and the inner world of the protagonist.
3. Temperamental loss must be there which makes the protagonist to undergo a long journey.
4. Time space must be long so that the protagonist gets a long time to get maturity of mind and character.
5. The novels have to be mere records of the contemporary society in which the novel is to be published. (1236)

These defining characteristics are commonly found in Bildungsroman such as *David Copperfield*; *Brown Girl, Brownstones*; *All the Pretty Horses*; *Jane Eyre* and even more recently, the Harry Potter series. In Bildungsroman, protagonists are sometimes accompanied by

secondary characters. The purpose of these characters is to assist the main characters in their quest to personal development, maturity, and growth. Christy suggests that “the genre focuses on the ideas about the societal impact, psychology and morality of the personality of the main character of the novel in relation to the society (1236). The genre is about, as Christy states “the process of maturation of the protagonist” (1237). Christy’s defining conditions of the genre are what define the typical Bildungsroman; however, all coming-of-age novels do not follow this pattern. If the genre is most concerned with the process of maturation, then how quickly the character matures does not matter. The purpose of the novel is to show that the character has undergone some type of personal growth. It does not matter if it took six years or six months, if there is development there, then the novel can be considered a Bildungsroman.

Haley Coster reads *Through the Looking-Glass* as a Bildungsroman in her article “*Through the Looking-Glass: Alice’s Coming of Age*”; within her interpretation, readers gain an understanding of the pressures of coming of age in Victorian society through the eyes of a little Alice. Using Suzanne Header’s defining qualities of a Bildungsroman, Coster identifies moments in Alice’s coming-of-age novel in which align with the typical development of Bildungsroman. According to Coster, Alice leaves home because of her “strong sense of curiosity”, she then starts on her journey in the Looking-Glass world (Coster 69). This journey is riddled with trials, or “nonsense episodes” as Coster suggests, for Alice to overcome on her quest to becoming queen. Many of her encounters with the inhabitants of this world serves as her trials in which Alice navigates successfully. Coster also suggests that, in typical Bildungsroman stories “the heroine finds an individual to guide her on her way” (73). Coster points out the most obvious guide, the White Knight; however, I believe the Red Queen also functioned as a guide for Alice upon the start of her quest. Finally, the Bildungsroman ends with the heroine being intergraded

into society. For Alice, this is her finally being crowned as queen; though, as Coster points out, it isn't at all what she expects (75). Coster suggests that Alice is "still purposeful, but more emotionally mature" in *Looking-Glass* (69), this due to her navigation of the imaginary world and her interactions with its inhabitants. As Coster suggests, *Through the Looking-Glass* is packed with meaningful encounters, many in which Alice is showcasing her level of maturity, especially those that show "how consciousness grows with meaning" (Coster 72). Alice's new-found level of maturity is what helps her form somewhat of an identity, a "foundational identity" as Brittani Allen suggests.

In her three-chapter analysis "Grow Up, Alice: Identity Development through Nonsense in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*" Allen explicitly highlights the relationship between society, language use and communication, and Alice's identity development. Although I do not agree with Allen's argument that the Alice novels cannot be considered Bildungsroman, she still provides some clear and agreeable points about Alice's identity. Using Erikson's eight stages of development (7), Allen states that though the novels do not quite fit the Bildungsroman criteria, but rather an incomplete Bildungsroman, Alice still goes from learner to teacher in the novels (9-11). To support this idea of an incomplete Bildungsroman, Allen argues that since

Alice is young and has not established an identity, the novels cannot possibly fit into the category of Bildungsroman [...] because qualities of Alice's identity cannot be listed after reading the novels, it is clear that Alice is an incomplete Bildungsroman [though it is clear] Alice is not struggling meeting developmental milestones. (54-58)

