



## Wonderland, Cats and Hiji bij bij

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**Abstract:** A weird concoction of symbols and social commentary through allegories makes the Alice stories the epitome of English nonsense literature, one that could perhaps be compared to Sukumar Ray's *Ha Ja Ba Ra La* on many levels. The sheer diversity of experiences Alice has in Wonderland and in the Looking Glass world, or Ray's narrator has in his dream, prevents the construction of a fixed paradigm for this world to function on, and feeds into the cliché that change is the only constant element. The strict devotion to randomness and unreason in these texts questions the viability of a fixed structure (or an institution) and the legitimacy of the 'reason' it propagates. Alice, along with the young narrator of *Ha Ja Ba Ra La*, is a representative of the structured world of recorded 'knowledge', and her sense of equilibrium (and of justice, morality, reason, and so on) is thrown into a topsy-turvy mess once she goes down the rabbit hole. This paper attempts to explore some of those instances by trying to locate the 'unreason' of these fantastical spaces through close inter-textual analysis constructed on the framework of a psychoanalytic reading.

"Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them."

*The Little Prince*, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

*Alice in Wonderland* (1865), *Through the Looking Glass* (1872) and *Ha Ja Ba Ra La* (1921), all function on a singular quality, and with the same purpose – to ensnare their readers, children and adults alike, into a shared dream with Alice or the eight-year-old narrator in *Ha Ja Ba Ra La*, and bamboozle their sense of reason.

The Alice stories have a dreamlike quality to them; they defy, and at times manipulate logic. This may be considered a direct attempt by their creator, the mathematician Charles Lutwidge Dodgson to put in praxis his idea that basic education for young people might include various games of puzzles. These would help them "think correctly" and navigate their way through life, in the same manner they would solve a puzzle. In Bengali literature, Sukumar Ray's nonsense writings *Abol Tabol* and *Ha Ja Ba Ra La*, among others bear great resemblance to the nonsensical worlds of Dodgson.

The imaginative 'dream' spaces of *Ha Ja Ba Ra La* and the Alice stories have much in common. They are represented as products of fanciful dreams of children – the questions arising from their social and cultural experiences. A discussion of some of the components of these narratives would



provide an interesting distinction between how adults and children view normative social practices, more specifically, what is taught to be perceived as 'normal', 'reasonable', and what falls into the sphere of 'unreasonable' or 'mad'. Some of the themes that will be discussed with close textual analysis include identity, madness, institutional bodies, the role of the creator or the dreamer and also the importance of the dream spaces represented.

## 1. The beginning

A certain section of critics and readers attribute Alice's adventures in Wonderland as psychotropic visions induced by the use of hallucinogenic substances. Alice finds that her entire experience has been nothing but a dream. Considering that Wonderland is dominated by unreason, one may look at the rabbit hole as a pathway to separating and confining the 'mad' components of Alice's mind from her rational consciousness. It is evident that the more time Alice spends in Wonderland, the more she becomes detached from her older, rational self that used to rely on conventional bodies of knowledge, such as geography and mathematics to validate 'smartness'. Thus, isolated from those institutions, Alice is afraid she is turning rather 'stupid'. This underlying trope of transformation is consistent throughout her dreams, perhaps a response to the changes she undergoes in life as she "grows up" to slowly become integrated into the larger social order.

The idea of the rabbit hole is multifarious. While it is an othered space relegated to unreason constituting a vast body of knowledge that is not (and cannot be) explored exhaustively, it is also a sphere of the unknown and infinite imagination and repressed desires. It is a response of resistance to the ordered reality, and hence, a parallel and binary presence in the margins, it is suppressed in Alice's dreams.

