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DECONSTRUCTING LITERARY NONSENSE IN LEWIS CARROLL'S
ALICE IN WONDERLAND

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ABSTRACT

An iconic children's book of record is *Alice in Wonderland*. It is a story of a young girl, Alice, following a rabbit and falling down in its hole then witnessing a weird and wonderful, dreamlike world. It is a magical wonderland where she gets to reunite with her friends who help her to realise the reality. Everything in Alice's imaginary world makes no sense as everything is so immature, where all are unaware of the truth but the imagination is as great as the reality.

Nonsense literature is a literary genre where the plot, the characters or the incidents do not make any sense. The actual definition of nonsense should be forgotten to understand Nonsense Literature. Nonsense in literature gives an entirely different definition where at some point it makes sense.

Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland's* deals with this literary genre Nonsense literature. It is not much complicated to bring out examples of nonsense from this novel as much we could see is the immature fantasy of Carroll. Nonsensical nature is seen in language, characters, plot and logic. To elicit particular examples from the novel, the Walrus and the carpenter will be narrating a story to Alice where the real essence of nonsense is seen. Also the oysters are easily tricked by the two main characters which then were eaten by them. Hence there will be a protest raised by the oysters and again nonsense is used as a tool to neglect their activity. Hence literary nonsense is obviously portrayed in every part of the novel *Alice in Wonderland*. This paper deals with the literary nonsense in *Alice in Wonderland* which leads a negative interpretation of adventures by providing a vivid nonsensical imagination as reality.

"A little nonsense now and then is relished by the wisest men."-Roald Dahl

Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* is an exemplary children's fiction. Meanwhile there are a lot of nonsensical elements appeared in his text. To perceive the intended meaning of Literary Nonsense cannot be achieved without complications. This work provides an analysis, elucidation, importance and the purpose of this genre through scrutinizing Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. . In the same way the main objective of this work is to refine the readers' interpretation skills by overcoming the archetypal approach of a text. Hence to succeed in dealing with such dictums, *Alice in Wonderland* is a supreme example since the plot, the characters, the language and the incidents written by Lewis Carroll has its own complications and lack of logic.

Lewis Carroll is a person who survived the Victorian era, an era of remarkable changes, which includes social and economical developments with greater innovations in technology. Carroll is known for his works written for children, as he started writing for children of his own family. However *Alice in Wonderland* is his first complete fiction published, he did not quit writing after the success of it like many people do, his other works like *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876), *The Game of Logic* (1887), *Sylvie and Bruno* (published in 1889) and *Symbolic Logic* (1896) have also earned great success. The most common thing he had was his audience, the children, his works never failed to entertain the children. Hence he is very popular among the young readers of his age. Just because children were fond of Carroll's writing that does not mean that adult readers did not like his works, even he kept the adult readers interesting by giving puzzles, logical and philosophical elements in his works.

To define the genre, Nonsense Literature or Literary Nonsense; the term "nonsense" is a "relatively recent phenomenon in literature, originating in Britain in the Romantic and post-Romantic era" (Tigges 3). Nonsense literature is a rapidly growing literature, where many people have increased their interest in reading works of this genre and started liking it immensely. The definition of "Nonsense" has not been widely accepted as everybody has their own definition, at some point the common thing we find in its definition is, it lacks sense or meaning.

Reading a nonsensical text does not mean that it is full of absurdity, it is actually an eye opener for things which really make sense. Anybody can read romantic fiction, because everybody must have felt romance at least once in their lifetime, probably everybody will know how romance works, likewise people who are very pious can read a work of religion or theology, also people who are curious about detective fiction will fall in love with crime fiction but it takes immense patience and intelligence to understand nonsense text. The reader of a nonsense text must know how reality works. It is not hard to understand the ground reality of everyday life like how everyday passes, what comes first, day or night, how does a dog bark, how a clock works, how a bicycle works or how do we eat, how do we walk, literally everything on earth will be known to an ordinary human.. To be precise, our everyday duty is aligned in our mind already. However to understand a nonsense text, the reader should be aware of the real world and the world beyond, the imaginary world of the writer, because the imaginary world differs from writer to writer yet having a thing in common . Yet it is also open to a reader to imagine however the way the reader wants, it is not necessary to envision what the author has experienced in his imagination. It is inevitable that it differs from person to person.