Allen's primary argument is the Alice's lack of identity. For the theory Allen used, this argument is valid; however, it is a little absurd to suggest that a seven-year-old would have a fully developed identity and to then base her own coming-of-age story off that lack of identity when the purpose of the novel is to in fact develop some form of identity. Instead, Allen suggests "as

an incomplete Bildungsroman, she [Alice] is using her social and linguistic experiences in her ordinary world, Wonderland, and Looking-Glass world to contribute to the development of her foundational identity” (74). This is an interesting concept considering that Alice is lost and confused throughout the novels due to lack of understanding; however, in *Through the Looking-Glass*, though that barrier remains, Alice can follow along while in conversation here. Her own communication development is noteworthy as she picks up on language quickly in the Looking-Glass world. Allen suggests that language use in these imaginary worlds “indicate there is still structure and power” among the madness; however, it looks vastly different than Alice’s ordinary world (Allen 12). Meaning, Alice brings aspects of the real world into her imaginary world in attempts to find meaning and understanding. For example, the way that Alice brings the names of bugs into conversation with the nat. In attempts to make connections she brings what she already knows to the table. This works for Alice and as Allen suggests, “through language and interactions [...] Alice begins to understand what an identity is” (Allen 13). Allen’s argument provides an interesting reimagining of Alice; however, the use of Erikson’s stages hinders true analysis of the novels making it incomplete.

In her article, “Imaging the World through Alice’s Eyes the Adventures of Lewis Carroll’s Alice as Bildungsroman” Alessandra Avanzini also advocates for the Carroll novels as Bildungsroman novels. She discusses how Carroll’s Wonderland can be considered a Bildungsroman, affirming the idea that *Wonderland* is the first of a trilogy which includes *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, *Through the Looking-Glass* and *Sylvie & Bruno*; *Wonderland* presenting the first fundamental stage of Alice’s journey. While most of Avanzini’s analysis is on *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, she does make note that Alice’s journey in *Through the Looking-Glass* is conscious, meaning Alice is fully awake and aware of what her imagination is

doing unlike her dream in *Wonderland*. Avanzini mentions that Alice questions this new world from the start of the novel and consciously wants to create this new world (122). She goes further, stating that “Alice has immediately transformed curiosity into desire because she is more aware of herself and her feeling (123). This is important to note because it shows that Alice, only six months later, has matured outside of her imagination; Alice is growing up. She has developed her thinking skills since her first adventure in Wonderland and has used that ability to help her not only navigate the Looking-Glass world but to accept it and become a part of it. As Avanzini suggests, Alice uses her newfound logic to create meaning in this new world. Her quest is a straight path with an end goal unlike her adventure in Wonderland. Alice even behaves in a more mannerable and respectful way towards the inhabitants here; for Alice, growth and maturity is finding a common ground between herself and this world’s inhabitants to successfully navigate it. That common ground is the game of chess; the rules clear and distinct for everyone.

Paulin Dewan’s *The Art of Place in Literature for Children and Young Adults: How Locale Shapes a Story* features multiple essays written on the topic of place and its influence on children’s literature. Dewan states in a chapter on journey,

Characters leave home for a multitude of reasons and become travelers on the road. The physical excursion is one of literature's most enduring metaphors for psychological, emotional, moral, and spiritual development. As characters expand their geographic horizons, they broaden their experience and knowledge and develop inner resources. The act of leaving home, Charles Butler reminds us, is "closely tied, at least in Western societies, to the end of childhood itself."<sup>1</sup> The movement away from the known and comfortable world often stimulates the development of dormant traits and capabilities. Roads and paths serve as important means of guidance, steering characters from place to place. The road is an especially important directive aid for children who are not as familiar with the world as their adult counterparts. But not all roads are straightforward: some are circular, others lead to crossroads; many lead uphill; some branch out into byways; and a number are simply confusing. Travelers get lost on these paths, wander away from them, take wrong turns, encounter roadblocks, or even change direction. (Dewan 55)

This experience shows little difference for Alice: she has encounters countless roads and pathways, roadblocks, and takes a wrong turn or two; however, she keeps on this journey, first in *Wonderland*, and now *Through the Looking-Glass*. As wonderful and masterful as *Wonderland* is, *Looking-Glass* is even more so a masterful presentation of a dream-like world where everything is essentially the opposite of what you think it ought to be. Flowers talk, pathways only lead to houses, deer and humans can be friends, to run fast is to not move at all, and the world is nothing but an enormous game of chess.