In *Through the Looking Glass*, Alice climbs into the Looking Glass world through the large mirror over the mantelpiece. Once again, there is no clear indication till the end of the narrative that her experience in that world is a figment of her imagination or her unconscious. Curiously though, there are multiple references to dreams in this text. Alice is asked to not wake the Red King, as everyone in that world exists because he dreams. Alice's awareness that she might be a part of a dream and the calm acceptance of this possibility makes the plot even more complex: "So I wasn't dreaming, after all," she said to herself, "unless – unless we're all part of the same dream. Only I do hope it's *my* dream, and not the Red King's! I don't like belonging to another person's dream," she went on in a rather complaining tone: "I've a great mind to go and wake him, and see what happens!" (Carroll 214)

Alice's desire to wake the Red King despite the warning that everyone's existence, including her own, might be jeopardized if he was indeed awoken, does not only demonstrate the natural human tendency to disobey<sup>1</sup> but also indicates a much darker underlying theme of self-destruction or Thanatos running through this text, as well as a reflection of the dreary weather in Alice's reality (since dreamwork draws from external stimuli).

The narrator's dream in *Ha Ja Ba Ra La*, on the other hand, has no particular entry point like the rabbit hole or the mirror. It may be marked only by a singular event of change – when his



handkerchief transforms into a red, talking cat that justifies its transfiguration and proceeds to pose ontological questions. In fact, both the narrator and the readers are hardly given the opportunity to question the viability of the existence of the characters. At the very moment of their inception, they justify their presence and their purpose in an unapologetic, entitled manner, as if the inability to comprehend their rationale is the narrator's (and the reader's) failing. There exists a direct, albeit implicit, link between the text and the reader in *Ha Ja Ba Ra La* right from the beginning which culminates with the narrator addressing his young readers in the end after he has been "woken up".

In all three texts, a certain gravity is attached to 1) the ability to comprehend both language and image and 2) the existing knowledge possessed by the child dreamer. At the same time, all serious arguments are represented to be obscure, and hence, nonsensical. The conventional correlation drawn between 'important' or 'serious' concerns and their incomprehensibility are portrayed in a satirical light. The inhabitants of the fantasy worlds constantly mock the ignorance of their respective creators/dreamers and treat them condescendingly if either Alice or Ray's young narrator is unable to answer the quizzical questions in accordance with the alternative paradigms of these worlds.

"The 'royal road' to the unconscious is dreams...Dreams for Freud are essentially symbolic fulfilments of unconscious wishes...the unconscious charitably conceals, softens and distorts [the dream's] meanings, so that our dreams become symbolic texts which need to be deciphered" (Eagleton 136). The dream space(s) experienced by Alice and the narrator of *Ha Ja Ba Ra La* can be defined in psychoanalytic terms as representations of the unconscious of the two 'dreamers'. The interplay of 'symbols' within the dream—human beings, anthropomorphic animals, other non-human entities, the events that take place, and most importantly, the sequence in which they appear—is indicative of the subject position Alice and *Ha Ja Ba Ra La*'s narrator in society, especially within the circle of the family. The Imaginary and primarily the Symbolic dominate the dream space of the two children. They are able to make distinctions between the conventional order they have been taught and the unpracticed rationale presented in their dreams.<sup>2</sup> One of the most intriguing characteristics which define these dream spaces is how both Alice and Ray's narrator are unfazed by animals and creatures that are able to express themselves in the same language as them, yet baffled when the conventions of the dreamland do not mirror the conventions of society. It may be argued, therefore, that these dreams, for the children, are a form of defiance of the norms of the social order into which they are in the process of being integrated. These dreams are also representations of the resistance they might have to the very idea of being a 'grown-up' or undergoing the complex process of growing up itself. The advice of the Cheshire cat and the Caterpillar, the different ideas of temporality that Udho or the Looking Glass world has, may be attempts of transmissions of their own unconscious.

## **2.The question of identity**

In addition to the memory of her ordered knowledge, with the various adjustments in size, Alice begins to lose her sense of "self" that may be interpreted as her identity.<sup>3</sup> When the Caterpillar asks her a rather existential question, one that would perhaps intimidate adults to no end, Alice replies with an equally insightful statement showcasing human inconsistencies, "...I know who I was



when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then" (Carroll 48). The use of the passive voice "I must have been changed" is notable here. Although Alice voluntarily partakes of the various confectionaries that change her size, she makes sure to attribute her change to the active operation of those items on her, the passive receptor without resistance. The "EAT ME" cake and the "DRINK ME" beverage both can be equated with external social factors that shape the Freudian ego. On the other hand, they are also interpreted as hallucinogenic substances (as represented in most modern popular culture). Now here is one of the many paradoxes that plague the scholar's mind. The food items are interpreted both as the instrument of social constraints (realism) and a way to evade those constraints (escapism). The key (literally, the reference to the key in the book is essential) is to use both tendencies in a balanced manner. Otherwise, there may be tremendous consequences, like Alice's exaggerated 'pool' of tears.