Carroll's Alice is actually his one of the best friends Miss. Alice Liddell, later she became an inspiration for the character Alice. Carroll wrote this work and the first copy was given to Alice as a gift (Collingwood 104). Carroll has started writing this as a kind of poetry where the tale of Alice begins in the third stanza of the opening poem that "there will be nonsense in it!" (11). Carroll has portrayed both absurd imagination and, at the same time, terms which gives no meaning.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland starts once Alice is very "tired of sitting by her sister on the bank and of having nothing to do" (15). Her sister is also there with her but she is into a book, reading "without pictures or conversations" (15). When Alice is much exhausted of that silence around her, suddenly, a White Rabbit wearing a waistcoat and also a watch becomes visible next to her saying "Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!" (16). Alice goes after the White Rabbit through his rabbit-hole. Soon after she enters the rabbit-hole happens to be an intense tunnel and, unexpectedly, it began to extend far down from the surface. Alice falls down for a long time, or "either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly" (16). While reaching the end of her fall, she did not hurt herself, Alice finally gets into a world of rational absurdities and certain puzzles, an entirely different universe which she names "the antipathies" (17).

So right from the very start of the novel Carroll used the Literary Nonsense genre explicitly, as he describes the nonsense reality: "Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly" (16). The idea of falling is depicted here, where Alice is falling into the well, falling is an immediate action and it is never slow in the real world. Just to give a clear description or to take the reader into a new world Carroll had made the motion of falling slow. In any case, the reader who does not is away from nonsense thinking must be wondering about the logic of sentence used by Carroll. Is there anybody in this world has fallen sluggishly? That depends on the

distance between the real world and the new world of Alice. So the basic law of physics has been taken in a nonsensical way. Hence it is directly given into the hands of the readers to interpret the text as the way he wants and each reader will be having a unique version.

We can find a lot of other examples about literary nonsense in the text. To describe one such incident is the meeting between the caterpillar and Alice. At once when the caterpillar sees Alice, the curiosity of him arises and he asks her, "Who are you?" Alice gives a confusing answer without any intention, she tells, "I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then" (48). This confuses him and he wants to get a better explanation from her about her identity. Alice never stops confusing him by her answer, she says, "I can't explain *myself*, I'm afraid, Sir, [...] because I'm not myself, you see" (49). This answer can be understood in many different ways; Alice is talking about the things changed in a day. Carroll emphasizes on the changes happen each and every day in one's life using absurdity. When Alice says the sentence "I'm not myself, you see" (49), a plenty number of paradoxical ideas are conveyed by Lewis Carroll. His way of using language without meaning is also seen, as it is also a part of Literary Nonsense.

There is another incident of nonsense we find in the text where the Red Queen and Alice will be running very fast for a longer time. During this run the Red Queen kept on demanding Alice to run faster. When the run came to an end Alice wanted to know why the Red Queen insisted to run faster, so she asks, "Why, I do believe we've been under this tree the whole time! Everything's just as it was!" (152). The Red Queen replies Alice: "Of course it is." Her reply makes the reader understand that so far they were running faster and faster in the same place and they have not even moved an inch. So the nonsense idea appears again. A question arises about incident, what is the reason of running so fast to stay back in the same place? Because if they are running in the same place, everything around them will also be moving to their speed. So the absurdity is once again proven under Literary Nonsense.

The most interesting character in this novel is the Queen of Hearts, one of the terrifying characters too. She is known for beheading the servants. She is a person who is very fond of red colour. The servants will be painting all the white roses into red as the queen hates white colour. Once the queen comes to know about it and she orders to behead them with her very famous phrase, "Off with their Heads!" Everyone in the tale is very afraid of her cruel behavior. The queen is an epitome of absurd behavior.

Hence *Alice in Wonderland* is entirely filled with nonsense problems. The characters, themes, symbols and the plot fall very easily under nonsense literature. So when the reader is reading the plot description or the characterization of Lewis Carroll, the lack of logic which confuses the reader is obvious. A text full of nonsense helps to increase the power of logical thinking. The readers who are really involved in the text will definitely self-analyze what the author has written without prejudicing the author. Especially children who are reading the nonsense literature must take their time to understand what the author's imagination is and what reality is. Children should use nonsense literature to widen their logical and critical thinking than believing it to be the truth.

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