Structurally, the Looking-Glass world is much different from Wonderland. In this world, although odd, things and creatures make sense; flowers can talk in a hardened ground and the Snap-dragon flies live on weak tea. Every creature and situation has its own place and only the queen knows how to win the game. In *Looking-Glass*, Alice is still the ripe age of seven, only this time six months older. The world is still a big magical place, but this time her inner anxieties about growing up are no longer on the rise. There are moments when she questions herself, but for the most part Alice knows who she is and where she's going while in this world. Of course, Alice doesn't complete her journey alone, along the way there are many creatures that question Alice, in which her answer is always as clever and logical as ever. The trip to the Looking-Glass world, cleverly disguised as yet another exciting adventure, is the inner dialogue with herself and her liminal stage laid out for readers to follow.

### **Contrariwise: Alice's Development**

I have previously defined Alice's Bildungsroman as one that is unconventional by standard. As we know, Alice has not aged much, but her ability to grow and mature are what truly make her novels. In *Looking-Glass*, Alice enters once again a dream world that takes her on



a journey; though this time it's no underground world, it is a Looking-Glass world. This world looks and feels like Alice's real world, after all it is a mirror image; however, this world does not function as the "real-world". It is in this mirrored land that Carroll's non-sense and absurdism come into play. Once again, Alice's journey is unique to her and reflects to her how she is feeling throughout the novel. There are no foods or drinks that manipulate her size, however, again the creatures of her fictional world help to mold her along the way. The Red Queen gives her the tools she needs to begin her journey to becoming queen, but it is up to Alice to logically play the game.

Alice's entry into this new world is unlike her previous trip. Before she enters this new space, she has already imagined what it might be like "there's the room you can see through the glass—that's just the same as [her] drawing-room, only the things go the other way" (*Looking-Glass* 4). She wants so badly to be in the 'Looking-Glass House' that the glass began to melt away "just like a bright silvery mist [and] in another moment Alice [is] through the glass" (*Looking-Glass* 5). This transition into this new space supports Dewans claims that doorways are protected by magic or other means. In this case, this doorway was accessed by the magic of imagination and determination. Alice did not stumble upon and fall into this boarder way, and this doorway was not protected by lock and key; already, the Looking-Glass world is more easily accessible and movement between worlds is structured rather than chaotic. Dewan also suggests that "windows function as portals to other worlds...open windows and doors invite exploration...and symbolize tolerance and open-mindedness" (Dewan 275). Although Alice does not get to the Looking-Glass world through a window, the mirror in this case works the same way. It provided a threshold that hold promise of adventure and exploration. Alice's open-

mindedness and imagination are well supported by this mirror, what she finds on the other side only adds to her excitement.

Unlike in *Wonderland*, once in the Looking-Glass world Alice adjusts quickly to her surroundings. Here she has control of herself and goes unnoticed for a while in the room. Though she is normal sized, the talking and moving chess board pieces take no notice to her. Alice remedies this quickly by writing out a message in the king's memory book. This startles the creatures, but most importantly, it makes Alice's presence known. After this encounter, Alice can be seen and heard this being her primary objective at the moment. Alice's quick thinking, although disguised as childish foolery, is important to note here. She has been in this world a few minutes and her actions are much more logical than they were in *Wonderland*. She has full awareness and control of herself, whereas the trip to *Wonderland* made her question her identity. This awareness is made clear to us when Alice walks out onto the path outside of the house. She walks the path a few times expecting it to lead to the hill she sees off in the distance, instead the path always leads back to the house she just walked out of. Curious enough, Alice walks on determined to make it to the hill just off in the distance, she tells the house, "I'm *not* going in again yet. I know I should have to get through the Looking-Glass again—back into the old room—and there'd be an end of all my adventures!" (*Looking-Glass* 14). Alice's commentary of the world and her place within it demonstrates how fully aware Alice is in this world and her ability to move between worlds; a stark contrast from *Wonderland*. She is also aware that she cannot stay in this world long, but if she is to go back that her adventures would end here with this world. Though a dream-vision like *Wonderland*, in this dream-vision Alice is awake rather than asleep. Her consciousness is aligned with this dream, making her experience here logical to navigate.