Size becomes the primary method of survival in this text. By virtue of her varying size, Alice takes turns playing the roles of both the predator and the prey, and she enjoys none. It can be said that she is never satisfied with the power (or the lack of it) she has. In the chapter 'The Rabbit Sends in a Little Bill', she is attacked when she grows in size while in the White Rabbit's house, being pelted with stones that turn into cakes as they hit her, from outside. This growth is an effect of the beverage she had consumed uninvited (that is, without the label "DRINK ME") in the White Rabbit's room. Two important conclusions may be drawn from here – (a) the stone-pelting is somewhat reminiscent of the earlier treatment of the mad by society when they are presumed to be a threat, and (b) the stones turning into cupcakes may be representative of the coercive process of curing the mad, to conform to their 'normal' standards once again. The first instinct after encountering the gigantic Alice is to set the house on fire along with her. This is almost a reflection of burning a witch at the stakes. In any case, the brutal treatment of the mad is medieval, stemming from the fear of the unknown which overpowers the need to examine the nature and cause of the deviation. There are of course sexual interpretations of all this consumption that is faintly reiterative of Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* (1862).

Alice faces a similar circumstance when she is accused of being a "serpent" by a pigeon, when her neck grows long, way above the trees. The pigeon's syllogistic conclusions that little girls are also a "kind of serpent" (Carroll 56) on grounds of eating eggs, may be faulty. But this once again calls Alice's identity into question:

"Well! What are you?" said the Pigeon...

"I—I'm a little girl," said Alice, rather doubtfully, as she remembered the number of changes she had gone through, that day.

"A likely story indeed!" said the Pigeon, in a tone of the deepest contempt. "I've seen a good many little girls in my time, but never one with such a neck as that! No, no! You're a serpent..." (Carroll 56)

Herein lies a vital difference that sets the Alice stories apart from *Ha Ja Ba Ra La*. The narrator, who is also the reader's primary link to the dream, is not subjected to any deviant disfigurement. While in



Wonderland, Alice is constantly plagued with the question of who she is, Udho voluntarily measures the narrator's identity without considering any of his own inputs, especially his age. He explains the process of calculating age in which he is in control of his age, not physically, but in terms of its linguistic expression. Within the narrator's dream, although the parameters of his identity are almost enforced upon him, since they are abstract in nature, they do not affect him at least perceptibly within the dream or without. He is, however, affected by the strangeness or even the plausibility of the ideas thrust upon him, and tries to deny them as "*abol tabol*" (literally, nonsense).

Hiji bij bij's entire discourse revolves around the multiplicity and dynamic nature of identity. He is described as an eccentric creature who resembles both animal and man. Thus occupying a chimaeric position, an amalgamation of imagination and reality, Hiji bij bij chalks out a matrix of his names, ones that he shares with his relatives, and later ones that change temporally. His dialogue with the narrator regarding the plurality of Hiji bij bij's identity enrages the latter who finds it difficult to accept the impermanence of people's names, and the multifarious identities they carry in society.<sup>4</sup>

*seyāl bollo, "bate tomār nām ki śuni?"*

*se bollo, "ekhan āmār nām hiji bij bij."*

*seyāl bollo, "nāmer ābār ekhan takhan ki?"*

*Hiji bij bij bollo, "tāo jāno nā? sakāle āmār nām thāke ālunārkol ābār ār ektu bikel halei āmār nām haye jābe rāmtāru." (Ray 41)<sup>5</sup>*