Dewan argues that dream vision works as a connection between the inner and outer world of characters, she mentions dream vision, traveling and transportation as she states that “the text as dream vision provides a number of links between the inner and outer frames [worlds]” (283). She provides several examples of transportation, including trains, in which she states, “time spent on a ship, train, or car is a threshold experience allowing for emotional, psychological, and spiritual adjustment, preparing characters for the difficult transition from childhood to adulthood” (Dewan 301-02). In *Wonderland*, Alice did not use physical transportation, although her movement through the underground world got her where she needed to be, Alice’s emotional and psychological adjustments were few and far in-between. In *Looking-Glass*, Alice has the opportunity to board a train in which she uses to get from one space to the next getting her closer to her goal of becoming queen. This scene is important for two reasons: first, this is the first time Alice has actually moved a far distance in this world, and secondly, the encounter with the insects on this train ride challenge Alice’s prospective on identity.

In chapter two, I tracked Alice’s development through her ability to change sizes. I noted that in *Wonderland* Alice’s change in size—whether manipulated or not—was reflective of her confidence levels. Though Alice won’t be changing sizes in this novel, she is on another journey, this time, one that is a little tougher to navigate. *Wonderland* was a chaotic world where anything could and did happen; Carroll describes it as a card game, it lacked structure. However, the *Looking-Glass* world has structure and is, as Alice puts it, “a great huge game of chess that’s being played—all over the world...” (*Looking-Glass* 18). Her mention of this game makes it clear that Alice is aware of this world and how it works. Alice’s development throughout this novel can be tracked by her movement throughout the novel, essentially the moves she makes as she plays the game. For the most part she travels by foot; while this does get Alice where she

needs to be, she does also travel by train. On this train ride Alice moves from her starting position at the top of the hill, down to the forest with no name. Though it is likely that she would've made it here, this ride was a logical move on her end as it puts her ahead of her components. Not only that this ride also tackles the reoccurring theme of identity in Carroll's novels.

While *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* have significant differences, there are several elements that Alice must interact with and gain knowledge from in both novels. In his article "The Curious Connection Between Insects and Dreams" (2011), Barrett A. Klein analyzes insects and their purpose for popping up in dreams. He covers a plethora of insects and instances in which those insects have shown up; he uses literature, art and movies to make these connections. Klein suggests that insects are "diverse, resourceful, and resilient, serving of everything from beauty and rebirth, to pestilence and evil" (Klein 1). Insects often hold greater meaning when they appear, especially in dreams. James Hillman is quoted stating, "dreams show something further, not suspected or predicted; the bugs have something to teach. They demonstrate the intentions of the natural mind, the undeviating faith of desire, and the urge to survive" (qtd. in Klein 2). Alice is surrounded by insects in both of her adventures: the blue caterpillar in *Wonderland*, and since her arrival in the Looking-Glass world, she has encountered elephant worker bees, and now a chicken sized gnat. When she speaks to the caterpillar and the gnat, the conversation is more like a lesson. With the caterpillar she got a lesson on size and identity, with the gnat, the lesson has returned once again to identity, but this time linked to naming.

For the structure of the Bildungsroman, the development and understanding of identity is vital. Alice's conversation with gnat demonstrates the power of identity that Alice struggles

throughout both novels, while maintaining Carroll's absurdist structure. The conversation between Alice and the gnat begins with a half-heard question: "—then you don't like all insects?" to which Alice replies "I like them when they can talk. None of them ever talk, where I come from" (*Looking-Glass* 25). Her reply springs the conversation forward into names of insects where Alice is from and what they are named in the Looking-Glass world: Butterfly becomes 'Bread-and-butter-fly', Horse-fly becomes 'Rocking-horse-fly, and Dragon-fly becomes 'Snap-dragon-fly'. After this exchange of names, the gnat asks Alice, "I suppose you don't want to lose your name?" (*Looking-Glass* 27), in which Alice replies no, and the gnat makes a comment about how convenient it would be to not have a name at all. Although the scene looks as if only setting up for the following scene in which Alice walks into the woods with no name, the conversation does two things here: firstly, it is a commentary on how humans do things for their own benefit, like naming animals and things although it's no use to the animal, and secondly, it is a reference to identity.

The inhabitants of Wonderland and the Looking-Glass world have a unique way of engaging Alice in conversations that challenge her mind set. They often ask her things that make her think about her answer before she answers it, or they help her discover the answer by countering her questions with more. When the fly asks Alice, "what's the use of their having names if they won't answer to them?" (Alice answers in the most human way stating, "No use to *them*, but it's useful to the people that name them, I suppose. If not, why do we name things at all?" (*Looking-Glass* 25). Though Alice's answer is logical, it was an answer she had to think of, which is a newly found habit and one that was nonexistent in *Wonderland*. Before this moment, it is safe to assume that Alice had never given much thought to why things that can't answer to a name would have one, in a sense, identity is given to people and things for selfish reasons. But

most importantly here, the emphasis is on the possibility of Alice losing her identity once again. Since her arrival in the Looking-Glass world, Alice has had no problem with her identity. She has stayed confident in who she is and her goal to become queen. In a short conversation with Alice, the Red Queen was adamant that Alice does not forget herself as she yells out “remember who you are” before running off (*Looking-Glass* 21). Alice does remember who she is up until she reaches the wood with no name. The moment Alice crosses the border into the woods, she first forgets what she’s surrounded by and soon realizes that she has forgotten her name as well. This is not only a reference back to *Wonderland* in which Alice has lost her identity for most of the novel, but it is also a sort of test. Alice is being tested on how well she manages without an identity. This test focuses more on Alice and how she handles loss of identity when things like names and labels are taken away.

In the Bildungsroman, characters will often undergo many challenges to test whether any lessons have been learned. Already, Alice has passed many, confidence, identity, and decision making to name a few; however, the walk through the woods is one of her biggest challenges yet. Alice does a great job of keeping her composure while in these woods. She doesn’t let the loss of her identity halt her forward movement and she even make a friend out of the fawn that has also wandered into the woods. This is a noticeable difference in Alice, who is only six months older than when she ventured into Wonderland. Already her level of maturity has surpassed what she entered this world with: she has learned certain lessons in this novel that characters in other Bildungsroman would not learn until they are well beyond the age of seven and a half. Her future interactions with the inhabitants here in the Looking-Glass world will continue to prove that.

Alice's encounter with Tweedledee and Tweedledum is a lesson in patience but also the poem they recite is a lesson on selfishness. When she comes across these two, she's in a hurry as she thinks that she will get stuck in the woods by night fall. Her main goal at this moment is to "get to the Eighth Square before it gets dark" (*Looking-Glass* 30), which will crown her queen, but to get there she must pass the twins. She walks up to them in hopes up asking for directions out of the woods, only to be met with logic (Dee) and illogical (Dum). Alice learns quickly that the brothers often counter the other's argument, and although this would make a great lesson, what's most important is how Alice handles these twins when they ignore her desperate attempts for directions. When she asks kindly which way out of the woods, Tweedledee begins to recite a poem about a walrus and a carpenter. When the poem is complete, Alice states, "I like the walrus best because he was a little sorry for the poor oysters" (*Looking-Glass* 37) and though Alice's answer isn't wrong, Tweedledee counters her argument by saying "he ate more than the carpenter, though. You see he held his handkerchief in front, so that the carpenter couldn't count how many he took: contrariwise" (*Looking-Glass* 37). This prompts Alice to change her answer in which she now likes the carpenter best, but she's again countered by Tweedledee who reminds her that the carpenter ate as many oysters as he could get. This is one of two moments between Alice and the twins that is important to Alice's development throughout her Bildungsroman, because it tests Alice's thinking and points out to her that though she may think that she's thinking in a logical manner, she does not pay attention to the whole situation in order to give the best logical answer. In other words, an answer can always be countered because there is always another side of a story.

On the other hand, Alice's encounter also taught her a thing or two about patience. Although Alice is in a rush to claim the eighth square and become queen, she takes her time with

Tweedledee and Tweedledum. When Tweedledum loses his cool about his rattle, Alice steps in almost motherly like to calm him. When the twins decide to have a dual to settle a dispute between them, Alice is asked to help them prepare for it by dressing them. Alice could have easily left them there and continued on to the eighth square, but instead she decides to help. She even tries to make them see that their fight is completely pointless “and all about a rattle” (*Looking-Glass* 42). This interaction demonstrates that Alice’s journey is allowing her space for continued growth through these lessons. Alice’s actions with twins are motherly. They are well beyond her age of seven, yet she knows how to handle these situations with ease. Typically, this type of maturity in characters is not seen until they are well beyond the age of seven and possibly not until they have children of their own. This is one example of not only her growth and maturity as a character, but also how her Bildungsroman is unlike any other.