"Dream texts are also cryptic because the unconscious is rather poor in techniques for representing what it has to say, being largely confined to visual images, and so must often craftily translate a verbal significance into a visual one" (Eagleton 137). This is particularly true for *Ha Ja Ba Ra La's* narrator; he is painstakingly meticulous while focusing on the appearance and transformations of the objects of his dream. His Ego is entrenched in what is considered 'normal' and 'absurd'; how human beings *should* look. Thus, Udho with his green beard, the talking, hybrid creature Hiji bij bij and the over-eager singer distinctly identifiable by his bald head can not only be read as social caricatures or deviations but as being *different* from the narrator's sense of self as well as identities that he deems desirable.<sup>6</sup> It is important to consider that the underlying construction of the dream space is not how one perceives others but the self in relation to others. This perception is plural and hybrid in nature, including both positive and negative connotations. Hiji bij bij may also be interpreted to be the narrator's perception of himself: a child who laughs at hypothetical, impossible scenarios, or have different imaginary identities and names as in play-acting. Excessive laughter, joy or freedom is not acceptable; it is considered nonsensical – that is the gist of his response to Hiji bij bij. He assumes the role of the very 'Law' he himself wishes to circumvent in reality.

Alice goes through a similar experience in Wonderland, as she herself is the subject of various transformations. For her, both fear and disgust are additional responses that function quite actively in her dreams. It is a struggle for her to maintain the image of, and to be acknowledged as, just a 'little girl' and not a deviant creature (additionally, it is difficult to not consider a gendered implication of



Alice's fear of being perceived as anything/anyone else apart from a little girl. It is an early foreshadowing of the unavoidable othering that she must face when she grows up to be a woman in contemporary society).

### **3. Madness**

An identity that can be uniformly shared by the inhabitants of these alternate worlds is that they are all mad, or that the functional framework of their reason is that of 'unreason'.

"...Visit either you like: they're both mad."

"But I don't want to go among mad people," Alice remarked.

"Oh you can't help that," said the Cat: "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad." (Carroll 65)

When Alice further asks how the Cat knew she was mad, it says, "You must be... or you wouldn't have come here" (Carroll 65). Even in the alternative universe that is Wonderland, where practically nothing makes sense, madness is defined and confined, although there may not be physical barriers as such to impose it. The Cheshire Cat reveals that both the Hatter and the March Hare are mad. But the reason behind their madness would be difficult to guess for non-European readers. The proverbs "mad as a hatter" and "mad as a March hare" were both in general use in the Victorian age; additionally, for hatters the occupational hazard of mercury poisoning, and having tea parties in the non-restrictive asylums are stark reflections of the contemporary time. The rhetorical brilliance takes into account the literalness of words is what distinguishes the language of the mad from that of those who are not. Almost all zeugmas in the text are flawed in logic. The March Hare admonishes Alice for not saying what she means, and instead relying on rhetoric to express herself. Considering that language in its entirety, according to poststructural psychoanalytic understanding, is metaphorical or forms "a chain of signifiers" (Eagleton 146). Alice is not the only one guilty of not saying what she means, we all are, the author, readers, critics included.

It is interesting to note that although everything in Wonderland is a representation of some form of subversion and madness, the Mad Hatter is a rather faithful portrayal of a madman with his sudden nature, disjointed speech, rudeness and riddles. What is the significance then, of the lack of deviation of the deviant, in an already skewed 'reality'? It has been said earlier that Wonderland operates on unreason and utter nonsense, which reaches its height in the Chapter "Pig and Pepper". Any time in the text Alice wishes to display her knowledge from the rational world, her efforts go unheeded. The Duchess, her baby which later turns into a pig, and her cook with a violent tendency who puts too much pepper in her dishes, reside in a world which is an intentional mockery of the reality that Alice comes from. The child is not treated with tenderness but crazy affection, the mother is seemingly uncaring, the domestic help is rude, and Alice is left to exercise her own version of rightness.

The Queen of Hearts is an institution or authority in Wonderland, but in her, irrationality is at its pinnacle. This evident caricature of the real world proves that Carroll draws his inspiration from the existing political and social body of knowledge and places it in a miscellaneous structure



constituted only by the collective Id of the real world. The Queen orders random executions but probably never goes through with them. What is evident here is that a mad streak of irrationality is present in all individuals of the rational society who *other* the mad by confining them, because the latter perhaps have the ability to resist the codes of the superego and deviate from social and institutional norms. The distinction, therefore, is maintained through a rather disciplined form of social Darwinism with the goal of self-preservation of the majority who are willing to follow the decisions implemented by authoritative bodies.