Alice’s encounters with the creatures of Wonderland and Looking-Glass have taught her many lessons, her meeting with Humpty Dumpty is no different. Instead of figuring out the significance of names or the difference between logical and illogical thoughts, Humpty seems to teach Alice the importance of words, words choice, and meaning; her first lesson being how provoking it is to be called an egg although Alice had said he only looked like an egg, followed closely by the fact that names should mean something (*Looking-Glass* 53-54). Here Humpty’s emphasis is not on naming, but rather the meaning of words, suggesting that names are just words. This point about words having meaning is furthered when Alice asks him to help her decipher the Jabberwocky poem. He starts with the first few lines, helping Alice discover that words like ‘brilling’ means “four o’clock in the afternoon—the time when you being *broiling* things for dinner” and that ‘slithy’ means ‘lithe’ and ‘slimy’. Slithy is “like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word” (*Looking-Glass* 58). This lesson comes easy to



Alice, as she takes a turn at figuring out that “‘*the wabe*’ is the grass-plot round a sundial” (*Looking-Glass* 59). Alice catches on quickly here, possibly the quickest of all the lessons she learns on this journey, demonstrating her continued growth. This could be due to the fact that Alice is already familiar with the concept of words having meaning. If anything, this lesson furthered her existing knowledge and forced her to expand her mind. This experience is significant to Alice’s journey. Unlike the others, it comes easy proving that every lesson for her will not be a challenge. This is also common in the Bildungsroman of other characters. As characters develop and mature, things that would have normally been challenging are easier to navigate. It is impressive that it does not take Alice repeating these lessons many times for her to grasp them, proving to be another sign of her maturity.

After an interesting encounter with a lion and a unicorn, Alice stumbles back into the forest where she meets both the Red Knight and the White Knight. The Red Knight “dressed in crimson armor” gallops up to Alice shouting “Ahoy! Ahoy! Check!...You’re my prisoner!” (*Looking-Glass* 73). It can be assumed that Alice, a pawn, is captured by the Red Knight and that her attempts to become queen would end here. However, the White Knight shows up moments later announcing “Ahoy! Ahoy! Check!...I came to rescue her!” (*Looking-Glass* 73). In this case, Alice has been saved by the White Knight and given the opportunity to become queen. This is not uncommon in Bildungsroman; many protagonists have a sort of side kick that they tackle tests and trials with. The purpose of the supporting character is to help the main character figure out how to pass the test at hand; however, it is interesting that the White Knight seems to do more saving than aiding. Alice has already been captured by the Red Knight and before she can begin to think for herself, she is rescued. Because she is so young, she is prone to being aided; we see this first in *Wonderland* when the food and drinks appear with ‘drink me’ and ‘eat me’

tags, but we see it the most in *Looking-Glass* first when the Red Queen gives her the necessary tools to navigate this world, and now with the White Knight who has come to rescue her. This could mean a few things for Alice: 1) Alice's uniqueness awards her the opportunity to be aided and guided on her journey or 2) Alice is not navigating this stage as well as she should and so she needs to be saved or guided toward completion.

Taking this one incident into consideration, and smaller incidents such as not being able to decipher the Jabberwocky poem or the poem about the walrus and the carpenter, then it may look as if Alice is having a hard time. Though the latter option may seem to be the case, for a young character, Alice is doing well in the Looking-Glass world just as she did in Wonderland. It is more likely that Alice's journey is tailored to her needs, meaning that if she needs assistance it is provided. Her purpose in these worlds is not to properly or successfully navigate the world physically, but to learn a few lessons along the way that will aid in her growth; this is what Alice has done so far. Though her main goal has been to be crowned queen, the most significant lessons she has learned have been patience and persistence. In each encounter Alice has stuck with her ultimate goal even as obstacles and situations meant to distract her arise. In these same obstacles and situations, Alice has had to be extremely patient. Although the creatures of the Looking-Glass world know what Alice is trying to do, they do not possess the same sense of urgency. The White Knight helps Alice advance stating, "you've only a few yards to go, down the hill and over that little brook, and then you'll be a Queen" (*Looking-Glass* 84). She takes his advice and in a few steps Alice lands on "a lawn of fresh moss, with little flower-beds dotted about it here and there" (*Looking-Glass* 84). Alice ultimately wins the game and is finally crowned queen, but this doesn't end the daydream; and though she is a queen she isn't treated as such.