The periodic appearances (and disappearances) of the Cheshire Cat in the text seem to signify bouts of madness or moments of great wisdom. It is an abstract entity that cannot be eliminated, as seen in the Queen's Croquet Ground. It represents an idea, here perhaps, the idea of resistance against the established institution, that is, the Queen. The idea of a Cheshire Cat that grins eventually leaves the readers with the (after)image of its grin that is tied to the signifier "the Cheshire Cat" of *Alice in Wonderland*.

In the fable-like nonsense text, one might almost expect time to take on a form. Although it remains abstract and formless, it is certainly attributed to a specific gender—a man—which is perhaps more than enough to make certain presuppositions. However, this claim is also made by a man, and a mad one at that which problematizes matters. The Hatter explains that for them, it is always 6 o'clock, that is teatime, ever since the Queen, enraged by the March Hare's song had condemned him to death, accusing him of "murdering time".

In the mirrored world of *Through the Looking Glass*, however, one must run to keep up with time. The spatial and temporal loci are intricately linked here. The inhabitants of this world all seem to possess absolute oracular knowledge of all events, so that they may execute them perfectly in the reverse order. Ignorance of foreknowledge is an impediment to basic survival in this world.

The Cheshire Cat's claim that had preceded Alice's decision to join the Hatter's tea party sums up the nature of the dreamland she tries her best to navigate around. It is a rather Victorian quality, the attempt of the curious mind to venture into alien territory and colonise it. Wonderland, however, resists Alice's attempts to grasp it within her cultivated learning (rather, reason). This is established in the end when the pack of cards rise up to attack her when she scoffs at their existence: "Who cares for you? You're nothing but a pack of cards!" (Carroll 117)

Wonderland is a universe parallel to Victorian England. It still has the hierarchical structures of monarchy, aristocracy, the masses and the deviants. Now, since Alice constantly changes, it is difficult for her to be associated with any one particular class or group. She is, in effect, a representation of the dynamic forces that form the founding structures of society and knowledge; that is, language, its associated signs and meanings, and codes that dominate what is to be deemed acceptable and what is not. Throughout the text, Alice is seen admonishing various characters, saying "it is rude" or "it is not polite" to do or say such and such things. Why is that? She tries her best to establish what she has learnt is 'right', but to no avail. Even towards the end, when she points out the absurdity of pronouncing the sentence before the trial, in response the Queen orders her death, a far more absurd command.



Alice's identity, therefore, is never complete in the text. It certainly has many possibilities, but essentially it seems that the world of unreason rejects her. Because the chaos that pervades Wonderland is not like an authoritative reason trying to impose itself on all (including those who resist it). With the medicalisation of madness came the need to discipline it, study it, and cure it, not treat it as a spectacle. But the entire foundation of Wonderland is based on the dominance of a Dionysian anarchy which surpasses, rather runs through even the monarchic authority there. The rigid creed to let the mad remain mad and practise their madness freely is a subversive act that is an impossibility in the real world. It is a celebration of the carnivalesque in its truest sense.

There are no political bodies represented in *Ha Ja Ba Ra La*. The novella, however, ends with an elaborate court scene, like in Wonderland. Before the narrator can protest against the impossible sentence pronounced upon Nyara – imprisonment for three months and execution by hanging for seven days – he is awoken rather violently by his uncle. The subversion and disruption of a legal procedure may be, for the young dreamers, an attempt to evade discipline like most children.

#### **4. The creative faculty**

The dream spaces in the texts under examination are a part of nonsense literary fiction and hence, it is not possible to restrict the interpretation of the objects of these dreams as being only visual elements with cryptic messages to be decoded. In any case, with the progression of psychoanalytic literary theory from Freud to Lacan, language, too, becomes one of the most integral pillars to make up the psyche, and what better realm for the Unconscious to articulate itself at its fullest than within the dream? Within the dream images are complementary to speech; they cannot entirely substitute speech. Every linguistic expression within the dreams of the two children has at least two aspects – 1) they replicate the linguistic (apart from the cognitive, moral and ethical) codes of society they have begun to imbibe, and 2) through the other characters in their dreams besides themselves, they express with abandon what they cannot when awake. In the latter case, it so happens that even if they do express themselves 'freely' in reality, especially to grown-ups, they are likely to generate responses that are either not satisfactory to them, or they are made to submit to silence by the employment of other distractions or disciplinary actions. Thus, it is not surprising that even within her own unconscious, Alice is driven by linguistic commands ('EAT ME' or 'DRINK ME'). Her essential autonomy may be questioned here. Do those commands emerge from her own repressed desires, or are they representations of forms of discipline she has been subjected to in reality that she is unable to escape? This further poses the question of how far these young dreamers can 'escape' their reality through their dreams, and whether it is possible to do so at all. *Ha Ja Ba Ra La's* narrator, too, is plagued by the nutritionist goat Byakaran Singh, as he had fallen asleep while studying 'byakaran' or grammar (in that case, what is the primary foundation of his dream – the cat or the goat?).

The creation of nonsense texts (and the sub-texts readers may identify within them) is analogous to the process of "dream-work" (Eagleton 156). The weird and the unlikely are brought together, through image and speech – both submissive and subversive – in the form of chains of metaphoric and metonymic representations of reality. The dream-work is elaborated and made transparent in different degrees in *Alice in Wonderland* and *Ha Ja Ba Ra La*. Both of Alice's adventures are concerned with Alice's identity as the inhabitants of Wonderland and the Looking glass world





struggle to understand the concept of a little girl. This is where Dodgson's texts take on a much more active role that poses a different question altogether: the relationship between the creator (or the dreamer) and the products of their imagination (or the dreams). While Alice is able to identify and label the characters within her imaginative space, they put her under constant cross-examination to ascertain her identity and role amidst them.

The role of the narrator in *Ha Ja Ba Ra La* as a creator is more complex. It seems that although he is the original 'creator' of the initial characters by virtue of being the dreamer, they slowly become independent of his control and start creating narratives of their own into which the narrator is drawn in. It would perhaps be pertinent to consider at this point that much like the construction of a person's identity, social, cultural and institutional influences bleed through their subconscious and become active factors in the construction of the dream space as well. By the time the court session is held, the narrator is a bemused spectator witnessing the bizarre proceedings which, though not conditioned by the reverse order of things as in the Looking glass world, do take place following ample unreason in accordance with the prevalent order of corrupt procedures.

The creator of one of the most vital absentee characters in the novel is the handkerchief-turned-red cat. Gecho *dada*, the omnipresent, omniscient Godot-like character is only alluded to describe only his elusive nature. In fact, he may also be interpreted to be an ever-busy representative of the political body whose existence is affirmed only by virtue of his absence. Like everything else in the text, complex calculations (much like bureaucratic procedures) need to be performed to ascertain where he *probably* might be at the moment. Thus, readers, along with the narrators travel through multiple layers of imaginative recursions that occur in this text – the cat's reference to a hole in the trunk of a tree is the originating point for Udho, Kakeshwar and Budho, Hiji bij bij's reference to the goat prompts the appearance of Shri Byakaran Singh, and so on.

Nonsense literature is generally a satirical critique of contemporary socio-political circumstances. *Ha Ja Ba Ra La* is direct in its approach, capitalising on the unreasonable yet acceptable social and political practices. The text may also be interpreted, like the Alice stories, as a conflicting internal dialogue within the narrator's psyche, between the traditional bodies of knowledge he has to be acquainted with in order to obey the normative institutional ideals, and his imaginative faculty. It is mandatory for a child his age to study subjects such as grammar as it is considered a component of primary education. The natural course of the child's imagination is shaped by such fundamental 'disciplining' subjects which follow fixed rules and prescriptive linguistic formulae at the basic level. It seems that the narrator's psyche seeks to escape in his dreams when he sits down to study. His subconscious accommodates the rational aspects of his 'reality' and magnifies the elements the narrator considers unreasonable.