The Red Queen reminds Alice, rather rudely, that before she can be considered a queen, she must pass the proper exams (*Looking-Glass* 87). Both the White Queen and the Red Queen sort of mock Alice's misuse of words, interrupting her attempts to explain herself, "That's just what I complain of! You should have meant! What do you suppose is the use of a child without meaning? Even a joke should have some meaning—and a child's more important than a joke, I hope. You couldn't deny that, even if you tried with both hands" (*Looking-Glass* 87); and she feels defenseless the whole time. Though Alice has previously had a lesson on word choice and meaning with Humpty Dumpty, those lessons seem to leave Alice when she speaks with the queens. This goes to show us that Alice is still a child no matter how much she has matured. Even with the ability to handle situations, around authoritative figures, kids will be kids. It is not until she's in her own castle that she finds her voice again. This time she's able to pick and choose her words properly, and after an eventful dinner she yells out, "I can't stand this any longer!" (*Looking-Glass* 97). Turning to the Red Queen she starts to yell "as for you", but by this time the queen has shrunk down considerably, and Alice is waking up. In this scene, Alice has the authority: she is confident here because her words are the rules. Carroll presents his readers with an Alice who has gained her confidence back and in turn has found her voice. Her experiences in the Looking-Glass world have prepared her for this moment. She knows how to use her words, to get her point across and she is most confident about what she will and will not tolerate. At this moment, she has found that moment of growth and maturity we'd been looking for her to find.

The end of this novel is especially interesting for our protagonist. Unlike in *Wonderland*, Alice does not quite leave this dream world behind, in fact she brings it with her when she wakes. As she's waking, she "respectfully, yet with some severity" tells Kitten not to purr so

loud, her lessons from the Looking-Glass world still very fresh on her mind. She goes on to try to start a conversation with her pet cats Kitty, Snowball, and Dinah in which she mentions that it'd be better if cats purred for "yes" or meowed for "no" "so that one could keep up a conversation!" (133) she quickly counters that by asking herself "how can you talk with a person if they always say the same thing?" clearly taking note from her conversations with Humpty Dumpty and the twins. Alice ties her dream world with her real one even further. As she's talking to each cat she figures out which character from her dream the cat embodies. She settles on Kitty as the Red Queen, Snowdrop as the White Queen, and Dinah as Humpty Dumpty (134-35). The choices are interesting here because Kitty and Snowball are both the children of Dinah, who we met in Wonderland. In the Looking-Glass world, though Humpty Dumpty seems to be a prestigious inhabitant, both the Red Queen and White Queen trump him in ranking. Alice's use of Dinah's children is reflective of her childlike mindset. In the Looking-Glass world, these characters helped Alice on her journey, with Humpty being possibly wisest, it's no surprise she's made these correlations between the cats and characters. What is even more interesting, at the end of the novel is that Alice is aware that this was her dream an imagination, but she states "now, Kitty, let's consider who it was that dreamed it all" (136). As she goes on to chastise Kitty, she suggests that the dream must have been the Red King's, her logic for asking Kitty for the answer being that she's his wife (136). Though this may seem illogical, those lessons will stick with Alice. She will practice with her newfound voice and confidence with her pet kittens. She will think logically, take the time decipher puzzles, think carefully about naming people and things, and she will constantly practice patience and persistence. As mentioned, Alice's story is much different than other Bildungsroman novels. Although she does not age beyond seven in either of her stories, she learns the same lessons any other protagonist would learn over their entire

lifespan. Both of Alice's adventures have taught her important lessons on growing older and maturing. Learning persistence and patience (*Looking-Glass*) are just as important as learning identity and confidence (*Wonderland*). In the Looking-Glass world, Alice lets her lessons in confidence and identity fuel her lessons in patience and persistence. Her journey is unlike others in which usually characters experience these things over years in which Alice has already experienced in just a few months. Though she does not grow older, she does grow wiser. As a children's novels these qualities are some of the most important to instill in children.

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