In the crucial chapter of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, "King's Cross", Albus Dumbledore answers the question about imagination and reality that sums up the existence of fiction, especially that of children's literature: "Of course it is happening inside your head...but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?" (Rowling 579). The elusive nature of the various metaphors used in the Alice stories, combined with the stark allegories that relate them to Victorian England and the Liddell sisters, makes them somewhat labyrinthine texts to grapple with. And therefore perhaps, the



attempt to restrict it within one or even multiple frameworks proves futile. *Ha Ja Ba Ra La*, on the other hand, ends with a direct message to the text's (young) readers, a plea almost to believe the dream the narrator's uncles, undoubtedly, seasoned, sensible men<sup>7</sup> disregard; because, indeed it is often a futile attempt on the children's part to explain to "grown-ups" the dynamic flow of their imagination.

Having a child take the centre stage in perceiving the world gravely alters the direction the text is going to take—in terms of narrative, semantics, linguistics, and abstract principles like morality. Hence, the most dynamic texts of nonsense literature also happen to fall within the category of children's literature, not only because a celebration of the impossible and the spectacular is relatable for children but in order to emphasise that young people, with reason yet to be completely undiluted by the various nuances of social norms, possess the best voice to question the standards propagated by society.

### End notes

<sup>1</sup> Alice's urge to disobey warnings may be traced to the Biblical event of Eve's disobedience and the subsequent fall of mankind.

<sup>2</sup> It is, by definition of the Real, not possible to address or specifically identify exactly which objects or moments fall within the category of the same; neither can its absence be claimed.

<sup>3</sup> The Alice stories are perfect instances of texts that may be interpreted entirely by using Jaques Lacan's perspectives on the conception of identity through the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real orders. Needless to say, the first two would play a dominant role to explicate Alice's adventures in Wonderland and in the mirrored world. Although a general psychoanalytic framework has been used here, a Lacanian psychoanalytic study of the texts would be the subject of an independent paper in itself.

<sup>4</sup> Variability of identity according to spatial and temporal coordinates is the central subject matter in Diana Wynne Jones's fantasy *Howl's Moving Castle*. The eccentric wizard Howl is known as Wizard Jenkin in Porthaven, as Howl Pendragon in Kingsbury. To his family in Wales, he is Howell. The 1986 novel is conventionally considered fantasy fiction intended for young adults, but upon closer study, carries clear postmodern elements. In any case, it is seen that the plurality of identity is a recurrent idea that authors attempt to explain to young people, perhaps to prepare them for the several social roles they would have to take up as adults.

<sup>5</sup>[Fox said, "Alright, what is your name?"

He said, "Now my name is Hiji bij bij."

Fox said, "Is there a now and then of names?"

Hiji bij bij said, "Don't you know even that? In the morning my name is Alunarkol and towards the evening it will be Ramtaru." ] (Translation mine)



The link between nomenclature and identity is notable here. While it caters to the conventions of nonsense fiction, it also charts the temporal progression of identity in society. For example, a boy may be called by his name or some pet name as a child or during his youth; subsequently, he becomes a Father, perhaps an Uncle, then a Grandfather, and so on. This is another instance of the child's response to 'growing up' and becoming a part of the broader social network.

<sup>6</sup> "...we arrive at a sense of an 'I' by finding that 'I' reflected back to ourselves by some object or person in the world. This object is at once somehow part of ourselves – we identify with it – and yet not ourselves, something alien" (Eagleton 143)

<sup>7</sup> Antoine de Saint-Exupéry', in his French novella *The Little Prince*, describes a simple process of distinguishing between "grown-ups", those who, like himself, might have retained their imaginative faculty despite the burden of other conventional bodies of knowledge such as "geography, history, arithmetic and grammar" (10) from those who find conversations on "bridge, and golf, and politics, and neckties" (12) 'sensible'. Children's literature, therefore, performs a dual role. Besides being a mode of entertainment for young people, it is also an invitation to adults to reassess their own worldview that has been dulled by material responsibilities and desires.

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